

As I prepared to write this blog I jotted some ideas that might help me organize my thoughts and produce a motivating and sincere message to our District family. In the process of brainstorming, I tried recalling messages from inspiring figures in education and thought about the books I read and movies I watched. Some of these include Joe Louis Clark and *Lean on Me*; Jaime Escalante and *Stand and Deliver*; or Erin Gruwell and *The Freedom Writer's Diaries*.

Although these and other stories are true and highly inspiring, I often think they make success in education appear mythical. More troubling is the thought that success, according to these dramatized Hollywood stories, may depend on being part of that mythical teacher's roster rather than being part of an educational system that breeds success for everyone. I decided that instead of hoping to hire a Clark, Escalante, or Gruwell every now and then, I would rather be part of developing an educational system that breeds success for every one of our students in every one of our classrooms. I believe we can develop a system where any bilingual student, regardless of his/her family's background can have their language developed to a college ready level as much as a Gifted and Talented student can be challenged to develop his/her talents beyond any initial awareness.

The question that follows is the million dollar question. Is there a "silver bullet" that will kill the woes of limited student success or that will help parents ensure students do homework and come to school ready to be inspired? I am convinced that such a "silver bullet" is as mythical as some of our Hollywood success stories lead us to believe is necessary. Many will try to sell us a program that guarantees success. Others will want us to import a program from a faraway place. However, the only real answer that will lead us to widespread student success can be found within our own ranks. The answer, nonetheless, is as simple as its implementation has been elusive. It will only be through consistent and long term collaboration that we will develop an educational system that breeds success for all students.

What then is collaboration in education? Collaboration is an understanding and a commitment to the notion that no single individual (teacher, counselor, administrator, etc.) is ever smarter than the collective group gathered for a common purpose – educating our children. The type of collaboration that should occur during our daily Planning Protocol sessions must involve the input of all individuals gathered around the table. We must collaborate knowing that what we produce will be worthy of being implemented in a novice teacher's classroom as well as in an experienced teacher's room. Similarly, I am hopeful that each of us will take everything that is shared with us during today's staff development and routinely discuss its implementation during our daily planning sessions. Academic vocabulary, strategic questioning, and scaffolding will be better implemented when continuously discussed with our department/cluster. I sincerely believe that our best days are immediately ahead of us.

An uncle of mine shared with me some words of wisdom this weekend. He said "As I get older, I don't like to see the days go by, much less the months and years. How I wish I could slow down time." As I reflected on the week's activities, I recalled his words and thought of how fast this week flew by, especially when much of my time was spent on the road. On Tuesday afternoon

some of us had the opportunity to travel to Laredo and see our Girls' Basketball team win in the first round of the state playoffs. As long as we were in Laredo, we took time to catch some of the [Boys' Freshman](#) and [Junior Varsity](#) basketball games against Alexander before driving over to TAMIU to see our girls become [bi-district champs](#). Excellent job ladies!

Wednesday morning I traveled to the Region 15 Education Service Center in San Angelo to visit with our support team. Having a conversation about our big three instructional initiatives (Planning Protocol, Bilingual/ESL instruction, and Early Literacy) and seeing the amount of work our ESC 15 partners had done to prepare for this week's staff development made the trip worthwhile. Although I had not planned to travel to San Angelo by way of Rocksprings -Highway 277 was closed- I did enjoy seeing the closest thing to a [winter wonderland](#).

Thursday, I again hit the road to see our [Girls' Basketball team](#) work to advance in the state playoffs. It was nice to see so many parents at the game and special to see that our [girls' softball team](#) was able to take a break from their own tournament to come support their friends. Although our girls fell short of their goal, the trip to San Antonio was entirely worthwhile. I told our girls that I had seen them win many games this year, but I had never seen them work as hard as they did that night. They were entirely awesome!

Besides being on the road this past week, I was also able to observe some pretty awesome student activities at our high school. On Monday, I stopped by to check on the benchmarking that was taking place. Whether I walked into our [gym](#) or our [band halls](#), I saw tremendous organization which ensured every student knew the [benchmark test](#) was important. Thursday, I again came back to the high school to observe the [career fair](#) that was put on by our [CTE upper classman](#) for the benefit of our [freshman](#) students. As an added bonus, I was able to see some of the [award winning projects](#) which some of our woodwork students had presented at a competition in San Antonio. Although I liked all of them, I was especially drawn to an award winning [antique bench](#) presented by Rogelio. I understand this bench is going to be sold at the end of the year – let the bidding begin!

Most of the day Friday was spent with the Leadership Del Rio cohort. Leadership Del Rio is a cohort of citizens, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, who set out to learn as much about our community as possible. We enjoyed giving them a tour of our CTE facilities, and future construction sites, as well as answering their questions.

In closing this blog, I want to thank our United States Congressman, [Pete Gallego](#), for taking the time to stop by our offices. His comments indicated a national awareness of our immediate needs, especially as they relate to funding and accountability. We have many reasons, at the local and national level, to remain hopeful. Let's all have a great week!!!

*For the great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie - deliberate, contrived and dishonest, but the myth, persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic... - John F. Kennedy*