

Northside ISD is nationally recognized for using technology to achieve educational goals

National education leaders have taken notice of Northside Independent School District's initiatives that blend technology and instruction in the classrooms. The National School Boards Association (NSBA) announced that NISD has been designated a "Technology Leadership Salute District for 2005." NISD is one of only three school systems across the nation to receive this designation and the only one in Texas.

NSBA officials praised the "themes of continuous improvement, professional development, systemic change, and partnerships" reflected in the Northside ISD's technology initiatives.

"We have always known that we have one of the top technology programs in the state," says Dr. John Folks, superintendent. "It is nice to receive acknowledgement at the national level, as well. We have one goal in mind and that is to use technology to positively impact learning and teaching."

"Northside ISD consistently and effectively uses technology tools to



NISD: A National Technology Leadership Salute District

improve, reform, and restructure the school environment with the goal of improved student achievement and student success." said Kelly Smith, Assistant Superintendent for Technology Services.

"Two examples are the development and implementation of our Technology Integration Project Planning & Assessment (TIPPA) model that helps teachers effectively

integrate technology in teaching and learning, and our efforts in launching a comprehensive web-based Curriculum Management System to facilitate instruction and help teachers focus on meeting the needs of each and every student," she added.

Smith also believes that "our work in deploying technology to campuses, establishing the "Parent Connection" web portal, creating Technology Core Competencies for Employees, and the annual eCamp Summer Technology Conference are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to initiatives that will positively impact and enrich the education that students receive in Northside for some time to come."

This is the 14th year of the NSBA Technology Leadership Salute District Program. Northside ISD is the third school district in Texas selected to receive the honor. Houston ISD (1998) and Dallas ISD (1992) have been past honorees.

The District will be recognized with the Technology Leadership Salute at a keynote session during the National School Boards Association conference in Denver this month. ■

Schools cost more to build today because... why?

School districts seem to get criticized for the costs of building schools. It is true that schools built today cost many times more than schools built 10, 20, 30 years ago. A \$60 million high school or a \$14 million elementary school is not unusual. But community members and taxpayers need to realize that there are solid reasons why schools cost more today. Here are some of them:

Inflation – It simply costs more to do business today.

Shortage in materials – The cost of construction materials has gone through the roof. These include concrete, gypsum board, steel, and roofing materials.

Labor shortage (manpower) – There is a building boom in San Antonio. This drives the costs of people up since there are less construction workers to do the jobs. The explosion of school construction in Central Texas and especially in Bexar County has improved competition but stretched the existing labor pools.

Program requirements – The state of Texas constantly mandates program specifications. These are largely unfunded mandates and include larger science rooms and minimum square footage for a variety of classrooms and libraries. These translate into larger schools.

Technology – Typing labs of yesteryear have been replaced by multiple computer labs and computers in all classrooms. Infrastructure (cabling, wiring, electrical) that accommodates all kinds of instructional and operational technologies add millions of dollars into the costs of schools.

Fuel – Rising fuel costs affect all construction products production (roofing/waterproofing etc...) and delivery of all materials through vendor imposed surcharges.

School sites – NISD has more challenging sites (topography, lack of useable area) than most school districts in Texas, especially as the District expands to the Hill Country.

Laws and ordinances – More restrictive authority by environmental jurisdictions and entities (i.e. City of San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality). City Of San Antonio Tree and Landscape ordinance requires replacement of removed trees and irrigation to support them. Schools constructed over the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone require expensive water quality ponds. Northside must also comply with strict indoor air quality standards. ■

Bond '07 becoming a reality

Since voters approved Bond 2004 — which is building 11 new schools, many classroom additions and dozens of renovation projects — almost 7,000 new students have enrolled in Northside Schools. With a projection of over 100,000 students within the next nine years, plans for another bond election are being made. While nothing has been recommended to the School Board, nor has a citizens'

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bond committee been formed, the likelihood of another bond election that would build 12 to 15 more schools is likely in May 2007. ■

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