

On Optimism, Momentum, and Potential

Solanco revised its mission statement to one that is simple, clear, and focused: “Connecting. Inspiring. Empowering.” Gone are the lengthy mission statements that were limited in function and few people could remember.

These three words are bold, optimistic, and challenging. But what do they mean to Solanco?

First, “Connecting.”

Educator Leo Buscaglia once said, “Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.” Solanco is driven to find ways for students to be connected to school. Because, as Buscaglia said, that connection “has the potential to turn a life around.”

What does it look like when students are connected? They are excited to come to school. They have connections to their teachers, support staff, principals, bus drivers, and cafeteria workers. They have school friends. They take classes of particular interest, which is why we added courses like Robotics and Automation, CADD w/3D printing, Digital Production, AP Computer Science, and even Strength Training for Athletes. We have a large number of students attending the Career & Technology Center (CTC). Connected students often participate in extracurriculars and clubs.

Second, “Inspiring.”

This is the one, our primary goal—for each student to be inspired. When we interview potential teacher candidates, we ask them to talk about this—what it looks like, how they plan to do so. Great teachers inspire students. Great coaches inspire students. But even the best of teachers inspire some while other students have not been inspired yet. Inspiring teachers are driven to reach all students and continually work to impact all students. We talk to teachers not about “being perfect” but “wanting to be perfect.” Teaching is a profession of success and struggles, of rewards and challenges, from the first day to the final day of a teacher’s career.

Third, “Empowering.”

The goal of empowering speaks to what students are able to do when they graduate. We envision that when students walk across the stage to receive their diplomas, they are emerging as thoughtful, skilled, and driven adults ready to take on the world. To find their passion. To make a contribution. When they graduate, they are the sum total of an entire community—all supporting, all encouraging, and all committing to each student.

Visioning is important for success—knowing clearly what something looks like. We focus on impacting key moments, and one of those is the moment when a child arrives home after school each day. We focus on impacting the daily conversation a parent has with a child after each school day. Often, the conversation starts with, “how was school today?” That moment, that answer—that is what we work for.

Author C.S. Lewis once said, "There are far, far better things ahead than any we leave behind."
In this present moment, there are so many good things to come.