

September 2011 Havens Interview Series  
Tery Susman, Havens Principal Interview as interviewed by Vicky O'Bresly, HPC President

V. Tery, how would you describe your typical day?

T. ---There really isn't a typical day. If it's a quiet morning I will turn on my computer to look through email and half the time I don't turn my computer until 11 or 12. Sometimes we'll have early Special Ed (IEP) meetings, or meetings with the nurse or teachers over grade level specific issues. I try to be out on the blacktop as often as possible and that leads to going into a classroom, talking with parents - time that isn't planned. I like to be in classrooms early to see how day is being set up.

V. Can you tell me something about your background, especially before you become Havens' Principal?

T. ---I was a teacher for seven years (starting in '74) in Ceres, CA in the Central Valley. I taught 6th grade for six years and kindergarten for one. I then went back to school to get a Masters in School Counseling and went back as Counselor in San Mateo. I was the Counselor at the Piedmont Middle School for a year. Following that, I was a Vice Principal in Albany for three years and then Principal here since '91. Only one other administrator has been here longer, Rich Kichens the new High School Principal. In fact, I have hired almost everyone at our school.

V. What has surprised you most about your work these past few years?

T. ---I have been surprised by the resilience of the entire school community, because of what we've gone through. All the changes and moving, and still children, teachers, parents and staff continue to keep teaching and learning as the very highest priority. They never seemed to get bogged down in the potential quagmire.

V. What do you feel most proud of from your work?

T. ---In the big picture, it is creating a school I feel exemplifies what an elementary school should be - child centered, community building, purposeful and wanting to be cutting edge in terms of research, application of research and the instructional program. I am also proud of the work the elementary schools have been doing together and working w/ the principals from the two sites (Beach and Wildwood) to bring program together. More recently, I am really proud of the work of the Evaluation Committee. With their work, we will be piloting a plan which includes multiple components such as peer observation. It promotes a system and process that respects teachers and the teaching profession and supports growth at all levels.

V. What would you like to see, in terms of your work going forward?

T. ---We have built a solid foundation and what I would like to see is that we continue to grow. I think we have all the components in place and it is an opportunity NOW to really incorporate the latest research into our educational program. I also think we still have lots of work to do in terms of inclusion. We have come a long way using Life Skills for students and the next piece will be to do more around acceptance and who everyone is - families, individuals, learning styles etc.

V. Can you tell me something about yourself that few people know, until now that is?

T.---I bet a lot of people don't know that I have 8 grandchildren ranging from age 2 to 14.

V. If people want to reach you, how can they best contact you?

T.---Probably the best, would be old fashioned telephone (510 594-2681), send an email ([tsusman@piedmont.k12.ca.us](mailto:tsusman@piedmont.k12.ca.us) ) or make an appointment.

