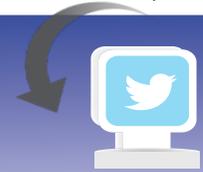


The Monti Navigator

Be Greater than the Average



Tammy Mangus, Superintendent of Schools

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Dear Member of the Monticello Community,

I admit it. I'm a lemming. Like just about everyone else, I just had to see Star Wars this holiday break. I'm not sure why I was so adamant about it. As a child raised on the original trilogy, I had lost all hope for any and all sequels (or prequels if you are truly a Star Wars fan) with the release of The Phantom Menace back in 1999 followed by two of the worst sci-fi movies I have ever seen. With these new pieces of the saga, over-animated and bursting at the seams with pomp and circumstance, but lacking in character development and a powerful storyline, it was as if George Lucas, so excited by the sparkle of possibility found in the latest technology, forgot the mission of his epic space tale, which mirrors the lesson of every great piece of literature ever written: that good and evil are only two steps apart.

The battle between the two calls to us from the depths of history and literature. Pick any war. At the heart you will find the same timeless saga between 'The Dark Side' and 'The Force.' Reread Hamlet, The Lord of the Flies, Othello, The Great Gatsby....or anything in J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series. The conflict is the same. The lesson is the same. There are two paths that each of us could possibly follow, but make no mistake, each of us gets to choose our agenda.

Star Wars simplifies the lessons for us.....The Dark Side promises power and esteem, while The Force seeks excellence through peace and kindness. The Dark Side preys upon blind ambition and cruel control, while The Force relies on opportunity and inspiration. The Dark Side's lever is fear, while The Force's lever is hope. The Dark Side seeks to uplift the self. The Force seeks to uplift society. The Dark Side beckons, do you want to be great? The Force reminds quietly, do great things.

In this latest installment of the Star Wars saga, Lucas returns to the elementary roots of this simple, yet epic historic lesson. The film does not rely on cinematic power and technological esteem to seek control over the box office, it relies on the simple societal lesson that has been knocking at our door through history and literature for centuries: that uplifting the self is certainly enticing, but uplifting society is, without question, inspiring.

If you aren't a Star Wars fan, insert any great tale. The equation for happiness and contentedness will be the same and is simple:

Do Great Things

When you wake in the night worried about the state of our world, decide to change it one little act at a time, and do great things.

When negativity surrounds you and sadness abounds, seek out the good in others and thank them for it, then find that same goodness in yourself and do great things.

When the urge to overreact overpowers, know that your energy can be better spent. Save it up and do great things.

When slanderous statements and ill-will taunt, consider the agenda of the other party, then choose yours and do great things.

**Change the future.
Serve the greater good.
Learn something new.
Give thanks.
Help someone. Take no credit.
Listen.
Smile.
Bring joy.
Empower others.
Inspire.
Spread hope instead of contempt.
Surprise yourself.
Do great things.**



Welcome to 2016, Monticello. May the force be with you (sorry, I had to do it).

Be well,

**Tammy Mangus
Superintendent of Schools**