

From: [Cohn, Gary](#)
To: [EPS.Maillist](#)
Subject: Thank You & Happy Summer!
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Importance: High

One of the many joys in this work is seeing a face light up with one of those miraculous “ah ha” moments of understanding, learning, or that flash of inspiration to dig deeper and explore more. Sometimes we are fortunate enough to see more than one face light up at a time.

Sometimes we don’t know when a lesson has “stuck” or even if the lesson we intended “took” in an entirely different way than we intended.

I was reminded of sometimes-serendipitous learning last Tuesday night during the school board meeting when Everett High School students spoke about their experiences in Crystal Han’s Mandarin Chinese class.

Lots of innovative collaboration and partnering went into bringing Crystal to the United States to teach those 70 students at Everett High this year. Our goal in that work was for students to have access to Chinese – a world language growing in importance.

The students testified that, yes, they are more fluent in Chinese now. And they testified to wondrous levels of serendipitous learning as a result of their time in Miss Han’s class. They spoke of gaining a wider perspective about their own culture and cultures in the rest of the world. They spoke of wanting to become “**students of the world**,” of “never looking again at things the same way,” of “knowing the world is more vast and wonderful” than they thought.

We cannot always know where or how the seed will grow, but these students clearly demonstrate why making learning opportunities available for students is so important.

Another reminder of this came from an email sent by Marilyn Donohew, third-grade teacher at Penny Creek who wrote, “Those of you who have given Level 24 DRA story (and know it by heart) *The Wonderful Day*, know of the character Roger Rabbit who finds a large cabbage and rolls it home to find that he is unable to fit it in the door. He sits down and begins to cry. When crying doesn’t help, he decides to take charge and invite his other rabbit friends to a party to share his big cabbage. In the end, it is small enough to take into his house. It was a ‘wonderful day’ with a little help from his friends. To test student interpretation of the story a prompt is given, ‘What do you think the author is trying to tell you in the story?’”

“Student response: ‘**Eat more veggies?**’”

Eat more veggies and *Become a student of the world*. Pretty good serendipitous “side dish” lessons for anyone – student or adult.

Last Friday and Saturday, we witnessed nearly 1,200 students cross the stage in what is the end-goal

ceremony toward which we all work. The sheer volume of “at-standard” learning and skills and the accompanying “side dish” learning packed under those caps and gowns and growing in the hearts of those graduates is unfathomable. The array of experiences and opportunities the graduates carry with them is staggering – and YOU made them possible.

As I celebrate graduation with these students and families, I thank you for the part you have played to support both intentional and serendipitous learning – and for the good examples you have set for each student who has crossed your path. You and these young men and women have shown me again this year that we can never know the true depths of the learning they take with them as they leave us for their lives beyond our schools. Frankly, it’s a miracle, each and every year. ***Of course, that makes you a miracle worker.***

Have a wonderful summer – remember to eat more veggies – and enjoy our miracles.

See you next fall – when the new crops of apples are in season.

Warmest regards,

Gary



Dr. Gary Cohn
Superintendent
gcohn@everettsd.org
425-385-4009 | 425-385-4002 Fax