

**January 26, 2015**

This past week was filled with Board Meetings, athletic events, and campus visits. The Regular Board Meeting held this past Monday and the Board Workshop held this past Wednesday certainly presented opportunities to discuss the growth and direction of the school district. Although I am excited about the potential restructuring of our elementary attendance zones and the potential construction of an additional campuses, I am immediately excited about the instructional plans currently underway at various campuses throughout the district. The beginning of the second semester always serves to remind us that the testing season is upon us. The increased anxiety of the season usually leads to increased tutoring and potentially some "drill & kill" classroom lessons.

I want to ask that you divert your energy from feeling anxious and instead focus your thoughts on engaging lessons that provide sound instruction and remediation. We still have plenty of days before the state assessment and much content to teach. There are exactly 38 instructional days before our ELA (Reading & Writing) assessments begin and 51 instructional days before our math assessments begin.

This past week I had the opportunity to visit with various principals, assistant principals, instructional coaches, and other curriculum personnel to discuss instructional plans for the coming weeks and months. The theme during these conversations was always the same as I asked principals not to focus on tutoring for the sake of tutoring. I invited each campus group to work with their personnel to ensure appropriate implementation of guided teaching practices. Guided teaching practices are the surest way to implement Step 5 of the Planning Protocol and the most successful form of remediation. The campuses that have been faithful in implementing guided teaching practices have already seen growth in student learning. Simply stated, "Guided Instruction is a non-negotiable in our District."

When I visit campuses I mainly look at the instruction going on in the core classrooms but somehow always find time to look in on the fun stuff. This past week I was thrilled to see the excitement with which students at [Dr. Lonnie Green](#) enjoyed their dance unit. Great job coaches. Having said that, I am confident that implementation of the instructional plans discussed with our groups this past week will yield the results our students and campuses deserve.

As busy as the week was, I found time to attend two exciting athletic events. First, I had the opportunity to see our [Boys](#) Basketball [teams](#) in action against Laredo United South. Although our teams fell short of a victory, I enjoyed seeing many moments of brilliance from our athletes. Today I want to highlight [Chase](#) Clay. As a senior starter, Chase has not only provided leadership to the team, he has created lots of excitement for our fans. If you haven't seen a game this season, I encourage you to stop by this coming Friday as our Rams take on Laredo Alexander. Chase and company will not disappoint you.

Next, I stopped by to see our [Girls](#) Soccer team [dominate](#) Eagle Pass C.C. Winn. Our girls easily defeated C.C. Winn by a score of 7 to 0. While complementing all of his athletes, Coach Martinez indicated that "[Marisa](#) Cortinas, Queen's Captain and Sweeper, has motivated the entire team to work hard and give it their all to win district and advance as far as we can as a team in the Playoffs."

Student athletic events are always filled with excitement and entertainment. Especially because they involve so many members of our school community. For example, at last Tuesday's basketball game [Garfield](#) Elementary honored us with their rendition of our [National Anthem](#). Not to be outdone, our [Queen City Belles](#) provided an incredible dance performance. We are blessed to be part of an entirely gifted and talented community.

In closing this blog I want to welcome and wish lots of success to our new high school librarian, [Mary Catherine Hargrove](#). Mrs. Hargrove is filling the vacancy recently created by the retirement of Ms. Margo Rosenow. It is nice to see the excitement and confidence that Mrs. Hargrove brings to her job as she works to fill some big shoes. Best of luck and enjoy!

**If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader. – John Quincy**