

Dysart *achiever*

Dysart Unified School District No. 89



Progress on the Path to Premier

What's Happening Around Dysart

Reading First helps children develop reading skills

A \$3 million federal grant is helping four Dysart schools focus on supporting the development of strong reading skills, giving students every opportunity for success in the primary levels.

The three-year Department of Education grant is part of the Reading First program, which was created as part of the No Child Left Behind legislation in 2002. Dysart is in the first year of the three-year initiative.

Built on years of scientific research showing that students who develop strong reading skills at an early age are most likely to remain in school, Reading First is a focused, nationwide effort to enable all students to become successful early readers.

Reading First is the most-focused early reading initiative ever put in place, with more than \$1 billion in funding across the country. More than 93,000 teachers are implementing approved reading instruction plans in all 50 states.

“Early development of strong reading skills is vital to a student’s academic development not only at the early grades but throughout a student’s school career,” said Dr. Gail Pletnick, Dysart’s assistant superintendent for elementary education. “This program supports the district’s commitment to providing the best professional development for our teachers so, in turn, teachers can provide the most effective instruction to all students.”

The program, which is focused on meeting the needs of all students, is being implemented this fall at four Dysart elementary schools: Kingswood, Luke, Dysart and Surprise. Children in kindergarten through third grade are participating.

Building on a solid foundation of research, the program is designed to select, implement and provide professional development for teachers using scientifically-based reading programs and to ensure accountability through ongoing screening and classroom-based assessment.

Reading First also provides teachers with professional development to ensure that all teachers, including special education teachers, have the knowledge and skills they need to teach all children to read fluently by third grade. Full-time reading coaches, teacher academies, training sessions and core reading program materials help teachers.

The program also helps develop strong leaders who have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, along with sufficient time, expertise and training to ensure effective implementation of a comprehensive reading program.

Here comes the judge: Appeals Court hears real-life case at Dysart High

Despite the popularity of shows like *Law & Order*, most people never see the justice system in person. For more than 200 students from Dysart and Willow Canyon high schools, the rare opportunity to see the Arizona legal system operate came to them this fall when the Arizona Court of Appeals heard arguments in an ongoing case at Dysart High School on Oct. 5.

Advanced placement and International Baccalaureate students from the two schools heard attorneys for the two sides in an appeal of a case that had been heard previously by a lower court. Three appeals court judges asked questions of the attorneys during the session, which lasted about 45 minutes. The decision has not yet been announced.

After the court concluded its session, students had the chance to listen to attorneys from the community speak and answer questions about the legal profession.

“This has been a tremendous opportunity for our students to see how the legal system works in person rather than through a television drama,” said Teddy Irvine, principal of Dysart High School. “Many of these students may be considering a career in law, and this experience can help them make the best career choice for themselves. For all of the students in attendance, it was a unique opportunity to learn firsthand about how the court system works.”

Judges sitting on the Court of Appeals hear active cases in school locations about twice each year to educate students about the legal process. This is the first time a case has been heard in the Dysart Unified School District.

The Court of Appeals is the second of three layers in the judicial system. Individuals who are not successful in civil and criminal cases in Superior Court can appeal those cases to the Court of Appeals. Those unsuccessful at the appellate level can appeal to the state Supreme Court; death penalty cases go automatically to the Supreme Court.



Educational Success Through CTE Programs

When a student asks, "Why do I need to learn this?" educators in the Dysart Unified School District have an answer, thanks to the district's growing Career and Technical Education program.

With 16 specialized CTE programs, Dysart offers high school students the opportunity to apply information learned in core classes like reading, writing, math and science, to real-world occupations. A computer maintenance student uses technical reading and writing to trouble-shoot, test and solve software and hardware problems; a lab assisting student uses biology and the metric system to draw blood, perform blood typing and begin DNA testing; an automotive technology student uses physics and computer skills to diagnose and repair automobiles using industry technician standards.

"Test results show that Dysart students who engage their learning through Career and Technical Education courses are outscoring their peers across the board," said Dysart's CTE director Vic Harrel. "Additionally, CTE students are more likely to graduate from high school." In 2005, 99 percent of seniors who took at least two CTE courses in high school graduated within four years. AIMS scores from the same year show that students who took a minimum of two CTE courses scored at least 9 percent higher on the AIMS exams than Dysart students not in the program.

The program also allows students to test drive a specific career without spending the money or expending the time to take college courses. Rather than exploring career ideas in college, Dysart's Career and Technical Education students typically graduate from high school with an idea of the field of study they'd like to pursue, allowing them to enter higher education on track to graduate in a timely manner.

"The hands-on experience will help me decide if medicine is the field I want to get into," said Kristina Villena, a senior in the Allied Health program at Willow Canyon High School.

Brittani Romero, also a student in the Allied Health program, remarked, "Working in the lab at the hospital will make me more comfortable dealing with real live patients in an actual medical environment. Plus, the program will help me become a certified phlebotomist."

Shayna Thompson, a senior in the Television/Media Production program at Dysart High School, came to the district with no notion of what career path to pursue. Since beginning the program last year, Shayna has developed an interest in editing and videography, and now is one of two producers of the school's weekly television news program. "Shayna has stepped up this year to be a leader in and out of the classroom. She has connected with every student in Media

Production and plays a crucial role in getting our show on the air each week," noted Brian Snyder, Television/Media Production instructor at Dysart High.

Working in partnership with Estrella Mountain and Glendale community colleges, students also have the opportunity to earn college credit through 20 different dual enrollment CTE courses. "Our goal is to prepare our students as much as possible for their future career, whatever direction it may take them," Harrel said. "As educators, it is our duty to provide our students with the tools needed to enter the world after high school, ready to conquer any challenge they encounter."



Online Tool Encourages Parent Involvement



Parents who want to know more about what their children are learning in school have a new tool—Dysart Unified School District's online curriculum.

"When we developed the curriculum, we never considered putting it in a binder to sit on a teacher's desk," Dr. Miller said. "Our curriculum is a living, breathing document. Housing it online allows us to add to and modify it over time so that it does not become static and outdated. Ultimately everything we teach will be available online."

Parents who want to know what Dysart schools are teaching in a specific subject and grade can visit the district Web site and find out. Go to www.dysart.org, click on "Parents & Students" and then click on "K-12 Curriculum."

The online tool gives parents the ability to see specifically what their children should be learning and includes activities and assessments that align with the curriculum. Parents are encouraged to use the information to engage their children at home, reinforcing materials learned at school. "When parents are involved in a child's education, the student is more likely to be successful," said Dr. Miller.

The district this year also implemented for the first time a standard curriculum that ensures parents that all students in Dysart schools are learning the same concepts, no matter what school their children attend.

"We decided within the Dysart community what our students should be learning, rather than having a textbook lead the course of teaching," said Dr. Cyndi Miller, Dysart's director of curriculum and assessment. "We now have a consistent, uniform curriculum being used district wide, designed to identify the skills and concepts our students should know at each grade level, and to provide teachers with the resources to ensure students make the appropriate educational growth each year."

The curriculum was created using national standards, scientific research and an understanding of the specific needs of Dysart students. It includes concepts identified by Dysart educators to address the needs of all students.

Later this year the district plans to create a curriculum advisory committee that will give parents a chance to comment on Dysart curricular issues. Anyone interested in becoming involved contact the Dysart Curriculum and Assessment Department at 623.876.7043.

There are Many Ways to Support Dysart

Volunteers help schools help kids

From parents who want to help their children's school run smoothly to retirees looking for an invigorating way to spend some time to community members with a passion for children, volunteers are vital to the success of Dysart schools.

This month Dysart schools for the first time counted more than 800 volunteers in our schools, about 15 percent more volunteers than served Dysart schools last school year. That growth is important—the district added four new schools this year, and at least two more are scheduled to open their doors next year.

Dysart is Arizona's fastest-growing school district, and it needs Arizona's fastest-growing volunteer force. In the 2005-2006 school year, volunteers provided more than 45,800 hours of service to our schools. This year, the number of volunteer hours in Dysart schools could surpass 50,000 for the first time.

Volunteers have the opportunity to choose which schools they volunteer in, so they can be close to home or in the same school as a child or grandchild. There also are a variety of volunteer opportunities to choose from, including office duties and athletics.

"Volunteers can work in almost any setting they would like and work almost whatever hours they want to work," said Pat Rumsey, volunteer coordinator. "If someone prefers to work mornings or afternoons or at a particular school, chances are I can accommodate that."

To serve as a volunteer, you must complete an application and take part in a short interview. Volunteers who do not have children currently attending Dysart schools also must undergo a background check to ensure all volunteers are safe to be around children. Volunteers also must attend an orientation class before beginning work in the classroom.

"If you believe, as we do in the Dysart Unified School District, that schools are here to serve children, then you are the type of person we want as a volunteer," said Dr. Mark Maksimowicz, superintendent.

To learn more, call Mrs. Rumsey at 623.594.2618 or e-mail her at pat.rumsey@dysart.org. You also can learn more about volunteering from our Web site. Visit www.dysart.org and click on 'Get Involved' and then 'Volunteer at Dysart' to get the specifics on how to apply. You can even read what other Dysart volunteers have to say.

Help a student, help yourself

Tax time is fast approaching which means getting documents in order before you file. Will one of your receipts show a donation to a Dysart school?

Arizona Law (ARS 43-1089.01) allows married couples filing jointly a tax credit of up to \$400 and individual taxpayers a tax credit of up to \$200 when they contribute to extra-curricular activities in public schools. Extra-curricular activities are optional, noncredit, educational activities that are offered before, during or after school hours. The best part is you don't have to be a parent of a child in school to benefit from this law.

A tax credit is better than a tax deduction because it is a full refund of your money, provided you have a tax liability equaling

or exceeding your donation. For example, if you have a \$500 Arizona state tax liability and you make a \$200 donation to a public school, \$200 is subtracted from your tax liability. Then, you would owe only \$300.

You are not the only one who benefits from your tax credit donation. The Dysart school you choose to donate to will use the money to support extra-curricular activities such as fine arts,



after-school clubs and athletics.

Your donation may help a kindergartener develop self esteem and learn safety awareness in a karate enrichment program. It might spark a high schooler's interest in restaurant management through participation in a national DECA conference. Maybe your donation will pay for after-school tutoring for a fifth grader struggling in math. These are a handful of the many ways your tax credit can make a difference in a child's life.

Contributions are donated directly to schools. This means your donations are used directly to support student activities of the Dysart school of your choice.

To receive a tax credit, fill out the form on the reverse of this page and follow the donation directions. A receipt will be mailed to you within a couple of weeks from when your donation is received. The form also is available on the district website, www.dysart.org.

Act now—the deadline to make a donation is December 31!



Dysart Unified School District No.89 'Growing Smart'

Arizona Tax Credit Contribution

Support local schools and receive a dollar-for-dollar state tax credit

Now, couples filing joint taxes may donate up to \$400; Individuals up to \$200

APPLY MY TAX CREDIT TO THE FOLLOWING SCHOOL:

- DYSART HIGH
VALLEY VISTA HIGH
WILLOW CANYON HIGH
ASHTON RANCH ELEMENTARY
CIMARRON SPRINGS ELEMENTARY
COUNTRYSIDE ELEMENTARY
DYSART ELEMENTARY
EL MIRAGE ELEMENTARY
KINGSWOOD ELEMENTARY
LUKE ELEMENTARY

- MARLEY PARK ELEMENTARY
PARKVIEW ELEMENTARY
RANCHO GABRIELA ELEMENTARY
SONORAN HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY
SUNSET HILLS ELEMENTARY
SURPRISE ELEMENTARY
THOMPSON RANCH ELEMENTARY
WEST POINT ELEMENTARY
WESTERN PEAKS ELEMENTARY

MAIL YOUR DONATION TO:
Dysart Unified School District No. 89 Attn: Tax Credit Program
15802 North Parkview Place, Surprise, AZ 85374
This form and a check can also be mailed to any Dysart School.

Name: Social Security #: Address: City: Zip: Phone Number: Amount Donated: \$400 \$200 other: I want to support... School may designate Enrichment Programs Athletics Fine Arts Clubs Field Trips

Hyper-Growth Requires Building More Schools

Just the FAQs about bond proposal

Leaders from the Dysart Unified School District, including Dr. Mark Maksimowicz, superintendent and Scott Thompson, executive director of business services, have attended numerous community meetings over the past few months to answer questions about the bond proposal that is on the ballot for district voters on Nov. 7.

Below are some of the commonly asked questions about the bond proposal along with the answers to those questions.

Q: How much is the amount of the bond issue?

A: \$190 million

Q: What impact will this have on school taxes?

A: There is no anticipated impact on the district tax rate for this bond proposal. Your tax bill could increase but only if the assessed value of your home increases.

Q: What will the money be used for?

A: The funds will supplement state funding of six new elementary schools and a new high school. In addition, the district intends to replace Luke Elementary School, build play and shade structures at all existing schools and upgrade environmental systems to be more efficient. Finally, the district intends to build a support facility for transportation and receiving. The bond includes buying land, designing and engineering the schools, preparing the land and constructing the schools.

Q: Will any of the money be used on schools that were built in the past five years?

A: Yes. Some important items were left out of those school construction projects because of funding limitations, including playground equipment, shade structures, athletic facilities and paved parking lots.

Q: Can't we use money from the state School Facilities Board?

A: The SFB funds the building and repairing of schools. However, the cost of school construction has increased faster than increases in state funding to build schools – by \$18 million for a high school and \$2.5 million for an elementary school in the past four years.

Q: Why do we constantly need new schools?

A: Dysart is one of the fastest-growing districts in the state, increasing from 5,000 students just a few years ago to 20,000 today. It is projected that enrollment in Dysart schools will reach 40,000 in the next 10 years.

Q: Is there room in the current school buildings for the current students?

A: No. All of our schools are at capacity or very close.

Q. What will the district do if the bond proposal is defeated by voters?

A. We will continue to build the schools we need, but without some of the important features that modern schools should include, such as playground equipment, shade structures and athletic and fine arts facilities. We also will use other school funds for construction, meaning less money for classroom supplies and teacher salaries.

Q. Wasn't there an election just two years ago for more money for the schools?

A. In 2004 voters approved two budget overrides, one to fund full-day kindergarten for our children and the other to increase our budget by 10 percent. State law requires that voter-approved funds can be used only for the specific purpose provided to voters before the election, so they cannot be used to build schools. The override issue from two years ago was money well spent – the children who benefited from full-day kindergarten already are showing progress academically, progress that can be maintained throughout their school careers. Children who learn more at younger ages have the best chance to learn more every year through graduation.

Q. When is the election?

A. Tuesday, Nov. 7

Construction Update

As Dysart Unified School District exceeds the 20,000-student mark, up from just 5,500 students in 2000, the district faces the challenge of staying ahead of hyper growth. This includes constructing two or more new school facilities each year.

This school year Dysart successfully opened facilities for a new high school, Valley Vista, two new elementary schools, Western Peaks and Sonoran Heights, and a preschool. The third new elementary school facility, Parkview, is currently under construction, though the school has already temporarily opened its doors at Valley Vista. Another two elementary schools, one in the Surprise Farms neighborhood and the other in the Cortessa neighborhood, are in the planning stages and are expected to open next school year. In addition, the district is continuing to review high school enrollment figures and, if the growth continues with its current trend, a fourth high school will open for the 2008-2009 school year.

In January, construction on the gymnasium at Valley Vista High will be completed. Finally, this month construction of a gymnasium at Dysart Elementary will commence.

"We're in uncharted waters here," said Scott Thompson, Dysart's executive director of business services. "Over the past few years we've had to build schools at a rate no other school district has faced and we've done so successfully with the limited financial resources available from the School Facilities Board. Our goal is to continue to offer new communities a complete school environment while making certain that all of our schools offer the same high-quality facility."

Kids are the Center of All We Do



Mark Maksimowicz, Ed.D.

Children.

If you want to know the focus of everything we do at the Dysart Unified School District, that's your answer.

The leadership team of our district and the Governing Board met for six hours on a Saturday in September to talk about the exciting things we are doing on the Path to Premier – our process for making

Dysart a premier school district. At the very outset of that meeting, the five board members and some district leaders agreed that no matter what topic we discussed, helping children grow and learn would always guide us to the right answer.

I would like to mention some of the special things we are doing in Dysart schools to give your children – our children – the best education we can provide within our resources.

Our teachers are doing truly special things in the classroom.

At Cimarron Springs Elementary School, technology teacher Ben Goodman has received national acclaim for his program that allows students to use blogging to improve their writing skills. Blogging is like writing a journal that is posted on the Internet for anyone to read. For our students, who range from grade 3 to 8, the excitement of the Internet brings new excitement to writing, and their performance reflects that. All student writings are reviewed by Mr. Goodman before they are posted and anything that could identify the child is removed. But by combining the excitement of the Web with the importance of academics, Mr. Goodman has made writing fun again for his students.

We have other exciting programs that we are bringing to Dysart students, including the Reading First program profiled in

this edition. Funded by a federal grant, Reading First teaches our youngest students learn to read well by third grade, helping them throughout their school careers. Schools all across our district offer programs to help students succeed both in school and after graduation – no matter what they plan to do after high school.

Career and Technical Education, also known as CTE, opens exciting new doors for students who may not plan to attend college after high school graduation. These classes combine academics with real-world careers to help students prepare for work after they leave high school. Classes include culinary arts, nursing, fire and police work, computer maintenance, blood typing and other career activities. CTE students also can earn community college credits to help their education. Students who took at least two CTE courses are more likely to graduate and performed better on AIMS than students who had no CTE courses. CTE programs provide an outstanding opportunity for our students.

Academically, our students are improving dramatically. The AIMS results for this year showed that our students improved more than their counterparts in other districts. In October, the state was scheduled to announce school labels under the AZ Learns program (too late for publication deadlines), and we are optimistic that our schools would receive good ratings.

Community education offers educational opportunities for children outside the school day. Programs like sign language drawing, sports, dance and chess are among our community education offerings. Students can learn sign language, pom and cheer or prepare for college entrance exams.

Dysart Unified School District is now the 10th largest district in Arizona - and possibly the fastest-growing district in the state. Our vision is to establish a district with academic success to match that growth in students. Every effort at every level must be dedicated to achieving that goal.

Governing Board

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Laura Ramirez

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Lynn Montanya
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Scott Thompson
Executive Director of Business Services
Tom Herrmann,
Public Information Officer

Jennea Bono, Communication Specialist II
Writer, Graphic Designer and Photographer



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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