

September 19, 2016

Over the course of the last 90 days I have made it a point to visit with educational leaders from our [Sister City – Ciudad Acuña](#). Through these conversations it has become evident that our students share absolutely the same aspirations and face similar obstacles. By extension, we also agreed that our school systems also share identical challenges. There was, however, one tremendous distinction between our system and theirs. Through our dialogue, we agreed that our SFDRCSISD system invests a large part of our wealth in programs which add value to our student's self-esteem, school connection, and creativity. These programs include athletics, fine arts and UIL academics, Leader In Me, Capturing Kid's Hearts and counseling. They postulated, and I agreed, that these programs have prevented increased crime rates, dropout rates, suicide rates and many other devastations which are prevalent in other communities.

As we continue through this academic year, it is wonderful to see that every elementary school has officially received The Leader In Me training. Buena Vista received their boost of leadership in early August and our other elementary schools are either in their first or second year of transforming into the belief that – Every child is capable. Every child is a leader. It completely blows me away when we see leadership visible amongst students. When their conversations about concerns are initiated using proactive language, when they think win-win and when they take the time to synergize; we can almost guarantee this initiative is well on its way to making a lasting impact.

We know that the key to the success of these initiatives does not lie on what students produce, but the faithfulness with which teachers and campus staff create opportunities for students to practice these great habits. Successful Leader in Me schools first get their own teachers on the same page and improve the climate among their staff before they can make it come alive with the students. It is evident in the visibility of the climate and culture at Chavira Elementary that there has been a buy-in to this belief. Lighthouse teams, we thank you for your commitment to making this common language a daily part of our schools.

On Wednesday I had the pleasure of observing [Mrs. Cardenas' class](#) where I was able to witness the Leader in Me program in action. [Daniel](#), a 5th-grade table leader, explained that he is in charge of keeping his table (a group of students) on task, collaborating, and motivated to learn while [Mrs. Cardenas](#) works around the classroom with small groups. Students take on leadership roles, inside and outside of the classroom, daily with pride and fidelity. Every classroom has a '[leader of the pack](#)' where a student takes on leadership roles tailored to each classroom's need/s. Other leadership opportunities to highlight include student led [morning announcements](#) and student [safety patrol](#) leaders which make the school a safe place to be. The Leader in Me program has definitely made a mark at Ruben Chavira Elementary. Nicely Done!

Another experience I wanted to share with you was the [high school pep rally](#) held this past Friday. In observance of the Mexican holiday, Dieciséis de Septiembre, our high school students celebrated a [Si Se Puede](#) Pep Rally. The Pep Rally was entirely respectful of the Mexican culture, high [energy](#), and very school spirited. It was a great way to start our Friday and absolutely set the tone for a great [victory](#) which came hours later in San Antonio. Great job to everyone who helped with the organization of the Pep Rally!

In closing this blog, I want to spotlight the beginning of an exciting process in the development of a future facilities plan for our District. The San Felipe Del Rio CISD Facility and Operations Citizens Committee initiated their first meeting last week. Dr. Irene Garza, former Superintendent and Facilitator for the 2016 Citizens Committee, lead the group through introductions, the Charge of the Committee, a brief summary and discussion of the work of prior citizens' committees which included the charge to build an elementary campus to the north and one in the center of town. She also presented an overview of the administrative work completed over the past three years and a review of property options for land sites for future elementary campuses. Committee members were also invited to participate in site visits to these properties during the course of this week. Thank you community members for your time and commitment, your perspectives and your collaboration in this important task.

“The ends you serve that are selfish will take you no further than yourself but the ends you serve that are for all, in common, will take you into eternity.” – Marcus Garvey