

Inside DSISD

DRIPPING SPRINGS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

October 2014



Board Approves Tax Rate Is Two Cents Lower than Anticipated

On Sept. 22, the Dripping Springs ISD Board of Trustees adopted a property tax rate that is two cents lower than the rate that was anticipated when the bond election was passed in May, 2014.

The approved rate for 2014-15 is \$1.52 per \$100 certified property value (\$1.04 M&O-Maintenance & Operations + .48 I&S-Interest & Sinking). Last spring, the district projected a five-cent increase over last year's rate would be necessary for the \$92.4 million bond package, which would have put the new rate at \$1.54 due to an I&S rate of .50. However, a higher-than-expected increase in property values provided a better scenario for repayment of debt, allowing the dis-

trict to implement only a three-cent increase rather than the projected five-cent increase as a result of the bond referendum. Last year's rate was \$1.49 per \$100 of value (\$1.04 M&O + .45 I&S).

"It is critically important that as a district we are good stewards of taxpayer money and respect the trust that our residents have placed in us," said Superintendent Bruce Gearing. "In this case higher property values mean more tax revenue will be generated than we had anticipated so we can meet our Debt Service payments with this lower rate. This adopted rate also helps minimize the overall impact on taxpayers considering their higher property values."

Tiger Nation Honored



Dripping Springs High School and the Tiger Nation were presented with the Sept. 22 Corner Store Spirit Award by Dave Campbell's Texas Football magazine (Head Coach/Athletic Director Joe McBride is seen accepting the award). The award is given to one high school (out of 1,400 statewide) each week during the season based on demonstration of outstanding school and team spirit. Then, following the Tigers' 23-0 upset over Cedar Park, Dave Campbell's TexasFootball.com announced that DSISD was the statewide winner of the U.S. Army Strong Team of the Week for 5A.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Superintendent's Message	2
Visit to The Thinkery	2
New Facilities Director	2
DSHS Ranked by <i>Newsweek</i>	2
Jadeja is Elite Educator	3
Senior Retreat	3
Board Briefs	3
DS Tiger Totes	4
DSHS Academic Honors	4
Campus Happenings	5
Schools Design Update	5
Grandparents Day at WSE	6
Superintendent's Podcast	6
Parent Breakfasts	6
MS/HS Theatre Productions	6

IMPORTANT DATES

October 13

Student Holiday/Staff Workday

October 17

End of Six-Week Grading Period (secondary)

October 20

Board of Trustees Agenda Review Meeting, 6:00 p.m., Central Administration

October 27

Board of Trustees Meeting, 6:00 p.m., Board Room, Central Administration

October 31

End of Nine-Week Grading Period (elementary)



Message from the Superintendent *Bruce Gearing, Ed.D.*

We continue to move into the fall and it seems that our district's energy level is at an all-time high! The school spirit at Dripping Springs High School is overwhelming, and hasn't gone unnoticed by those outside our community (see "Tiger Nation Honored" on Page 1). Volleyball is ranked among the state's top teams, football has recorded some big wins, and debate, tennis and cross country have experienced success as well.

The high school isn't the only place where exciting things are happening. Middle school athletic teams have been playing extremely well and student interest in the theatre program is tremendous as evidenced by the number who auditioned for the fall musical. Students are active in Student Council, robotics, choir and many other areas. Our elementary students are engaged in the process of becoming better leaders through the new "Leader in Me" philosophy. What a great time to be a Tiger! Also, Camp

Champions is scheduled for fifth-graders at each campus in the month of October.

One high-priority issue right now is planning for facilities included in the bond program. Voters approved a new elementary school and middle school on property just north of the Highpointe entrance on Sawyer Ranch Road.

The schools will be contained in a single building shell, but separate entrances will lead to different sections of the facility for elementary and middle school students. The connecting areas include the kitchen, the work area of the front offices, and the Center for Learning and Innovation. The CL&I is being designed as the campus hub, will have separate areas on different levels for different-aged students. There will be designated, controlled areas where staff and students can pass between the elementary and middle schools, so that we may take advantage of opportunit

ies for collaboration, off-grade-level academics, and mentoring relationships. The bond/construction website – www.dsisdbond.net – is being updated with information about the design process.

I'd like to share my pride in how well our teachers and instructional leaders are helping transform our district in the 21st Century. Dripping Springs ISD is committed to being innovative, student-centered, and personalized in our learning and teaching. We want to connect students with their passions so they will explore without boundaries and reach new heights. Thank you, parents, for being a part of that exciting journey.

Sincerely,

Bruce Gearing
Superintendent

Administrator "Field Trip"



Members of the district's administrative team recently visited "The Thinkery" to tour the facility. District staff met with the Thinkery's Associate Director of Education to learn more about the organization's approach to learning and engagement. DSISD's Facilitators for Learning and Innovation are participating in The Thinkery's "Ed Exchange" program.

Facilities Director Is Hired

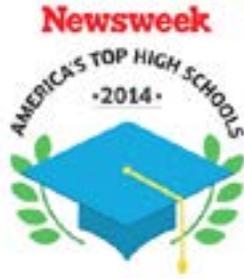
Michael Hruska will be joining DSISD as the new Director of Facilities and Construction (formerly Director of Plant Operations). He has spent 12 years with Whole Foods Market, most recently serving as director of development in charge of design and construction of new stores. Previously he had seven years of experience as a project manager. Mr. Hruska earned a bachelor's degree in economics from Montana State University.

Newsweek Recognizes DSHS as Top School

Dripping Springs High School again is featured on the Newsweek list honoring "America's Top High Schools," published in the September 2014 issue. DSHS ranked 274th in the nation and 17th in the state of Texas. Among open-enrollment comprehensive high schools only, Dripping Springs High School is ninth in the state (regardless of size).

The list identifies top-performing schools based on a metric of student achievement and college preparedness data provided by the National Center for Education Statistics and from a survey of schools performed by Newsweek. Factors considered were: enrollment rate (25 percent), gradu-

ation rate (20 percent), weighted AP/IB composite (17.5 percent), weighted SAT/ACT composite (17.5 percent), change in student enrollment between 9th-12th Grades (10 percent), and counselor-to-student ratio (10 percent).



The last time Newsweek released a high school ranking was in May of 2013, at which time Dripping Springs High School was placed #519. That poll was conducted by Newsweek in partnership with The Daily Beast; since then the two sources have separated and now each create its own ranking. DSHS was 83rd on The Daily Beast's poll that came out last month.

Jadeja Is Elite Educator

Dripping Springs High School Technology teacher Jad Jadeja is one of 25 teachers and professors in the nation recently selected to be part of the inaugural NI (National Instruments) Elite Educators Program. These educators are "thought leaders in science and engineering education, chosen for this program because of their unique approach to teaching with NI technology," according to the company.

As a member, Mr. Jadeja will have the opportunity to network and collaborate with other educators and the engineering community, receive early access to NI products, and provide input into NI tool development. The group includes nine high school teachers and 14 university professors.

"Mr. Jadeja is constantly searching for new ways to inspire his students," said Dripping Springs High School Principal Joe Burns. "He is a master at creating experiences that help students make connections between classroom concepts and real world applications. We are very proud to have Mr. Jadeja as a member of the DSHS faculty."

Mr. Jadeja teaches Computer Programming and Robotics in the DSHS Academy of Applied Science and Engineering. He also volunteers as a sponsor of the Inventors Club and the Lady Tigers Club (girls in STEM). He has been teaching at DSHS for three years after serving on the district's Technology staff for four years.

Senior Retreat is Fun for All



The annual Senior Retreat featured many team-building activities such as "Crossing the River" pictured above, capture the flag, tug-of-war, and more.

September Board Meeting Briefs

The September 22 Board of Trustees meeting opened with academic recognitions of Dripping Springs High School students honored in the National Merit program and as AP (Advanced Placement) Scholars. Dripping Springs Elementary did a Campus Spotlight on blended learning. A proclamation for School Bus Safety Month was read.

Sergio Garcia from the firm Perdue Brandon Fielder Collins & Mott reported on collection of delinquent property taxes.

Kerri Ranney and architects from

Huckabee updated the Board on the schematic design for the new elementary and middle schools to be built on Sawyer Ranch Road. She reviewed the site analysis, site plan, floor plan, "mass model" that incorporates contours of the property, and allocation of space. The Board then approved the design, meaning that design development can begin.

Other actions approved were the lease purchase of school buses, and the district safety and security audit. The Board also approved a resolution to adopt the 2014-15 tax rate of

\$1.52 per \$100 of certified property value (\$1.04 Maintenance & Operations + .48 Debt Service).

Superintendent Bruce Gearing reported on enrollment. Assistant Superintendent for Business Services Elaine Cogburn introduced the monthly financial reports. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Greg Jung presented an overview of the performance of DSHS students on last spring AP exams. Scores have increased, and participation rate has decreased mainly due to the expanded dual enrollment program.

Tiger Totes Program Continues

What is Tiger Totes?

DS Tiger Totes provides food and basic necessities for the families of students who qualify for free/reduced lunch program within Dripping Springs ISD. The effort started a few years ago at Walnut Springs Elementary, then expanded to serve families at all campuses. Backpacks or tote bags are filled with food items and given to students on Friday afternoons. These basic supplies help families in need get through the weekend. Approximately 150 families district-wide currently are being assisted through the DS Tiger Totes program.



How can you help?

DS Tiger Totes is always seeking donations in the form of money or basic food items. Suggestions are: instant oatmeal, chicken noodle soup, saltine crackers, pop-tarts, Ramen noodles, canned tomatoes, pinto beans or chili, cereal bars, fruit cups, boxed Spanish rice, microwave popcorn, and individual bags of pretzels/Fritos. They can be dropped off at Walnut Springs Elementary or any school front office. Checks can be made out to: DS Tiger Totes and mailed to: P.O. Box 282, Dripping Springs, 78620. For more information see: www.dstigertotes.org.

High School Students Receive Academic Honors

Several Dripping Springs High School students have been honored for academic achievement at the national level.



Tori Gahagan

Senior Tori Gahagan has been selected as a National Merit semifinalist in the 60th annual National Merit Scholarship Program. Semifinalists represent less than one percent of U.S. high school

seniors, and were the highest scoring students on the 2013 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT). To become a finalist, a student must have an outstanding high school academic record, be recommended by the school principal, and submit SAT scores that confirm his/her earlier qualifying test performance. Finalists will be announced in February 2015.

In addition, nine other DSHS seniors were named as Commended Scholars in the 2015 National Merit Scholarship Program. Commended students are: Cole Crawford, Kristina Dickinson, Alyssa Fowler, Madeline Kennedy, Sydney Neugebauer, Abigail Schmidt, Savannah Shifflet, Robert Thomas, and Haley Willis. These seniors placed among the top five percent of more than 1.5 million students

nationally who took the PSAT/NMSQT. Approximately 34,000 Commended Scholars have been named nationally.

Dripping Springs High School students performed extremely well on Advanced Placement (AP) exams administered in the spring of 2014.

The College Board's Advanced Placement Program provides motivated and academically prepared students with an opportunity to take rigorous college-level courses while still in high school, and to potentially earn college credit with a score of 3, 4 or 5 (on a 5-point scale) on the AP exam.

Of the total exams taken by DSHS students, 79.6 percent of tests received scores of 3, 4, or 5, which can earn credit at most colleges and universities. That percentage far exceeds the state rate of 52.2 percent; internationally, 61.3 percent of tests received scores of at least a 3. In 2014, 378 students took a total of 645 AP exams at Dripping Springs High School. Dripping Springs student enrollment in AP courses during the 2013-14 school year was 1,145.

One hundred and nineteen students from DSHS received recognition for their exceptional achievement on AP exams administered last spring, which means some of those honored are current seniors and some are 2014 graduates.

AP Scholar Awards are present-

ed on several different levels based on average score on the exams and the cumulative number of tests taken. The College Board recognizes several levels of achievement based on students' performance on AP Exams. For DSHS, many of those recognized are graduates from the Class of 2014, while others are now seniors or juniors.

Dripping Springs High School had eight National AP Scholars, which represents the highest level of recognition. The National AP Scholar Award means the students earned an average grade of 4 or higher on all AP exams taken, and scores of 4 or higher on eight or more exams. Recipients were Class of 2014 members Clark Boes, Taylor Hetrick, Devi Jadeja, Evon Looper, Thomas Metzger and David Slater, as well as current seniors Tori Gahagan and Savannah Shifflet.

The AP Scholar with Distinction Award was earned by 34 DSHS students who scored an average of 3.5 or higher on all AP exams taken, and grades of 3 or higher on five or more tests. Dripping Springs High School had 21 students named AP Scholars with Honor, which means they received an average score of at least 3.25 on all exams, and scores of 3 or higher on four or more. A total of 55 DSHS students were honored as AP Scholars, a status that is granted to students who receive scores of 3 or higher on three or more AP Exams.

Campus Happenings

Dripping Springs High School:

- DSHS alumnus Wallis Currie-Wood (Class of 2010) has a role in the new CBS drama “Madame Secretary,” playing lead character Tea Leoni’s daughter, “Stevie.” The show premiered Sept. 21, and Wallis’ first appearance was Sept. 28. After graduating from Dripping Springs, she went on to attend Julliard’s Drama School. She also recently completed filing a role in an upcoming film with Robert DeNiro titled “The Intern.”

Dripping Springs Middle School:

- The fall choir concert will be held Wednesday, Oct. 15, starting at 7 p.m. and the band concert is scheduled for Tuesday, Oct. 28 at 6:30 p.m. Both concerts will be held in the cafeteria.
- The middle school is offering “mini-courses” to students in areas such as animation, video announcements, digital painting, knitting, video game coding, chess and book club. Students, who meet in the Center for Learning and Innovation during their advisory/homeroom periods; they may sign up for one class per semester.

Dripping Springs Elementary:

- DSES will again hold its PIRS (Partners in Reading Success) program this year, with the first reading session scheduled for mid-October. This program pairs community volunteers with students who need a little extra help in the area of reading.

Rooster Springs Elementary:

- Rooster Springs Elementary School students are enjoying use of the “ActivTable.” This tool empowers students to lead their own learning, driving engagement, participation and creativity. The ActivTable was purchased thanks to a grant from the Dripping Springs Education Foundation.

Walnut Springs Elementary:

- A Family Learning Night in science will be held Thursday, Oct. 16, from 6:30-8:00 p.m.
- The Walnut Springs Watch DOGS (Dads of Great Students) group has begun its second year. These fathers and grandfathers who volunteer in classrooms and offer support on campus held a kick-off event on Sept 28 attended by approximately 100 men.

UPDATE ON DESIGN OF NEW SCHOOLS

The district continues to make progress on the design of the new elementary and middle schools that were included in the May 2014 bond package. The schools will be built on district-owned property on Sawyer Ranch Road, just north of the entrance to Highpointe.

On Tuesday, Sept. 16, a public forum was held to share information, answer questions, and gain feedback on the preliminary schematic design and floor plan of the elementary and middle schools. Then, at the Sept. 22 meeting, the Board approved the schematic design.

The schools will be contained in a single building shell divided into distinct elementary and middle school areas, with controlled crossover to allow for student opportunities and staff collaboration. Current plans have two entrances (elementary and middle school) for parent traffic from the road and two main doors/front offices. The offices connect on the back end in a shared teacher workroom.

The campuses will have separate nurse’s clinics, classroom wings, and cafeterias. The cafeteria will share a kitchen, but have different serving lines. In addition there will be separate stages, but an operable wall could be moved to combine the stages for major events or programs. The most interconnected area will be the Center for Learning and Innovation (library). The elementary and middle school sections of the CLI will be divided mainly by different elevations; staff will manage areas of use depending on grade levels of students.

A unique feature of the site is the varied elevation. An 85-foot drop-off exists between the western-most part of the site (Sawyer Ranch Road) and the most southeastern part of the property (bordering Highpointe). Architects are working diligently to incorporate the changes in elevation into a unique building design, and to capture opportunities the topography offers. This building will have an internal elevation change of approximately 20 feet.

A Traffic Impact Analysis was conducted in September and will result in report that will include recommendations (how long driveways should be, what improvements are needed on Sawyer Ranch). A traffic engineer will work with Hays County as this planning process continues.

Regarding possible connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods, discussions have occurred with both Highpointe and Belterra. There does not appear to be any opportunity for vehicular connectivity to Highpointe, but pedestrian connectivity should be an option. Discussion is in progress with Belterra regarding both vehicular and pedestrian possibilities.

See www.dsisdbond.net (then click on “Design Updates”) for regular updates on the planning process. Frequently Asked Questions will be expanded as new issues arise.

The next step in this process is design development. The architects will continue to provide reports at future Board meetings.

Grandparents Visit WSE



Walnut Springs Elementary hosted Grandparents Day, where students' grandparents received a special invitation to eat lunch on campus. Pictured are grandparents Barbara and Gene Rowell with grandsons Grant (left) and Connor.

PODCASTS AVAILABLE

Superintendent Bruce Gearing introduces an innovative program of student achievement in 3-4 minute podcasts that are available on the DSISD website. The link to podcasts can be found on the district website (www.dsisd.txed.net/podcasts). To be alerted when new podcasts are posted, sign up under the "Notify Me" function on the website ("Sign up to get email notifications, alerts, updates" is the second star below the map on the homepage).

The following podcasts were posted in September:

- Sept. 4: "The Leader in Me"
- Sept. 17: DSE National Anthem Sing-Along
- Sept. 25: DSHS Tiger Nation

ELEMENTARY PARENT BREAKFASTS



Each year, the Department of Child Nutrition works with campuses to designate days for parents to join their students for breakfast on campus. This year's dates are:

"Breakfast With Dad"

- DSE: Oct. 9 (A-L)
Oct. 10 (M-Z)
- WSE: Oct. 7 (A-L)
Oct. 8 (M-Z)
- RSE: Oct. 6 (A-L)
Oct. 7 (M-Z)

"Breakfast With Mom"

- DSE: Oct. 23 (A-L)
Oct. 24 (M-Z)
- WSE: Oct. 14 (A-L)
Oct. 15 (M-Z)
- RSE: Oct. 21 (A-L)
Oct. 22 (M-Z)

Theatre Productions at DSMS, DSHS

Students are preparing for fall theatre productions at both the middle school and high school.

Dripping Springs High School will present Ken Ludwig's "Lend Me a Tenor" on Oct. 30- Nov. 1, at the DSHS auditorium. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$6 for students. See www.dshstheatre.com for more information or to purchase tickets. "Lend Me a Tenor" is a comedy that has been produced on both the West End and

Broadway, and won nine Tony Awards.

Dripping Springs Middle School presents "Aladdin Junior" on Nov. 13-15, starting at 7 p.m. each night in the cafetorium. Ticket prices are \$7 for adults and \$5 for students. The Disney-favorite musical features a cast of 62 talented students on stage and 14 crew members who play an integral role in the production. Technical theater classes also are helping with set construction and prop building.

Inside DSISD is the Dripping Springs Independent School District newsletter for parents, friends and the entire Dripping Springs community.

Those wishing to submit photos or story suggestions, please contact Director of Communications Dale Whitaker (dale.whitaker@dsisd.txed.net).

DRIPPING SPRINGS ISD

Board of Trustees:

- Barbara Stroud, president
- Shelly Reeves, vice president
- Carrie Fontana Kröll, secretary
- Ron Jones
- Tim Kurpiewski
- Caroline Pekarek
- Jon Thompson

Superintendent: Bruce Gearing, Ed.D.