

Right before I sat down to write this blog I noticed my oldest daughter looking at a school calendar and counting the weeks that remain before we enjoy our Spring Break. According to Corina, there are four weeks of classes between us and Spring Break. Observing my daughter's eager anticipation for Spring Break caused me to consider how eager, and perhaps tired, everyone else must be or will be by Spring Break time. The truth of the matter is that the Spring Semester is fast and furious!

Lots of teaching and learning coupled with numerous students' activities makes for exciting but taxing days for our staff. Somehow the [cold days](#) make everything more [memorable](#) but also contribute to that eager anticipation for Spring Break. I appreciate the many [teachers](#), [coaches](#), [parents](#), and [student groups](#) that have given much of their time to make sure our students get the [best](#) experiences public education can provide. Each of you are truly making education a "forever" experience that will then create an "eternal" joy.

In these few weeks of the second semester we have observed so much teacher and student work. All though not all inclusive, here are just a few of these activities: [Science Fairs](#) at each elementary campus, including a District Science Fair; our girls' basketball team has completed their season and are now moving on to the playoffs; our boys' basketball team will complete their season this coming week in Laredo; our [golf](#) teams have [enjoyed](#) their local tournaments; our elementary students have been benchmarked and our secondary students will take their benchmarks this week; soccer for both boys and [girls](#) is well underway; Softball has also seen its [first pitch](#) and baseball will soon begin; and we have opened an [exhibit center](#) at Plaza del Sol Mal - in [style](#). I hope you will stop by the exhibit center and [observe](#) some our [student's work](#).

This past week our Central Administration staff began an activity called Campus Learning Walks. The Campus Learning Walks consist of approximately twenty Central Administration personnel visiting a campus – as a group - to determine how Central Administration can improve our support for the instructional reform (Planning Protocol) and other campus operations. This past week four campuses were visited: Garfield Elementary, Chavira Elementary, North Heights Elementary, and Buena Vista Elementary. In the weeks to come we will have the opportunity to visit all campuses.

Although we saw lots of wonderful instruction, I want to take this opportunity to remind all of our teachers that our purpose of visiting classrooms during the Learning Walks is not to inspect particular classroom instruction. Instead, our purpose is to determine the progress of the Planning Protocol throughout our District. After visiting well over 120 classrooms this past week, we are incredibly pleased with the progress we have made since the beginning of the school year. After only a few short months we can tell that the Planning Protocol is beginning to shape the instructional culture of our District. We see evidence of strong teacher collaboration, faithful curriculum implementation, and strong trends towards increased rigor. Excellent job!

We have lots to celebrate as there is strong evidence that we are clearly headed in the right direction. However, I want to be cautious and remind everyone that true instructional reform takes years of refinement and consistent implementation. In consideration of this we will work and live as lifelong learners alongside our students. I believe that together we can best determine how we can improve the use of our staff development days and daily planning sessions. Thank you for all that you have done and will continue to do!

Next, I want to highlight one of our student's heroes. This week, the focus is on [Ms. Rocio Peña](#), a fourth grade teacher at Garfield Elementary. The success of [Ms. Peña's students](#), in part, can be attributed to her excellent use of anchor charts and use of journaling. The emphasis she places on [vocabulary development](#) and her use of guiding questions is a model to be followed. Although she is an excellent teacher with lots of instructional skills, I was most impressed with how much she enjoyed teaching her students. Congratulations on a job well done!

In closing this blog, I want to highlight this past Friday's boys' basketball game. Not only was this the last game of the season, it was also [parents night](#). It was so nice to see so many parents fill the Carl Guys Gymnasium and be honored by the student athletes they have supported all year long. The [Dance Company's](#) performance was absolutely an added bonus.

*"Let us think of education as the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope and dream which, fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone and greater strength for our nation." - John F. Kennedy*