

April 7, 2015

Easter break, for me, is by far the most enjoyable break of all. First, the break is not long enough to plan anything tiring, but long enough to dedicate it to rest and relaxation; second, the feel of spring provides a sense of newness and creates a tremendous burst of energy; and third, for the last eight years my [family](#) and I have spent this break with lifelong friends in [Concan](#), TX. [Five families](#) and guests usually comprise over 30 of us that enjoy [swimming](#), [kayaking](#), [tubing](#), [volleyball](#), [baseball](#) and great food. It's just a great time.

The Concan retreat also provided a lot of time for reading and thinking about the direction our District is headed. While I am absolutely convinced that there is a tremendous amount of work that lies ahead, I am equally convinced that before us are great opportunities for our students and our community. For example, just yesterday I received an email informing us that our application for an Early College High School (ECHS) designation has been approved by TEA. By next August our first cohort of freshman students will be enrolled in dual credit courses. We trust that these same students will graduate having earned approximately 60 transferrable credits and will have experienced classes at the repurposed Central Administration building.

The ECHS (completed construction planned for August 2016) is just one of three high school redesign initiatives we are undertaking. The other two initiatives include the [CTE Academy](#) (completed construction planned for August 2016) and the Blended Academy (completed construction planned for December 2015). I am anxious to name the principals for ECHS and the Blended Academy so that we may begin to roll out the curricular plans, enroll students, and begin the new experience that is sure to add value to our District.

I am also pleased to note that we will award a contract for the [Student Activity Center/Administration Building](#) this month and break ground soon after. This renovation of the Old Del Rio High School is scheduled to be completed by December 2015.

With the high school redesign initiatives and related construction underway, I am pleased to prioritize some elementary initiatives. Specifically, we will focus our energy over the next couple of months on the rezoning of our elementary attendance zones; the implementation of bilingual newcomer centers; construction of new elementary facilities; and a potential Elementary STEM Magnet.

All of the secondary and elementary redesign initiatives coupled with existing curricular reform initiatives (Planning Protocol & Electronic Resources) are monumental to say the least. However, I am certain that understanding these reforms will bring our District into the 21st century learning standards. This will in turn create opportunities that will transform our entire community and will provide for us the energy to see them through. I am hopeful that all of us will be around for the grand finally.

In closing this blog and considering all the work we have done, and the monumental work that is ahead of us, I want to thank all of the teachers and students that create opportunities for all of us to enjoy our job. Today I want to highlight three experiences that I thoroughly enjoyed last week. First, I want to thank the teachers at Lamar Elementary. While I did a routine walkthrough to observe STAAR testing, I was treated to a classroom experience that provided a glimpse of what our instructional reform should look like. I saw a teacher providing [Guided Instruction](#) (Planning Protocol Step 5) to a small group of students while two other [interventionist](#) worked to [strengthen](#) the skills of two small groups of students. The students were entirely engaged – excellent work!

Next, I was able to stop by Dr. Lonnie Green and congratulate the [Panther Young Notes](#) for the work they did in Disney World. Their hard work has proven that magical dreams do come true. Finally, I end the week in Laredo where a whole lot of us, including the [Ram](#), displayed our [school spirit](#) and saw our boys play their hearts out in the second round of the playoffs. Although our boys fell short, our [Girls Soccer](#) stole the show winning by a [score of 3 to 1](#). Our kids were awesome! Not only did they create [experiences](#) for themselves, they also provided something [extra special](#) for the rest of us.

Do the difficult things while they are easy and do the great things while they are small. A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step. – Lao Tzu