

November 12, 2013

The academic progress of school districts throughout Texas is monitored by the Texas Education Agency using an accountability system known as the Performance Based Monitoring System (PBMAS). Utilizing results from state assessments (i.e. STAAR), [PBMAS](#) assigns a score of 0-4 to each of four district programs: Bilingual/ESL; Special Education; Career and Technology Education; and No Child Left Behind. The preferred score is zero (0) and the least favorable score is four (4). SFDRICISD, for the second year in a row, received a rating of 4 in the area of Bilingual/ESL. This is particularly significant because approximately 17% of our district's population is Bilingual/ESL. Although our Bilingual/ESL teachers have been working extremely hard, we clearly have some adjustments to do in this area. I want to reassure everyone that we have been working diligently on some pretty aggressive plans and have already begun the implementation and/or studies of these plans.

In anticipation of this PBMAS rating, we set an ambitious certification program in motion to ensure we have enough bilingual teachers to service our students. Currently, SFDRICISD is paying tuition for over 30 teachers who are taking courses to prepare themselves for a bilingual certification, to which they must pass a state exam. Next, we have allotted money for campuses to hire temporary support staff to help provide [supplemental instruction](#) to our Bilingual/ESL students. Finally, we have completed a study to determine the feasibility of providing concentrated services to our Bilingual students in half of our elementary campuses. Providing services at half of our campuses will allow us to consolidate our resources, thus being able to provide enough certified teachers, additional [instructional aides](#), focused staff development, and additional instructional resources. We are hopeful that we will be able to fully develop this plan and implement it during the 2014-2015 school year.

After a productive Monday and Tuesday, I set out for Round Rock by way of Laredo, TX. New Superintendents (upon being hired) are required by the Texas Education Agency to complete three trainings: First, complete 10 hours of financial investment training; next, meet with an assigned superintendent mentor for at least sixty hours; and finally participate in a *New Superintendent's Academy* during the first year hired. On Wednesday and Thursday of this past week, I attended the first of three New Superintendent's Academy sessions in Round Rock, Texas. As informative as the sessions were, I always find it difficult to be away from the School District.

I wanted to be in Laredo Tuesday evening with our [Queens Volleyball team](#) and their Del Rio [fan base](#), as they made Del Rio Volleyball history. Our Queens met the Edinburg North Volleyball team at the Laredo Martin Tiger Gymnasium for the Bi-District Playoffs. It was a pleasure not only to see our girls play so well, but to observe the huge community support. Everyone from [parents](#), to [administrators](#), to the radio announcer from [KTDR](#) made the trip. Later in the week I had the opportunity to see our volleyball team compete in the Area Playoffs where they fell just short of advancing to Regional competition. Regardless of the outcome, these ladies made Del Rio history. Congratulations ladies on the finest season ever!

On Thursday I returned to Del Rio just in time to participate with the CTE department's advisory groups. We are thankful that so many [community members](#) turned out to volunteer their time and advise us on how we can improve our CTE programs. Friday morning, I stopped by and

visited the Buena Vista library where I observed a [fifth grade class](#) participate in a video conference with the Fort Worth Zoo. Thanks to technology our students were able to take a virtual tour while discussing how traits and behaviors play a vital role in animals' survival.

Returning to the office on Friday morning, I was pleased to hear reports of the many things that happened while I had been out of town. From practicing [emergency procedures](#) and after school [Zumba](#) classes at Lonnie Green Elementary to an [administrator meeting](#) at central office, everyone was on task ensuring students were being provided for. The students at Lonnie Green Elementary are showing their commitment to staying fit by learning a variety of Zumba routines. They are also looking forward to performing at the Thanksgiving Feast of Sharing community event. Fitness is so important for our kids daily. This is also a reminder that our district will be leading a *Staying Fit For My Kids* 5K walk/run this coming Saturday. I hope to see members of our community, staff and students participate in this event.

Of course, nothing gave me more satisfaction than hearing of the detailed instructional planning that continues to improve on a daily basis. From reviewing assessments at [Lamar Elementary](#) to providing detailed [lesson plans](#) at [Buena Vista Elementary](#), our teachers are ensuring our students receive the best instruction. Buena Vista 2nd grade teachers have taken their planning a step further to include visuals ([anchor charts](#)) of their activities. This type of dedication not only ensures that teachers are mindful of what they plan for in advance, but can also be extremely beneficial when substitutes are needed. This type of planning guarantees quality instruction on any given day. Excellent job ladies!

My week ended with a final trip to Round Rock, TX, to cheer on the Boys and Girls Cross Country Teams as they competed in the State UIL Cross Country Meet. I am told that there are over 200 high schools that compete at the 5A level, so it is beyond impressive that our boys finished 5th and our girls finished 12th in the state.

Although competing at the state level has become quite the tradition for our runners, getting there didn't just happen overnight. The dedication set by Coach Ric Smith in building a program that ensures students train with the end in mind has flourished beyond just a goal to achieve. The commitment from the runners themselves, in training hard daily for this one competition to end their season starts as early as their years in elementary. I am confident that if we, as a District family, faithfully work hard and dedicate our commitment to academic excellence, we too, will see our students' success flourish in the years to come.

It was truly an honor and a pleasure to watch this fine [group of students](#) end their season always supported by their [families](#). Congratulations on another excellent season! As an added reminder, this year Coach Smith will host the 12th Annual Elementary Cross Country Meet at Walter Levermann Ram Stadium on November 14th. I look forward to having a lot of our elementary students represent their schools.

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act... but a habit."

- Aristotle