



DURÓN'S DIGEST

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SAISD: Quality Education, at the Heart of a Great City!

Valentine's Day is just a few days away—and that's an appropriate time to remind ourselves how important quality public schools are to the future of San Antonio. After all, effective schools strengthen the city's heartbeat. Each year, we count on SAISD graduates to pump new life into the community. With that in mind, I'm happy to report that many of SAISD's key vital signs are strong (and growing stronger) in 2010—both on our campuses, and all across this great city.

You may recall the "Vision 30/30" plan, for example—a commitment to keep improving the high school curriculum so that at least 30 percent of our students are able to graduate high school with 30 hours or more of college credit from local colleges and universities. Clearly, we're on our way: SAISD has nearly doubled the number of students enrolled in dual credit courses this semester compared to Spring 2009 (1,002 now versus 586 then).

Another sign of progress: Eight SAISD schools were on the Texas Education Agency's list of 2009-10 Title 1, Part A Distinguished Schools. That's up from two last year—a four-fold increase. This designation recognizes schools that consistently demonstrate strong academic performance over a three-year period and have an economically disadvantaged student population of 40% or more. All of the SAISD schools on the list achieved the Academically Exemplary rating for the current school year.

We are making substantial headway in classroom technology, too. Next week, we will complete the deliveries of the 3,240 new Dell computers—upgrading the technology at every school we serve. In addition, we will be installing new interactive whiteboards and video projectors in high school Math and Science classrooms, starting this month. All these efforts are the direct result of recent cost cutting that has enabled SAISD to achieve a six-fold increase in funds available for technology purchases this year.

A few weeks ago, we took a big step in furthering academic choice with the announcement of our new Medical Professions Magnet Program at Fox Tech and partnership with University Health System. This exciting program is the fruit of a year-long collaboration among local medical professionals, elected leaders and educators. It promises to open many new career paths for our students, while also strengthening the region's status as a center of excellence in health care. Applications are being taken now for next fall's freshman class.

There's progress to report on the restructuring front, as well. In January, the Board of Trustees approved plans to move forward with a community survey—input that will help the district determine the priorities for implementing the restructuring plan. Once that data is in hand, we expect to hold a workshop with the Board to review the findings. The community has been an integral part of this process from the beginning, and their views will determine where we go from here with this long-term initiative.

Great friends are a key part of our story, too—friends like the SAISD Foundation. Under the visionary leadership of former state senator John Montford, the Foundation has developed new fundraising avenues and invested hundreds of thousands of dollars to reward excellent teachers and spur innovation in the classroom. As Senator Montford now passes the baton to a new leader, Carrie Baker Wells, we are confident that this extraordinary partnership will continue to bear much fruit for our students. (If you'd like to be a part of that process, then you may want to mark your calendar for May 3, when the Foundation tees up its major annual fundraising effort—the "Golf Fore Excellence Tournament".)

We are grateful for your ongoing support, as we work across many different fronts to strengthen the District and improve academic opportunities. With your help, we will continue to make progress in addressing our key challenges—and ensure that the heart of this great city grows ever stronger for generations to come!

Best regards,