

September 8, 2014

A fast paced first week of school followed by a short week (Labor Day Holiday) leaves us wondering how it can already be the third week of classes. This week is traditionally the first full academic week of the school year, and for our students, it signifies the first grade reporting period – progress reports. For our teachers, it is a hectic time that leaves them wondering if they have assigned enough work to merit a progress report and if they did, can they get it all graded in time. I am full of hope and optimism that this school year will be the best ever.

To be perfectly honest, this second week of school was filled with excitement and wonderful news. We started the second week of classes with some great news. Our District received word that we were awarded the Technology Lending Program Grant for Dr. Fermin Calderon Elementary. This grant awards up to \$100,000 to Texas public school districts for the implementation of a technology lending program. With this money, our fifth grade students at Dr. Fermin Calderon Elementary will be provided iPads (with internet) to use in the classroom and home. This makes the second competitive grant in a row that we have competed for and won. Many thanks to the local team that supported the grant writing efforts. Our school year can only continue to get better!

Tuesday evening, I, along with numerous [parents](#) and supportive [students](#), had the opportunity to celebrate the results of [hard work](#) and dedication. Our [girls' volleyball](#) team enjoyed an easy win against our neighbors to the south. The [teamwork](#) and dedication was rewarded by the [excitement](#) in the crowd. It is always nice to see so many parents and students display their school spirit. Congratulations to [Coach Elizondo](#) and his staff.

Wednesday evening we had the opportunity to present to our School Board, for approval, the schematic design of our future [CTE Magnet](#) school and the Student Activity Center/Administration Building. The Board's approval provides us the opportunity to move forward with the implementation of the \$25 million construction projects. It is enjoyable to note that sooner than later our high school students will have a state of the art facility to complete their courses related to Project Lead the Way, Welding, Construction, and Automotive Technology. Equally exciting is the renovation of the once [Del Rio H.S./Del Rio Middle School](#). This building will be a future site for all types of [student activities](#), school board meetings and [parent engagement](#) activities, as well as house the central [administration](#) personnel. Once we complete these projects, we will move to transform the current administration building into an Early College High School. There is complete excitement for the future of education in our community!

Thursday morning I stopped by [Lamar](#) Elementary. After reviewing some small projects, I asked the principal to take me into some classrooms. We visited Mrs. [Martinez'](#) room and were entirely impressed not only with the [rigor](#) of the work the students were engaged in, but also with the [joy](#) they displayed. I want our teachers to know that we are well aware of the detailed planning that it takes to prepare and implement these types of lessons; and most especially that we are entirely grateful for the hard work and dedication that goes into teaching.

After an admin-filled Friday, we had the opportunity to enjoy some more student activities. Friday evening we watched the last part of a hard fought JV football game against the Holmes Huskies. The last game ended in a tie, but boy was it exciting. Saturday gave my family, as well as a lot of [Del Rioans](#), the opportunity to drive to San Antonio and support our students. The [band](#), cheerleaders, student council and the [Belles](#), along with the large crowd of fans, got the opportunity to see our Quarterback, [Steven Salinas](#) - #12, connect with three different teammates in the end zone for a total of six touchdowns – a very nice job by an equally nice student. Senior student, [Braxton Bradley](#) - # 21, caught a nice one in the end zone; while sophomores [Gaston Flores](#) - #88, caught two TD passes, and [Shane Creamer](#) - #87 caught three TD passes. All in all, it was a great trip to San Antonio. Congratulations to Coach [Frenchey McCrea](#) and his entire staff.

While in San Antonio we received news from San Angelo that our Cross Country team had swept the Angelo State Cross Country meet. Congratulations to senior [Paul Delgado](#) and Freshman [Anahi Romo](#) for finishing first in their divisions. Great work to [Coach Smith](#) and all his student athletes.

I want to close this blog by sharing with you a bit of our hope and optimism for this school year. We look forward to the dedication and commitment each member of our team will make to improve the process of learning for both teachers and students. This year, [instructional](#) coaches started with a slightly different role, but still, a role that promotes what research suggests ultimately improves the learning of students. With 15 instructional [coaches](#), we are excited about the talk teachers have expressed in the support instructional coaches have to offer. Although instructional coaches will continue to facilitate Planning Protocol, they will only facilitate those sessions indicated by administration at each campus. Coaches will, more importantly, work closely with not only new teachers to the District (0 and 1 year teachers), but also any teacher that strives for support in their own professional growth.

With that in mind, it is important to note that the future of learning depends on the future of teaching. Through Planning Protocol and instructional coaching, our teachers will gain job-embedded professional development. I am certain that each year a teacher gains in their profession has to be closely related to their own gains in learning. Our students are completely blessed to have each and every one of you as either their teacher, counselor, aide, nurse, custodian, cafeteria, administrator, and in some cases, all of the above. Thank you for all that you do.

*"It is what teachers think, what teacher do, and what teacher are at the level of the classroom that ultimately shapes the kind of learning that young people get." – **Andy Hargreaves & Michael Fullan***