

January 25, 2016

This past weekend our students were involved in UIL Academic Competitions in San Antonio, a district UIL [swim meet](#) in Corpus Christi, [cheerleading](#) competitions in the Dallas area, and basketball District games here and in Eagle Pass. I am pleased to report that our students had a wonderful time and excelled in every competition they participated in. Even if our students had not excelled in their competitions, the fact that there were various opportunities for participating in enriching activities beyond class work, is noteworthy. I am proud to work in a District that has historically placed emphasis and resources that allow students numerous opportunities to thrive in areas beyond school work. Our students are absolutely receiving a well-rounded education.

This past week, I had the opportunity to visit campuses and observe some tremendous teaching and learning activities. At Del Rio Middle School, besides enjoying a couple of great [basketball](#) games alongside [friends and family](#) of team players, I also observed students using the [new laptops](#) which will eventually replace all the Kuno tablets. It was nice to see students engaged in their learning. Just as exciting were the elementary [science fairs](#) that I was able to observe throughout the week. Even today as I write this blog, I can picture the faces of the young students waiting for the judges to interview them. I especially enjoyed the surprised look on a student at Calderon Elementary, explaining how her [chickens](#) preferred cat food over popcorn or rice. At [Lonnie Green](#) Elementary, I along with other [community members](#), had a chance to judge many interesting projects. An emphasis in our curriculum is the ability to speak fluently about what is learned. Listening to students explain the work and showcase their projects was powerful.

Next, I want to dedicate a few lines to extend congratulations to our 6th, 7th, & 8th grade UIL Academic teams on their performances this past weekend, as well as congratulate our Del Rio High School Swim Team. Our UIL teams competed in San Antonio and brought back numerous medals. As if that wasn't enough, all three grade levels also brought home the all around first place trophy! Middle school UIL coaches, your work should be praised! I recall a few years ago, as the former principal of DRMS, the same sweeps were taking place. This most definitely feels like tradition and we look forward to an awesome UIL Academic season. Our swim team, in their first year of existence, performed admirably at the District meet in Corpus Christi and had multiple swimmers qualify for [Regionals](#). Congratulations to everyone!

As mentioned in previous blogs, school business does not intend to slow down. The Curriculum and Instruction team paired up with several of our talented teachers to organize and present Elementary and Secondary Extravaganzas this past week. Both [elementary](#) and [secondary](#) teachers had multiple opportunities to collaborate, develop and expand their [teaching toolkits](#). Elementary teachers created instructional tools on a variety of topics: Math Talks, Penmanship, Choice Boards, Meeting the Needs of Struggling Readers, and Building a Treasure Chest of Reading Resources. Meanwhile, secondary teachers had four dates scheduled to enjoy "make and take" opportunities through the use of innovative tools such as Smore, Symbaloo, and Spinners to name a few. The C&I team continues to strive to meet the needs of our teachers through the means of professional development so that they, in turn, can continue to build the success of student growth and academic achievement. A big thank you to the C&I department and teachers who assisted by sharing their talents in support of our staff district-wide.

For the next few months our District will participate in a Strategic Planning process guided by consultants from Region XIII and the Rural Schools Grant awarded to Del Rio Middle School. Strategic Planning is a stakeholder-driven process to continuously review and create vital systems, such as curriculum and instruction, which serve an extraordinary purpose for our schools. Teachers, students, parents, school board and community members are selected by each campus to form part in a Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will then identify common core values that are held by the community after which, a District mission/vision will be arrived at to guide the work over the next 3-5 years. As a result, this Strategic Plan will solidify and articulate the pathway for continued growth in our District.

Finally, in the coming weeks we will conduct a survey of secondary teachers and have one last round table discussion with a committee of parents, teachers, and students regarding the proposal for block scheduling. Ultimately, each campus will arrive at a decision which should be reached by early March.

"If real learning is to take place, our classrooms must be dependent on the collaboration of its learners, not solely on the knowledge of its teachers." – Robert John Meehan