

September 30, 2013

The Texas Association of School Boards held their annual conference in Dallas, Texas this past week. Our seven School Board members and I, along with hundreds of other school board members and administrators from around the state, participated in the conference. At the conference we heard former First Lady Laura Bush share stories about being a teacher and First Lady. Mrs. Bush also discussed an initiative that she and her husband are supporting through their foundation and presidential library –Middle School Matters. This initiative seeks to improve graduation rates by focusing on Middle Schools. I will be following the progress of this initiative in the months to come and look forward to learning from their work.

Because I started last week knowing we would be gone from Del Rio for the last two days of the week, I tried to participate with our staff and students as much as possible. We started the week by launching our one-to-one (1:1) laptop initiative at the Freshman Campus. Each freshman student was issued their [laptop](#), asked to verify they could log in [successfully](#) and then returned to class to begin their digital [learning](#) experience. I am told that Mrs. Cortez, a freshman Biology teacher, took advantage of this new student resource by immediately having her class login to their online Biology book –a very exciting opportunity for our students. The 1:1 initiative was planned before my arrival in Del Rio but had not been funded. I am thrilled that we were able to dedicate some monies provided by the state (Instructional Materials Allotment) to purchase these laptops. We hope to extend the 1:1 initiative to the high school next year.

On my way to the Del Rio Middle School Open House I stopped by the tennis courts to see our Junior Varsity and Varsity teams compete against one of the United ISD high schools. I enjoyed seeing [Lemuel](#), a senior, and [Eusebio](#), a sophomore, win their doubles tennis match. After the Open House I stopped by the courts again to see the singles competition and visit with the coaches. Coach Castellanos commented on how physically fit the kids are. She summarized her comments by saying “these boys and girls play matches that last up to three hours with no time outs and no substitutions.”

At the Del Rio Middle School Open House I was greeted by Breanna and Maria, Middle School Student Council members who were [volunteering](#) by distributing flyers and directing parents. It was a pleasure to see so many seventh grade parents visiting their children’s classes and conferencing with their teachers. I also had the opportunity to visit with a new parent group. This new group is called [Target 2019](#). The main goal of Target 2019 is to support their children through the middle school years and on through high school by getting parents involved. I wish them tremendous success and look forward to their participation.

On most days I usually have time to visit at least one school but Tuesday was a busy day with back to back appointments and no breaks. However, I did get a chance to visit with the Lonnie Greene Elementary faculty before going to a Middle School football [game](#). I wanted to attend the game because I was informed that our seventh grade [band](#) students would be performing for the first time. The afternoon was hot, but they didn’t let the heat bother them. I was also tremendously impressed with the large number of girls participating in the DRMS Queen Pom [Team](#). I was told that Ms. Lopez has almost one hundred active members. It was nice to see all the young ladies perform at half time. Later that evening my kids and I enjoyed the air conditioning at the Carl Guys Gymnasium and the Girls’ Volleyball victory over United South. With all due respect to previous Queens’ volleyball players, I don’t

think I have ever seen a more skilled and competitive Volleyball team than this one. They have a district record of 3 wins and 2 losses, and are on track to earn a playoff spot.

Wednesday needed to be an especially productive day and I really wanted to have a great start. Early Wednesday morning I had a wonderful experience and probably could not have asked for anything better. Throughout the United States since 1990 the “See You at the Pole” event has occurred on the fourth Wednesday of September. I started my day at the Ram Football Stadium to observe our students participate in this event. One of our student organizations, The Fellowship of Christian Athletes, participated with students across America by leading many Del Rio High School students in [prayer](#). Although the prayers were led by students, many parents and community members were present to support the students at the “See You at the Pole” event. It was uplifting to see our students join together for a cause beyond themselves. We truly have great students and are blessed to live in a wonderful community.

“Every calling is great when greatly pursued.” – Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.