

November 4, 2013

Understanding that the newness of the school year has come and gone leads me to consider how tired everyone must feel. During the course of these ten weeks student needs have been assessed, resources have been developed, and lessons have been planned and delivered. Not to mention the many hours our teachers have dedicated to supervising and supporting student activities and competitions. I am certain that many teachers, sponsors, coaches and parents are thankful that the weeklong Thanksgiving holiday is just around the corner. The wonderful [bulletin](#) boards throughout the district certainly indicate the approaching holidays.

Although I understand and appreciate everyone's exhaustive contributions, I have to encourage all of us to temper our holiday eagerness with the student learning needs that remain and student excitement that continues to fill the air. Visiting North Heights Elementary on Tuesday morning reminded me of the excitement for learning. Before 7:30 in the morning Mrs. Adams, the principal, and many of her staff were already waiting for the approaching students with a smile. I was entirely impressed with how welcomed the parents felt at North Heights Elementary. Just about all of them greeted the principal by name and felt right at home watching their kids enjoy the [playground](#) or walking them to [class](#). Mrs. Perez, first grade teacher at NHE, gets the award for most efficient. While in her classroom, I saw students enjoying the [Breakfast](#) in the Classroom program while reviewing their academic vocabulary journal. Excellent job ma'am.

Later that day we had the opportunity to visit with our [Partners in Education](#) and update them on the different programs we have begun to implement. We presented to them the ongoing and future building construction plans that were also presented later in week to a [Citizen's](#) Committee; the launching of the 1:1 initiative at the Freshman Campus; the many public relation efforts; and the balanced budget. Nothing gave me more pleasure or sense of responsibility than discussing the instructional needs of our students. I have no doubt that instruction is our number one priority. I ended a highly productive day by visiting our senior students who were putting the finishing touches on their [bonfire](#).

On Wednesday morning, I made it a point to visit our high school before engaging in difficult but necessary administrative issues. Although the high school [hallways](#) definitely announced the homecoming [excitement](#), the classrooms were all about the business of teaching and learning. Mrs. Torres' chemistry class was burning different chemicals to determine the coloring effects of fire on its properties. The students were entirely engaged and in [awe](#) of their lab results. In the afternoon I first visited Lonnie Green Elementary and later had the opportunity to be a guest speaker at Calderon Elementary. I want to thank the librarian at Lonnie Green Elementary, Mrs. Gurley-Looney, for inviting me to be a special judge at their [pumpkin](#) decorating contest. At Calderon Elementary I shared with students three important guidelines to follow in preparation for successful leadership: select a cause you love; prepare your skill set for the task at hand; and stay out of anything that will be dangerous to you or others.

The evening ended with many reasons to celebrate our district and our community: the homecoming [parade](#) down Main Street; and homecoming pep [rally](#) at Walter Leverman Stadium. It was so nice to see thousands of Del Rioans turn out and enjoy these [events](#). Special thanks to the [elementary](#) schools that created an opportunity for their students to [participate](#) and begin to build Del Rio Rams/Queens [pride](#) and congratulations to the seniors whose [excitement](#) shows the bonds they have formed with their [classmates](#) and school. The energy of the [lit bonfire](#) was a nice parallel to the [energy](#) that lives in our [high school students](#). From the student [council](#) members to the [football players](#) to our [School Board](#) members, everyone enjoyed the festivities!

On Thursday, I was invited to participate in the Celebrity Reader program at Chavira Elementary. I, along with many of our [supporters](#), were asked to read to students. In the spirit of Halloween, I chose to read *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. I really don't know who enjoyed the stories more, the students or the adults? It was nice to hear all the positive comments about our Chavira students made by the guest readers. Excellent job organizing this event. The Region XV Education Service Center had previously indicated an eagerness to partner with us in our instructional reform effort. This past Friday we had the opportunity to discuss potential staff development partnerships with Region XV. This meeting was especially significant because it set the stage for a unified instructional reform effort. Our teachers should not feel pulled in different directions. It must be clearly communicated that the depth and complexity encouraged by the Planning Protocol does not operate in a vacuum. Rigorous instruction requires development in questioning strategies, writing skills, academic vocabulary, resource development, and so much more. I am entirely committed to supporting all facets of good instruction.

Besides the Homecoming festivities at the football game, we also had the opportunity to acknowledge a lifelong supporter of Ram Football. Mrs. Elia Robles has held the same reserved season tickets for over 40 years. She has been enjoying Friday night activities dating back to the years when her own children participated in Del Rio High School athletics. The district and high school administration truly enjoyed being in the company of [Mrs. Robles and her family](#) as we presented a plaque and a football. Thank you for all of your support.

Although the week had many opportunities to celebrate student success, the highlight of the week has to go to our Boys and Girls Cross Country teams. Our Cross Country teams competed at the Regional competition where they both qualified for State. I truly enjoyed watching our teams [warm](#) up, loosen their nerves by [singing](#) in their tent, and of course the race itself. Congratulations to [Liz and Diamond](#) for finishing in the top ten of the 5A Girls Division and to [Cesar](#) for finishing in the top ten of the 5A Boys Division. Finishing in the top ten is tremendously exciting, especially when you consider that each race had over 200 of the top runners in the region. The [girls](#) finished third overall as a team and the [boys](#) finished first. The discipline and commitment to excellence displayed by our boys and girls is a true indication of the same commitment and dedication of their coaches. Congratulations! Best of luck to each and everyone one of you at the State competition.

"Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure... than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much, because they live in a grey twilight that knows not victory nor defeat." - Theodore Roosevelt