

Dysart achiever

DYSART UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 89

Board Calls for Election to Boost Achievement

PROPOSALS TO SUPPORT STUDENT PROGRAMS, ALL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

This summer, the Dysart Unified School District Governing Board approved two fiscal proposals to be submitted to voters on November 2. As one of the fastest growing school systems in the state, the Dysart Unified School District gains more than 3,000 students each year. Growth brings new challenges. The Dysart Unified School District is seeking voter approval for two initiatives which will continue to allow the district to offer expanded services to students, launch an academic all-day kindergarten program, and maintain lower class sizes while ensuring program equity across the district.

If approved, both proposals would add about \$63.60 to the average homeowner's yearly property taxes. However, the Dysart Unified School District would maintain one of the lowest tax rates among Valley school systems because of the Governing Board's commitment to conservative fiscal management.

M&O Budget Override

The Maintenance & Operations Budget is the primary fund for paying salaries, buying classroom supplies and providing expanded services. While the law limits a district's budget, schools are permitted to request additional funding directly from voters to supplement allocations from the Legislature. Most local districts receive this additional funding. Currently, Dysart is operating with an 8 percent override, approved by voters in 2000. The Governing Board is seeking reauthorization of the override with a 2 percent increase.

The M&O Budget Override will allow Dysart to:

- ▶ Continue Student Programs:
Band, Music, Physical Education and Art
- ▶ Offer Competitive Employee Salaries
- ▶ Enhance Safe Schools Initiatives
- ▶ Improve School Counseling Services
- ▶ Bolster Technology Integration Programs
- ▶ Maintain Lower Class Sizes

Additional information on these proposals is available at www.dysart.org. A voter information pamphlet will also be mailed to each household with a registered voter. Vote-by-mail ballots may be requested through the Maricopa County Elections Department (<http://recorder.maricopa.gov/earlyvoteballot> or 602.506.1511). Early voting runs through October 22.

K-3 Budget Override

Recent changes in state law allow a special budget override for kindergarten through third-grade programs. Like the M&O Override, these funds are provided directly by voters through the secondary property tax. Currently, Paradise Valley Unified, Washington Elementary and Alhambra Elementary school districts are operating with K-3 overrides. Rather than depending on allocations from the state Legislature to fund these early intervention and prevention programs, the Dysart Unified School District Governing Board is seeking immediate funding from the community.

The K-3 Budget Override will allow Dysart to:

- ▶ Provide Academically Based All-Day Kindergarten
- ▶ Enhance Literacy Intervention Programs
- ▶ Provide Special-Area Teachers for Grades K-3



Counseling Grant to Support Diversity, Link to Home

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools has awarded the Dysart Unified School District a three-year, \$1.1 million grant to support counseling services for elementary school families. This award, along with district funding, will establish the Educating Through Counseling project, allowing Dysart to provide children and families with services designed to support student achievement.

A team of counselors, led by a diverse advisory team, will implement and supervise programs to reduce cultural barriers between students, support local mentoring efforts, provide home-based family crisis services, and provide training for elementary school teachers.

"This grant from the Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools will help Dysart to focus our existing counseling services to best meet the needs of our changing community," said Dr. Gail Pletnick, the district's assistant superintendent for elementary

education. "By increasing staff training, focusing on cultural barriers and providing services in homes, we hope to positively impact the educational progress of our students."

The primary goals of the grant are to decrease student suspensions, reduce violent incidents and make an annual 2-percent cut in discipline referrals. As a result, the project hopes to increase student achievement on the AIMS test by 5 percent.

The Dysart Unified School District was the only Valley district, and one of only 33 awards nationwide, to receive funding through this competitive grant process. A partnership of community organizations – including the cities of El Mirage and Surprise, the Arizona Department of Education, and Big Brothers/Big Sisters – created the program to meet the needs of the district's at-risk population with a focus on student achievement.

Dysart Schools Make Progress

Under the federal No Child Left Behind Law, schools are required to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). As a stringent measure of accountability for schools and educators, there are more than 144 ways for a school to fail to make AYP. In the Dysart Unified School District 12 of the 14 schools made AYP with Surprise Elementary and El Mirage Elementary schools not meeting AYP goals. At this time, at the request of the district, the AYP data from those two schools is under review by the Arizona Department of Education.



To meet the Adequate Yearly Progress, schools and districts must improve AIMS test scores in math and reading in grades three, five, eight and ten. At each campus, 95 percent of all students, as well as 95 percent of students in certain categories (such as special education, ethnic background or English Language Learner) must take the examination. Schools must also

demonstrate 94 percent attendance or show progress towards that goal. High schools also must exceed or show progress towards matching the state's average four-year graduation rate of 71 percent.

The federal AYP designation is used by the Arizona Department of Education to establish school achievement profiles of excelling, highly performing, performing, underperforming or failing. Achievement profiles are expected to be released in October. The state also factors in the Measure of Academic Progress, an evaluation of students' Stanford 9 scores for those who spent the entire year at a school, as part of those achievement profiles.

The Dysart Unified School District supports the higher accountability that is associated with the Adequate Yearly Progress designation. In the weeks ahead, each school in Dysart will submit to the superintendent a Continuous Improvement Plan to establish clear and rigorous goals for academic improvements. All schools will use a data-driven process to address academic areas of concern. The schools will ensure that time is allocated and protected to focus on curriculum and instructional issues. With a limited number of school days, we must ensure that every minute of classroom time is used to advance student achievement. Our district curriculum is being carefully examined and schools will pool best-practice strategies to ensure that all students are exposed to the best-available methods.

The Dysart Unified School District is making progress. We appreciate your support and assistance as we strive to become a district of excellence for every student.

Dysart Continues Campus Improvements

Funding approved by voters in 2002 through a bond and capital override election provided additional revenue to allow the Dysart Unified School District to make improvements to existing schools and meet the needs of growth. Through the 2002 election, which was the first bond election approved by district voters since 1980, the district has implemented the work of the Capital Equity Committee, a citizen advisory group dedicated to assisting the district create modern, efficient schools for all students.

Since being approved, safety enhancements have been completed at West Point Elementary, extensive renovations have been completed at Dysart High School with more work still underway, El Mirage Elementary was entirely reconstructed, and 32 new school buses equipped with air conditioning were added to the fleet. The additional capital funds have provided furniture, fixtures and equipment for new and rebuilt schools, and provided mobile computer labs for every campus.

Future projects to be funded by the bond and capital election include the reconstruction of Surprise Elementary, the relocation and reconstruction of Luke Elementary, an additional academic building at Willow Canyon High School, the continuing



renovations at Dysart High School, and renovations to Kingswood and Dysart elementary schools.

Funding has been committed to enhancing fine arts programs, student athletics, technology and new schools through 2010.

Through the support of voters, the Dysart Unified School District has aggressively addressed the demands of growth while ensuring that students in existing schools have equitable facilities and equipment. Prior to passage of the 2002 bond, Dysart had only five campuses, three of which were more than 50 years old. Today, the old schools are nearly all replaced and the district has grown to 14 campuses serving 14,000 students.

Write Yourself a Lower Tax Bill

“Close your eyes. Imagine a place where everyone could give \$250 to their favorite public school and get all that money back as a credit on state taxes... Wake up. Welcome to Arizona, the state where the taxed can write themselves a lower tax bill.” Those words led an editorial published by *The Arizona Republic*, which endorsed the state law allowing each household to claim up to \$250 in tax credits to support public school extra-curricular activities for students.

In short, Arizona law allows married couples to donate up to \$250 and individuals up to \$200 to support public schools. The dollar-for-dollar tax credit of up to \$250 will make extra-curricular activities available to more students and more affordable for families. Donation may be designated as a contribution that benefits all children, or as a fee to cover the cost of a specific child’s participation in an activity.

Parents, as well as taxpayers who do not have a child enrolled in a public school, are eligible for the tax credit, which is not the same as a deduction on your income tax form. For example, if you owe \$1,000 in state income taxes and you donate \$250 to a public school for extra-curricular activities, you may subtract the \$250 from your tax bill and pay the state only \$750.

If you would like to support extra-curricular activities for students, complete a form, available at all schools and at www.dysart.org, indicate which program you would like to

support, and return it to the school or District Office. You will receive a receipt to submit with your tax return. Donations must be received by December 31 in order to be eligible for the tax credit this calendar year.



Grand Volunteers Support Students

Volunteers from Sun City Grand donated nearly 1,000 backpacks for elementary school students in the Dysart Unified School District. Sun City Grand volunteers collect funds and materials for the backpack drive throughout the year – this year, more than \$10,000 was collected to support the project. The program was launched in 1998 by developer Del Webb Corp. as a way to support the Dysart Unified School District. Last year, residents created the non-profit School Backpack Program. Five residents lead the effort: Phyllis Prosser, Virginia Schermerhorn, Paula Forster, Sharon Gullickson and Loydine Myhre.

FROM THE Superintendent

Dysart Focused on Academic Improvement



Dr. Mark Maksimowicz
SUPERINTENDENT

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

The Dysart Unified School District, like the communities we serve, is undergoing a transformation. No longer rural agricultural communities, the cities of El Mirage and Surprise have become vibrant, diverse suburbs.

As the communities have grown, so too has the school district. As the 2004-2005 school year opened, the Dysart Unified School District welcomed more than 3,000 new students into our schools. Dysart has grown to about 14,000 students, up from about 6,000 children in the 2000-2001 academic year. We are expecting about 26,000 students for the 2010-2011 academic year – a doubling of our population in just six years. This year, we hired more than 190 new educators to fill our classrooms and serve as educational leaders.

This growth brings great advantages to our community, but places a challenge upon our schools. In November, the Dysart Unified School District Governing Board will ask for voters to consider reauthorizing the district’s Maintenance and Operations Budget Override and expanding that funding by 2 percent to

meet the legal maximum. This continuation of funding will allow the district to continue offering special area classes, like PE and music, while also maintaining competitive teacher pay and keeping class sizes small.

A second question on the November ballot is to fund all-day kindergarten for all Dysart students. Despite funding promises from the state, the Governing Board felt it was important to ask voters to immediately fund an academically based, structured, all-day program for our youngest students to get them into an early habit of academic success. Funding from the K-3 Budget Override will also fund additional prevention and intervention programs for our early grades.

As our community grows, so do the needs of the Dysart Unified School District. We are committed to improving student academic performance, maintaining fiscal stability and meeting the challenges of growth. We are on an aggressive path towards excellence, but we will need the help and support of our community to reach our goals.

Governing Board

Mr. Charles Otterman, President
Dr. Sally J. Bell, Clerk
Ms. Diana Bass, Member
Mr. Bill Lipscomb, Member
Mr. Ray Rodriguez, 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 and Technology 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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