

The month of January, as a midpoint to our school year, and as the month that indicates our return from a well-deserved break, certainly shows up fast paced. I think it is safe to say we all resumed work hitting the ground running. With that said, I have often thought about the stress that commonly permeates our organization, and I dare say our entire profession. As I reflected this week on what went well and what did not go so well, I concluded that as educators we expect for our outcomes (student success) to always be sloping in a positive direction. When outcomes are not trending “up and to the right” we have a tendency to want to point the finger and blame a factor. Sometimes we blame ourselves, sometimes the neighbor, and sometimes we blame the students. Although it is only human to desire continuous improvement, it is important that we recognize that moving in a positive direction involves constant change on everyone’s part... and “change is difficult.” Nonetheless, change is what we will continue to strive for. If we strive for it together, we can face any stressful situation and continue moving in the direction that will yield overall success.

Monday morning I managed to make the “great escape” from the office and visited with some sixth grade English teachers about our ESL students. I am convinced that our ESL students who have been in our system since their kinder school year belong in a regular English class, alongside some type of ESL support. However, to provide this service to our ESL students will require all of us to think outside of the box. I am looking forward to finding a real and long lasting solution for our English Language Learners.

On Tuesday, I again, made it a priority to get out to the campuses in the early morning. I was able to see firsthand how the elementary benchmark testing and the secondary semester exams were progressing. I am happy to report that students were engaged at every level. At [North Heights Elementary](#) and at our [high school](#) there was clear evidence that students were taking the exams quite seriously. After my campus visits, I returned back to the office, as I had some important guests from the Boys & Girls Club. We discussed an agreement, whereby we will lend our elementary gymnasiums for afterschool basketball and volleyball practices and they in turn, will provide tutoring services to our elementary students. It pleases me to know that our students who participate in extracurricular activities will have a warm place to practice while others will have some afterschool homework help at the Boys & Girls Club. I ended my day on Tuesday by traveling to Eagle Pass where I enjoyed seeing our [boys’](#) basketball [team](#) defeat the CC Winn Mavericks.

Although Wednesday was altogether a whirlwind, I do have a wonderful recollection of the final Citizen’s Committee meeting. After a three month process our Citizen’s Committee will make construction recommendations to our School Board tonight (Monday, January 20, 2014). Among the [final recommendations](#) is the renovation and repurposing of the Old Middle School on Griner Street into a Student Performing Center/Central Administration Building. Also on the final

recommendation list, is the construction of a CTE magnet school at the Old North Heights site on Main and 10<sup>th</sup> Street. If approved by our Board of Trustees, we should see some serious construction on both sites before this summer ends.

In the early afternoon on Thursday, I stopped by the high school where I again observed students hard at work on their [final exams](#). It was pleasing to also see [student council](#) members getting ready to express their appreciation for our Board of Trustees. January is School Board Appreciation month and it is most fitting to thank our community members who serve to provide oversight of our school district's administration. A big thank you to our seven school board members.

A portion of the afternoon on Thursday was dedicated to working with our [committee](#) to finalize the Educator Excellence Innovation Program Grant. We look forward to receiving \$1,000,000.00 annually to be able to: Provide incentives to teachers who wish to obtain certifications in critical needs areas (Bilingual/ESL, Secondary Math, Secondary Science, and Special Education); bonuses to recruit additional teachers into our community; funds to provide a stream lined early literacy program; as well as resources to continue to improve on the implementation of our Planning Protocol. In between the committee's grant work, I managed to find time to attend a [middle school basketball game](#) (our girls won a nail biter) and visit with high school parents who came to a [college workshop](#) in the Board Room.

Friday was by far the most exciting day of the week for me. I especially enjoyed my trip to Calderon Elementary where students in [Ms. Fabela's](#) First Grade Bilingual class took pride in individually [reading](#) to me their [writings](#) on Martin Luther King. I remember walking out of Ms. Fabela's class thinking how successful each of her students already were and especially thinking that years from now these students will regard Ms. Fabela as their hero. My hero for this week is Ms. Fabela. Excellent job!

Towards the end of the day, I had the opportunity to handle different types of laptops that we are considering for the 1:1 initiative which we hope to launch at the high school for the upcoming school year. In the next few weeks we will assemble a group of students and teachers who will give us their opinion on which laptops will best serve our students' needs. There are many exciting things to come.

To end the day, I stopped by our boys' [basketball game](#) and our boys' [soccer game](#). It is always nice to see our students' [perform](#). It takes true dedication to study hard and make good grades in order to participate in these extra-curricular activities. Hats off to our soccer kids - playing in shorts in the middle of January requires a lot of heart.

My work week came to an end on Saturday night at the annual High School Football Banquet. It was pleasant to see so many [students](#) and [parents](#) fill up our cafeteria. Mrs. Mancha and her

girls did an excellent job decorating the cafeteria, and Coach McCrea and his staff did an outstanding job [highlighting](#) our kids and their efforts. The awesome brisket plate was an added bonus. It is events like these that recognize our students for their efforts and really highlight the opportunities students have to be successful. We must be mindful to continue to dedicate all of our efforts to displaying this kind of commitment in how we plan for and instruct our students, so that they can continue to strive for excellence.

*"The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character-that is the goal of true education." - Dr. Martin Luther King*