Dear San Mateo County school community members,

During the week of Thanksgiving, when we all came together to appreciate all we are grateful for, I had the opportunity to visit the new NUA Lab School in the Redwood City School District. That experience continues to inspire me about not only what is possible, but the path forward. I was struck by the joy, hope, and optimism I observed during my visit, and I am excited about the responsiveness of their students to the NUA accelerated learning program.

At the core of the work is equity, and the NUA approach is excited about the responsiveness of their students to the NUA accelerated learning program. At the core of the work is equity, and the NUA approach is excited about the responsiveness of their students to the NUA accelerated learning program. At the core of the work is equity, and the NUA approach is excited about the responsiveness of their students to the NUA accelerated learning program. At the core of the work is equity, and the NUA approach is excited about the responsiveness of their students to the NUA accelerated learning program.

Another key component of the NUA approach is identified and activated student strengths. The students were curious about our visit and eager to show off their learning skills. Students were discussing arrays and algorithms as part of their math work. Instead of memorizing times tables, they were digging into understanding what multiplication means, with obvious benefits for higher-level math down the road. Students were discussing the kelp forest biome and associated food chains that exist within the biome. The students are adept at understanding and using various thinking maps, which they reported help them focus their thoughts and work through questions and assignments. They also demonstrated how they use singing and dancing definitions to remember key pieces of information. In addition to our asking students about their work, the teachers observed and shared what the students were learning in the classrooms and in conversations with teachers and administrators. It’s clear that the NUA approach is helping the Redwood City School District provide all students with what they need to succeed.

All of this work is centered on a focus on student voice, while the teachers masterfully facilitate curious, engaged, and empowered students. This pedagogy centers student voice, while the teachers masterfully facilitate high intellectual performances, situating learning in the lives of students, and amplifying student voice, was clearly demonstrated in the classrooms and in conversations with teachers and administrators. The students were curious about our visit and eager to show off their learning skills. Students were discussing arrays and algorithms as part of their math work. Instead of memorizing times tables, they were digging into understanding what multiplication means, with obvious benefits for higher-level math down the road.

I would like to give a special shout-out to the school teams who have been asked to do much, yet continue to rise to the challenge in support of our students. These committed school teams have stepped up to meet the educational and mental health needs of our students who have been deeply impacted by the pandemic. They dedicate themselves to making our schools safe and supportive places to learn, while also meeting the unique needs of our students. These school teams have risen to the challenge of continuing to connect, communicate, and collaborate effectively. And I am grateful.

I am still basking in the glow of that inspiring visit. Not every county can say that they have the opportunity to visit classrooms in a school district as innovative and inspiring as the NUA Lab School in the Redwood City School District. That experience continues to inspire me about not only what is possible, but the path forward.

Dear San Mateo County school community members,

During this week of Thanksgiving as we reflect on our many blessings, my heart is full of gratitude for our partners who work with passion and dedication in creating a child-centered place. I want to express my humble thanks for all of you who do so much, every day, in big ways and small.

I wish you a restorative and joyful Thanksgiving and offer my humble thanks for all you do for the children and youth of San Mateo County.

Yours sincerely,

Danny Hayes