



DURÓN'S DIGEST

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**Celebrating
our past,
looking
forward**

There has been a lot of focus recently on the challenges and opportunities ahead for SAISD. We know that we need to restructure our District in order to offer the best educational opportunities and create a stronger teaching and learning environment for our students. Our Board is in the process of gathering more information on the facilities planning process and committee recommendations, with the ultimate goal of teaming with the committee to take a proposal to the community for input. I'll keep you updated as decisions are made.

In the meantime, it's also important to not lose sight of all the great things going on in our District. We're nearing the end of the school year, and graduation is around the corner – a great time to reflect on the progress over the year and what we've done to further prepare our students for success in school and beyond.

One program with exciting results is the "Reach Out to Dropouts" initiative kicked off last September, and the opening of the Cooper Academy for dropout recovery, which has resulted in more than 100 students returning to continue their education. I attended a breakfast celebration this month with Mayor Phil Hardberger to honor 20 students graduating this year, who not so long ago had reason to believe this day would not happen. That number might reach 25 by graduation day. It is a significant achievement for these students and for the many educators and administrators who worked with them through the year.

We also launched the Young Women's Leadership Academy (YWLA), San Antonio's first all-girls public school, and Travis Early College High School (TECHS), which provides students the opportunity to earn an associate's degree or up to 60 hours of college credit upon graduation. Both of these schools experienced outstanding success in only their first year. Admission into YWLA is so sought after that this spring 300 students applied for the school's 75 open slots. And at TECHS, 103 students have earned college credits at San Antonio College. Both of these schools will be *exemplary* on their state accountability.

These schools also provide great examples of new life for campuses closed last year. While many community members were saddened by the end of an era for Travis ES, Mann Academy and Cooper MS, the good news is that outstanding learning continues to occur. The closures have reaped benefits for their former students as well. For example, those in middle school have been able to take advantage of even more academic and extracurricular offerings by attending campuses with larger enrollments. Tonight at Longfellow, the band will hold its Spring Concert featuring 300-plus young musicians. That's nearly twice as many students as last year that we are providing the opportunity to learn an instrument. And for the first time, there are enough performers for the intermediate-level band to perform. The consolidations provided increased opportunities for electives and sports, as well as Advanced Placement and Gifted and Talented courses, providing a strong foundation for our students, and particularly helping our 8th-graders be better prepared for entering high school this fall.

I'm also happy to report that we expect to see an increased number of *exemplary* and *recognized* campuses, based on the state accountability assessment. And for the bottom line, all of this has been accomplished while we cut approximately \$16 million from our budget this year - \$26 million over the past two years. And still we continue to look for ways to cut costs and further our budget.

These are just a few of the accomplishments of the year – there are too many to list. I am so proud of the people of SAISD who every day show a commitment to making a difference in our students lives. I've met personally with many of you this year, in a variety of forums, and I am always struck by those with a true passion for doing their part in helping our children succeed in school and beyond. It's that attitude and drive that brings us the many successes of the year.

We will continue to face challenges, and I know that together we will continue to achieve successes and make this District even stronger focusing on our mission to graduate all of our students and prepare them for success in higher education.

Thank you again for your support of our SAISD!

Best regards,