

Dysart achiever

DYSART UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 89

Dysart Bolsters Emergency Planning

Starting this year, schools in the Dysart Unified School District will conduct quarterly lockdown drills to prepare students and staff members for various emergency situations. Like fire drills, the goal is to make lockdown drills routine exercises which

support safe, secure learning environments.

A lockdown can be called for a variety of critical situations, from suspicious people to chemical spills. In many cases, events in the neighborhood will cause a campus to lockdown. If you are on campus during a lockdown—whether a drill or actual emergency—please follow the instructions of the staff members and expect to be secured on campus for the duration of the lockdown.

When the news breaks that an emergency is taking place at a school, every parent's first reaction is to rush to the campus to pick up his or her child. In fact, a horde of parents arriving at school can increase the risk to students.

Here are some tips for parents when an emergency occurs on or near a Dysart campus:

- ▶ During most critical situations, schools will not answer their telephones. Parents can call the Dysart District Office at 623-876-7000 for information on a campus' status and basic information during an emergency.
- ▶ For critical events requiring an evacuation, local media will be asked to help inform parents of the location for parent-child reunification. During a large-scale emergency, tune to KTAR-AM 620 for the latest information.
- ▶ Ensure that your student's Emergency Card is up-to-date and contains accurate primary and secondary contact numbers.
- ▶ Become familiar with the district's emergency operations plans. School staff welcome your question regarding our emergency preparations. Later this year, look for a Safe Schools Action Plan to be posted in every classroom across the district.
- ▶ During a lockdown, students will generally sit on the classroom floor, lights will be turned off, windows will be covered and instruction will cease. The goal is to make the children and staff members "disappear" from the campus to ensure their safety.



New Schools Under Construction

The Dysart Unified School District Governing Board approved a recommendation to close enrollment for new students to three Dysart elementary schools. The temporary move is a result of soaring student enrollment and limitations

on some schools due to Air Force operations.

New students seeking enrollment at Cimarron Springs, Dysart or El Mirage elementary schools may be diverted to other campuses within the Dysart Unified School District for the remainder of this academic year, with transportation provided by the school district. The Dysart Unified School District has grown to more than 14,500 students this year, up more than 3,000 from August 2003.

Cimarron Springs Elementary School has been the hardest hit: the campus currently houses more than 1,250 students in grades kindergarten through eight. Students who are denied enrollment at Cimarron Springs because of this cap will be enrolled at Ashton Ranch Elementary School.

About 1,170 students are enrolled at Dysart Elementary School. Dysart Elementary is one of four campuses in the district to operate under an enrollment restriction, established in 2001 under an agreement with the U.S. Air Force because of the school's proximity to Luke Air Force Base. As a result, the campus population—including a large pre-school population—is nearing the maximum enrollment of 1,300 students. Students who are denied enrollment will be transported to Luke Elementary School.

El Mirage Elementary School currently has about 1,100 students enrolled. In addition, the Sundown Mountain Alternative Program is housed on the campus, as well as a preschool. As with Dysart Elementary, El Mirage

Elementary has enrollment restrictions due to Air Force operations; the maximum enrollment is 1,300 students. As a result, enrollment will be frozen at the current levels. All new students will be enrolled at Thompson Ranch Elementary School.

To relieve the pressures of growth, the Dysart Unified School District will open two new elementary schools for the 2005-2006 academic year. As one of the fastest growing school systems in the state, Dysart has seen total student enrollment nearly triple since the 2000-2001 school year. The yet-unnamed new campuses are located in the Rancho Gabriela and Sierra Montana communities.



Warning: AIMS Approaching

The AIMS tests are approaching, and all students need to ensure they are in class and ready to take the state-required exams. Scores from the AIMS test are important information to help parents track the progress of their student and school. In addition, federal laws require that districts and schools test 95% of students or risk being designated as failing to make yearly progress.

Limited make-up dates are available for the tests, but it is vital that all students attend school during these testing periods. As a graduation requirement for high school students, and an important measure of progress

for elementary grades, students should be encouraged to get a good night of rest before the exams and do their best.

HIGH SCHOOL	
AIMS Writing	February 22
AIMS Reading	February 23
AIMS Math	April 12
GRADES 2-9	
AIMS/Terra Nova	April 11-15

Dysart Voters Say 'Yes Yes'

In the 2004 General Election, voters in the Dysart Unified School District approved proposals to implement full-day kindergarten and continue student programs. Nearly 25,000 residents participated in Dysart's election, which also included

the selection of three Governing Board members. The Maintenance and Operations Budget Override, first approved in 2000, will continue to allow Dysart to provide student programs like PE and band, offer competitive employee salaries, support school safety programs, and maintain lower class sizes despite significant growth. Funding will be provided for seven years.

Full-day kindergarten instruction will be funded for all Dysart students through the K-3 Budget Override, also approved on November 2. This additional funding will

be targeted towards the expanded kindergarten program, but will also support additional literacy resources for grades one through three. Dysart becomes one of the few districts in the Valley to implement district-wide, full-day kindergarten. With this approval by voters, the district will refine a detailed implementation plan for the program, to begin with the 2005-2006 academic year.

Also on the ballot, Governing Board President Charles Otterman was reelected with Surprise residents Bernice Boone and Kay Paulus being elected to serve four-year terms on the board.



Improvement Plans Guide School Progress

As part of the Dysart Unified School District's renewed commitment to ensuring academic success for every student, each campus is completing a Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP). This plan, based on state Department of Education

templates, helps schools align goals to performance indicators while ensuring consistency with Dysart Governing Board objectives.

The CIP process requires school teams to use data to evaluate existing programs, justify the elimination or continuation of these offerings and create targeted goals with comprehensive implementation strategies. Providing staff development and evaluating campus expectations, such as leadership and instruction, are part of the process.

"This collaborative process helps each school identify their strengths, challenges and focus areas," explains Dr.

Gail Pletnick, assistant superintendent for Elementary Education. "We all want to increase student achievement, but each campus must chart a specific course to meet the needs of their students, under a district framework."

Once completed, the CIP is reviewed by the district's leadership team, including Superintendent Dr. Mark Maksimowicz, and is used to measure the performance of a campus in meeting their self-identified objectives. In the end, educators will gain a sharper focus on campus needs, how to meet those needs, and the important role data analysis plays in advancing the achievement of students.

FROM THE Superintendent

Working Together for Positive Change



Dr. Mark Maksimowicz
SUPERINTENDENT

“We are committed to improving student academic performance, maintaining fiscal stability and meeting the challenges of growth.”

Among the teachers, administrators and staff across the Dysart Unified School District, “Working Together for Positive Change” has emerged as our theme. Focusing first on student achievement, we are committed to transforming Dysart into a premier school system in five years. As we work together—employees, students, volunteers, parents and community members—a stronger school system will be created to support our students and communities.

When we talk about becoming a premier school district, here’s what we mean:

- ▶ Improving student achievement and student success
- ▶ Meeting student academic and social needs
- ▶ Cultivating a total learning environment
- ▶ Becoming a recognized leader and innovator
- ▶ Remaining fiscally responsible and good stewards of the public trust

One of the first steps in this process is the creation of Campus Improvement Plans, a school-by-school document to establish focus areas, confront challenges and question existing programs and services. Schools, using site-based teams, are completing these plans. What makes this planning process different is the use of student data: achievement scores illustrating

areas of success and challenge are being used to guide the school planning process. As goals are created, methods of grading the success of these goals are established using this same student data.

As a district, Dysart has been designated as not meeting federal Adequate Yearly Progress mandates. In addition, one Dysart school was placed on the state Department of Education list of failing schools. As superintendent, however, I know that a school cannot fail when it is provided with appropriate, professional expertise from the district office. While state experts help us with our failing campus, we are working to make improvements across our administration to ensure that no campus is designated as failing. We can and will do more to ensure that every student has a learning environment which fosters success.

Together, in just one semester, we are making positive changes. Voter approval for full-day kindergarten, the Dysart Achiever newsletter, a Campus Improvement process, and professional development for our educational leaders is establishing a foundation for positive changes as we move forward. Premier in five years: together we can do it.

GOVERNING BOARD

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President

Mr. Bill Lipscomb
Clerk

Ms. Bernice Boone
Member

Mrs. Kay Paulus
Member

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Mark Maksimowicz
Superintendent

Dr. Gail Pletnick
Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education

Ms. Denise Birdwell
Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education

Ms. Lynn Montanya
Executive Director of Human Resources/Legal Counsel

Mr. Scott Thompson
Executive Director of Business Services

Mr. Timothy Tait
Public Information Officer



The mission of the Dysart Unified School District is to ensure that our students achieve academic success and make responsible life choices through a bold, distinctive educational system that cultivates their innate gifts, provides multiple opportunities and inspiration for unlimited learning in a safe environment and sustains effective community and family relationships.

Dysart Unified School District No. 89

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