



A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

As we enter the second semester of the 2007-08 school year, I want to address a very critical time for every SMSSD student. Though we stress to our staff and students that every day we have with our students is important, the state assessments, such as the TAKS and other forms of testing, will begin during the spring semester and occupy a great deal of instructional time. Please know that SMSSD teaches the instructional objectives under the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and by doing so, prepares our students for various TAKS tests. However, I want to strongly encourage all parents of an SMSSD student to talk to their child about the importance of each TAKS test. It is usually not difficult to convince a high school junior how important the Exit Level TAKS tests are but students in lower grades sometimes do not comprehend the significance of the TAKS test they are taking.

In order to assist parents in discussing the relevance and importance of the TAKS tests, please use the following points as a guide:

1. The TAKS assessment provides an opportunity for every student to be measured and to determine where each student needs additional instruction or support.
2. The TAKS assessment provides an opportunity for the teacher and campus staff to determine which subject areas, instructional skills, and specific content skills must be improved. If the results are an accurate reflection of our students' knowledge and skills, then that data is used to help every teacher and staff member improve.

3. In Grades 3, 5 and 8 students must demonstrate mastery in reading or math to be considered for promotion to the next grade level. Grade 11 students must pass the Exit Level TAKS test in English, math, science, and social studies in order to be graduated from high school.
4. Each TAKS test closely mirrors the higher order thinking skills required on college entrance exams such as the SAT, ACT, etc.
5. The results of each TAKS assessment on every campus is used by the State of Texas and federal government to determine if campuses (and overall district) are performing at the levels required by each entity. (While I have serious concerns with the process used to determine a campus or district's ranking by both the state and federal government, I do not discount the significance these rankings have when campuses or districts are being judged by the local community.)

Again, I encourage all parents to continue stressing the importance of preparing for the TAKS exams that each of your children may take. If you do not have students in school, I encourage you to provide your resources or services to a campus or student. If you are interested in becoming a student mentor, please contact my office. Thank you for the opportunity to serve Stafford Municipal School District as superintendent.



H.D. CHAMBERS

Texas Education Agency and Testing

The Student Assessment Division of the Texas Education Agency manages and oversees the development, administration, scoring, and analysis of the statewide assessment program which includes the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), the State-Development Alternative Assessment II (SDAA II), the Reading Proficiency Tests in English (RPTE), and the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS).

As mandated by the 76th Texas Legislature in 1999, the TAKS, administered beginning in the 2002-03 school year, measures the statewide curriculum in reading at Grades 3-9; in writing at Grades 4 and 7; in English Language Arts (ELA) at Grades 10 and 11; in mathematics at Grades 3-11; in science at Grades 5, 10, and 11; and social studies at Grades 8, 10, and 11. The Spanish TAKS is administered at Grades 3 through 6. Satisfactory performance on the TAKS at Grade 11 is prerequisite to a high school diploma.

The RPTE was field tested in Spring 1999 and implemented in Spring 2000. These tests are designed to measure annual growth in the English reading proficiency of second language learners, and are used along with English and Spanish TAKS to provide a comprehensive assessment system for limited English proficient (LEP) students. LEP students in Grades 3-12 are required to take the RPTE until they achieve a rating of advanced.

TAKS-M is an alternate assessment based on modified academic achievement standards designed for students receiving special education services who meet participation requirements. TAKS-M has been designed to meet federal requirements mandated under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. According to federal regulations, all students will be assessed on grade-level curriculum which includes those students receiving special education services. TAKS-M covers the same grade-level content as TAKS, but TAKS-M tests have been modified in format (larger font, fewer items per page, etc.) and test design (fewer answer choices, simpler vocabulary and sentence structure, etc.). Two percent of the tested population can count as proficient for Adequate Yearly Progress calculations beginning in 2007-08. The SDAA II or Locally Determined Alternate Assessment (LDAA) will no longer be

In This Issue

Today's students must pass many tests throughout their education career. From the time they reach third grade until they are graduated from high school, SMSSD students are administered state standardized assessments that hold them and the school district accountable on the local, state, and national level. In order to leave our public education environment, students must undergo another set of assessments to enter college. It is important to know that our students are competing against other students from across the United States for admission to college, financial scholarships, financial aid, etc. This issue of the Spotlight is dedicated to providing information and support to all parents as we prepare students for whatever assessment they may take.

Also in this issue we are providing an update on the 2006 Bond Referendum construction. Our projects are moving along and our students are benefiting from the results. As you will see, many of the projects have been completed below the projected budget. A tremendous amount of credit goes to Daniel Munoz, Director of Maintenance and Transportation and Jimmy Webster, Maintenance and Facilities Supervisor.

administered. TAKS-M may be an appropriate assessment for some students who previously took those assessments. Standards for TAKS-M are set by the state based on the Spring 2008 test data.

The TAAS measures the statewide curriculum in reading, mathematics and writing at the exit level. TAAS will remain the graduation requirement for students who were enrolled in Grade 9 or higher on January 1, 2001.

Source: www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/about/overview.html

Getting Ready - Being Prepared

SMSD expects all students to be successful and to achieve all their goals. To help them meet their expectations in the many assessments they encounter, we offer tutorials or preparatory classes focused on the appropriate area. For instance, Middle School offers after-school tutorials four days a week. High School students may get an extra boost in subject areas, for assignments, or for TAKS assessments from individual teachers and tutoring sessions. Juniors who are preparing to take the SAT assessment may enroll in a series of preparatory classes for the March administration.

The following is additional student support for assessments. We encourage students to take advantage of these offerings. Please contact your child's campus administrator or counselor for

specific information on these offerings.

- In-school tutorials
- After-school group tutorials
- Teacher-student tutorials
- Mentoring tutorials
- Web-based SAT/ACT preparatory program
- College Prep LLC

The City of Stafford funds an SAT/ACT preparatory course for high school juniors. This is an intense 8-1/2 week classroom preparatory course for the March 1 administration provided by a reputable SAT/ACT instructor. Contact Ms. Rebecca Benedict (281-261-9200 x3220) for more information.

2007-08 Testing Calendar - remaining dates

Grade 3	
Mar 04:	TAKS and TAKS-M Reading; TAKS Sp Reading
Mar 08:	Makeup for Mar 04 tests
Apr 28:	TAKS LAT Math
Apr 29:	TAKS Math, Sp Math and TAKS-M; TAKS LAT Reading
Apr 30:	TAKS Reading and Sp Reading Retest
May 03:	TAKS Makeup for Apr 28-30 tests
Grade 4	
Mar 04:	TAKS Writing, Sp Writing; TAKS-M Writing Field Test
Mar 08:	Makeup for Mar 04 tests
Apr 28:	TAKS LAT Math
Apr 29:	TAKS Math, Sp Math and TAKS-M; TAKS LAT Reading
Apr 30:	TAKS Reading, Sp Reading; TAKS-M Reading
May 03:	TAKS Makeup for Apr 28-30 tests
Grade 5	
Mar 04:	TAKS and TAKS-M Reading; TAKS Sp Reading
Mar 08:	Makeup for Mar 04 tests
Apr 07:	TAKS LAT Math
Apr 08:	TAKS and TAKS-M Math; TAKS Sp Math
Apr 10:	Makeup for Apr 07 and Apr 08 tests
Apr 29:	TAKS LAT Reading
Apr 30:	TAKS Reading and Sp Reading Retest
May 01:	TAKS Science and Sp Science; TAKS-M Science
May 02:	TAKS LAT Science
May 03:	TAKS Makeup for Apr 28-30 tests
May 13:	TAKS Math and Sp Math Retest
May 15:	Makeup for May 13 tests
Grade 6	
Apr 28:	TAKS LAT Math
Apr 29:	TAKS Math, Sp Math and TAKS-M; TAKS LAT Reading
Apr 30:	TAKS Reading, Sp Reading; TAKS-M Reading
May 03:	TAKS Makeup for Apr 28-30 tests
Grade 7	
Mar 04:	TAKS Writing; TAKS-M Writing Field Test
Mar 08:	Makeup for Mar 04 tests
Apr 28:	TAKS LAT Math
Apr 29:	TAKS and TAKS-M Math; TAKS LAT Reading
Apr 30:	TAKS Reading; TAKS-M Reading
May 03:	TAKS Makeup for Apr 28-30 tests

Grade 8	
Mar 04:	TAKS and TAKS-M Reading
Mar 08:	Makeup for Mar 04 tests
Apr 07:	TAKS LAT Math
Apr 08:	TAKS and TAKS-M Math
Apr 10:	Makeup for Apr 07 and Apr 08 tests
Apr 29:	TAKS LAT Reading
Apr 30:	TAKS Reading Retest
May 01:	TAKS Science; TAKS-M Science
May 02:	TAKS Social Studies, LAT Science; TAKS-M Social Studies Field Tests
May 03:	TAKS Makeup for Apr 28-30 tests
May 13:	TAKS Math Retest
May 15:	Makeup for May 13 tests
Grade 9	
Mar 04:	TAKS Reading; TAKS-M Writing Field Test
Mar 08:	Makeup for Mar 04 tests
May 01:	TAKS Math; TAKS-M Math Field Test
Grade 10	
Mar 04:	TAKS and TAKS-M ELA
Mar 06:	TAKS ELA Makeup
Mar 08:	Makeup for Mar 04 tests
Apr 28:	TAKS LAT Math
Apr 29:	TAKS and TAKS-M Math; TAKS LAT ELA
May 01:	TAKS Science; TAKS-M Science
May 02:	TAKS and TAKS-M Social Studies, LAT Science; TAKS-M Social Studies Field Tests
May 03:	TAKS Makeup for Apr 28-30 tests
Exit Level	
Mar 04:	TAKS ELA; TAKS-M ELA Field Test
Mar 08:	Makeup for Mar 04 tests
Apr 29:	TAKS ELA Retest
Apr 30:	TAKS Math; TAKS-M Field Test; TAKS Math Retest
May 01:	TAKS Science; TAKS-M Science Field Test; TAKS Science Retest
May 02:	TAKS Social Studies; TAKS-M Social Studies Field Tests; TAKS Social Studies Retest
May 03:	TAKS Makeup for Apr 28-30 tests

Construction Bond Update

In November 2006, Stafford voters approved a \$15,050,000 bond referendum for multiple SMSD facility renovations, repairs, and upgrades. It also included the possibility of a new cafeteria for Primary and Middle Schools, contingent upon the availability of funds after other projects are complete. At this time, the funds necessary for the additional cafeteria are in place. The following information is an update on the projects, original approved budgeted amounts, actual costs, and balance of budgeted amount (saved or loss). With the exception of

technology costs, every project approved through the 2006 Bond Referendum is either at or below original budget estimates. Through thorough value engineering and paying attention to only those facility needs that are truly required, the district projects to enjoy a balance of approximately \$2 million to be used on additional facility and capital needs. The district will be evaluating those needs and making the appropriate recommendations to the Board of Trustees for future expenditures. More information will be available in the future.

Project	Original Budget	Actual Cost	Balance Saved	Update
Central Plant Renovation	\$3,200,000	\$3,017,437	\$182,563	Complete
Primary and Elementary Foundation Repair	\$2,938,557	\$2,770,000	\$168,557	Complete
High School Gym Foundation Repairs	\$247,577	\$147,577	\$100,000	Complete
Elementary Science Labs	\$45,000	\$28,000	\$17,000	Complete
Primary and Elementary Playground	\$241,500	\$191,500	\$50,000	Complete; additional playground equipment to be provided
Primary, Elementary, Middle, High Schools' Fire Alarm Retrofit	\$569,000	\$523,000	\$46,000	In progress: completion date August 2008.
SUB TOTAL	\$7,241,634	\$6,727,514	\$514,120	
Technology	\$320,000	\$329,000	\$(9,000)	Complete
Roof Repairs	\$348,203	\$269,500	\$78,703	In progress
Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing	\$500,000	\$300,000	\$200,000	85% complete
Primary, Elementary, Middle, High Interior Repairs	\$1,600,000	*	**\$600,000	Primary complete; remainder complete by August 2008
High School Science Lab Conversions	\$150,000	Unknown	Unknown	To be complete by August 2008
Cafeteria	\$3,500,000	Unknown	Unknown	Currently in design
Professional Fees	\$898,144	\$438,000	**\$150,000	Architectural Consultant Fees
Contingency	\$492,019	\$0	\$492,019	Estimated savings
AGGREGATE PROJECT TOTALS	\$15,050,000	\$13,024,158	\$2,025,842	

* Expected to be under budget due to current market. ** Projected