

August 31, 2015

The start of this new school year is much like throwing a long pass at the beginning of a football game. For our District, that long pass was the Elementary Rezoning, the new Bilingual/ESL program, the new approach to Food Service, the expansion of our co-teach program, and a few other things. When you throw a long pass you hope the ball will not be intercepted and create an uphill battle during the rest of the school year; sometimes you don't mind dropping the ball if you get a second chance at long yardage the following day; but it sure is great when you score and set the tone for the rest of the school year. I want to start my blog this new school year by thanking everyone who made this first week of classes such a huge success. The Principals and their staff did a great job organizing for the start of the year, and the teachers executed their plans for the first days of school with perfection.

As I walked around campuses the first couple of days, I took note of the tremendous work teachers did prior to the beginning of the school year. The [bulletin boards](#) absolutely helped set the [tone](#) at [Lonnie Green](#) and the [excitement](#) with which they engaged their students was fabulous. Del Rio High School was buzzing with excitement. Everything from the [traffic](#), to the energy the [students](#) displayed alongside their [guest speaker](#) indicated that the beginning of the school year was welcomed by everyone. It was especially nice to see the students walk through the [lunch](#) line at various campuses. Every student from the [high school](#) to each [elementary](#) campus seemed to enjoy the variety- especially at the salad bar.

Towards the middle of the week, I had the opportunity to participate with our entire community as we [cheered](#) on the start of the [fall](#) sports season. Everyone from the [Cheerleaders](#) to the [Band](#) enjoyed our school spirit and supported our Queens and Rams. [Coach McCrea](#) alongside his [newest assistant coach](#) lifted the crowd and promised an exciting season.

This past week also gave me an opportunity to reflect over this past summer's work. I couldn't help but feel proud about what our team accomplished. These are just a few of the undertakings that will help us move forward confidently this coming year:

- For a second year in a row our teachers received a step increase and an adjustment to their salary matrix.
- Our Professional Salary Matrix (Counselors, Librarians, Diagnosticians, Speech Pathologist, and Registered Nurses) received the same \$2,000.00 adjustment that our teachers received last year.
- Our self-funded health insurance program transitioned to a new manager and continues to remain at zero cost to our employees.
- Most of our elementary classrooms are at a 22:1 student to teacher ratio, and almost all that are not will be balanced by the end of this week.
- Our bilingual program is off to a great start with most of the bilingual beginner & intermediate classrooms near a 15:1 student to teacher ratio.
- Classrooms who serve both special education program and regular education students combined (Co-Teach) have been balanced so that a true co-teach model will be facilitated.
- Sheltered Instruction teams for our ESL students have been established at the secondary level.
- Our Curriculum & Instruction Department has launched their new Team Sites, where accessing curriculum and resources is at a click for teachers by grade level (elementary) and content (secondary).
- A Parent Portal has been created to allow parents access to view what their child is learning each six weeks along with resources to assist at home.
- And how about all that progress on our [construction projects... Awesome!](#)

I sincerely believe that as a District, we are organized and poised to support continued improvement for all students. All that is left for us is to continue collaborating with each other as we develop strong, engaging lessons that will push our students to the next level of academic achievement. I have a strong belief in the strength of collaboration and am hopeful that each of you will use your Planning Protocol sessions to lean on each other and develop the very best lessons.

In closing this blog, I want to express a word of encouragement to our Ram fans. Although this past Friday was everything shy of a victory, I absolutely witnessed the beginning of a wonderful season. Our boys showed repeated moments of football brilliance. Even today, I am still thinking about and enjoying the long yardage gained by those passes from [Stephen](#) to [Gaston](#). Great job boys!

**“I’ve come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It’s my personal approach that creates the climate. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized.” - Haim G. Ginott**