

Alvord ISD Family:

Our school year is off to a great start and flying by. I can't believe today is the last day of September. As we enjoy the fall weather I find myself frequently thinking about a training we went to this past summer.

18 staff members, including all of our principals and myself, attended a 4 day Great Expectations (GE) training in Coppell in July. We have several others in the district who have been to this training in the past. I went because I wanted to learn more about the program after seeing the success we have had with it at our elementary campus.

While GE has been a successful program for us it's people, not programs, that make the difference. Programs like GE give us the ability to clarify our identity. Successful schools know who they are, what they believe in, why we are doing this, and how we do things. If we don't have a clearly established identity we will never be great.

So what is our identity in Alvord ISD? I spent some time last year working with 3 different teams to help me determine that. I met with a team of teachers, a team of parents, and our admin team where we answered the following questions: what do we stand for, what do we live for, what do we want, what do we have, and what will we do?

What I learned is that as a district and community we value success, unity and excellence. We want everyone to be involved and feel welcome at school. We have pride in our community, in our kids, and in our schools. Most importantly, **we work together** to meet the **high expectations** we have for our kids and our schools.

The Great Expectations program fits our identity. I have copied a link to the GE Eight Expectations for Living below. I believe these expectations match up with who we are:

<http://www.greatexpectations.org/eight-expectations>

One thing in particular that was emphasized at the GE training that resonated with me was the value of a handshake. The speaker encouraged us to teach our kids to greet each other and adults with a handshake, direct eye contact, a smile, and to call others by their name. This good old-fashioned greeting establishes a relationship of respect.

I started off the year by emphasizing the value of the handshake with our staff. Some of our staff members have had a little fun with me by making sure they shake my hand every time they see me! I have been really pleased by the number of students who have shaken my hand and said hello. I believe this fits with our small town and small school values. We believe in good manners, encouraging each other, and treating others like we want to be treated. This is the way we do things. This is who we are.

I am excited to see what our students and staff will accomplish this year. We have our fair share of challenges and opportunities ahead of us. Like many districts we have budget issues to work through. We are also working on a plan to improve our facilities. How will we meet our high expectations? We have a community that supports our schools. We have parents and staff members who are willing to do whatever it takes to see our kids succeed. **Working together we can achieve anything.**

Thanks for everything you do for our students. Have a great weekend!