

June 27, 2013

## Dr. Sylvester Perez named District's 18th superintendent



SAISD Superintendent  
Dr. Sylvester Perez

SAISD's newest superintendent needs no introduction. He's Dr. Sylvester Perez, who has served as SAISD's interim since March 2012.

After being named the lone finalist for the job last month, Trustees

unanimously approved his selection at the June 17 School Board meeting, where the decision was met with cheers and applause from attendees. Perez officially begins this role on July 1 with a contract running through June 30, 2015.

After coming out of retirement to serve as interim superintendent, the Harlandale (ISD) HS graduate said his decision to stay on was based in part on his love for his hometown.

"Being a native San Antonian, I realize the importance of SAISD in this city and its future, which is dependent upon tomorrow's citizens being well educated. I want the parents and community to know that my commitment is

personal and heartfelt."

His immediate goals include expanding upon some initiated in 2012-13.

"Last year's top priority continues, which is our laser focus on literacy," he said.

"Students not reading on grade level is a major challenge and cause for concern. We want to see students reading above grade level so writing skills, AND all other disciplines will improve.

"Another priority is in continuing our trajectory in decreasing the dropout rate, which I see as not only a challenge for SAISD but an epidemic across the country. While we have moved the needle in reducing dropouts and increasing the completion rate over the past two to three years, there will be no finish line until 100 percent of our students graduate."

Prior to taking the helm as SAISD's interim, Perez most recently was superintendent of Midland ISD, from which he retired in June 2010.

He previously was superintendent for the San Marcos Consolidated, Clint and Mathis school districts.

Throughout his 40 years in education, Perez has held a variety of positions - classroom teacher, coach, athletic director, assistant principal and principal - in several school districts throughout Texas and New Mexico.

Additionally, he has earned numerous honors and awards. Among them:

- 2006 Texas Superintendent of the Year finalist
- 2006 Highlands University Hall of Fame inductee
- 2004 San Marcos Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Educator of the Year
- 1999 election (first Hispanic) to the Texas University Interscholastic League Legislative Council
- 1998 Harlandale ISD Hall of Fame inductee

Perez's master's and bachelor's degrees were earned at New Mexico Highlands University and his doctorate in educational administration from Texas A&M University.

Asked what he most would like others to know about him, Perez replied:

"That I resemble many of our students' story, and that I promise to make all decisions based on what is best for students."

## SAISD welcomes Castro and thanks Stark-Wilson for her service



Emilio Castro, new deputy superintendent for teaching and learning

After serving the District since June 2012 as interim deputy superintendent for teaching and learning, SAISD once again is bidding Dr. Peggy Stark-Wilson a fond farewell as it welcomes Emilio Castro to fill the role on a permanent basis.

In this capacity, Castro oversees and provides leadership for instructional programs and the operation of all teaching and learning activities.

The 19-year educator has served as a teacher,

assistant principal, principal, area superintendent, superintendent and leadership consultant.

Most recently, Castro led professional learning and leadership development at Lewisville ISD. This district comprising 50,000 students boasts nearly 60 schools rated *exemplary* or *recognized* by the Texas Education Agency.

Previously, he spent 13 years with Dallas ISD and two-and-a-half years with Kingsville ISD.

Castro has a master's of education in educational administration from Texas A&M University-Commerce and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Texas.

He replaces Dr. Betty Burks, who left the District

Expressing his appreciation to Dr. Peggy Stark-Wilson is Superintendent Dr. Sylvester Perez.

last June.

Stark-Wilson returned for the transition after retiring in 2006 as associate superintendent of curriculum and instruction.



## Rojas 'AIMS' to help boost science and math instruction

SAISD students can look forward to more exciting ways to learn math and science this fall, thanks to special training their teachers and mentors will receive.

Leading the sessions will be Liz Rojas, the District's coordinator of new teachers & mentors, who will share with them lessons she learned at the Activities Integrating Math & Science Education Foundation PLC Summit July 21-26 in Fresno, Calif.

"I am planning on bringing this training to the new teachers and mentors in after-school sessions called C.A.R.E. (Classroom Assistance with Resources & Enrichments) that are offered twice a month during the school year and also assist the Curriculum & Instruction Department with trainings in the area of math and science," the 34-year veteran SAISD educator said.

Rojas is a long-time member of the AIMS



Liz Rojas heads back to class this summer to learn exciting new math and science lessons to pass on to new teachers and mentors to share with their students.

National Leadership Network and was selected for the summit

based partly upon her essay on how she believes AIMS relates to the needs of the 21st century learner.

Among the reasons she cited were: creative hands-on activities using real-world concrete learning objects; continually adapting to the challenges of establishing 21st-century skills for students, teachers and educators; and use of an integrated model of learning including doing, writing, illustrating and thinking.

Through AIMS, Rojas also has presented at

workshops and served as a trainer for math and science educators nationally and statewide.

Prior to her current assignment, Rojas most recently was an SAISD principal at Smith ES where she also was an assistant principal.

Other positions include teaching at Steele ES and serving as a campus instructional coordinator at Ball ES.

## Pay raises approved

Good news for SAISD employees.

Trustees at the June 23 School Board meeting approved pay raises for all permanent full-time staff members.

The rate of the increases and effective dates are based upon a variety of factors.

For details visit [www.saisd.net](http://www.saisd.net).

# Spurs take time out from the NBA finals to team up with Wheatley

Wheatley MS assumed center court when present and past members of the Western Conference champs came to help prepare students for victory in the game of life.

The San Antonio Spurs and Miami Heat both took time out from the series finals to join forces with the National Basketball Association and State Farm Insurance for the newest NBA Cares Learn and Play Centers, which opened in their hometowns.

"I definitely want to thank all partners who contributed to this extraordinary project for Wheatley," said school principal Mae Olson.

Wheatley was chosen for the \$40,000 renovation based on the school's proximity to the team's home court, the AT&T Center, and its participation in the Eastside Promise Neighborhood federal grant program.

Following a two-week makeover, the library

was unveiled at a June 12 ribbon-cutting ceremony to show off its fresh paint job, Spurs-themed decorations, new furnishings and other amenities.

"The pictures of all the players on the walls inspire the students (to think) one day that could be me," Olson said, adding:

"Academically, the 7,000 books that were given to us will allow the students to choose books that they are comfortable reading.

"The new computers will enhance the literacy improvements that are needed for our students. It also allows the parents in the community to come and work with their students or attend technology classes."

Every year the two teams making the NBA finals sponsor a Learn and Play Center for their cities. Wheatley's is the NBA's 811th and the fifth in San Antonio.



With media there to capture the moment, former Spurs great David Robinson (from left) and current players Patty Mills and Matt Bonner treat youngsters from the Wheatley MS feeder-pattern of schools to storytime. Others (not pictured) on hand for the festive occasion included coach Gregg Popovich, current player Danny Green, retired Spurs George "the Iceman" Gervin and Sean Elliott and NBA Commissioner David Stern.

## SAISD celebrates even more opportunities to enhance literacy

From grants to expand library collections to taking books to the streets, the District's goal to increase rigor in reading and writing knows no summer break. Following are two of the latest examples:

### Laura Bush Foundation for America's Libraries grants

Thanks to funding named for America's foremost former school librarian, book lovers from 11 District campuses can enjoy expanded and updated reading selections.

Their schools are among 212 nationally and 14 locally awarded \$5,000 from the Laura Bush Foundation for America's Libraries.

SAISD's beneficiary elementaries and librarians are: Cameron and W. W. White, Sue Hales; Collins Garden, Lucinda Flores; Hillcrest, Jennifer Grimes; Lamar and Smith, Herlinda Barrientos; Margil, Martha Wolf;

and Neal, Najentel Chaisson.

Also receiving grants and school librarians are: Mission Academy, Jeanette Barrera; Rogers MS, Jennifer Zinn; and Fox Tech HS, Sylvia Carreon (retired) and Virginia Garcia.

Since its 2002 inception during Bush's first term as first lady, the foundation has awarded more than \$10.5 million to schools in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

### Book Mobile Read to Succeed

While students at the Laura Bush Foundation grant recipient campuses have more reading offerings to look forward to this upcoming school year, Herff ES students need not wait until then to enjoy new books.

Twice monthly through July a book mobile is making stops throughout their Alamodome-area neighborhood.

This opportunity for students to continue learning throughout the summer break by reading for fun was arranged by principal Dr. Traci Smith. Books representing all grade levels are in English and Spanish and each child may select two to keep.



Loading the book mobile with reading materials are (l to r) Herff ES librarian Alma Mendiola, principal Dr. Traci Smith, administrative assistant Kristy Suarez and teacher Jennifer Galvan.

## Campus curb appeal counts

While the District's Facilities Services employees and contractors are busy with building improvements through SAISD Bond 2010, maintenance crew members are spending the summer making repairs at a number of campuses and enhancing their curb appeal.

The work is part of a total package ensuring that SAISD schools not only are being better equipped to serve the learning needs of 21st century students, but are becoming more inviting places with ground beautifications sure to please their communities as well.

Also adding to the campus curb appeal are new marquees that the following schools are getting this summer: Barkley-Ruiz, Baskin, Bowden, Briscoe, Crockett, De Zavala, Franklin, Graebner, Hillcrest, Kelly, Lamar, Maverick, Pershing, Rodriguez, Schenck

and Woodlawn Hills elementaries and Carroll, Carvajal, Knox and Tynan early childhood education centers.

The Board of Trustees has put a priority on accelerating improvements to be made to exterior buildings and grounds, starting with the highest needs. Facilities Services is currently doing a preliminary evaluation to present for Trustee review.

These enhancements are the latest for a variety of SAISD schools which already has begun with attractive new playgrounds and security fencing funded through the \$515 million voter-approved bond program.



Madison ES is among schools benefitting this summer from curb appeal makeovers. Other recent recipients were Gates and Miller elementaries and Wheatley MS.

## Happy Fourth of July

SAISD will be closed July 1-5 in observance of the Independence Day holiday and reopen on Monday, July 8.

*Have a safe and happy holiday!*

## New District appointments and assignments announced

**Dr. Mateen Diop, superintendent's office, special projects and partnerships executive director**  
Formerly: instructional technology and learning services director

### High schools

**Edward Garcia, Lanier HS principal**  
Formerly: Rhodes MS principal

**Miguel Elizondo, Travis ECHS principal**  
Formerly: Lanier HS principal

### Middle schools

**Julio Garcia, Rhodes MS principal**  
Formerly: Davis MS assist. principal

**Dr. Carol Velazquez, Harris MS principal**  
Formerly: Jefferson HS academic dean

### Academies

**Noemi Davila, Austin Academy principal**  
Formerly: Mission Academy assist. principal

**Will Webber, Bonham Academy principal**  
Formerly: Negley ES (Hays CISD) principal

### Elementaries

**Claudia Ramos, Kelly ES principal**  
Formerly: Nelson ES administrative assist.

**Cynthia Rocha, Rodriguez ES principal**  
Formerly: Longfellow MS assist. principal

## 'Last Herd' heads out on a high note

The close of 2012-13 signaled the end of an era at Fox Tech HS with the graduation of the final traditional class, known as the "Last Herd." This event marks the completion of the historic downtown campus's transition into a stand-alone magnet for students preparing for law or health careers. Overall, this seminal year has been a good one for Fox Tech. It began with its designation as a National Blue Ribbon School and concluded with being honored by Mayor Julián Castro for highest participation in Café College among area high schools.



Accepting the award (left photo, l to r) are interim principal Sarah Croft, District 1 Trustee Steve Lecholop and Superintendent Dr. Sylvester Perez. Shown right photo addressing the class of 2013 during a "Last Word from the Last Herd" assembly is senior Zachary Reyes.



## Making headlines

Honored for her work with Inner City Development where she has been a volunteer co-director since 1972 is District 5 Trustee Patti Radle. Although this was a salaried position, she and her husband Rod instead chose to work there without pay, inspiring IDC to develop the tradition of being an all-volunteer agency. She was one of seven to receive a Headliners Award on June 21 from the Association for Women in Communications San Antonio Professional Chapter. Presenting Radle's award in the Volunteer Service category (right) is Mary Lance, an AWC board member.

Photo courtesy Roberta Barnes



## Marking a milestone

Gathering to celebrate Michael Olivares' status as Cooper Academy's 500th graduate are (back row, l to r) teachers John Paul Boone and Mo Rafati, principal Joseph Zatarain, teacher Geri Barnes, vice principal Margarita Mendoza and liaison Louis Robles. Front row (l to r) are secretary Helen Ramon and teachers Anne Shipman and Patricia Cardenas. Next stop for Olivares is St. Philip's College. Cooper opened in 2008 to help former dropouts earn their high school diplomas. The program since has been expanded to serve students at three satellite sites in addition to Cooper.



## Community advocate

Accepting the Mayor's Award for Youth Group on behalf of Jefferson HS Serving the Community is club sponsor Isabel Fears. The award, coordinated by United Way, recognized Jefferson's community service efforts. The group also received \$1,000 to give to the charity of its choice, the Salvation Army.

Courtesy photo

## How SAISD spells summer

Availing themselves of fun learning opportunities including taking bows at center stage are just some of the ways District students are spending summer 2013. These are just a few examples.

Leading her castmates in a rendition of "A Noun is a Person, Place or Thing" is Ailyn Duran. The incoming Edison HS senior was among aspiring thespians in grades 6-12 performing "Schoolhouse Rock Live! JR." The production was the grand finale for SAISD's two-week summer musical theatre camp.



Camp 98.6 participant Laura Cid (left) wraps Videlia Acosta's hand in a device paralyzed patients use for physical therapy. This exercise was part of a weeklong intensive education program to provide rising Health Professions Magnet sophomores real-world experience in the medical field. Camp partner is the University Health System.

Burbank HS assistant principal Ricky Flores directs students participating in the 4th-Annual Alamo City Band Camp, which provided more than 250 young musicians an opportunity to improve their performing skills through both individualized and group training led by SAISD band directors and other professional musicians. Flores formerly was an award-winning band director at Irving MS.

