



S T A M P E D E

September 28, 2007

A Publication of the Devine Independent School District

DISD PARENT

Superintendent's Notes

by Rickey Williams

Trying to explain school finance is one of the more challenging aspects of my job, especially when dealing with tax collection rates, Tier I, II and III funding, assessed values, hold-harmless provisions, homestead exemptions, the 65 years

and older tax freeze, existing debt allotment, instructional facilities allotment, maintenance tax notes, the difference in Maintenance & Operations and Interest & Sinking tax rates, property poor and property wealthy districts, etc. Kind of makes my head swim.

That said, let's take one more plunge into the murky waters of school finance and look at how we get the money to operate the District. Devine ISD receives about 66% of its money from the state and the rest from local tax payers.

On November 6, Devine ISD voters will have the opportunity to give every employee in the district a raise by approving the tax rate set at \$1.235. This is a reduction from last year's tax rate of \$1.377 yet will generate about \$1.2 million more a year. If a majority vote against the \$1.235, the tax rate will be set at \$1.105. Simply put, in Devine, for every \$1000 generated from local taxes, the state will match with about \$3000. So at the end of the year, the District will have \$4000. If our banks gave us that kind of return on our money, we'd all be rich! So how is it possible to have a lower tax rate and generate more money? It's all a part of the legislature's plan to lower property taxes by raising business taxes. Yes, it's six one way and a half dozen the other. Yes, the state is robbing Peter to pay Paul. Yes, the state is taking money out of your front pocket and putting it in your back pocket. However, only communities that vote for the tax increase will receive the money, but they'll be paying the new state business tax regardless. That's like the state taking money out of Devine's front pocket and putting it in Pearsall's back pocket. Currently, there are 115 school districts across the state being required to have elections to approve their tax rates.

So please vote and look at our District's web site for a 10 slide power-point presentation with more information concerning the election to set the tax rate. The link is

http://devineisd.org/district/news/election_to_approve_tax_rate.mht

or for a PDF version: http://devineisd.org/district/news/election_to_approve_tax_rate.pdf

District Facility Improvements



Greenhouse nears completion



Intermediate principal Scott Sostarich gives tour of new science lab during September board meeting.



Board members, teachers, and guests tour the completely renovated fifth grade wing during September board meeting.

How to reach us...

Administration	851-0795
High School.....	851-0895
Middle School	851-0695
Intermediate	851-0495
Elementary	851-0395
Special Education ...	851-0881
Cafeteria	851-0413
Headstart office.....	665-5456
Transportation	851-0753

End-of-Course Exams Replace TAKS in Grades 9-11

by Linda McAnelly

In the last legislative session, Texas lawmakers passed senate/house bills to replace TAKS Tests in grades 9-11 with end-of-course exams. Currently, Texas public high school students must pass the TAKS in four subject areas—math, science, English-language arts and social studies—to receive a high school diploma. "The bill would allow students to take 12 state-created, uniform exams throughout their high school years and score at least a composite of 840, which is an average of 70 for every test," said Sen. Florence Shapiro, R-Plano, who authored the bill. "The test also would account for 15 percent of the student's final grade in the class and would allow the students who test poorly in one subject but test well in another area to compensate," Shapiro said.

The end-of-course exams would be applied to Algebra I, Algebra II, geometry, biology, chemistry, physics, English I, English II, English III, world geography, world history and United States history. Devine ISD must participate in the May 2008 U.S. History and chemistry end-of-course exams.

Many lawmakers believe that the TAKS Test is too broad an indicator to determine what a student has learned, and end-of-course exams are a more accurate indication of a student's ability. To prepare Texas's 9th to 11th graders for the Texas End-of-Course Exams, Devine ISD and other selected districts will participate in mandatory U.S History and chemistry end-of-course field tests during May 2008. Although DISD will not receive any test results from the May 2008 end-of-course field tests, our students must participate in these mandatory tests as directed by Texas Education Agency. The field test data is used by Pearson Education, the testing entity for TAKS and EOC Tests, to build high-quality assessments and set appropriate passing standards for the Texas testing program.



Stephanie Kohleppel, Elementary Counselor pictured with Principal, Mrs. MacKaron



Shirley Haass, Cafeteria Manager pictured with Supervisor, Pam Patteson.

Devine ISD Public Meetings: Election to Approve Tax Rate

Devine ISD will be holding public meetings to present information about the November 6th election to set the tax rate.

Tuesday, October 2, 2007

8:15 a.m. (during PTO executive meeting) Devine Intermediate Cafeteria

Tuesday, October 2, 2007

7:00 p.m. Devine Intermediate Cafeteria

Monday, October 8, 2007

7:00 p.m. Devine Community Center 200 E Hondo (next to Driscoll Public Library)

Monday, October 22, 2007

7:00 p.m. Devine Middle School Cafeteria

End-of-Course Exams Continued

With the passage of these bills, the TAKS test would be phased out starting with ninth grade students and above in the 2009-10 school year, and end-of-course exams would be phased in instead. "Many lawmakers think that the end-of-course exams cover more specific material that students are taught during the course of the school year," said State Rep. Dennis Bonnen, co-author of the House version of the bill, HB 2236. The end-of-course exams will only cover material taught specifically in the course, and teachers will not have to teach their subjects as well as content from previous years.

Mentoring Support for New Teachers

by Glenda Allen

Devine ISD is striving to retain first and second year teachers through an improved mentoring support system. The district has always provided mentors and administrative support for new teachers and in the last three years, Lisa Rogers from Educating Diverse Learners has provided support through observations and feedback. But this year, the district is developing a more structured system through mentor, mentee, and administrative communication and observations, guidelines and timelines to direct these measures, researched based materials and observation forms for both mentors and mentees, and support checklists.

Why is mentoring support so important? Research from the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) states that 73% of teachers leave the profession the first three years on the job. More recent statistics from the National Education Association (NEA) states that more than half of new teachers currently leave the profession within five years. NEA also reports that most new teachers still feel isolated, and whether they stay in the profession for the long haul depends a great deal on their ability to "sink or swim" during that first year or two. A study by the U.S. Department of Education found educators that participate in new teacher induction/mentor programs are nearly twice as likely to stay in the profession as those who don't.

Consequently, with the increase in state and federal testing accountability and in the attempt to keep teacher salaries competitive with neighboring districts, the importance of attracting and keeping committed teachers is critical. In May of 2007, the DISD school board actually named teacher retention as one of their 2007-08 priorities. This priority ties in directly with one other: student success on state assessments. Research from NEA also indicates, "what common sense has told us all along: that a critical predictor of student success is teacher quality."

DISD mentors and mentees met prior to the beginning of school to review the purpose of and to outline the mentoring support system. A two-day training was conducted earlier this month by Lisa Rogers, and she will continue to provide support throughout the school year, along with that of campus administrators, and the guidelines set forth in the district mentoring program.

Effective mentoring support allows new teachers to focus less on survival and more on student success.

Attendance Q & A

by Lori Marek

At what point does the district file charges on parents or students for having too many absences?

State law regarding mandatory school attendance REQUIRES school districts to file charges if/when: a student has accrued 3 or more unexcused partial or full-day absences within any 4-week period, or a student has accrued 10 or more unexcused partial or full-day absences within any 6-month period.

Devine ISD will be filing all charges for the 2007-08 school year in Medina County Court, Precinct 4, with Judge Phil Montgomery.

Next time: What are some examples of "acceptable excuses" for missing school?

IMPORTANT DATES

- 10/8..... Student Holiday/Staff Development
10/15 Regular School Board Meeting
10/16-19 TAKS Exit Retest
10/26 Early Release/Teacher Prep, 1:00 p.m.
10/26 End of 1st 9 week grading period