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New Campo Principal John Walker: It's all about Collaboration

By Sophie Braccini



John Walker Photo Sophie Braccini

When John Walker takes over Carol Kitchens' office as Campolindo's new principal in early July, he has no plans to shake up the school. He knows Campolindo High School is strong and high performing, but as he puts it: Success should not lead to complacency.

Walker will bring to the Moraga high school the collaborative approach for continuous improvement that he was part of at San Ramon Valley High School, and which happens to be the Acalanes Union High School District's (AUHSD) strategy. Parents, teachers and students can expect changes from a principal who promises to listen to all.

Walker's appointment was the result of a lengthy process involving District staff, teachers and parents. "We received 50 strong applications," says AUHSD Superintendent John Nickerson. "There was consensus that John Walker's experience and strong sense of what Campolindo needs would make him the best fit." Walker's reputation for building connections with parents, students and faculty was a great asset, Nickerson indicates, but foremost was Walker's experience establishing a professional learning community.

"I am well aware of the strong history of success of Campolindo, of the pride the community takes in its high school and the high achievement that is expected. My goal is to build on that success," Walker says. "In education, every year brings new challenges, and we need to stay engaged in professional development and training."

Walker believes that no school is perfect and that his job is to work with staff, parents, students, and the district, to identify areas of growth and improvement. "I'm a strong believer in continuous professional development so everyone owns their craft," he says.

In San Ramon, Walker was part of the establishment of a professional learning community (PLC). Collaboration is at the core of the PLC model. Teachers work together to develop the curriculum, the best practices, and the assessments tools. According to Walker that does not mean the end of their freedom, it just means that when they have a problem, someone down the hall might have the answer. "We have to make it a priority and find the time for teachers to meet," he says.

With that method comes an open door policy. "I plan to be very accessible and present on campus," says Walker. "I want to have frank conversations with everyone to know about what's going well and what needs improvement." The new principal adds that he will be very visible on campus, particularly in the classrooms a good portion of the day where the learning is taking place.

"I feel very proud and humbled to be working with such an engaged community and great quality staff," Walker says.

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