



FEATURED TEACHER AUTHOR

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“Don’t Blink”

When first asked to be a guest writer on the TUHSD website, I was flattered. Then, my feeling morphed to uncertainty. I teach the students in my Read 180 class to always begin a writing assignment with a target audience in mind, but who was my “target audience?” I could write a motivational piece directed at students. Would they visit the website? If so, would they find the words of an old guy boring and irrelevant? I could write an inspirational piece to my colleagues – one thanking them for their hard work in preparing our students for higher education and life. Do they really want recognition from me? They already know how I feel about the job we do. I could write an ode to the parents lauding them for their assistance and support. What impact would I make?

After pondering, maybe procrastinating, for weeks, the answer came to me. I was listening to the radio when a song came on: Kenny Chesney’s “Don’t Blink.” The lyrics perfectly express the sentiments I have for us all – students, parents, and teachers. Essentially, a man is interviewed on his 102nd birthday and asked, “What is the meaning of life?” The elderly gentleman replies with advice that we should all heed: make the most of every opportunity as life flashes by quickly.

STUDENTS: Don’t Blink! One day, you are that scared freshman, panicked about locating your first hour class. You blink a few times, and you are on the stage at graduation. My two pieces of advice for you are to get involved and take things seriously from the very beginning. High school has something for everyone - football or theater, softball or student government, baseball or computer club. Get involved! The friendships you make and the life skills you learn by being involved in the extracurricular activities are life altering. Don’t be like so many I have spoken to after graduation who say “I really regret not joining in this club, or that sport.” There truly is something for everyone. That sport or club you join might just turn into a lifelong friend or a future job. Make sure you try your best from day one. Your GPA and experiences will make your life infinitely easier, and more rewarding, as you move beyond these four short years.

PARENTS: Don’t Blink! These brief years will present so many memories. Even while your babies are testing your boundaries and you are wondering what in the world happened to the sweet, gentle human being you raised, encourage them to be involved, to do their best. When they seemingly want little to do with you or act as though they are embarrassed to have you near, show up anyway. They will appreciate it when these difficult teenage years are a distant memory and they are calling you to ask how to change a diaper or cook pasta.

COLLEAGUES: Don't Blink! The students' lives we impact are many. Enjoy the laughs in class, the life lessons taught, the smiles and accolades from the students. When we are bogged down with testing data, new mandates, and the next biggest educational standards, remember that we all chose this career path for the students. Focus on the moments which make you smile – the moment an elaborate prom invitation takes place in your class, the moment a student truly understands a difficult concept, the moment your heart swells after helping a student through a particularly arduous place in life. Those moments are why we chose this path. Relish them despite the challenges presented outside of the classroom.

I am honored to be on this educational journey with all of you. Together, we will make it amazing and remind each other – Don't Blink.