



## ***Monday Morning Thoughts***

**April 27 - May 8, 2026**

***"I would rather make mistakes in kindness and compassion than work miracles in unkindness and hardness."***

Greetings ~~

The photo above is Drewsey students at the Malheur Wildlife Refuge enhancing their learning about our region and the Migratory Bird Festival. What a great week and weekend this festival was as I observed, participated in and marveled at the generosity of so many in our community. And the talent that is here is WOW!

I am going to be honest with this MMT and model vulnerability. Over the weekend I reread a lot of Brené Brown's work, (love her book Rising Strong). I was at a loss to write this MMT and thought about just NOT. Brené Brown talks about vulnerability as both **the hardest thing we do and the most essential** for a meaningful life. One of her core ideas is: "Vulnerability is the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity." She goes on to say that we often avoid vulnerability because it makes us feel uncomfortable—uncertain, risky, and emotionally exposed. But avoiding vulnerability also means avoiding the very experiences that give life depth and connection. Brené says: "We want courage, connection, and authenticity—but those require vulnerability, which we're wired to resist."

And out of the blue Josh Cline asked if he could write something. What a blessing. His heartfelt message is below mine. ***Thank you Josh for your vulnerability and for sharing.***

There is a saying, "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade." I have gallons of lemonade that I sure wish could magically turn into Diet Pepsi! In all seriousness, we are going through some changes and that is difficult. It is especially difficult when it gets personal. When WHO I am is under attack it hurts, down to the core. And when our board is also put in this position, that is so disappointing. Have we lost sight of our vision to Make a Difference, to do what is best for **every** student we serve? Have we? I

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believe that it is hard to measure the value of relationships. But that is what I feel I am being asked to do, to quantify the cost of establishing and maintaining relationships. I simply can't, but what I can do is reflect on what it will cost if those relationships are lost.

Please offer patience, grace and understanding as our board works through this "messy mud". They are truly the ones that need our support.

Stay strong, keep doing the hard work you are doing, keep creating memories for our students and know that I see you and I value you. I may not be physically present to the extent that I want to be, but I am with you in spirit and I am a text and email away.

***A message from Josh:***

When I asked Shannon if I could sub in for her MMT this week, it sure seemed like a good idea at the time. Now that I'm actually sitting down to do the thing, I'm having some doubts. Too late to go back now.

Like you all, I've been along for the ride as the ESD tries to find its way through this transition. Knowing that Shannon would be leaving was difficult enough, but the less-than-smooth (putting it kindly) process of finding her successor has only added to the sense of unease I've been carrying with me. Which brings me back to my offer to write this. I tend to be more reserved by nature. I think and feel deeply, and usually I keep those things close. But something I've learned to heed is that still, small voice inside. Sometimes it nudges me when I'm holding back. When perhaps it's time to reach out, because maybe there are others who are feeling the same. So, here goes. I have to get vulnerable to get to my point, but bear with me. I hope it's worth it.

Ten years ago I became part of a club I never asked to join when my wife, Alicia, died from complications of Stage IV oral cancer. It was a devastating and traumatic experience for me and our sons. One of the many things I learned from that experience was just how little control we actually have in this life. From her prognosis, to her difficult treatment options, to her pain and suffering - we were never really in control. So to keep my sanity, I did this instead - I focused on what I *could* control. I could control the fact she would never go through a treatment session alone. She would never have to process the news at each follow up, good or bad, on her own. From the moment of her diagnosis to her passing just nine months later, that never changed. Our commitment to support one another, no matter how bleak the outlook, was the one steady thing amidst so much chaos and confusion.

Now I know that my experience and the present circumstances at the ESD are entirely different situations. But for me some things still ring true. We're experiencing upheaval and change. Things outside our control are happening. Sometimes I (safe to assume we?) feel I don't have all the information. Which is why I feel it's all the more important to recommit to supporting one another, no matter the circumstances. And yes, even supporting each other should some of us decide, as has already been the case, to move on to other opportunities. Because the thing that keeps coming back to me as I've witnessed the competing visions/hopes/desires that have swirled around this process is this - we're not engaged (or shouldn't be) in a zero-sum game. That is, one "side" doesn't have to win at the expense of the other. Regardless of our job description, at the end of the day our entire reason for

being at the ESD is to help students succeed, whether those students are sitting at a desk in Burns, in Crane, or two hours away in Fields.

Thankfully, the loss my family experienced wasn't the end of our story. In the depth of my grief, I had no way of knowing one of my dearest friends would eventually try to set me up with her daughter's kind, lovely, and intelligent 4th grade teacher. From that first brief encounter, I couldn't have known we would one day be sharing our vows with each other in the mountains of Alaska. My point is this - light and life *can* be found on the other side of dark and desperate times. I share this not as a platitude (I despise platitudes), but as lived experience. My hope is that we, as a staff, can hold space for this very same truth as we navigate this time together. Thanks so much for reading, all. I'm thankful for the opportunity to work with such a talented and dedicated group of people, and I'm thankful for the support I've felt from so many of you already.

## **PLANNING AHEAD**

- Monday, April 27, 2026
  - Shannon out at schools
  - ESD SSA Liaison zoom meeting 1:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, April 28
  - Shannon out of office - not working
- Wednesday, April 29
  - MDT Monthly meeting at the courthouse 8:00 a.m.
  - Unified Application zoom meeting 9:00 a.m.
  - COSA OTR virtual meeting 10:00 a.m.
- Thursday, April 30
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- Friday, May 1
  - Harney Tech Conference at Crane
  - Deadline for teachers to commit to Summer Learning Mix and Math
  - Small Rural ESD Collaborative zoom 7:00 a.m.
  - COSA Friday Forum zoom meeting 8:00 a.m.
- Monday, May 4
  - Shannon out of office - not working
  - PE with Kaitlin at Suntex
- Tuesday, May 5
  - Shannon out of office - not working
  - PE with Kaitlin at Fields
- Wednesday, May 6
  - Shannon out of office - not working
  - PE with Kaitlin at Drewsey in AM and Diamond in PM
- Thursday, May 7
  - Crane PlayDay and Art Show
  - Suntex Board meeting
- Friday, May 8
  - Region Special Education Director Meeting 8:30 a.m.

~~ YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE ~~