

Success has sparked growth



DR. RICK SCHNEIDER

Superintendent

The beginning of a new school year creates a sense of excitement and anticipation. When the opening bell sounds, our campuses will once again be filled with the smiling faces and laughter of children, eager to begin a year full of wonder and learning.

Our students and teachers have much to celebrate as we dive into this school year. They worked hard and rose to new levels of achievement last year as student passing percentages on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills showed improvement in all subject areas at all grade levels. Furthermore, our students and teachers can be proud of the national recognition they received as several schools earned high marks for their sustained excellence in academic performance by The National Center for Educational Accountability and the Just For The Kids organization.

Our teachers do an excellent job of educating our students. It is that continued success that has sparked our growth and is leading us into the challenges of the year ahead.

One dilemma that faces our district is our rapid growth, which outside studies have shown is two years ahead of projections. A facilities audit has also shown the need for renovations of some schools, while replacing some aging campuses. MetroStudy estimates that there will be 6,220 closings on new single family housing units within the district by 2007. Enrollment is also predicted to climb from 46,133 to more than 52,000 students by 2006.

For the past year, the Future Facilities Committee, comprised of more than 80 community members, examined the growth trends and suggested what steps the district should take to brace for the future. The committee presented a plan to our Board of Trustees for review that includes \$339.86 million in new facilities and renovations. Pending board approval, it would require voter approval of the package to set the projects in motion.

Major aspects of the proposal include the building and implementation of middle schools that would house fifth and sixth grades, the construction of a sixth high school to relieve projected overcrowding at Dobie and Memorial high schools, two new elementary schools, replacement campuses for five schools and several other renovations.

With these developments taking shape, demographic studies show that enrollments will see a significant increase. The study says Beverly Hills and Thompson intermediate schools will top 1,300 students by 2008, with Dobie High School's enrollment climbing to 4,400 students. Studies also show that Jessup Elementary will grow to more than 1,300 students in four years.

Seven of our 10 intermediate schools enroll more than 1,000 students today. Four of those seven schools have more than 1,100 students. By 2006, all 10 schools will exceed a student enrollment of 1,000 students. In two years, three elementary schools will exceed 1,000 students with 19 campuses exceeding the district's goal of 750 students for its elementary schools.

We are indeed faced with a challenge of making room for the children who are here and those who are coming to Pasadena ISD.

The facilities proposal not only addresses the bricks and mortar aspect, but also learning inside school doors. To that end, the Future Facilities Committee recom-

mended implementing a middle school concept as a transition between elementary and intermediate schools. New campuses, housing fifth and sixth graders, would provide more intense instruction directed specifically at these students. The committee recommended this proposal based upon available research that centers on the closer match between the intellectual, emotional and social development of fifth and sixth grade students.

The rise of new housing developments has greatly contributed to rapidly increasing enrollments at Dobie and Memorial high schools, which prompted the committee to propose a plan for a sixth high school west of State Highway 3 that would relieve both schools of potential overcrowding. The same growth trends sparked the committee to propose the construction of two new elementary campuses in the southern portion of the district in the Blackhawk and Riverstone Ranch areas.

Creating a safe and healthy learning environment was also a concern of the Future Facilities Committee. Based on the information they received in a year-long facilities audit, the committee suggested to the board that replacement schools be built for aging campuses such as Kruse, Richey and Pearl Hall elementary schools, as well as San Jacinto and Southmore intermediate schools.

The committee's plan also includes capital improvements and increases safety measures for many other campuses in the district. These facilities plans are being reviewed thoroughly by our Board of Trustees.

The continually rising levels of student achievement have made our area and Pasadena ISD an attractive place for families to call home. We must continue to follow our vision for success for all children. We must also have the facilities to accommodate them.

Immunizations from page 7

Varicella (Chickenpox)

Students born on or after September 2, 1994, are required to show proof of one dose of varicella vaccine received on or after the first birthday or a parent or physician validated history of varicella illness (chickenpox) or serologic confirmation of varicella immunity.

Students born on or after September 2, 1988, but before September 2, 1994, are required to show proof by 30 days past their 12th birthday of one dose of varicella vaccine received on or after the first birthday or a parent or physician validated history of varicella illness (chickenpox) or serologic confirmation of varicella immunity. Two doses of varicella vaccine are required if the student is 13 years old or older at the time the first dose is received.

PROOF OF IMMUNIZATIONS

Proof of immunizations shall consist of personal records by a licensed physician or public health clinic with a signature or rubber-stamp validation.

EXCEPTIONS FROM COMPLIANCE

Upon receipt of a certificate or affidavit as specified in the law, exceptions from compliance may be permitted on an individual basis.

Medical Reasons: The student must present a statement signed by the student's physician (M.D. or D.O.), duly registered and licensed to practice medicine in the United States who has examined the student, in which it is stated that, in the physician's opinion, the vaccine required is medically contraindicated or poses a significant risk to the health and well-being of the student or any member of the student's household. The physician's statement must identify the specific vaccine(s) and reasons why they would pose a significant risk to the student or any member of the student's household. Unless it is written in the statement that a lifelong condition exists, the exemption statement is valid for only one year from the date signed by the physician.

Reasons of Conscience, including Religious Beliefs: If the student's parent or guardian declines vaccinations for reasons of conscience, including because of the person's religious beliefs, the parent or guardian must present to the school a notarized official Texas Department of Health affidavit requesting the immunization exemption. No other forms or reproductions will be allowed. Parents or guardians must request affidavit forms in writing and include the child's full name and date of birth. Written requests for the affidavit must be submitted through the United States Postal Service, commercial carrier, facsimile (512-458-7544) or hand delivery to the Texas Department of Health, Bureau of Immunization and Pharmacy Support, 1100 West 49th Street, Austin, Texas 78756. If the student is transferring from another Texas school and awaiting the transfer of immunization records, including the official TDH vaccine exemption affidavit, Texas Education Agency policy requires a school district to provisionally enroll the student for no more than 30 calendar days. The vaccine exemption affidavit must be renewed two years from the date notarized. Students who have not received the required immunizations for reasons of conscience, including religious beliefs, may be excluded from school in times of emergency or epidemic declared by the commissioner of public health.

ENROLLING OF NEW STUDENTS

A student who has not previously been enrolled in a school and/or district in Texas must obtain immunizations - to the extent it is medically feasible - before he/she will be eligible to enroll. Thereafter, additional immunizations must be completed as soon as it is medically feasible. A student transferring from another school and/or district in Texas shall be allowed to enroll pending receipt of immunization records. A grace period of no more than thirty (30) calendar days shall be allowed for the school to receive such records. One week (7 calendar days) shall be allowed for updating incomplete immunization records received during this 30-day period.

FAILURE TO COMPLY

The principal shall exclude, but not withdraw, the student for non-compliance. Such absences are unexcused and in violation of compulsory attendance laws.

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Pasadena Independent School District, requiring the commitment of all employees, parents, business and community members, and students, is to guarantee all students will:

- acquire the knowledge
- master the skills, and
- maximize the talents

necessary to fulfill their potential as responsible citizens in the ever-changing world of the 21st century.

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PINNACLE

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