

October 25, 2013

SAISD dropout prevention program hits the big screen

The success of the District's Middle School Partners program, which allows 8th-graders who have been retained at least one year an opportunity to graduate high school with their peers, is earning fanfare through the PBS short documentary "Skipping Up."

The film follows three Twain MS students in the spring of 2012 as they were completing the program, which enables targeted 8th-graders to enter high school with enough credits to put them on track to timely graduation.

Today, all are on track and doing well in high school, one at Jefferson and the other two at Travis Early College.

"Seeing it on the big screen made it even more real," David Udovich, SAISD secondary initiatives executive director, said following the free Oct. 17 advanced screening at the Santikos Embassy 14 Theater.

"The students jumped onto the screen and you found yourself really following their stories."

Twain principal Christopher Castro called "Skipping Up" a well-told story of resiliency.

"The video highlights the success of schools, and teachers particularly, in connecting with students on a deep level while simultaneously giving students hope that they can graduate high school despite the challenges of being retained in the past,"

Castro said.

Udovich also praised the role of teachers in the program's success.

"Teachers are special in that they care and build relationships where the students trust them, allowing for the teachers to expect more from these students than they are used to giving.

"This causes the students to achieve more than they even expected," Udovich said.

In January 2010 Twain was one of two SAISD middle schools to pilot MSP, through which participants spend half their school day on 8th-grade core subjects and the remainder online working on their high school courses.

Since October 2010 SAISD has been able to offer

MSP at all 14 of the District's middle schools through a \$14 million, five-year U.S. Department of Education grant.

The "Skipping Up" screening was part of the community cinema series presented by the Independent Television Service and KLRN, which also featured "The Graduates/Los Graduados," the Bernardo Ruiz film exploring the many roots of the Latino dropout crisis through the eyes of six inspiring young students from across the United States.

It also is among a series of shorts offered through the American Graduate: Let's Make it Happen, whose website describes MSP as having "generated national interest as a model for schools with significant Latino populations."

Funding was provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in association with Latino Public Broadcasting. Producers were Quiet Pictures and ITS.

A community discussion to engage the public in a dialogue about the Latino dropout crisis followed the screening, and participants included the featured students' teacher, Beth Adams, who also appeared in the documentary.

For more information, visit:
klrn.org/communitycinema.



Among those at the screening (front row, l to r) were former Twain students Brandon Martinez and William Elizondo with director Jim Mendiola and producer Faith Radle. Shown back row (l to r) are SAISD Secondary Initiatives Executive Director David Udovich, Twain teacher Beth Adams and school principal Christopher Castro.

It's the dawning of a new era for Highlands HS

History was made when the Owl community of students, staff, alumni and well wishers gathered on Oct. 16 to celebrate the start of major demolition at their Southeast Side campus.

The first wall of the original 55-year-old facility coming down signaled the dawning of a new era toward the \$65.7 million modern school to come.

"Watching the first wall come down made the prospect of a new building a reality," said principal Lorna Klokkena.

"There has been a lot of work going on behind the scenes, but this was the first part of the demolition that was visible to the public."

Highlands' project will be the largest of the 22

major school renovations funded through SAISD Bond 2010.

"The new building will be a state-of-art building with the latest in technology to complement our magnet," she said of the school's Science, Engineering and Technology program.

"With the new building and the upgrades to the auditorium, Highlands HS will be the hub of community educational activities."

When completed, the new Highlands will feature:

- A three-story building with larger classrooms, including those for career and technology education, science labs and a library media center.
- A two-story building to house the fine arts

programs.

- Cafeteria to include large indoor and outdoor dining areas.
 - Dance studio with hardwood floors and mirrors.
 - Prominent and welcoming main campus entrance.
 - Courtyard that encourages and accommodates group instruction/student gatherings.
 - Refurbished auditorium with a full balcony.
- Homage to the auditorium's history will be paid with the reuse of existing elements, such as seats, being used for sound design.



Cheerleaders get ready to jump for joy over the new state-of-the-art campus to come. Funding was provided by the \$515 million bond program voters approved in 2010 for improvements throughout SAISD.



Workers hold a banner for the demolition claw to grab as a prelude to it taking down the first section of the 55-year-old original Highlands HS building.



During an on-camera interview, principal Lorna Klokkena presents KABB-TV reporter and Owl alum Sylvia Rincon with a commemorative piece of the first wall.

How do these young wordsmiths spell fun? Scrabble!

Rogers and Wheatley middle school students are building their vocabularies, sharpening their strategic thinking and reinforcing math skills one tile at a time as members of their respective schools' Scrabble Club.

Thanks to funding from the SAISD Foundation, the schools' librarians were able to start a club dedicated to the word game.

Rogers librarian Jennifer Zinn launched the club there last school year, and Nyree Cavazos, Wheatley's librarian, started the club at her school this year.

Zinn, an accomplished Scrabble player who participated in the National Scrabble Championship last summer in Las Vegas, saw how learning to play the game could benefit her students.

"Scrabble helps with spelling, vocabulary, math, spatial reasoning, logic, strategic thinking and developing relationship and social skills," Zinn said.

"In addition, it promotes healthy competition (learning to win and lose graciously), and studies have shown that it can help improve memory and concentration."

Rogers' club was the District's inaugural Scrabble Club, drawing about 25 active players last year. This year, the number of core players has about doubled, Zinn said.

Wheatley's Scrabble Club has about 25 active players who meet regularly on Thursdays but also



Rogers MS librarian Jennifer Zinn observes players Justin Rodriguez (left) and Cesar Trujillo during a lunchtime game of Scrabble.

can play during lunch or after school. The Rogers club meets regularly on Mondays, and students also play before school and during lunch.

The first few Rogers meetings, Zinn said, involved teaching the basics: how to play, how to keep score and how to use available aids. Zinn also taught the students how to average their weekly scores and graph them so they could track their progress and come up with ways to boost their scores.

One Rogers Scrabble Club member, John Gonzalez, is becoming a formidable player, with 3,000 points earned so far and eight bingo plays under his belt, meaning he used all seven tiles in a

single play – no easy feat.

"I get to learn new words and get to have fun," Gonzalez wrote in a survey about his club involvement.

This spring, Zinn and the students will host a fundraiser, called Scrabblethon, in which people can sponsor a student by paying a penny for every point that student earns up to 1,000 points, or \$10. Those interested should email jjzinn1@saisd.net.

The proceeds will help pay for a club awards banquet at the end of the school year, among other incentives.

Meanwhile, Wheatley's wordsmiths have challenged themselves to see who will be the first to play a bingo, just one example of the kind of camaraderie that unfolds at the game board.

"It is rewarding as an educator to witness this friendly competitiveness among the students over an educational game," Cavazos said.

Want to play?

Schools interested in starting their own Scrabble Club can apply to the SAISD Foundation Mini-Grant Program to receive funding. Learn more about the Mini-Grant process at:

www.saisdfoundation.com/grants.php

At the helm in the board room

Learning about the nation's central bank from the unique vantage point of the board room are these newly appointed members of the Student Board of Directors. Teens from nine District high schools are participating in this six-month program at the San Antonio branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas where they gain an insider's view of the economy, banking and business. This year's board members and their high schools are: (standing, l to r) Salvador Garza, Edison; Julia Gonzales, YWLA; Dominique Rodriguez, Fox Tech; Cassandra Macias, Burbank; Tristen Cortinas, Brackenridge; Roland Pintor, Burbank; Anbrinique Gistard-Amires, Sam Houston; Ben Mocada and Allison Kimball, Jefferson; Eram Villanueva, Travis; Thristian Lewis, YWLA; Alejandro Zapien, Travis; Lorena Rangel and Jeremy Moreno, Lanier; and Austin Mitchan, Highlands. Seated (l to r) are:



Melissa Almendarez, Brackenridge; Deja Bennett, Sam Houston; Tiffany Fernandez, Edison; Manuela Cabral, Fox Tech; and Miranda Castillo, Highlands.

College events '4' the whole family

Time for higher education-bound 7th-, 8th- and 9th-graders and their families to make note of upcoming events specially designed to help them explore careers, set goals and make their dreams of college come true.

Families 4 Education SAISD/AARP College & Career Family Night

High school freshmen, parents and grandparents are invited to enjoy a lasagna dinner with all the trimmings, hear a keynote speaker and attend college and career awareness sessions.

Hands-on sessions will include: How to Make College Affordable; Know How 2 Go; Take Virtual College Tours; STEM it UP for College & Careers; Explore Careers; College & Career Bingo; HS Grad Plans; and Identify HOT Jobs.

There also will be a supervised corner for children, a Zumba presentation, attendance drawings, giveaways and more.

This event is part of the college-prep GEAR UP, Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs.

Core4 STEM Expo

District 7th-graders interested in pursuing the STEM fields of science, technology, engineering and math can explore higher education opportunities at this special three-day expo.

The first day will feature successful women in STEM professions for female participants. Day two will provide boys opportunities to meet successful men in STEM careers.

CORE4 STEM Family Day

This event for 7th-, 8th- and 9th-graders and their families will feature interactive, hands-on sessions presented by a variety of business, college and university representatives.

Keynote speaker will be astronaut Jose Hernandez, who also will answer questions about the STEM fields and NASA.

CORE4 is presented by the San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.



Families 4 Education

Nov. 13 (Wed) - 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Burbank HS, 1002 Edwards St.

RSVP by Nov. 6

Call 554-2615 or

email mcortez3@saisd.net

CORE4 STEM Expo

Nov. 13-14 - 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Joe Freeman Exposition Hall
3201 E. Houston St.

Nov. 13 (Wed) - Latina Day

Keynote speaker

Janie Martinez Gonzalez

Webhead CEO

Nov. 14 (Thurs) - Latino Day

Keynote speaker

Dr. David Jimenez

UTSA Health Science Center professor

Nov. 16 (Sat) - Family STEM Day

9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

St. Philip's College, 1801 Martin Luther King Drive

Keynote speaker

Jose Hernandez, astronaut



in the Spotlight



In the pink for a good cause



SAISD Assistant Athletic Director Barbara Wise (left photo, standing right) presents WINGS Director Terri Jones a donation of \$7,800, which the local non-profit organization will use for breast cancer treatment and health care. The money was raised in conjunction with Oct. 18 Dig for the Cure



Courtesy photo

volleyball matches between eight District high schools. Shown above, Jefferson HS principal Orlando Vera (center) was among those cheering on his school's team during a pre-game pep rally.

Expert advice



Spurs guard Cory Joseph leads Wheatley MS students through the types of agility drills he and his teammates run in preparation of another championship season. Exercise tips from this expert were held in the school's newly renovated gym, which was remodeled through the NBA Cares Legacy Project, United Way and Spurs Sports & Entertainment.



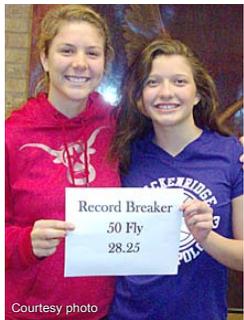
ONE MORE MATCH

Those unable to make any of the Oct. 18 Dig for the Cure matches still have time to show their support for the cause by attending this final event for 2013:

**Sam Houston vs. La Vernia • Oct. 29 (Tues) - 6:15 p.m.
Sam Houston HS, 4635 E. Houston St.**

Names of breast cancer survivors may be submitted for recognition by emailing Sam Houston teacher Courtney Davis, cdavis@saisd.net.

Eagles soar on land and water



Courtesy photo

It's been a banner October for Brackenridge HS. First, sophomore Star Rosales (left photo) broke a 15-year SAISD record in the 50-meter butterfly at the Alamo Area High School Swimming League, hosted by Palo Alto College. The

previous record was set by a fellow Eagle: Carla Landeros in 1998. With Star is her proud coach Natalie Walker. Less than a week later, the Brack band (photo right) earned a superior first division rating at the University Interscholastic League Region 12 marching competition, qualifying them to represent SAISD at the UIL Area D marching contest to be held Oct. 26 in Leander. Showing off the trophy are drum majors Alexandra Tamez and Michael Lopez. They are joined by their

pleased directors (l to r) Mark Wolocki, Gabe Valdez, Alfonso Alvarado and principal Moises Ortiz.



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Learning from the best

A trio of SAISD schools recently were in the spotlight as models of education. Jefferson HS and Longfellow MS hosted visitors interested in seeing the Advancement Via Individual Determination college-readiness program done right. Both, along with Whittier MS, are national demonstration sites in recognition of their successful use of AVID in preparing students for higher education. Meanwhile,

at Pershing ES, guests learned about the school's implementation of the Success for All reform strategy. **1.** Judy Torres, Jefferson's AVID coordinator, greets visitors from throughout South and Central Texas. **2.** Observing Longfellow English teacher Stephanie Cardenas' class are South Texas-area educators gathered for the AVID Regional Workshop. **3.** Pershing principal Kathleen St. Clair addresses Council of Urban Education members.


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