



STAFFORD MUNICIPAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE

October 2009

SMSD Community,

As SMSD students and staff begin the second grading period of the 2009-10 academic year, students recently completed their first set of diagnostic exams (benchmarks) in all academic content areas. In order for our teachers and academic support staff to maximize our true understanding of each student's academic strengths and weaknesses, it is absolutely critical for us to perform strategically placed diagnostic exams throughout the academic year. With our ability to capture each student's individual academic data (Cambridge Data Systems) within a few days of each diagnostic assessment, our teachers are able to create individual academic plans with our curriculum (CScope) for each student. These academic plans are designed to focus on each student's specific weakness and empower their specific strengths.

The reason I mention this is that in order for any school district or educational system (public, private, charter, home-school, etc.) to genuinely meet the true academic needs of each student, detailed diagnostic data must be collected on each student multiple times throughout the academic year in order to measure academic growth, status quo or reduction. The days of using only daily grades, test grades, quizzes, and homework as the only way to identify a student's true academic understanding of instructional objectives are gone. The education of students in the 21st century must use, among other things, multiple diagnostic assessments over the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) in order to meet the high academic expectations of SMSD and the State of Texas.

I am very proud that SMSD's educators have embraced this and are utilizing the resources necessary to educate and assess our students' learning in a very student-specific manner.

I would like to end by expressing my sincere appreciation to the SMSD Board of Trustees and Stafford City Council for a successful 2009-10 SMSD budget and tax rate process. In a joint meeting on August 27, 2009, both entities approved a budget that provided raises for employees, funding all academic and extracurricular programs without any reductions, and increased funding in those areas in need of additional resources. This budget was also adopted with a forecasted surplus at the end of fiscal year 2009-10. On September 23, 2009, both entities passed a total SMSD tax rate of \$1.23 per \$100 valuation on all property in Stafford. This marks the third consecutive year that the SMSD tax rate has been reduced for all Stafford property owners. When considering the 2009-10 SMSD budget is stronger, forecasts a surplus (while meeting our needs), and includes salary increases for employees and accomplishing this with a reduced tax rate, I trust the Stafford community would agree that the SMSD Board, administration, and Stafford City Council are responsible stewards of tax payer funds.

Thanks!

*H.D. Chambers*

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