

October 21, 2013

Although this past week can only be described as a fast paced marathon, I am entirely pleased with everything that I was able to witness and be a part of. The race to the finish began with Staff Development on Monday and ended with road trips to Eagle Pass and San Antonio on Saturday. When students are not present in classrooms, our teachers work hard to continue to build themselves professionally. Monday's staff development proved to be no different. Multiple sessions occurred at [various campuses](#) throughout the [district](#) and gave our teachers the opportunity to delve deeper into writing, questioning, and innovative strategies. These student engagement tools are especially important in supporting the critical thinking component of our Planning Protocol.

Tuesday's activities were highlighted by the High School's College Night. Although we had plenty of rain, many students and their parents came out to visit with recruiters from some of Texas' finest universities. From the [greeters](#) at the door, to the [colleges](#) that set up displays, the students and parents clearly got the message that this night was important. Many thanks to the high school counselors that worked so diligently to make Tuesday evening a success.

While most of Wednesday was dedicated to preparing for this Monday's School Board meeting, we did manage to take some time to celebrate Boss's Day. I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone throughout the district who took time to pat their boss on the back. I found it very reassuring that even after everything we ask of our employees, so many took time to recognize and celebrate their boss. I am certain this indicates the existence of a common understanding - *everything we do is for our students*.

Fearing that the week might end without visiting some classrooms, I took time on Thursday to visit the High School and observed a Project Lead the Way class, a sociology class, and a math class. My son had mentioned that they were doing some neat things in Mr. Davis' Principles of Engineering class, so I thought I would start my visit there. The first year [engineering](#) students were [building](#) compound machines designed to transfer energy from one simple machine to the next – Rube Goldberg Machine. Next week I will stop by and see the end product, where all six machines will work sequentially from one to the next, with the final movement being the raising of a flag that says "Go Rams Go". As impressive as this class was, I cannot end this entry without noting the focus and positive relation with the teachers that the students equally displayed in Mr. Wardlaw's sociology class and in Mrs. Cadena's Pre-AP Algebra II class.

I couldn't ask for a better way to end a long day, than to participate in a Letterman Jacket ceremony with ROTC students. The ROTC students planned a [BBQ](#) dinner to celebrate the presentation of the Letterman Jackets to twenty-six of their fellow cadets. Fourteen seniors, two Rifle Tandem team members, and ten Blue Top team members received their jackets. This was truly a special ceremony for the [senior](#) ROTC students and the many parents who were present.

After a quick glance at my agenda on Friday morning, I realized it was going to be the peak of my marathon. I thought I should visit an elementary campus before the day got moving. From spelling tests, to labs, to reading about Cesar Chavez, the students were absolutely engaged at Dr. Lonnie Green Elementary. However, students were not the only ones engaged. Before moving through the hallways, I first noticed PTO [parents](#) (Maddie, Rosa and Gloria) engaged in volunteer work. I want to commend PTO parents who take time out of their day to volunteer on a day-in and day-out basis. Your gift of time is worthy and means so much to our campus' success.

After an afternoon filled with meetings, I was able to briefly stop by the high school to see our faculty and students enjoy their pep [rally](#). Kudos to Mrs. Bonita Gonzalez's class who showed up early enough to get

a great seat and show their Ram [Pride](#). After the brief, but wonderful visit at Ram Stadium, I drove out to Lake Amistad where I was invited to participate in the traditional *Fiesta de Amistad Abrazo* ceremony. The ceremony was especially meaningful to our District because so many of our students participated. From the honor [court](#) to the [ROTC](#) students who posted the colors, to the middle school [band](#) that accompanied Mr. Robert Wade's rendition of our national anthem, our students made our community proud.

In between the Abrazo and the Ram football game I managed to participate with our Trustees in a Finance Committee meeting and even enjoyed dinner with some staff and School Board members at the Mayor's Fiesta de Amistad Reception. The football game was especially nice because I was invited to give the motivational talk before the game, observe the [crowning](#) of the Band Court during halftime, and saw our students record a victory. Not having been a football player in high school, I was impressed with the level of intensity in that locker room. Our Rams were absolutely ready to win and our fans thoroughly enjoyed the [celebration](#) that followed.

To end the work week I traveled first to Eagle Pass to see our Cross Country teams compete in the District Cross Country Meet. It was a privilege and an honor to see our [Boys](#) and [Girls](#) Cross Country teams finish in first place as a team – on to Regionals. Special acknowledgement to [Liz](#) and [Cesar](#) who led our boys and girls across the finish line. Also, congratulations to Coach Rick Smith and his staff for having developed such an awesome program. It takes a lot of talent to motivate students when all you have to give is a pair of sneakers and a lot of pavement.

After the Cross Country meet my kids and I traveled to San Antonio to see our band students perform at their district marching [competition](#). Not only was I impressed with our student's performance, I was equally impressed and so very thankful with the coordination of our band parents. It takes a lot of volunteering to put on a 200 student production. I hope our students, especially our [senior](#) students, created some memories that will last them a lifetime.

In closing this lengthy blog, I want to thank our teachers, principals, and curriculum staff for the instructional work they are doing. After having a meeting with our elementary principals on Tuesday, our secondary principals on Wednesday, and our district wide assistant principals on Thursday, I am entirely encouraged by the observed progress and especially thankful for everyone's dedication to our instructional reform efforts. I am hopeful that our teachers have begun to see some consistency in the quality of feedback that is given by their administrator after a ten to fifteen minute classroom observation, and equally hopeful that this feedback further strengthens our planning process – The Planning Protocol.

“Happy are those who dream dreams and are ready to pay the price to make them come true.” –L. J. Suenes