

January 12, 2015

Welcome back from a well-deserved break! Hopefully the first week back was a smooth transition for everyone. It suddenly became clear to me that the end of the first semester is upon us this week. The fact that we have been busy for half a year already leads me to worry about the energy level each of us currently has, especially after being able to sleep late and take naps during the day. In visiting campuses and making my rounds this week, my worries quickly subsided as I took note of all the exciting things that continue to occur for our teachers and students.

This past week I was informed on the progress of our Educator Excellence Innovative Program (EEIP) grant implementation. We now have eight additional [Language Arts teachers](#) who are ESL certified. Our goal is to provide an educational setting for our Bilingual/ESL students that is exactly the same in content and rigor to all other students. Thanks to the incentives provided by the grant and the hard work of our DRMS language arts teachers we are moving closer to our goal. In recognition of their efforts, our teachers have received a \$2,000 bonus. Great Job!

Having received the wonderful EEIP update, I decided to visit Calderon Elementary and observe the implementation of our other grant, the Technology Lending Grant. I visited Mrs. Villarreal fifth grade classroom and was thoroughly impressed with the ease with which the [students](#) navigated through their iPad software. As Mrs. Villarreal discussed different landforms, the students were able to readily observe pictures of these landforms immediately in front of them. The students are also able to take their [devices](#) home (loaded with internet access) and work on Think Through Math, Study Island, and Istation.

Although the work load seems to pile up after a holiday break, I did find time to participate with students in their extra-curricular activities. Being that it is basketball season, I found myself enjoying gym time as a spectator. On Tuesday I was able to travel to San Antonio and enjoy a [JV](#) and Varsity game against the Southwest Dragons. The kids worked hard and represented us well. Later in the week, I stopped by Del Rio Middle School and saw our seventh and [eighth grade boys](#) play strong against San Angelo. It is great to see good sportsmanship and the degree of support the coaches provide for our students as they mold them to be dedicated athletes.

I ended the work week on an incredibly positive note. Saturday morning I stopped by Annex 1 and visited with [28 teachers](#) who gave up their Saturday to receive support that will help them pass their bilingual state certification exam. I was tremendously impressed with the level of training and the commitment from each of our teachers. As an added note, each teacher that completes their bilingual certification will receive a \$4,000 bonus. I commend each of these hard working teachers and wish them the best of luck.

To end the day on Saturday I visited the Val Verde County Fair Grounds where I was invited to be an [honorary](#) judge for the 4-H activities. Before engaging in the formal activities, I enjoyed some wonderful Bar-B-Q – these 4-H dads sure do know how to cook! I was able to observe students displaying their [love](#) for the program and demonstrate the excellent [work ethic](#) that is developed through 4-H. Congratulations to every community member that has worked so hard to create these wonderful opportunities for our students.

In closing this week's blog, I want to take the time to provide some encouraging words that I hope will positively jump start the second semester. With testing season fast approaching, I understand staff and students feel the pressure to achieve success. As a teacher, you must remain deliberately mindful of the power you have to assist in students' success. Remaining optimistic, energized, and focused on the job at hand (student growth and success) will not only help you feel confident, but also helps students feel less of the pressure to test and more of the power to learn for the sake of being successful life-long learners. The road to mastery isn't easy. But it becomes easier to manage when you surround yourself with support. Collaboration and continued dialogue will help each of us manage the challenges we inevitably face and ensure that we stay focused and true to our calling.

"The achievements of an organization are the results of the combined effort of each individual." – Vince Lombardi