

2009 Dallas Achieves! Community Conversations

Questions from attendees

QUESTION	ANSWER
Bond program/maintenance	
How are you deciding which bathrooms and kitchens will be renovated?	Schools scheduled for bathroom and kitchen renovations were identified by a detailed needs assessment conducted prior to the 2008 Bond Election. The scope of renovation work at all campuses is available on the district's Web site (www.dallasisd.org) by clicking on the tab labeled "2008 \$1.35 billion bond program approved."
In future bonds, can other classes be added to regular schools, such as art? That way, students don't have to apply to magnet schools that are across town?	All new schools are constructed with classrooms for fine arts.
Is it too late to submit a name for a new school? How can I get a nomination form?	Recommendations for names and name changes can be received at any time during the year and referred to the administration for comments and input from the school community involved. The board reviews all such proposals and input at its May board briefing and votes on any recommendation to the full board at its June regular board meeting. Proposed changes must be submitted before April 1 to be included in that year's consideration process. For further information and to get a nomination form, call Board Services at (972) 925-3720 or visit the Web site: www.dallasisd.org/about/boardnamingfacilitieshtm.htm
What's the status of installing a preventive maintenance system so that we repair, replace or paint our machinery and buildings proactively?	Maintenance Services implemented a Cyclic General Maintenance Program in the 2007/2008 school year in response to the need for a proactive and managed care approach to general maintenance activities at Dallas ISD facilities. The Cyclic General Maintenance Program addresses electrical, plumbing, and general maintenance activities such as flooring, carpentry, and masonry.
What can we do so that West Dallas schools get the benefits that are due them so that they are maintained well and can be a legacy to future students and teachers?	The West Dallas schools receive the same benefits we give to South, East, and North Dallas schools, such as our cyclic maintenance program visits and weekly scheduled maintenance campus walk throughs with principals.

<p>Why are they putting the elementary schools last for breaking and repairing of the schools?</p>	<p>Maintenance Services work order tracking department receives, screens, approves, classifies, assigns, prioritizes, schedules, tracks, accounts, and reports all work throughout the facilities maintenance process, from inception to completion of work. The work orders are prioritized by severity of the problem and scheduled accordingly.</p> <p>Emergency—Respond within 2 hours, and restore in 5 days</p> <p>Urgent—Same day or 4 hours</p> <p>Priority—30-45 days</p>
<p>Security/truancy/dropout rate</p>	
<p>I would like to ask for a better way to punish children who misbehave in school because suspending them is not a punishment. It puts them behind in class, and they think it's great that they have three days to do nothing. I agree with having to pay fines. I paid \$285.</p>	<p>The Student Code of Conduct is reviewed annually. Your comment will be shared with the task force that reviews student consequences. In addition, your comment will be shared with learning community executive directors and principals.</p>
<p>What can I do about the letters they sent my daughter about absences?</p>	<p>Any time your child is absent from school, please call the school attendance office that morning. Once your child returns to school, send a written excuse from yourself or a doctor to document the absence. If you receive a letter from the school, contact the school immediately.</p>
<p>What is being done to help cut down on truancy and dropouts in middle schools and high schools?</p>	<p>The Attendance Improvement and Truancy Reduction program assists all campuses in providing prevention, intervention, and enforcement strategies/activities for parents/guardians and students depending on the student's level and history of truancy.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A computer based model, Student Attendance Monitoring System (SAMS), monitors the daily attendance of all Dallas ISD students to ensure early truancy identification, intervention, and enforcement. 2. 54,860 state-mandated Warning Notices (students missing three unexcused days or parts of a day) are centrally generated and mailed to parents/guardians. 3. Parents notified via <i>School Messenger</i> by telephone daily of the mailing Warning and Intervention Notices. 4. 18,197 Intervention Notices, if unexcused absences continue (typically for first offenders), centrally generated and mailed. Parents are requested to attend a Parent Information Forum held weekly and students are required to attend Truancy Law Class, complete community service or campus tutorial, etc.

	<p>5. Approximately 11,450 parents and students attended Parent Information Forums that assisted parents with attendance issues.</p> <p>6. 21,776 truancy cases filed in three truancy courts. 53,350 truancy hearings docketed in these courts.*</p> <p>Operation: Comeback served to identify No Show (potential dropouts) for all high school students early in the school year (September 6, 2008), physically locate them, and enroll them in the best academic setting for success.</p> <p>*Data based on 2007-2008 school year.</p>
<p>What can the community do to help bring truancy numbers down?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As business owners, refuse to serve school age students during school hours. 2. As community members, report truant youth to the Dallas Police Department providing description of youth and location. 3. Volunteer as mentors in local area schools. 4. As neighbors, inform neighboring parents if students are at home instead of at school.
<p>What proposals or grant-funded programs are being developed to meet the dropout prevention and truancy needs?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. File a truancy case on students that have withdrawn from school as dropouts or not enrolled in another Dallas ISD school as indicated when withdrawn. 2. The Dallas ISD's Alternative Programs received the <i>Dropout Recovery Pilot Program Grant</i> aimed at assisting students 19 to 25 in obtaining a high school diploma or GED. 3. Alternative Programs applied for TEA's <i>Collaborative Dropout Reduction Grant</i> that provides wraparound services including mentoring, job skills training, college preparedness, tutoring, including 17 community partnerships for 9th and 12th grader in three high schools.
<p>What are you doing to prevent drugs, gangs, and weapons inside the schools?</p>	<p>Every adult employee on a campus is a part of keeping all schools safe. The Dallas ISD Police Department takes a lead role in ensuring this safety. All secondary schools have a security person assigned. Additionally, a police officer and a security specialist are placed at high schools, and a police officer is also at many of our middle schools. All secondary schools require students to be screened with a metal detector.</p> <p>Other measures designed to keep schools safe include: drug dog searches, Crime Stoppers program and anonymous drug tip hotline. The district also has a gang intervention unit that follows up on reported gang issues.</p>
<p>Can you provide more security to all elementary schools like they have in middle schools and high schools?</p>	<p>The Dallas ISD Police Department has a uniformed patrol division with marked police cruisers that ensure police visibility and presence on elementary campuses by providing regular patrols of our elementary schools. Additionally, these patrol units</p>

	respond to all calls for service at these schools. Police and security personnel assigned to secondary schools also assist at neighboring elementary schools and provide a variety of services for them.
Why do principals put most of the responsibilities on the teachers instead of working as a team?	Principals are encouraged to work with all staff members on the campus as a team to best meet the needs of all students
Parent involvement/volunteering	
How can I become a volunteer? What are the hours and activities?	All potential volunteers are asked to complete an application online (it can be done from home or at any school); once approved, volunteers are provided with orientation and training appropriate for type of service. There are a variety of volunteer activities—mentoring, academic tutoring, providing translation support for school meetings, chaperoning field trips to name just a few. Needs vary; each campus has a volunteer coordinator who can provide further information, including times volunteers may be needed. Call (972) 925-3918 or (972) 925-3922, or visit www.dallasisd.org/partners for further information.
What can I do if I think my child’s teacher is demanding more than I think is appropriate for his/her age?	The first step is to meet with the teacher to get an understanding of what the grade level curriculum requires. The second step would be to visit with the campus principal with specific concerns.
Do you have information in Vietnamese and/or Swahili?	The district provides in-house interpreters in the following languages: Vietnamese, Spanish, and Cambodian. In addition, it contracts out for other languages including Swahili. These interpreters are available for school and community meetings, if requested by parents or by the school. They also assist during Special Education placement meetings and Youth and Family Centers psychological evaluations. Frequently used documents such as the Student Code of Conduct, Student Handbook, drug information brochures, school flyers, and parent letters are also translated into Vietnamese.
Is there a mechanism in place on the [district] Web site that parents can ask questions and receive an answer?	Currently, there is no mechanism for parents to ask questions through the Web site. There are plans, however, to provide opportunities for interactivity in the future. Parents and guardians who have questions about their child’s school are encouraged to contact the principal at the school. The Parents section of the Web site offers information about several topics of interest to parents. If more information is needed, parents should call the district’s main number, (972) 925-3700, to be connected with a person who can help them.
I am a single parent. Is there a program for parents that dropout? I want to set an example for my kids. How can I learn about this program?	The district offers GED classes through: Adult Basic Education (972) 925-4443 Conchis Silva, director Rebecca Salinas, administrative assistant

	<p>If over the age of 22 and one is looking to obtain his/her diploma call: Robert Munoz Counseling Services (972) 925-3514 or Gloria Rosas Alternative Programs (972) 925-4878</p>
<p>Are there English classes available in the evenings so parents who work during the day can attend?</p>	<p>Yes, please call the following department for more details: Adult Basic Education (972) 925-4443 Conchis Silva, director Rebecca Salinas, administrative assistant</p>
<p>General academic</p>	
<p>Schools need to recognize student achievement more. What is the district doing?</p>	<p>Individual student achievement recognition is often handled at the campus level. To offer suggestions of additional ways to recognize student achievement, please contact the principal at your school or the PTA president.</p>
<p>What are you doing to improve schools under the performance level?</p>	<p>Campuses that are low performing receive additional support to improve their performance levels through assignment to the Superintendent's Learning Community.</p>
<p>I got a letter for a student transfer and was very confused about the directions given? What is the process?</p>	<p>There are various types of transfers. For specific information on the letter received, please call: Student Transfers Office (972) 925-3270 Carroll Morgan, coordinator Florina Jayme, administrative assistant</p>
<p>Have Dallas Achieves! Goals been revised because of the RIF and current financial crisis?</p>	<p>No. Dallas Achieves' goals have not been revised.</p>
<p>What stage are we on for the Title I School Improvement? What plans does the district have to keep the TEA from taking over?</p>	<p>The district is currently reviewing all of the components of Title I to ensure that we are in compliance and that we utilize the funds to best meet our students' needs.</p>
<p>Why are they moving children from some schools to schools we don't want?</p>	<p>Movement of students from one campus to another is only approved if it is determined that student needs are better served at another campus. If this option is exercised, parents/guardians may apply for transfers or school choice options.</p>
<p>High school/scholarships/college prep</p>	

<p>Why would the [district] take out of the schools here in Dallas the reconnect [centers] when it helps us have a greater graduating class?</p>	<p>The Reconnect Centers are designed to assist students with credit recovery and assist them with meeting the requirements for graduation. The district is reviewing ways to enhance the Reconnect Program. Currently, there are no plans to eliminate them from the campuses.</p>
<p>What are the requirements to attend Early College programs?</p>	<p>Early College High Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First-generation college student (parents do not have a college degree) • 70 average or higher in all eighth grade classes • Excellent attendance • Complete application. Packets can be picked up from the middle school counselor or from the Early College High School campus. Application packets must be returned to the ECHS campus. • Students from Atwell, Comstock, Holmes, Hulcy, Jackson, Storey, Seagoville and Zumwalt are eligible to apply to ECHS - CVC. • Students from Browne, Edison, Stockard, Greiner, Garcia and Quintanilla are eligible to apply to ECHS -MVC. <p>Middle College Program is open to all students. Students are NOT required to be first generation college students. Students must apply in the spring of their eighth-grade year, provide recommendations from administrators and core subject teachers, and be interviewed.</p>
<p>I would like more information about scholarships for college. Are high schools helping students with attending college and getting scholarships for 2009?</p>	<p>There are several resources and Web sites to gain scholarship information, such as College Board and Fast Web. Contact the school counselors for specific scholarship resources and information. Counselors and college access programs that exist on many campuses help students with college, financial aid, and scholarship applications.</p>
<p>How many credits do you have to have to move from high school to college?</p>	<p>To graduate from high school, students must have 26 credits on the recommended plan, which is a requirement for most colleges/universities. Admission requirements vary from college to college. Contact the school counselor for specific college requirements.</p>
<p>What can I do to get my seventh-grader into college credit classes in high school?</p>	<p>Advanced Placement classes are available to any student. Dual credit is available for 11th- and 12th-graders (with the exception of Early College High School students) who meet eligibility requirements. Contact the school counselor for specific details.</p>
<p>Do extracurricular activities help a student for college?</p>	<p>Extracurricular activities reflect positively on college applications. Many times, colleges are interested in community service, work experience, participation in sports, and other factors in addition to academic achievement.</p>

	The time management skills and discipline students learn as they participate in these activities is of great benefit in college. Involvement in extracurricular activities is often an important consideration that colleges use to determine who will be accepted into their institutions. There are also many scholarships available to students who continue participation in these activities at the college level.
How can students get into college if they don't have a social security number?	Social Security numbers are not required for college admittance.
How many schools will have career programs and what can we do to implement it at all schools?	All secondary schools offer career courses, but some offer specific programs, such as engineering, business, etc. In order to implement specific career programs, the school would need to initiate the planning required by identifying courses and staffing certified teachers. For additional information, contact Joanne Frantzen, director of Career Education & Workforce Partnerships at (214) 932-5181.
How do you get your child into one of these career schools?	All eighth-graders can apply to the seven high school redesigned schools through the application process. This year's deadline was Jan. 30. In addition, high school students can request a curriculum transfer to other schools that offer specific career pathway programs.
Special needs programs	
If my child is in a special education program, can he later get help with scholarships?	Your child being in special education and on a minimum graduation plan may reduce opportunities for obtaining state funded scholarships. All students must meet the individual university criteria for admission and scholarships generally reserved for students on a recommended or distinguished graduation plan.
What programs or options are available for me to help my child with disabilities learn?	Special Education is required to offer a continuum of services for all students meeting eligibility requirements. In addition, the district provides a variety of instructional programs designed to meet the individual needs of an eligible student. The student's case manager and the campus support personnel are knowledgeable about the available instructional resources for students with disabilities.
Parent involvement/volunteering	
Are textbooks translated into Spanish available so I can help my child if I only speak Spanish?	State adopted textbooks are provided in English and Spanish for the elementary grades for students enrolled in the bilingual program.
If I don't speak English and my child is taught in English, I can't help with homework and assignments. Where can I go to get that sort of help for him/her?	The expected role of the parent is to show the child the importance of completing the work (not in providing the explanations or instruction) by being with them while it is done and encouraging them to do it. When your child needs help, contact your teacher about options available at your campus.
My child doesn't like to read. What can I do to get him interested in reading?	Focus on togetherness and fun. Some suggestions are provided below:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit and read aloud or listen to a book on tape together. Then, talk about it or ask your child to tell what he/she learned or tell the story to you. The important thing is to spend some time with your child in reading and talking about it and having fun together. • Make a point of finding out what interests your child and help her/him find books, articles, Internet sites that she/he wants to read. Read jokes, riddles, poems, songs, and speeches. • Make regular visits to the library to read and check out books, take part in literary events. • Make it a special time to be with your child. • Turn on the caption feature of the television and help your child follow along. Discuss the story, characters, problem, events and solution. • Play games related to the books you read together or skills that your child needs. • Make reading a reward or privilege. Allow your child to stay up 15 minutes later if they read or you read to them. <p>There are many Web sites that offer suggestions for other activities to do at home to encourage reading. One of them is listed below: www.rif.org/parents/motivate/default.msp</p>
<p>What can I do to help my children learn if I can only speak Spanish?</p>	<p>It is important that you keep using your language at home. This will help your child have a better vocabulary. What the child knows in one language, he will also know in his second language. Expressing interest to your children about their schoolwork, asking them to give you detailed explanations, encouraging them to listen attentively, and honoring time for homework are ways to help your child learn.</p>
<p>General academic</p>	
<p>My child is being taught math in English. He doesn't speak English, so he doesn't understand and is falling behind. Why can't he be taught in Spanish so he can understand and learn?</p>	<p>The dual language program is designed around keeping the two languages separate from each other. This has yielded greater results for millions of children. The child will learn math and English together with the numerous supports provided by the teacher (other than using Spanish) for instruction</p>
<p>Why are children so low in science like the graphs you have shown?</p>	<p>Our students (all grades) continue to make significant gains in science achievement. There was a 10 point gain in science scores from 2007 to 2008. Overall, lower scores in science (e.g. lower overall percent meeting standard than English language arts or social studies) are</p>

	<p>primarily attributable to a number of interrelated factors.</p> <p>Science was first tested in fifth grade only a few years ago. In the spring of 2006, the eighth grade science test was added. For many years, since science was not tested, it was not given the priority in classroom instruction that it should have been given. This is particularly evident in the eighth grade level. Science is still playing catch up to some of the other subject areas that have been tested for a decade or more.</p> <p>More resources and assistance are being directed to those schools needing support in science and significant student gains are expected, despite the passing bar being raised again for 2009.</p> <p>Though the overall percent “met standard” rate is still not acceptable in science, the Dallas ISD is still outperforming a number of comparable urban school districts in Texas.</p>
What do you see as our goals for this academic year?	The district goal is to educate our students to become college and workforce ready. We are accomplishing this task by ensuring the use of approved instructional materials and teaching strategies that are aligned to the district’s Theory of Action. Ongoing teacher and principal training is paramount so all stakeholders are delivering the same instructional information to all students across the district.
Why are students who cannot read on grade level allowed to pass to the next grade?	<p>It is very clear from the research on retention that students who are retained in a grade level, fail to catch up to their peers. In fact, sometimes, students who repeat a grade perform at a lower level than in the previous year. Instead, we offer several opportunities for intervention through the curriculum, afterschool programs, and intervention programs.</p> <p>If a student fails in TAKS grades three, five and eight, a Grade Placement Committee is required to meet to review the student’s performance, attendance, ability, emotional and physical maturity, and probable outcomes if the student is placed in the next grade or retained for the upcoming year. The committee determines what would be the best possible placement for the child.</p>
Is there anything available for kindergarten children in extracurricular activities?	Art and music teachers are assigned to all campuses in order to offer weekly art and music classes during the school day. After-school programs are offered at some campuses for kindergarten students.
What is the district doing to ensure that African-American students are being provided with the necessary tools to overcome their learning	The math department provides Curriculum Planning Guides for teachers that include tools for facilitating conceptual development in math as well as operational skills. Schools with a larger percentage of African American students who are scoring lower in math receive additional tools

hurdles in math and science?	including teacher training, calculators, incentives for math clubs, and a summer bridge program for students entering Algebra I in fall.
What specific community initiatives are taking place in the African-American community to increase academic success?	Friendship-West Baptist Church hosted a community meeting that included task force representatives to collaborate on issues. Church members subsequently organized an initiative for parents on how to facilitate student learning at home and in the community.
How can I know what schools are best for my children and if they can be accepted?	<p>One way to determine which school is best for your children is to visit a variety of schools you are interested in to determine which best meets your needs and interests.</p> <p>This answer applies when choosing a place of residence within the Dallas ISD boundary. Once a family resides in the Dallas ISD boundary, the following steps apply.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There are several sources available to obtain information about Dallas ISD Schools <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Dallas ISD Web site (www.dallasisd.org) b. The individual School Scorecards found under the Schools tab on the Dallas ISD Web site c. The Texas Education Agency Web site (www.tea.state.tx.us) 2. All students residing in the Dallas ISD are assigned to an attendance zone school. 3. Should a parent wish to attend another school within the Dallas ISD, there are several possible options. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Magnet Schools – For a description and process, contact the magnet coordinator. b. Parental Public School Choice – Eighth grade students can apply to attend a redesigned high school for ninth grade during the application window. Placements are made using a lottery. c. Curriculum Transfers – Students can apply to attend the nearest Dallas ISD school with available space that offers a course or program not offered at the attendance zone school. Curriculum transfers must be requested during the application window and follow the process as outlined in board policy FDB. d. Hardship Transfers – Students can apply to attend another Dallas ISD school with available space if personal or family circumstances create a hardship for a student to attend the attendance zone school. Hardship transfers must be requested during the application window and follow the process as outlined in board policy FDB. e. Public Education Grant Transfers – Students can apply to attend a higher

	<p>performing school (non-PEG) with available space if the attendance zone school is a PEG school. Parents are notified of PEG status in accordance with TEA. PEG transfers use the hardship application and process.</p> <p>f. NCLB School Choice – Students who attend a Dallas ISD school with a school improvement status as defined by Adequate Yearly Progress guidelines can apply to attend a select list of eligible Dallas ISD schools during the application window. Parents are notified in accordance with TEA guidelines. NCLB School Choice assignments are made at the central staff level with priority given to the lowest achieving students from low-income families as required by law.</p>
<p>What has been identified as the primary educational challenges for elementary students?</p>	<p>Across all of our grade levels, math and science are areas of focus for improvement. Mastery of literacy skills and math skills are critical for elementary students to be successful at upper grades.</p>