



## Students Prepared for STAAR

In April, Northwest ISD students, along with school districts across Texas, were introduced to a new state standardized testing program: STAAR (The State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness). STAAR replaced the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) and brings a new level of rigor to the standardized testing, focusing on "readiness" and ultimately preparing students for their futures. The state has introduced new standardized testing programs every eight to ten years since 1980. Each test adds new expectations for students and teachers.

"We are committed to preparing students for their futures," says Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Edward Chevallier. "NISD recognizes the STAAR test comes with new challenges and opportunities. Our teachers are prepared, our students are equipped with the tools and resources, and together we will be successful."

### STAAR vs. TAKS - What's Changed?

STAAR has proved to be a more demanding program, with new expectations for students and teachers. The exam contains more complex questions and requires students to complete the test in four hours. This is the first time since the state began a standardized testing program that students will have a time limit during the exam. Other test versions, such as STAAR Modified and STAAR Alternate, are available for students upon approval from the admission, review and dismissal (ARD) committee. In addition, specially-designed tests are available for eligible English Language Learners (ELL).

Elementary and middle school students will take an exam with similar subjects and grades as the TAKS test. Most of the changes predominately affect students at the high school level. Freshmen and sophomores will be tested in grade-specific End-of-Course (EOC) exams that will impact graduation. Replacing grade-specific tests, the 15 EOC exams are offered three times a year and include:

- English I, English II, English III (The English exams have reading and writing components totaling six tests.)
- Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II
- Biology, Chemistry, Physics
- World Geography, World History, U.S. History

In efforts to re-examine the new system, the Commissioner of Education has deferred implementation of the original 15 percent STAAR EOC grading policy for the 2012-2013 school year. To graduate, a student must meet a determined cumulative score equivalent to Level II: Satisfactory Academic Performance on all of the EOC assessments taken in each content area.

### NISD Launches STAAR Website

NISD has developed a website ([www.nisdtx.org/STAAR](http://www.nisdtx.org/STAAR)) dedicated to providing information about the STAAR testing program. The website contains a district assessment calendar, answers to frequently asked questions and resources from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) website. In January, secondary campuses will provide information to parents to further explain the STAAR EOC assessment.

Parents can find their child's STAAR EOC score by logging into the Home Access Center (<http://hac.nisdtx.org/homeaccess/>) and clicking on the Test Scores link on the left-hand side. For more information, contact the office of Research, Assessment and Accountability at 817-215-0057.

## NISD Joins Elite Group of High Performing Schools

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) selected Northwest ISD as one of 23 school districts in the state to the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium. The Consortium was created by Senate Bill 1557 in the 82nd Legislative Session. Serving as a design team, the Consortium is charged with informing elected officials concerning methods for transforming Texas public schools by improving student learning through the development of innovative, next-generation learning standards and assessments and accountability systems. In 2006, 35 superintendents came together to create a new vision for public education. The ongoing work of the Public Education Visioning Institute encourages innovation, creativity and more meaningful assessment and accountability measures.

"Northwest ISD provides a high quality education, preparing students for college, the global workforce and personal success," said Northwest ISD Superintendent of Schools Karen G. Rue, Ed.D. "Our students have access to current technology and are learning within a digital environment. They are engaged in collaborative, project-based learning developing relevant skills for creativity and innovation. Today's graduate will enter college or the workforce ready to demonstrate their knowledge – which is more than can be measured by a scantron."



Lakeview Elementary fifth-grade students Trenton Barlette and Sydney Barrow use the GPS tracking devices at the district's Outdoor Learning Center.

In February 2012, the NISD Board of Trustees were among the first of nine school boards in the state to adopt a resolution calling upon Texas legislators to reexamine the accountability system in Texas and to develop a system that truly measures student learning. Today, approximately 860 of the 1,000 school districts in the state have signed this document.

"We are building a future," Rue says. "Together, we are transforming public education." If you are interested in sharing your thoughts with the legislature and Commissioner of Education, contact information is listed at [www.nisdtx.org/legislative](http://www.nisdtx.org/legislative). In addition, Texans Advocating for Meaningful Student Assessment, a statewide grassroots organization of concerned parents, will provide additional information as the implementation of STAAR continues at [www.tamsatx.org](http://www.tamsatx.org).

### Performance Standards

STAAR	TAKS
Level I: Unsatisfactory Academic Performance	Not Met Standard
Level II: Satisfactory Academic Performance	Met Standard
Level III: Advanced Academic Performance	Commended on TAKS

Current juniors and seniors will graduate on the TAKS program. The new EOC STAAR graduation requirements began with the Class of 2015 last year.

## NISD State Honor Board

The 2011-2012 NISD School Board was selected as one of five Honor Boards in the state by the Texas Association of School Administrators' (TASA) annual School Board Awards program. In September, the Board of Trustees was recognized at the TASA/Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) convention in Austin. The 2011-2012 school board members were Mark Schluter, Mel Fuller, Josh Wright, Devonna Holland, Kerry Jones, Daryl Laney, D.C. and Jeannette Leong.

January is School Board Recognition month, and NISD would like to say thank you to its seven-member Board of Trustees. As a Texas Honor School Board, the NISD Board of Trustees has risen to new heights, dedicating countless hours to serving and leading the school district and ensuring Northwest ISD is the best and most sought-after school district where every student is future ready.

### January 2013 School Board Recognition Month



The 2012 - 2013 NISD Board of Trustees are (pictured from left to right) Daryl Laney, D.C., Kerry Jones, Judy Copp, Secretary Mark Schluter, Devonna Holland, President Mel Fuller and Vice President Josh Wright.

## School Finance Trial Underway in Austin

Last year, Northwest ISD joined other school districts across the state to participate in a school finance lawsuit by members of the Texas School Coalition. The coalition is made up of revenue contributing schools like Northwest ISD.

In October, the school finance trial began in the Travis County 250th District Court. The trial is expected to last through mid-January, and a decision is not expected before February or March. "That decision will most likely be appealed to the Texas Supreme Court and could take until the late fall of 2013 or early spring of 2014," says NISD Chief Financial Officer Jon Graswich, CPA.

The Texas Legislature will convene for the 83rd Legislative Session on January 8. For up-to-date information on the school finance trial or for a list of contact information for elected representatives, go to [www.nisdtx.org/schoolfinance](http://www.nisdtx.org/schoolfinance).

## NISD to Launch SMS Text Messaging Service

Northwest ISD is excited to announce the launch of a new service that will enhance communication by allowing the district to deliver important information to parents and guardians via SMS text messaging. On January 23, parents will receive a text message inviting them to opt-in to NISD's new SMS text messaging service. To opt out of the service, parents should not respond to the text.

NISD will use the service to provide information that is timely and relevant, such as inclement weather notifications and emergency communications. This service is not intended to replace the district's existing means of communication. To confirm the district has a wireless contact number in the student information database, contact your child's campus.



Please note, although Northwest ISD does not charge for this service, the district does not pay for text message charges that may be incurred by you for sending or receiving text messages. The SMS messaging only works with mobile accounts that use short code messaging.

Contact your wireless carrier to determine the type of messaging your phone receives and for any possible charges. For more information, go to [www.SchoolMessenger.com/tm](http://www.SchoolMessenger.com/tm).

## Save the Date... 2/28/13 Third Annual Techno Expo

Northwest ISD community members are invited to attend the third annual NISD Techno Expo at Byron Nelson High School on Thursday, February 28 from 5 to 8:30 p.m. From animation and digital video to multimedia and website design, this event will showcase student use of technology in today's classroom. The showcase is open to all Northwest ISD students and the community.

Selected students will present and demonstrate their use of technology in the classroom during a series of more than 300 breakout sessions. Dinner will be served by students in the district's Academy of Culinary Arts and Hospitality from 5 to 7 p.m., and music performances will be provided by NISD fine arts students. Student presentations are scheduled from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Door prizes will be given away at the conclusion of the event.



# NISD Residents Approve \$255 Million Bond, District to Name New High School

On November 6, a record number of NISD community members cast their vote in the district's \$255 million bond election. From the approximately 42,000 registered voters in NISD, more than 25,000 people voted, and 57 percent voted "for" the bond proposition.

"This is the first time we have called a bond referendum during a Presidential election," NISD Board President Mel Fuller says. "A Presidential election typically draws more people to the polls. The School Board called a bond referendum for the November 6 ballot in hopes of providing more people with the opportunity to make their voice heard."

As one of the fastest growing districts in the area, NISD is projected to increase by an additional 5,800 students during the next five years. The bond will provide for an additional 4,000 student seats and includes construction of a third comprehensive high school (opening in August 2015) and the district's sixth middle school (opening in August 2016). Both campuses will be located in the north Fort Worth/Haslet area. From the 5,800 student population increase, approximately 1,800 student seats can be accommodated in existing schools.

The \$255 million bond referendum will also provide updates to technology, safety and security, program enhancements, classroom space for math, science and environmental studies at the Outdoor Learning Center, major building component replacements like HVAC systems, flooring and roofing, as well as a building addition.

"NISD has seen tremendous growth, roughly 10,100 students since May 2005," said Superintendent of Schools Karen G. Rue, Ed.D. "Our community recognizes the need to accommodate our growing student population, and we are greatly appreciative of the continued support."

## Elementary 17 to Open in August

With more than 1,000 new students enrolling each August, Northwest ISD has experienced growth that has ranged from eight to 19 percent annually over the last 10 years. Construction is underway at the district's 17th elementary school located in Roanoke on Litsey Road near the Seventeen Lakes housing development. Funds from the 2008 bond referendum will be used to construct this 103,926 square-foot campus. The school will feature an



**Elementary 17 is the first NISD elementary school designed with the optimal 850 student capacity.**

expanded cafeteria and gymnasium, open space, enclosed courtyard, flex spaces, and energy efficient amenities. The new elementary school will open in August 2013.

## Nine Elementary Building Additions

In 2011, the Board of Trustees reestablished the optimal capacity of elementary schools with 450 students to 650, and schools with a capacity of 650 students to 850, saving the district more than \$3 million in operating costs.

School Name	Capacity Before Construction	Capacity After Construction	Estimated Completion Date	Funding
Beck Elem.	450	650	Aug. 2012	Bond 2008
Granger Elem.	650	850	Aug. 2012	Bond 2008
Roanoke Elem.	650	850	Aug. 2012	Bond 2008
Lakeview Elem.	450	650	Aug 2013	Bond 2008
Love Elem.	650	850	Aug. 2013	Bond 2008
Nance Elem.	650	850	Aug. 2016	Bond 2012

During the next four years, three more elementary schools are expected to receive building additions, funded through the 2008 bond program. The selection of the three campuses and timing of construction is dependent upon growth in the surrounding areas.

To see your tax dollars at work, go to [www.nisdtx.org/bond2012](http://www.nisdtx.org/bond2012) to view photos, videos and announcements as the district breaks ground on new schools and building additions.

## NISD Seeks Feedback to Name New Schools

Northwest ISD Board of Trustees and administration invite the community to submit nominations for naming elementary school 17 and comprehensive high school 3. Beginning January 7 through February 7, community members will have an opportunity to nominate a name for the two new schools.

Go to [www.nisdtx.org/schoolnames](http://www.nisdtx.org/schoolnames) for more information. After the naming committee reviews the recommendations, the NISD Board of Trustees will vote on the names at the March school board meeting.

# No Limits to Learning at NISD's Outdoor Classroom



**STEM Academy students Garrett Garcia and Nathan Patzke test their physics skills on their student-designed catapult with teacher Kim Garrett during a pumpkin launching contest at the OLC.**

"The OLC is the place to be." It's a chant heard loud and proud from Northwest ISD fifth-grade students during their annual visit to the NISD Outdoor Learning Center (OLC). "The NISD OLC offers a curriculum that is without walls, providing ultimately limitless possibilities," said Outdoor Learning Center Coordinator CyLynn Braswell.

The OLC, a 193-acre educational facility located in Northlake, provides an environment for students to explore, discover, imagine and create. From discovery trails to creek studies and GPS devices to geocaching, the OLC is committed to providing students and teachers hands-on, real-life experiences. Starting this year, fifth-grade students will travel to the district's Outdoor Learning Center instead of the annual Camp Grady Spruce visit. Students will embark on a two-day outdoor adventure in the fall and one day in the spring semester. Using digital cameras and video, students can document their journeys while engaging in conversations and conducting experiments.

"As the years progress, this kindergarten through twelfth-grade center will allow students to participate in activities we could never simulate in a standard classroom," Braswell said. The 2012 Bond Program includes funds that will positively impact the instructional spaces throughout the OLC property. A committee, made up of NISD staff and community members, will soon begin meeting to outline specific projects and goals for the Outdoor Learning Center. Become a fan and start following the OLC on Twitter and Facebook for updates, photos and video clips of the students in action at the OLC. Go to [www.facebook.com/NISDOOutdoorLearningCenter](http://www.facebook.com/NISDOOutdoorLearningCenter), or follow the OLC on Twitter, @nisdolc #olcistheplacetobe.



The Northwest Vision is published by the NISD Communications Department.

## 2012 – 2013 Calendar

Student Holiday/Staff Development .....	Jan. 2
Early Release – All Students .....	Jan. 17-18
Student/Teacher Holiday .....	Jan. 21
Student Holiday/Staff Development/Bad Weather Day.....	Feb. 18
Student/Teacher Holiday (Spring Break).....	March 11-15
Student Holiday/Staff Development/Bad Weather Day.....	March 29
Student/Teacher Holiday .....	May 27
Early Release – All Students .....	June 6
Graduation (Steele AHS) .....	June 6
Early Release – All Students .....	June 7
Last Day of School.....	June 7
Graduation (BNHS & NHS).....	June 11

### Early Release Times for January 17 & 18

- Elementary Schools - 12:15 p.m.
- Steele AHS & Special Programs Center - 1:05 p.m.
- BNHS and NHS - 1:15 p.m.
- Middle Schools - 2 p.m.

## NISD Health Fair

January 12, 2-5 p.m.

NISD and Texas Health Resources Alliance will partner to sponsor a Health Fair for students, parents and community members at the new Texas Health Resources Alliance Hospital, located at the corner of Golden Triangle and Interstate 35. The hospital will offer free screenings ranging from BMI, blood pressure, bone density, and car seat safety. Students from the Academy of Medical Professions will provide tours of the new facility, and student performances can be seen throughout the day.

## NISD Online Parent Survey

All parents are encouraged to provide feedback by completing the 2012-2013 parent survey in January.

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