

**September 25, 2017**

Welcome to the final week of the first grading period. Reviewing last week's activities quickly informs us that our students had some pretty neat experiences. From participating in a [Roving Chef](#) program, to the [Birds of Prey](#) presentation at [Lake Amistad](#) to numerous [athletic](#) events, our [students](#) are blessed to live in a community that provides so many [opportunities](#).

Before moving forward with my blog, I want to encourage each of you to remind your students that this week is it! There will be a report card next week, and it will be final! All assignments, homework, projects, etc. need to be "made-up" or completed this week. By the same token, we need to evaluate our own progress. The end of the first grading period and the beginning of the second one is an excellent opportunity to reenergize and recommit to goals we may have set. Whether the goal was to have papers graded before the beginning of each week, eat healthy or exercise more, this is the perfect time to finish strong and begin the second grading period in full stride.

This past week we coordinated a [celebration](#) picnic at [Lonnie Green](#) Elementary to thank the [students and staff](#) for their incredible commitment to academics during the 2016-2017 school year. The state report cards show that Lonnie Green achieved five Distinction Designations amongst their comparison group: Academic Achievement in ELA Reading; Academic Achievement in Science; Top 25% Student Progress; Top 25% Closing the Achievement Gap; and Post-Secondary Readiness. Although this is quite an accomplishment, it comes as no surprise. Last year, on October 10, 2016, I wrote the following in my blog ....

Next, I traveled to Dr. Lonnie Green Elementary. I have told everyone, that in as many school districts as I have worked in, I have never seen an entire grade level cluster so dedicated to a common purpose. Sure, I have seen a great math lesson here and a great reading lesson there. But to see an entire cluster of teachers, all at once, engage and challenge their students to reach high levels of academic achievement is beyond impressive. At Dr. Lonnie Green Elementary I witnessed perfection!

The Principal, Mrs. Salas, explained that "Power Hour (known as LG 55) at Dr. Lonnie Green Elementary provides intense reading interventions for all students. Reading is vital in every aspect of life! Words spoken and written are building blocks of life." It did not matter if I walked into a GT teacher's class, a bilingual class, a remediation class, or an "on level" class. All of the teachers were highly prepared for instruction and had their students fully engaged. By the level of engagement, and visible commitment to a common goal, I surmised that none of the teachers were bothered if they were working with their neighboring teacher's students, students that perhaps didn't have a certain label, or their own students. Like I said, I witnessed perfection!

Congratulations LGE! I encourage LGE (and all of our campus teams) to continuously remind yourselves that committing to student progress through campus and district- wide reforms, rather than to individual ideals, is what created LGE's greatness and set the stage for LGE students to make this type of progress.

This past week we saw similar greatness while visiting campuses throughout the District. At Lamar, [Mrs. Villarreal](#) reminded us about our commitment to guided learning practices. Students in her class walked around the room doing a math scavenger hunt all the while demonstrating their ability to work independently. This type of independent learning created an opportunity for Mrs. Villarreal to guide a small group through some rigorous division problems – it was beautiful. At NHE, [Mrs. Przepierski](#) carried out a Read Naturally lesson to perfection. Students were observed doing their cold reads (first attempt at reading a passage); warm reads (second attempt) using [whisper phones](#) or reading to a friend; and their hot reads (third times a charm) to their teacher. Again, the level of independence with which students worked was impressive. In Mrs. Przepierski's room, it was also entirely clear that expectations were successfully communicated to her students. I encourage anyone who needs a Read Naturally lesson modeled, to visit Mrs. Przepierski.

I want to end this blog by congratulating Coach Elizondo and our varsity girls' volleyball team for their victory this past Saturday against Laredo United South. It was a wonderful way to end the work week. Seeing a group of students work together as a team was like visualizing a symphony. Their victory improved their district record to 3 & 2, and they are currently sitting in third place right behind Alexander and United. Best of luck to them as they travel to Alexander tomorrow.

"Winning isn't everything, but wanting to win is." – Vince Lombardi