

**December 15, 2015**

Monday morning I reviewed my calendar and was quickly reminded that I was about to begin my [favorite week](#) of the year. Besides being filled with lots of holiday concerts and eating, this past week was also my 49<sup>th</sup> birthday week. It sure has been nice spending my last three birthdays as superintendent in my hometown, especially when we are accomplishing so much for our [students](#) and our staff.

Over the summer, I made the decision to shift kinder classroom aides and relocate them as instructional aides across our bilingual academies. While this was a tough decision, I was aware that we were one of the few districts in Texas to still have dedicated instructional aides in kindergarten and that we needed to use instructional aides with a more at-risk population. Although this decision made sense, we were very cognizant that we were leaving our kinder teachers without a resource they had become accustomed to.

Because of the discomfort that persisted, it became obvious that we were probably asking our [kinder teachers](#) to do more paper/administrative work than other districts. Therefore, a few weeks ago I asked our C&I team to lead a [Kinder Collaborative](#) aimed at reducing kinder teacher paperwork. I am delighted at their [brainstorming](#) and overall collaborative effort. This group of teachers made some recommendations that made sense and can be implemented almost immediately. For example, following the practices of other successful school districts in Texas, they recommended that we replace the current kinder assessment process and use of the 6-week Report Cards with a newly created checklist type document. They also recommended that we teach all required Kinder TEKS for Science and Social Studies through integration with ELA, but not report grades on Report Card/Checklist. Next, they asked to have the *Leader in Me* documentation binders begin in 1st grade. Finally, they asked for some much needed resources. I am [thankful](#) for their efforts and most especially thankful for exemplifying the collaborative process that should permeate our organization.

Now let me tell you about my favorite week of the year. Monday I enjoyed a cabinet luncheon celebrating my [birthday](#). Then later in the evening I stopped by [Chavira Elementary](#) to enjoy their [Holiday Concert](#). Minutes after the concert, I was at the Paul Poag Theater enjoying some of the most [awesome](#) mariachi [music](#) in the region. I can't say enough about our [Mariachi](#) groups, including all the [parents](#) that support them.

Although Tuesday was quite a busy day, I managed to leave the office immediately after 5:00 PM and arrive in San Antonio for an 8:00 PM [tipoff](#) against Antonian Prep. I can honestly say that I saw our [boys](#) play with a level of [intensity](#) they had not yet experienced. Our boys outscored Antonian in the second half by a significant margin but simply ran out of time.

Wednesday was filled with [campus events](#), teacher [meetings](#), and an early evening Parent Forum. I started my day as a [Celebrity Reader](#) at [Lamar Elementary](#) where I had the opportunity to [read](#) *The Wolf's Coming!* to Miss Vasques' second grade students. Next, I raced to DRHS where I was asked to be a judge at the [High School Student Expo](#). The students put so much work and creativity into their projects. In the early afternoon, I participated with School District Police Chief, Duane Maldonado, and other law enforcement agents in a discussion about collaboration and later viewed "Here Comes the Storm" – a presentation by the FBI on agencies collaborating with each other in case of a catastrophe.

Still on Tuesday, I had an opportunity to visit with [high school teachers](#) about implementing a program that will ultimately lead to having our high school achieve STEM designation status. It is our goal to continue the high school reform by creating a menu of services (ECHS, CTE Magnet, Blended/Non-Traditional, STEM Designation, and Comprehensive High School) for our students. As soon as the STEM meeting was over, I stepped into the [District Teacher Forum](#). I am completely thankful for teachers who are willing to engage in courageous dialogue about the needs of our faculty and staff. I ended my day in a late afternoon parent forum at [North Heights Elementary](#). I look forward to visiting with parents at each

elementary campus as well as secondary campuses to discuss the possibilities of a delayed start to the secondary school day and a block schedule.

Thursday allowed me an opportunity to continue the collaboration with stakeholders on improving our systems in place. I was able to meet with the Border Organization, along with holding a Finance Committee Meeting on giving raises to hourly employees and paras. My evening ended with one more [night of music](#). It was a [joy](#) to listen to three different [bands](#). They are awesome and more than likely the best in Texas!

I couldn't ask for a better way to end my week than to hit the road with a good friend to watch our boys play some great basketball at the [New Braunfels Tournament](#). The Varsity boys proved to the fans that their game just keeps getting [stronger](#). The boys played tough against some great teams, but the highlight of this particular tournament was watching our boys defeat Seguin (my old stomping grounds). It is great to watch Varsity strengthen their team skills each week. I am certain when district rolls around, the boys will have played enough as a team to make for some great games!

On a side note, I hated missing the Elementary District UIL Meet which took place on Saturday. I couldn't be more proud of the dedication of each sponsor, student and overall campus as students prepared to show their academic skills. Lonnie Green Elementary was victorious at the end by taking 1<sup>st</sup> place by the narrowest margin ever. What makes the existence of this district event so uplifting is knowing that regardless of which campus is the overall winner, there are clearly winners that represent all campuses. Our absolute purpose is to come together as a District and celebrate the victories of students across SFDRCSID.

As we prepare this week to close out our school days and enjoy the holidays, I want to thank each of you for your dedication to our students. I cannot say it enough; reform is not an easy task. Yet, as I visit schools, I continue to be encouraged by the progress being made where it counts: in our classrooms. I cannot end without recognizing that across the District, everyone is giving their best to ensure every piece of this organization is taken care of with respect to instruction. Whether it involves those that enhance our buildings, manage professional development, or engage our parents and community, the priority is that of our students. This holiday season, I am grateful beyond words for each and every member of our District's family. May the holidays bring about a special and restful time spent in closeness with your family.

***“If you are working on something exciting that you really care about, you don't have to be pushed. The vision pulls you.” — Steve Jobs.***