

## THANKSGIVING BREAK

All Round Rock ISD campuses will be closed from November 27-29 for Thanksgiving Break.

Have a safe and relaxing Thanksgiving!

## DID YOU KNOW?

There are over 84 different languages spoken in Round Rock ISD.

These languages include English, Spanish, Arabic, Farsi, French, German, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Russian and Vietnamese.

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## Current, projected growth prompts work of bond study



Steve Flores,  
Ph. D.  
Superintendent  
of Schools

It is hard to believe we are already approaching the end of the fall semester. It has been busy and will only get busier as we head into the holiday season and spring semester.

The district continues its tradition of high enrollment growth. Already this year, we have grown to 46,500 students. In my first month and a half of serving as Superintendent of Schools, I have seen that growth firsthand visiting campuses and meeting with teachers, students and community members.

Because of the current and projected growth, the Board of

Trustees in October directed us to explore the possibility of holding a bond election in May 2014.

As is the tradition in this community, this process will begin with a Citizens Bond Committee. Members were appointed recently to serve on one of four subcommittees: Elementary Needs, Secondary Needs, District/Technology Needs and Finance.

The committee will explore an exhaustive list of items proposed by district leadership, possibly including the following projects from all corners of the district:

- Elementary school No. 34 to relieve overcrowding at Bluebonnet and Wells Branch elementary schools
- Middle school No. 11 to relieve overcrowding at Cedar Valley and Walsh Middle schools
- A technology refresh
- Westwood High School

- Master Plan Phases 3 and 4
- Round Rock High School Master Plan Phase 4
- A fine arts performance venue
- Projects at multiple campuses and other district facilities

After completing their review and taking community input, the Citizens Bond Committee will make a final recommendation to the Board of Trustees.

If the Board chooses to proceed with a May 2014 election, they must announce their intentions by February 28, 2014.

It is our responsibility as an administration to make sure we provide the relevant information for making decisions regarding these potential projects. We recognize that is important to our community as we move from a first class to a world class district. We will accomplish this goal because *all children will learn...whatever it takes!*

## School absences can mean loss of district revenue

Approximately \$63,555 in state funding is lost per day due to absences

Each day students miss school makes a significant impact on their overall education, both instructionally and financially.

Each time one student misses a day can cost the district \$35 in state funding, according to Round Rock ISD's budget figures as of September 27. On an average day, roughly 1,800 RRISD students miss school, leading to a loss of approximately \$63,555 a day.

Under the current funding formulas, a 1-percent increase in the district's attendance rate could increase revenue by approximately \$2.7 million.

Executive Director of Business Services Randy Staats said missing school not only costs the district funding but puts students behind their other peers who have not missed as many school days.

Title I Parent Programs Coordinator Maria Rosas Garcia talks

to parents who attend the district's monthly Conversations/Pláticas meetings about the importance of attendance. Pláticas provides information for parents in their native language.

"Basically we're taking money away from our students if they miss too much school," Rosas Garcia said. "It means less money for things like instructional materials."

Even necessary things like doctor's appointments can affect school funding if parents don't understand certain processes.

If students have a doctor's appointment during the day, must attend school before or after the appointment and bring a note, in order for the district to be eligible for its daily attendance funding, said RRISD PIEMS Coordinator Dennis Telas.

"Good regular attendance is important because it funds our school programs," Telas said.

## 'Wonder' book initiative promotes good character

To launch the "One Book, One District" reading initiative for 2013-14, librarians recently distributed 31,000 copies of the book "Wonder" to students, parents and community members.

In R.J. Palacio's book, readers are introduced to August (Auggie) Pullman who was born with a facial deformity.

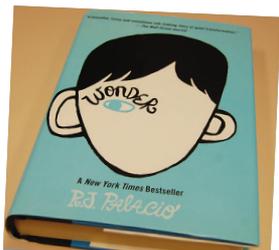
Craniofacial Association and now students are spending this school year connecting with two middle school children - Shelby, 12, and Jeremy, 14 - with craniofacial differences.

"From when we first started reading 'Wonder' our students wanted to know if Auggie was real," Kay said. "Connecting with Shelby and Jeremy and hearing their very real experiences with their facial differences have really brought this initiative home. This book has taught our students and our school to really focus on others and choose kindness before reacting. It has changed the overall culture and thought processes at our school."

The funding for this \$40,000 book study came from the \$100,000 award RRISD received in May as the H-E-B Excellence in Education Large District winner.

"We wanted to invest the dollars to really connect with all of our schools and the community and place a significant focus on literacy, reading and writing," said Deputy Superintendent of Instruction and Administration Dr. Martha Salazar-Zamora.

Salazar-Zamora is encouraging people to join district students and staff in reading the book, writing a message inside the cover and sharing it with someone else.



Wonder,  
by R.J. Palacio

The story chronicles the ups and downs of his first year in middle school from his perspective and the perspective of those around him. The book's message is to always choose kindness.

Round Rock ISD hopes this will be a yearlong communitywide book study.

Palacio is tentatively scheduled to visit RRISD in 2014. Teachers and campuses across the district have a variety of activities planned to promote the book's theme.

Ridgeview MS Librarian Linda Kay contacted the Children's

## Round Rock ISD offers an array of academy, Career, Technical Education options



Westwood High School juniors Navya Kumar (left) and Nihaari Josyula (right) work on a crime scene investigation project in Michele Acker's second-year biomedical science class.

Round Rock ISD offers a unique career and technical education model to prepare students for whatever goals they choose after graduating high school.

Within all five RRISD high schools, the wall-to-wall academy model creates small communities of students who take both elective and core classes within a chosen career pathway.

The district has built a model involving every high school student and linking core and elective teachers around career pathways. The academies engage the business community and give students a chance to sample specific career interests before spending money on more in-depth college or career training.

"The district supports career and technical education in remarkable ways," said Career and Technical Education Director Richard Kincaid. "Everyone is so invested in these programs. Our charge in CTE is to provide innovative courses that align with business and industry needs to prepare students for college or their future careers. By grouping students into a particular academy, we're bringing relevance to things we are teaching in our core areas."

All of the district's five high schools offer the Professional Studies, Science, Technology,

Engineering and Math (STEM) and International Business and Economics academies. Additionally, Cedar Ridge and Westwood high schools are home to the Visual and Performing Arts academies while Cedar Ridge, McNeil and Stony Point high schools offer Health Science academies.

One of the newest academy subject offerings is biomedical science at Round Rock and Westwood. Health science educators with a biology background teach these classes. Students considering a career in biochemistry and biomedical engineering benefit from an introduction to a career path through projects such as making artificial heart valves.

Members of RRISD's Student Support Services and College/Career Readiness Department explain the value of academies during yearly eighth-grade parent nights. Eighth-grade students are encouraged to select an academy they will be a part of their freshman year. Just like college majors, academy choices can be changed.

