

October 14, 2013

Although my week consistently starts the same, meetings and attempts to address items that were not finalized during the previous week, this past Monday, I had the opportunity to join Mr. Valdez, Student Services Director, and other administrators to review anti-bullying/anti-hazing efforts. This is an effort we all strongly believe in. With hopes of creating awareness against bullying and hazing, we asked our entire fine arts department and athletic department to make presentations to students participating in their programs. This past week the athletic department began sharing a PowerPoint presentation to middle school and high school student athletes. It is our intention to educate the entire student body as we make every effort to raise awareness and set standards that continue to promote character in our students.

Tuesday morning, I had an opportunity to visit two classrooms at SFMMS. With the advancements this generation displays in electronic devices, it was nice to see students successfully engaged with technology. Even more impressive was my visit to Mrs. Bowman's art class where the students were entirely attentive and engaged in a CD design project under the supervision of a substitute. As I looked around, it was obvious that Mrs. Bowman had left detailed lesson plans that were well thought out and developed. For the benefit of our students, I encourage each teacher to follow Mrs. Bowman's example. Great job!

Arriving at a middle school football game on Tuesday, I encountered a group of students who I had not previously seen at a Tuesday night activity, the middle school flag core. After chatting with them, I walked around the corner and visited with the Middle School Symphonic Band. I got to meet the first chairs in the band (Jessica, Harlie, Breanna and Zoe) and they were nice enough to entertain me with *Wipe Out*. As an added bonus, I arrived early enough to hear members of our choir (Shaylee, Parker, Kayla and Rebecca) sing our *National Anthem* before kickoff. I left the middle school that night thankful for all the sponsors who dedicate so much time to enhancing the lives of our students.

Every now and then I get to be Superintendent and Dad all at once. Tuesday night I had the opportunity to visit SFMMS for one of those rare opportunities – Open House. Walking around the hallways and visiting with teachers was interesting, but I was most impressed with the number of parents, the dedication of the teachers and the display of student work. I finished a very successful Tuesday by attending the Queens Volleyball game where the victory against Eagle Pass was witnessed by so many Lonnie Green students and staff. When I commented that Lonnie Green was well represented, I was reminded that Coach Elizondo, Head Volleyball Coach, teaches at Lonnie Green. Way to show support for our athletes!

State law requires that superintendents and chief financial officers complete 10 hours of investment training. I am pleased to note that I fulfilled this requirement on Thursday and Friday of this past week. Unfortunately, I had to drive all the way to the Rio Grande Valley to accomplish this requirement. On a positive note, I was able to join our Del Rio Family in Laredo during my return travel. Visiting a familiar place, I saw many of our High School students strolling around and having fun before the football activities.

Although my week seemed short, due to my traveling requirements, Saturday morning allowed me to participate in a workshop with the School Board. With the exception of taking sides on the [UT/OU](#) game, it was nice to see that our School Board continues to work as a single unit moving the district forward. Upon the completion of the workshop, my son and I attended what has probably been the most thrilling volleyball match of the season. Our Queens defeated the Alexander Lady Bull Dogs in a five game match. Our girls fell short the first two games before winning 3 straight games to win the match. Great job ladies!

As we move into week two of the second grading period, I want to encourage our instructional staff to continue to work with your campus instructional leadership team in the implementation of the Planning Protocol. Reflecting on the outcome of the first round of district assessments, I have heard of some teachers wanting to revert to the old *Drill and Kill* methods of instruction. I want to caution that when critics of public education speak out against us, they are mostly referring to these types of *Drill and Kill* instructional methodologies. We must continue to work together to increase the rigor our students experience on a daily basis through authentic instruction. While the first round of scores on district assessments indicate the need for some improvement, I am encouraged by the fact that these scores are overall higher than last year's scores. If we continue to create opportunities for students to experience learning at the highest level possible, we are producing lifelong learners. This is what our district strives for; looking beyond just the success of our students on a state assessment and into their future success for college and career.

At the Elementary level we compared results for 27 Six Weeks Assessments and were able to observe growth in 17 of the 27 assessments, while results for 5 additional assessments remained mostly unchanged. At the Secondary level we compared results for 39 Six Weeks Assessments and were able to observe significant growth in 24 assessments while results for one assessment remained mostly unchanged. On a final note, it is important to state that this year's assessments are written at a more rigorous level. We will not deviate or alter our instructional plan; instead we will work together to continue to make improvements.

“Our deep spiritual confidence that this nation will survive the perils of today...compels us to invest in our nation's future, to consider and meet our obligations to our children and the numberless generations that will follow.” – John F. Kennedy