

January 13, 2014

Starting the New Year certainly brings a lot of hope and promise. The hard part is reminding ourselves of the hope and promise that inspired us during the days leading up to New Year's Eve. Some of us made New Year's resolutions to exercise more, eat healthier, visit family, not procrastinate, or take on tough decisions. Any of these will certainly improve our outlook on life and I am hopeful we will all stay committed to them. I want to share with you my resolution for the New Year. At least the one that relates to work.

This year, I want to focus on bringing attention to our students' true heroes. Some may ask, "Who are their heroes?" I have no doubt that while there are many individuals who our students look up to; the heroes that remain throughout a lifetime are those that improve students' lives every step of the way. Through the media we often see statues of heroes taken down because they were not who we thought they were. We see trophies and awards stripped away from athletes because of some performance enhancer, or we find out that our hero really had someone else doing the work for them. Yet teachers, much like a parent, work heroically each and every day. Often times without a thank you.

Every week, for the remainder of the school year, I am going to highlight a classroom teacher who is doing heroic work for their students. I hope you will take time and send me an email with your suggestions. This isn't a contest so don't be discouraged if your nominee has to wait a couple of weeks to be highlighted. At the end of this blog, I am attaching a tribute I made to my heroes as part of the Acknowledgments section of my dissertation. I hope you will take time to read them. Many of my heroes still work in our system today.

The first Monday of the year was unlike most of the previous Mondays this school year. My son even commented on the limited traffic on the first day back and wondered if it was due to the weather or maybe kids not used to getting up. Nonetheless, we were back at work with lots of emails to catch up on, appointments, and meetings galore. One [exciting meeting](#) was held on Monday afternoon with Cabinet and C&I staff to discuss the process for applying for the Educator Excellence Innovation Program grant. If awarded, this grant will provide the funds to continue the development of the Planning Protocol as well as increase our ability to promote teacher certifications in high needs areas. We will keep everyone posted on the outcome of our application.

By Tuesday, a lot of the urgent meetings had been held and I was free to visit some campuses. I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to Buena Vista Elementary, where I had the opportunity to visit with one of the lab managers, [Maria Hartman](#). Mrs. Hartman was excited to show and explain the different tiers described in the Istation Movement Reports. I hope teachers continue to

encourage their students to take these monthly diagnostics seriously so that the time in the Reading Lab continues to be of great benefit. While at Buena Vista I also observed PE students participating in a [dance unit](#). Seeing the little ones dance around in the cafeteria reminded me of the progress being made on the [construction](#) of the new gymnasium. Everything appears to be on track and our Buena Vista students should have their new gym by the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year. Before leaving Buena Vista, I stopped by to observe the student vision screenings. The State requires vision and hearing screenings to be done yearly for grades kinder, 1st, 3rd, and 5th. Thanks to the volunteer work encouraged by the Host Lions Club and the work of volunteers like [Mrs. Gloria Klasen](#), all 841 students at Buena Vista and other elementary campuses will continue to receive an annual vision screening.

To end a highly productive Tuesday, I rewarded myself by participating in the Fall Sports Awards gathering at the Little Theater. It was nice to hear the [pride](#) in the Volleyball and Cross Country coaches, as they [highlighted](#) their [successful](#) season and [bragged](#) about their [student athletes](#). For our Volleyball Girls, especially the [seniors](#), they will forever know that they made Volleyball history in Del Rio. For the first time ever, our girls shared in the District Championship and advanced in the playoffs to become Bi-District Champions and qualify for Area Finals. Our [boys and girls](#) Cross Country teams have continued a long established tradition of [success](#) having 11 total teams qualify for State since 2005. Although our Boys Cross Country teams have had State appearances for 9 consecutive years, our Girls teams are on the rise representing in 2009, 2010, and currently.

Wednesday and Thursday, I had the opportunity to visit with two teacher groups. On Wednesday I visited with the teachers who had obtained a 4-8 Math Certification and was encouraged by how many of them are willing to dedicate their summer time to earn a 6-12 Math Certification. I look forward to the day when we no longer have a shortage of certified teachers in critical areas. Thursday I visited with Elementary teachers to continue our Planning Protocol discussion. While the teachers were clearly on the side of continuing with the Planning Protocol reform, they did note the need for assistance in developing resources. I am encouraged by our progress and excited about our future stages of improvement.

I ended my day Thursday by visiting the Lonnie Green Science Fair. Students presented projects that ranged from [dental hygiene](#) to maintaining ones [natural beauty](#) to salt and [lava lamps](#). Like always, it was nice to see the [parents](#) lined up to congratulate the [winners](#) who will move on to the District Science Fair on February 6th at the Del Rio Civic Center. Good job to all the participants.

Friday evening and Saturday afternoon was all about enjoying student activities. On Friday evening, my daughter Corina and I enjoyed watching our Queens Basketball team prevail over our rivals from Eagle Pass. Our [girls](#) dominated on [offense](#), [defense](#), and [from the line](#). While

basketball in and of itself is exciting, watching various student groups enjoy the activities makes everything more meaningful. Our [cheerleaders](#) and [Belles](#) do a great job in bringing spirit to the games and have lots of [fun](#) promoting this tremendous value. Great job ladies. Saturday afternoon my daughter Victoria, her friend Alexi, and I enjoyed walking through the local [4-H Stock Show](#). The delicious Bar-B-Q was just an added bonus. The day's activities were capped with a basketball game at our [DRMS annual tournament](#). Again, our girls prevailed winning tournament championships at both the 7th and 8th grade level. The 8th grade championship game even went into overtime. Great Job!

"I would rather be accused of breaking precedents than breaking promises." - John F. Kennedy

Acknowledgements

I wrote the following acknowledgments, as a motivational strategy for me, approximately one year before I finished my dissertation. It is mostly because of these contributions to my life and a strong desire to validate them, that I have completed this work.

The educators in the San Felipe Del Rio Consolidated Independent School District loved and mentored me as a student and/or colleague. Each of you taught me by example that the most important element for successful teaching and learning is a loving and supportive teacher-to-student relationship: Roberto De Leon (fifth grade teacher), Linda Fernandez (sixth grade teacher), Roberto Fernandez (superintendent), Yolanda Fernandez (English III teacher), David Gomez (coach), Raul Hernandez (fourth grade teacher), Cathy Leghman (Algebra I & II teacher), Gloria McGuirre (first grade teacher), Dolores Ortiz (second grade teacher), Armando Paniagua (coach), Manuel Polanco (basketball coach), Debbie Salinas (English II teacher), and Maria Scott (kindergarten teacher).