

May 19, 2014

The end of the school year has always been an exciting time for the entire community. For our students and their families, this time of the year usually means High School Graduation, a time to celebrate the yearlong [achievements](#), or simply the opportunity to look forward to a restful summer. For the District's faculty and staff, this time of the year gives us the opportunity to attend end of the year [activities](#) as well as look forward to a restful summer. Personally, the end of the school year gives me the opportunity to share in the joy of the [celebrations](#), and more importantly, to take some time and consider everything that needs to be planned for and implemented in the coming year. Trying to understand the best way to implement legislative requirements always takes time, energy, and a vast amount of problem solving. I want to dedicate the first part of this blog to discussing what [House Bill 5](#) requires us as a community to implement, but also to highlight the opportunities for increased teaching and learning.

House Bill 5 was passed to first, specifically reduce the End of Course Assessments and second, to increase the number of electives that students are able to take. The increased number of electives is directly tied to the State's initiative to have students earn an endorsement in one of our CTE programs of study. Clearly, most everyone is thankful for the reduction in state assessments. It's the second goal of House Bill 5 that requires us to think about changes that have to be made locally. The biggest change is the Graduation Requirements. Our incoming 2014/2015 freshman are no longer required to complete a 4 X 4 course of study in all core subject areas, specifically, Social Studies.

The fact that our local board policy has additional graduation requirements (one credit of Business Information Management – BIM; and half a credit of speech), coupled with the opportunities presented with our 1:1 laptop initiative, presents some incredible opportunities for our students. We are excited that our incoming freshman students will take their required BIM class as freshman where they will learn to master Microsoft programs such as Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, among others. This learning, joined with the laptop as a daily resource will allow students the opportunity to create exciting school projects that will deepen their learning. I am confident that the best learning lies ahead of our students and that our teachers will capitalize upon the opportunities that are brought about by the digital age.

We, however, are concerned that legislative mandates create changes to our established program of study, particularly changing a previously required core course (World History/World Geography) into an elective. This requirement necessitates changes to our master schedule and even teacher assignments. Nonetheless, we are confident that if we

are guided by the principle of working towards the best interest of our students, our decisions will be made easier and will be entirely fruitful.

Next, I want to thank all of the teachers who took the time to provide insightful feedback to the Planning Protocol survey. The [feedback](#) was tremendous! It is clear that teachers value the opportunity to collaborate with their colleagues and entirely value the importance of understanding what content is required for appropriate student learning. However, it is also evident that we need to make some serious adjustments to the scheduling and perceived requirements of the Planning Protocol. For example, teachers indicated that more time was needed to plan for and deliver interventions for our struggling learners. I am confident that the necessary adjustments will be made and that we will begin the school year feeling confident that the teachers' voice was heard loud and clear!

In closing this blog, I want to give special thanks to our students and their sponsors who participated in all of our showcase programs throughout this year. Whether students were part of [Cheerleading](#), [Belles](#), [Dance Company](#), or any of our [Fine Arts programs](#), their participation allowed them the opportunity to have fun and grow as individuals. For our school district, their involvement gave us the opportunity to show the best face of our community. Over the last two weeks, I had the opportunity to attend a Belles Banquet, a Cheerleading Banquet, a [Band Banquet](#), a middle school ceremony where students were inducted into the National Junior Honor Society, as well as many [fine arts](#) recitals. Having the opportunity to see so many students across our district participate in these types of showcase programs reminded me that regardless of what the state assessment results may or may not indicate, our students are receiving a well-rounded education.

I enjoyed seeing our Mariachi, jazz band, and concert band perform at the Paul Poag and Carl Guys Gymnasium. The [excitement](#) that the students displayed while dancing, [entertaining](#), and particularly showing off their [costumes](#) was heartwarming. As happy as I was for them, I could not help but look down the road towards the completion of our Student Activity Center. It will be nice for our students to have a performing stage they can call their own.

I close this blog with excitement as we move towards graduation and encourage each of us to stay focused as we work to provide meaningful education in the closing weeks. Thank you for all that you do!

"Nothing in life just happens. You have to have the stamina to meet the obstacles and overcome them." - Golda Meir