



Where Excellence Is Tradition

10/1/2012

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We recently recognized Glenbard East and Glenbard West high schools for meeting the criteria for being Illinois Democracy Schools. This prestigious award, sponsored by the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition, identifies high schools that provide students with authentic experiences in rights, responsibilities and tensions inherent in living in a constitutional democracy. These civic-centered experiences include volunteering in local elections, serving as liaisons on local governance committees and acting as delegates in a Model United Nations simulation.

While reflecting on how our talented instructors develop experiences to equip students with the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary to be informed and engaged citizens, it's clear that we already have a number of authentic real life examples for students to observe. At the national level we have the intense and sometimes polarizing national presidential election, which splits us all into red and blue states. At the state level we observed a contentious strike in Chicago Public Schools where the discord and dissention between board and union leadership resulted in the education of 350,000 students being delayed. And from time to time we observe one or more of our local elected bodies embroiled in conflict over a single agenda issue or miscommunication.

Yes, our students do not need to look far to observe authentic examples of democracy in action. While on occasion we do experience this tension inherent to governance and democratic process, I'm proud that I live and work in communities that are earnest and make great effort in living out the elements of a strong democratic process. Following the rule of law, ensuring transparency, being responsive, building consensus, being inclusive, ensuring accountability, working for effectiveness and efficiency, and most importantly, prioritizing public participation. That's what I have observed in Glenbard High School District 87, our many elementary sender districts and among the other numerous elected boards and governing bodies.

While our students observe us, they are learning that true democracy is about cooperation and commitment. They are learning that good government is about well-intentioned people who bring their ideas and preferences and through process, discourse and dialogue, capture all of our stakeholder interests and needs and reflect them in the decisions and policies that are made. Yes, our students are watching us. Let's be wary, and continue to live out strong democracy!

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