

# Comal Independent School District

## NEWS BRIEFS

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### **School board to consider teacher contracts**

Contracts for teachers, nurses, counselors, librarians and administrators for the 2011-12 school year will be considered by the Comal ISD school board during its regular meeting on Thursday, March 31 at 6 p.m. at the Support Services building.

As the district grapples with an estimated \$16.8 million shortfall in the budget for next year, a number of cuts will be made, such as the termination of probationary teacher contracts, across-the-board reductions in operations expenses and the elimination of certain non-teaching positions, which includes shifting administrative positions at the campus and district levels. According to state law, teacher contracts must be voted on prior to April 12. The district hopes to have letters of assurance to at-will employees by early May.

In other business, the school board will hear a report on the progress of the district's technology initiatives and will consider the adoption of textbooks for prekindergarten, English as a Second Language and English Language Arts as recommended by the district's textbook committee.

### **Walker's letter includes rundown of the use of a taxpayer \$1**

Frustration statewide is growing over a refusal by the Texas Legislature to address the inequitable tax system, according to Dr. Marc Walker, superintendent of Comal ISD, in his latest letter to employees.

“The greatest disappointment from Austin right now is this refusal to address the current inadequate and inequitable funding system,” he said. “Costs are rising but our revenues are essentially the same as in 2006. And there has been little activity by the Legislature to correct this. It will inevitably play out in the courts, but how do districts operate in the meantime?”

A recent report endorsed by several of the state’s professional education organizations traces the path of the average taxpayer \$1 in a school system.

Of the \$1, 49 cents goes toward a teacher’s salary, however, the other 51 cents is responsible for such imperatives as transporting the students to and from school, meals at school, curriculum and instructional support, lights/heat/air conditioning, the library and counselors.

“What would you cut from that \$1?” Dr. Walker rhetorically asked in regards to districts’ mandate to reduce their budgets by millions of dollars.

## **Comal ISD begins donation drive for Japan**

Campuses throughout Comal ISD will be raising funds for victims of the earthquake and tsunami in Japan in a drive, April 4-15. Donations may be made to any campus in the district or to Central Office Support Services, 1404 IH 35 North, New Braunfels, 78130. The district will make one donation to the American Red Cross at the end of the drive.

An 8<sup>th</sup> grade student at Canyon Middle School has already taken the initiative to illustrate her campus’ efforts.

Lucy Zapata’s illustration, “There is hope, Japan,” will be used for advertising for the drive and as badges for “jeans week” for teachers. Staff members who donate toward the effort receive a badge and may wear jeans for a week.

“This is a great chance for Lucy to take part in something that is bigger than she dreamed she could be a part of,” said Jennifer Cooper, one Lucy’s teachers at Canyon Middle School.

Other campuses in Comal ISD have the opportunity to adopt Lucy’s illustration for their efforts.

If your child is struggling with thoughts and feelings about the stories and images from Japan, here are some tips by the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement:

- Talk about the event with your child
- Ask your child what he/she already has heard about the events
- Gently correct inaccurate information
- Encourage your child to ask questions and then answer those questions directly
- Limit media exposure
- Work with your child to figure out a way to help the people affected by the disaster
- Be a positive role model by sharing your feelings with your child
- Be patient.

More information is available at this website:

[www.cincinnatichildrens.org/school-crisis](http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/school-crisis).

## **Dual language program information meetings scheduled**

Information meetings for Comal ISD’s Dual Language program for students entering kindergarten in August are scheduled for the following dates and locations:

- Morningside Elementary, Thursday, April 14
- Bill Brown Elementary, Monday, April 18
- Clear Spring Elementary, Tuesday, April 19.

Meetings for Spanish speaking parents begin at 5:30 p.m. and for English speaking parents begin at 7 p.m.

Students registered in this program will be able to speak, read, and write in both English and Spanish by the end of the program and will achieve as well or better in all other academic areas. Because one of the goals of the class is to become bilingual and bi-literate, the students in the class are encouraged to participate until the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Both native English speaking and native Spanish speaking students are invited to register to be a part of this exciting program.

“A Two-Way Dual Language education classroom is a self-contained classroom for speakers of Spanish and English,” Jodi Cox, principal of Morningside Elementary School, explained. “Students of two different language groups are purposely mixed in the same educational environment to provide communicative and academic language development through an interactive and cross-cultural setting. Program participation begins in kindergarten and a subsequent grade level is each year as the students progress through the grade levels.”

Instruction is conducted in both Spanish and English.

Parent attendance at one of the informational meetings is part of the mandatory application process for eligibility.

“ This program does take a commitment on the part of parents and the school community in order to be successful,” Cox said. “If you are interested in this exciting opportunity for your child, please plan on attending the meeting. We are looking forward to meeting you and working together to make your child’s school experience a positive one!”

### **Parents, community attend AC-MECHS Open House**

Some 40 students, parents and community members attended the open house of the renovated Alamo Colleges-Memorial Early College High School (AC-MECHS) on

Thursday for tours of the new facility. The event was part of the school's celebration of Early College High School Week.

"Early College High School Week is a way of showcasing college readiness in all academics. Our students have an opportunity to earn up to 60 college hours at the same time they earn their high school diploma," said Dr. Dolly Adams, principal of AC-MECHS. "This gives them a unique advantage over other high school students who are entering college after high school."

Dr. Adams lauded the students, who are all currently freshmen, saying they have made tremendous headway in reaching their goal of earning college and high school credit at the same time.

After introducing the staff of the school, Dr. Adams said to the parents, "Welcome to our family."

### **Students participate in Lone Star Leadership Academy**

Rubey Haley, a 4<sup>th</sup> grade student from Clear Spring Elementary School, participated in Education in Action's Lone Star Leadership Academy over Spring Break. Rubey was selected based on demonstrated academic success and leadership ability and involvement in school and community activities. The academy drew delegations of students from all over Texas to develop leadership skills while learning about Texas.

### **Comal ISD, CHS to host 75<sup>th</sup> annual TASC conference**

Comal ISD, through Canyon High School, is the proud host of the 75<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Texas Association of Student Councils (TASC) Conference.

The conference will take place April 3-5 at the Arlington Convention Center. It is the largest gathering of student council leaders in the country, with more than 4,500 students and advisors expected to attend.

The opening session is one of the conference's highlights, and will include renowned motivational speaker Mark Scharenbroich giving the keynote address. The event will also include a catered meal and a private party night at Six Flags Theme Park.

### **Canyon Lake HS JROTC receives \$5,000 grant**

The JROTC rifle team of Canyon Lake High School has been awarded a grant totaling more than \$5,000 from the Friends of the NRA to purchase additional equipment and supplies.

"This is the fourth year in a row that the Friends of the NRA have approved grant money for the Hawkeye rifle team," said retired Army Lt. Col. Michael Collyer, "In fact, almost all of the equipment and supplies used by the rifle team have been purchased with grant money."

### **PTA launches bullying prevention program**

The National PTA has recently launched a new bullying prevention program, "Connect for Respect." The website ([www.pta.org/bullying.asp](http://www.pta.org/bullying.asp)) contains helpful resources, tip sheets, resolutions and position statements.