

September 16, 2013

As I reflect on the completion of the third week of classes, I am reminded that students will receive their first progress report and that perhaps the school year is well underway. At the same time, I temper my thoughts with the reality that there is still newness to the school year, and in order to build success, it is necessary to continue to establish routines and procedures. Observing our teachers and students engaged in the learning process and some extracurricular activities this past week reminded me of the old saying “May will be here before you know it”.

On Tuesday, I had the opportunity to visit some classrooms at Del Rio Middle School. I first made a stop by Mr. Ortiz’s [Keyboarding](#) class. We recalled keyboarding as a course we took in high school and both agreed that times have certainly changed. An even clearer indication of 21st century learning and the advancement of students’ knowledge was the distribution of the [Kuno](#) tablets. Each 7th and 8th grade student received a Kuno tablet that allows them online access to assignments, some textbooks, and internet research. I am certain that the days when students had to carry four to five huge textbooks are long gone. Before leaving DRMS, I walked the [hallways](#) and visited a Planning Protocol [session](#). What I observed made it clear that as much as times may change, the dedication and collaboration of our teachers will prepare to serve our students in any situation.

Later that same evening I came back to DRMS to enjoy their extracurricular activities. I was pleased to see our 8th grade girls display their [volleyball](#) skills against our neighbors to the south and our seventh grade boys roughing it up on the [football](#) field. The evening’s activities were highly spirited, thanks to the contributions of our middle school [cheerleaders](#) and [dance](#) team.

Wednesday led me to visit San Felipe Memorial Middle School. I, along with the principal, Mr. Ramos, walked the campus and visited the classrooms. The fresh paint on the walls, the Student Council officer [elections](#), and the bulletin [boards](#) were all immediately noticed. However, what was most impressive, was the staff’s dedication to helping students prepare for success. The librarian, Mrs. Ballard, took time to introduce the [library](#) and its many resources to the students. The band director, Mr. Basler, was taking extra time to ensure students understood tempo. Lastly, Mrs. Vallejo, English teacher, took time to ensure her students maximized their learning by continuing to emphasize the mastery of classroom procedures. I am certain that the time spent teaching procedures will yield high student learning throughout the year – Excellent job!

Most of the day Thursday and Friday was dedicated to seeking out candidates for our assistant principal and principal vacancies. I am pleased that we will be able to recommend promising candidates to fill these vacancies during Monday night's School Board meeting. Although most of Thursday was filled with office work, during the evening I had the opportunity to watch our JV football team compete at Ram Stadium. Friday presented an opportunity for my entire family and I to travel to Schertz and support our Rams. It was a wonderful experience to see so many of our parents make the trip and support our students. Not only do we have the best students, but we have the most dedicated parents and grandparents willing to go the extra mile for our kids.

Saturday morning had many of us wake up early to support the Cross Country Booster organization by participating in the first annual, *We Run This Town 5K* Color Run. It's expected to receive water at different stations throughout the run, but alongside the water, we enjoyed being *splashed* with different colored powder. A large group of our *students* and community *members* did their part in supporting the event as well. I must admit, it was a worthwhile cause and a whole lot of fun. Just when I thought the week was over, I was reminded that our Varsity *Mariachi* was helping Wal-Mart celebrate Mexican Independence Day (16 de Septiembre) by performing some songs in the Wal-Mart patio on Sunday afternoon. I, along with many parents and customers, entirely enjoyed their performance.

I closed last week's blog by stressing the importance of collaboration amongst our teaching staff. This week I again want to highlight the collaborative efforts occurring throughout our district. Although there are many efforts, I want to share a report I received from the high school.

This week I was impressed by the collaborative efforts demonstrated during the ENG II and Creative Writing planning session at *DRHS*. The team discussed the importance of teaching students how to use words from the writing prompt to guide the development of a thesis statement that will guide their writing of an expository piece (Planning Protocol, Step 1). Teachers and the instructional coach then modeled strategic methods for teaching students how to develop and write a thesis statement (Planning Protocol, Step 4). Collaborative sharing of lesson delivery ideas will help teachers of all experience levels ensure that engaging and rigorous lessons are part of their daily instruction.

I want to close this blog by thanking the fourteen elementary teachers that came together to discuss how we can improve the implementation of our district led instructional reform at the elementary level. The insight that was provided by our teachers gave us an opportunity to better improve our reform and helped us clarify some misconceptions. I have never been more convinced that the collaborative efforts of our staff will yield the highest learning opportunities for our students.

"Among individuals, as among nations, respect for the rights of others is peace."

–Benito Juarez