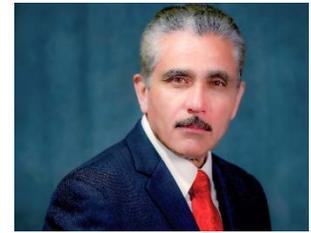


## In the Time of Coronavirus: Hope and Optimism

Dr. Francisco Reveles, Yuba County Superintendent of Schools



“Mom, does that mean all my good grades won’t count?!” her 9 year old son pleaded tearfully, “Was it all for nothing?” It hurt to see him like this. It hurt even more not knowing what to say. “When can I go back to school and see my friends?” he continued to press.

Everything seems to be unraveling on so many different levels. Like a crash in slow motion. Schools assuredly closing for the rest of the academic year, employers sending workers home with no guarantee of a paycheck, and daily press conferences from the Governor giving us play by play updates of an evolving national health crises. And please don’t get me started on toilet paper rationing.

And the more we are told not to panic, to have faith in the cryptic COVID19 media pronouncements, only feeds our sense of loss of control and compels us to question even more.

Our children are bearing witness to the turmoil and uncertainty of our unfolding plight. And they want answers from those they love and depend on, a sense of structure and certainty in their daily lives. And as parents, we are instinctively driven to protect them and advocate on their behalf. Consider the following hypothetical scenario.

Suppose you are at your doctor’s office with a really bad cold. You’re feeling miserable. You’ve been sitting in the waiting room for over an hour only to be told by the receptionist that the doctor has been called away and won’t be able see you today. You’re told to come back tomorrow. What do you do? In my presentations on the power of purpose, people generally respond that they have no choice but to return tomorrow. Now let’s change the scenario a bit.



Suppose it’s not you who is sick, but little 4yr old Charity. You’re protectively holding your daughter’s tiny form close to your chest in the crowded waiting room. Her normally vibrant eyes now reflecting pain and the toll of a fever. As any loving parent can attest, when our children are in deep pain, we hurt right alongside them, if not more, wishing and praying that the pain, the hurt, would somehow miraculously be transferred to us.

Now the receptionist approaches as before and again notes that the doctor is no longer available. She declares that you will need to bring little Charity back tomorrow. Your response? It would probably go something like this: *“Nope! That is NOT going to happen! I want someone, I don’t care who it is, to see my daughter – NOW!!”* You get the picture.

That's the real power of a higher purpose, something bigger than ourselves. It doesn't matter one's educational attainment, economic or social status, or cultural background. It is spiritual, innate, in our DNA. And therein lies the hope, optimism, and the sense of responsibility that we are called upon to bring during these chaotic times.

I remember my mamá Magdalena often quoting an old Spanish saying when our family was confronted by seemingly unsurmountable and cruel realities, such as the time when we found ourselves homeless huddling on the concrete steps of the Colusa Police Department for safety. "No hay mal que por bien no venga," Roughly translated: There is no misfortune that doesn't bring good (a blessing) with it, she would declare. I can still picture her silhouette standing resolutely against the approaching sunset as she traced the shape of a cross in the air while solemnly whispering "Jesüs, Maria, y José," (Jesus, Mary and Joseph). It helped comfort our hungry and exhausted bodies and raised our collective hope that this too would pass.

COVID19 has undoubtedly brought tremendous personal stress and inconvenience. Still, it has also provided a precious opportunity to look inward as a family unit, to reassess what really matters. Indeed, what a providential misfortune has befallen us.

So here's the bottom line: in the coming weeks I will be sharing some areas to consider in those conversations as well as thoughts on the distance learning and insights on developing purpose and responsibility in youth. I hope you will join me! Dr. Francisco Reveles, YCOE Supt of Schools