

November 18, 2013

Two weeks ago I worried that the change of seasons coupled with the long work days, and the occasional flu, may begin to slow some of us down. However, the level of instruction and support for students I observed this past week entirely proved my worries to be unfounded. Principals, counselors, and teachers across the district were engaging students in our [Elementary](#) and [Secondary](#) anti-bullying discussions. Students enjoyed every opportunity to display their athletic and theatrical talents. Teachers engaged students in rigorous learning. Altogether, everyone was focused on student excellence and student achievement.

Monday, being a holiday, made Tuesday an entirely busy and administrative type of day. I was thankful that Tuesday evening provided an opportunity to see our [girls' basketball team](#) play at home. Early on in the season our girls are showing a lot of promise. I am looking forward to also seeing the boys play at home in the weeks to come.

On Wednesday, the CTE director, Mr. Roger Gonzalez, and School Board Secretary, Mr. Joshua Overfelt, treated our State Representative, Poncho Nevarez, and a few of us to a [tour](#) of our CTE department. It was impressive, to all at once, see the wide range of CTE programs that are available to our students. I would be remised if I didn't highlight just a few of these programs. Observing Brianna and Jose reassured me that our [EMT](#) and [CNA](#) certification programs are preparing students to make valuable contributions to our community. I am confident that the certification programs in [welding](#) and [automotive](#) will graduate students ready to perform necessary services that most of us are sure to benefit from. Sarah and Kasey demonstrated that cooking, when done with [Culinary Arts](#) finesse, creates a fine dining experience.

Before leaving the high school on Wednesday, I stopped by to visit some sophomore English classes. Mrs. [Casbeer's students](#) were busy developing their vocabulary and reading a couple of my favorite stories, *Death of a Salesman* and *The Glass Menagerie*. At the risk of professing my own ignorance, I will admit that two words on their vocabulary list were above my reading level: "bipartite" (having two corresponding parts) and "calliope" (a musical instrument that produces sound by sending steam or compressed air through large whistles). I finished the day by participating in the second of four scheduled Citizens' Committee meetings. I am confident that this group of citizens will make some sound recommendations for the future construction needs of the District.

Thursday can only be described as a festival of the high quality of achievement in our District. From instruction to student activities, teachers and students were incredibly awesome. At Chavira Elementary I was especially pleased with Mrs. Garza's second grade class. Her student's excitement was in abundance after they did so well on a [summative exam](#) which they read by themselves. For second graders, reading a rigorous assessment is quite the challenge. Keep up the great work.

Later in the afternoon I stopped by to see the High School Robotics team practice. It was impressive to see students engaged in the design, [troubleshooting](#), and building of robots. Just as impressive is the number of community volunteers that the coaches (Mr. Davis & Mr. Billeaudeau) have recruited for this program. After a short but notable visit to Robotics, I walked over to the tennis courts where I saw our middle school tennis team. I was able to witness Maria Isabella defeat her Uvalde Coyote challenger. After seeing [Maria Isabella](#) report her victory to her coach, I drove over to [Walter Leverman Stadium](#) to participate in Coach Rick

Smith's annual [Elementary Cross Country Meet](#). Besides seeing my two youngest daughters participate, I thoroughly enjoyed seeing so much [student](#) and [parent](#) involvement. The hot chocolate and Frito Pie was an added bonus.

My marathon Thursday evening ended at the Del Rio High School Little Theater, in the company of my family, enjoying our high school students' performance of *Annie*. As enjoyable as the singing, dancing, and acting was, nothing gave me more joy than seeing our students' [celebrate](#) their accomplishment with their parents and friends who came to support them.

After enjoying a Thanksgiving lunch with our Central Administration team on Friday, I visited Garfield Elementary where I was able to see [Miss Del Rio](#), Melinda Mayers, share her anti-bullying sentiments with fourth grade students. The [Garfield students](#) showed a lot of interest as their principal, [Mrs. Diaz](#), presented the anti-bullying PowerPoint.

On Saturday morning I was able to participate in the kickoff of the District's first annual [Stay Fit for My Kids](#) 5K walk/jog/run. While [many schools](#) participated, and they all deserve acknowledgment for staying fit, we congratulate [Buena Vista Elementary](#) for winning the Most Participation Trophy. A big "Thank You" to [Mrs. Laura English](#) and everyone who helped her put this health and wellness event together. Later that morning I was able to enjoy an elementary robotics practice meet. Similar to the first practice meet, there was a lot of [excitement](#) and a lot of competition. Congratulations to [Calderon Elementary](#) for amassing the most points.

Although Sundays are traditional "stay at home" days. This Sunday was a bit different. I was fortunate enough to attend the 21st Annual Feast of Sharing community event where many of our students participated in the [opening ceremonies](#) and provided [entertainment](#) throughout the day. In appreciation of the District's participation, HEB management presented the District with a special recognition plaque. This very exciting week ended with another viewing of *Annie* on Sunday night. Like all other performances, the Little Theater was [filled](#) with family and friends. Congratulations to Mrs. Martine, Mr. Gonzalez, Ms. Brandenberger, and Mrs. Rodriguez for helping our students develop their talents. Excellent job!

In closing this blog I want to share with you a conversation I had with [Liz](#), a senior student who represented DRHS at the State Cross Country Meet. I saw her at Friday night's basketball game and thanked her for volunteering at Thursday night's elementary cross country meet. She informed me that she had participated in this same meet as a Lonnie Greene Elementary student. Her comments immediately reminded me that success does not happen overnight; instead it is a process that involves years of dedication and support from caring adults. Whether we are developing cross country athletes, workforce ready students, national robotics champions, or lifelong independent learners, it takes a commitment from each and every one of us to set and support the highest standards for our students. Keep up the great work!

"Students must have initiative; they should not be mere imitators. They must learn to think and act for themselves and be free." - Cesar Chavez