



Personal Reflections

12/1/2014

Greetings this Holiday Season-

We are nearing the completion of IMSA's fall semester and, as the upcoming holidays approach and 2014 nears its end, I am moved to reflect on my accomplishments and share them with you.

Since I'm expanding the reach of my reflections to our students, parents and alumni I'd like to first welcome our newest readers—and also express my gratitude for everyone's dedication and hard work. We've had a good year.

My previous Personal Reflections capture my thoughts from my first 90 days and after reading a recent email message exclaiming, "*we can't wait for day 91!*," I decided that on this 91st day (December 15, 2014), to write of three things: an update of my first 90 days as IMSA's president; the sharing of an important learning concept; and my best wishes for a happy and healthy holiday season.

Updates: The First 90 Days

- My 90-Day Listening and Learning Plan was successfully implemented:
 - Aggregating my time between off-campus meetings (50%) with elected officials, business and community leaders, parents and stakeholders and on-campus meetings (50%) with individuals and/or groups of students, faculty and staff members.
 - Assimilating what I've learned from talking and listening carefully to people, asking thoughtful questions and reviewing numerous informational reports.
 - Sharing my initial impressions in my November 25, 2014 Personal Reflection.

Day 91 and Beyond—Looking Ahead

- An Administrative Retreat (January 8, 2015) is scheduled off-campus with invited faculty and staff members
- All staff meeting (January 14, 2015) for sharing some of our plans that will result from the Administrative Retreat and also my impressions after implementing my 90-Day Listening and Learning Plan.

"Growth Mindsets," a Learning Concept

I've always been inspired by the genius and achievements of the great Italian artist Michelangelo who said, "If people knew how hard I worked to get my mastery, it wouldn't seem so wonderful at all." These words and his remarkable life are examples of a person with a



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“growth mindset”—whose hard work, effort, persistence and dedication despite a lifetime of challenges and adversity led to achievement.

Our faculty and students have been reading and discussing the work of Carol S. Dweck, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology at Stanford University, author of *Mindset*, and a world-leading researcher in the field of motivation, achievement and success. As an educational community, IMSA’s work in creating the conditions and organizational culture that celebrates hard work, development and resilience will support growth and vitality—a growth mindset—which differs significantly from a fixed mindset, one that assumes innate talents, abilities and intelligence are fixed. Our growth mindset view fosters a love of learning and a resilience that is needed for talent development and accomplishments.

Enjoy the Holiday Season

My wife, Isabel, and I count our blessings at this special time of the year: good health, rewarding careers and vibrant relationships with family and friends. As you might know, both of us experienced impoverished childhoods and are grateful for priceless impact that education has had on our lives. I’ve been grateful for the chance to meet with many of IMSA’s students and alumni, who make me proud every day. Their stories and accomplishments lead me to assert that IMSA offers a unique educational opportunity to Illinois students.

The current actual cost of an IMSA education for three years is approximately \$90,000 per student, which is a significant investment that the State of Illinois makes in support of our academic program, and also the roughly 8,000 students and 1,000 educators served annually through statewide extension programs. We are thankful for all who make IMSA possible, including our elected officials, members of our Board of Trustees and the IMSA Fund Board, our 5,457 alumni, donors, parents, students, staff and faculty.

I’ll certainly remember 2014 fondly as my inaugural year. It is a privilege and an honor to be the president of this remarkable educational institution and a great pleasure to work with all of you. I am grateful for all you do to make the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy a special and vibrant community in which to learn and to work. Our progress and our accomplishments are a tribute to Illinoisans whose support is a personal and professional blessing we all share.

Have a wonderful holiday. I’ll see you in 2015!

José M. Torres