

The beginning of the semester so often will mean different things for different individuals. For our students it most certainly means an opportunity to have a fresh start and hopefully maintain or improve upon their first semester's accomplishments. We should make sure to continuously remind our students of this fresh opportunity. For our teachers and staff, the second semester also represents a fresh start but also indicates how fast time comes and goes. Soon enough, our students will take STAAR Exams, EOC Exams, or exams that will determine whether they will graduate. For me, it reminds me of projects that we started and must complete in the next couple of months. For example, this February we will recommend to the Board of Trustees the approval of a contractor to perform the Random Drug Screenings for our students. The Random Drug Screenings is a project that has been studied and developed since last summer. We are hopeful that this and other projects will finally come into existence and maintained in the coming years.

This past Monday we had the pleasure of [recognizing](#) our school board members. Students from all [schools](#) lined up to express notes of [appreciation](#) and shower each of them with [gifts](#). It was rewarding to see that so many students are aware of how much elected officials donate to their success.

Tuesday seemed to progress at a mile per minute. I started out my day at an awards [assembly](#) at North Heights Elementary and then moved on to Lamar Elementary where I was able to [observe](#) the [Science](#) Fair [projects](#) for the early grades. Next, we had the opportunity to visit with our Elementary [Principals](#) at their monthly meeting also held at Lamar. While many items were discussed, it was encouraging to hear them convey, on behalf of their teachers, a willingness to have a single Early Literacy approach for our District. I am hopeful that we will select one as early as May of this year. In the evening, I enjoyed participating alongside parents who attended a girls' softball meeting, watched part of the [Rams](#) soccer [game](#), and ended the night at the Carl Guys Gymnasium where our [Queens](#) Basketball team was victorious against United South. As an added treat, a community based organization provided us with plenty of entertainment at half time. These young ladies are most certainly our future [Belles](#) and [Cheerleaders](#).

I traveled on Wednesday evening and was out on Thursday to deliver a grant we look forward to receiving information on, therefore I did not participate in activities. However, on Friday I was able to visit the Curriculum & Instruction building and witness the tremendous amount of staff development that is happening in our district. Our [secondary](#) and [elementary](#) Instructional coaches were also joined by [mentor](#) teachers under the direction of Mrs. Rodriguez and our [Student Guidance and Learning Center](#) teachers also came over for some staff development on a new program called *Why Try*.

Next, our School Board President and I had the opportunity to visit Buena Vista Elementary. Before going into the classrooms we stopped by to see the PE students having some fun in the

cafeteria. It was nice to see them [feverishly](#) shake an enormous canvas and then create a [parachute](#) by lifting the canvas above their heads. They were definitely enjoying their afternoon.

Although we enjoyed the PE activities, we visited Buena Vista because I had been told that Mrs. [Dunlap](#) has been doing some pretty [amazing](#) things with her first grade students. Sure enough, we were impressed with the level of student engagement. Mrs. Dunlap consistently extended upon the students learning by asking questions that pressed the students to critically think about the responses they were providing. Questions such as “How do you know that to be true?” or “Can you explain why that is the correct answer?” were very common. Mrs. Dunlap is this week’s hero. Great job!

I ended the day by again enjoying a [Junior Varsity](#) and [Varsity](#) Basketball game at the Carl Guys Gymnasium. Our students did a great job against Laredo LBJ. It appears that our girls and boys basketball teams are both on track to make the playoffs. The official work week ended on Saturday at a Board Workshop dedicated to understanding the Board’s very important role of evaluating the superintendent. I am thankful for each of their participation.

In closing this blog, I want to encourage everyone to continue working hard on a daily basis. The dedication each person commits to building student success will yield high results over the course of this reform. It is because of each person’s dedication that we see small gains in everything that we do. The commitment will extend to years of growth and results that will have us producing life long learners.

*“The greater our knowledge increases the more our ignorance unfolds.” - John F. Kennedy*