



Aug. 21 2014

Dear CFISD Community,

In a matter of days, we will step into another exciting school year for Cypress-Fairbanks ISD. This one is particularly special for us, because 2014-2015 marks the **75th Anniversary** of the 1939 merger between the Cypress and Fairbanks school systems.

We cannot wait to get back to work and fulfill our annual theme as we **Lead the Way** into our 75th school year for more than 113,000 CFISD students.

The 2013-2014 school year was a banner one for CFISD. The following achievements represent a few among many:

- the community overwhelmingly supported our \$1.2 billion **bond referendum**, allowing for safety and security upgrades, transportation upgrades including elimination of the 2-mile bus rule, new facilities and renovations through the year 2020. We thank you for voting in the May election, and pledge to be wise stewards of your tax dollars for years to come;
- our Board of Trustees passed a budget this summer that includes no increases to the tax rate;
- the Education Resource Group rated CFISD the No. 1 district for financial and academic performance for the second consecutive year;
- Texas Comptroller Susan Combs gave CFISD a “Platinum” Leadership Circle rating for financial transparency, and even visited our district to praise us for our model efficiency in school construction; and
- the inaugural Superintendent Fun Run was a community-wide success last February, and raised more than \$30,000 for the Cy-Fair Educational Foundation.

As you can tell, it is a good time to be part of the CFISD community. Numerous studies show that the most important factor in an area’s continued growth and development is a quality education system. Our goal is to continue a positive partnership with you so everyone can benefit from this growth.

As a sign of that upward trend, we are opening our 18th middle school, David Anthony, Ed.D. Middle School, to students on Monday.

We are pleased that, as a result of the Bond's passage, we will be restoring bus service to the majority of our students beginning Aug. 25. Please remember, though, that many students will continue to walk and ride bicycles to our 86 district campuses, and we want to urge drivers to exercise caution on the roads. The safety of our children is of utmost importance.

On that note, if you would like to volunteer to help our young first-time riders as a [Bus Buddy](#), we would love to have you sign up by Aug. 22 through the community engagement department.

There are many ways to stay plugged into our educational community, regardless of whether you are a parent or an empty-nester. Residents who are 60 years or older can sign up for a [Super Senior discount card](#) through the communication department to earn free admission to CFISD athletic events, fine arts performances and high school libraries, among other perks.

Whether you are new to our district or have been here for years, you are a part of our 75th Anniversary story. As we celebrate this monumental year, we look back and honor those from Cypress, Fairbanks, Carverdale, and all of the communities that helped make this one of the fastest-growing areas not just in Texas but in the country.

Throughout the year, I will be hosting messages like these and other notes about CFISD in a new home, the [Superintendent's Blog](#). Feel free to subscribe to this and [follow me on Twitter](#), where I will link to new posts and give updates on all things CFISD.

It is an honor for me to serve this fine community, which is truly a destination for educators, parents and businesses. I hope you feel at home in CFISD. Have a great year!

Sincerely,

Mark Henry, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools



Sept. 19, 2014

Dear CFISD Community,

Did you know that our graduation rate is 3 percent higher than the state average? Or that we transport more than 78,000 students to and from school every day? How about that our homestead exemption effectively reduces the tax rate by 31 cents?

Many facts about Cypress-Fairbanks ISD come as a pleasant surprise to our residents, and I was happy to reveal many of these this week in my annual *State of the District* presentation for the Cy-Fair Houston Chamber of Commerce.



Members of the Cy-Fair Houston Chamber of Commerce listen to Dr. Henry's State of the District address at the Berry Center on Sept. 16.

The audience was pleased to learn that our academic performance was best among the five largest Texas school districts despite our per-student state funding being lowest.

I was proud to share that our students earned nearly 20,000 dual credit hours through a partnership with Lone Star College – CyFair, and that our 2014 graduates earned nearly \$80 million in scholarships.

Some staggering growth statistics were shared, including our district being only 70 percent built out with nearly 43,000 new home occupancies projected by 2023.



Chamber of Commerce luncheon guests read the State of the District brochure, which is available on the district website. All of these statistics and more are available online on our [State of the District page](#), which includes links to our State of the District brochure, presentation and video that give an inside look into the fantastic things happening in CFISD. Look for the “75 Years of Leading the Way” link on our homepage to access this information. I hope you enjoy viewing these great resources, and that you, too, are pleasantly surprised by our school district’s excellence.

Don’t forget to follow me on Twitter at [@SuptMarkHenry](#) for more great news and updates throughout the school year!

Sincerely,
Mark Henry, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools



Oct. 15, 2014

Dear CFISD community,

The Nov. 4 general election is right around the corner. The two-week [early voting period](#) begins on **Monday, Oct. 20**, and I'd like to encourage you to make plans to vote in the election.

The 2014 ballot is filled with dozens of important races and measures that will impact us on national, statewide and local levels. A scroll through your [sample ballot online](#) reveals a U.S. senatorial race, a Texas gubernatorial race, a host of judicial races and – close to the very bottom – a proposition “FOR” or “AGAINST” the Lone Star College System bond. More information on the LSC bond is available on the [Lone Star website](#).

Please take some time to look over the entire voter-specific ballot on Harris County Clerk Stan Stanart's [website](#) by entering in your name and address. Please also browse through the [early voting sites and hours](#) on the site.

Voting is one of the great American freedoms that too many of us take for granted. I hope you will take the brief amount of time necessary to exercise that right, either during the early voting period or on Election Day.

Sincerely,

Mark Henry, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools



Dec. 17, 2014

Dear CFISD Community,

If anyone says I've done something silly in the name of public education, I have no clue what they are talking about:



While I may not make all the other reindeer shout out with glee, I have certainly enjoyed “guiding this sleigh” throughout the fall. In a perfect ending to the semester, [a commemorative marker was unveiled](#) in front of Cy-Fair High School on Dec. 9—the date of the 75th Anniversary of our school district. What a special honor to be there among so many legends in our district’s history, and what a treat to take a photo with all 10 of our high school mascots:

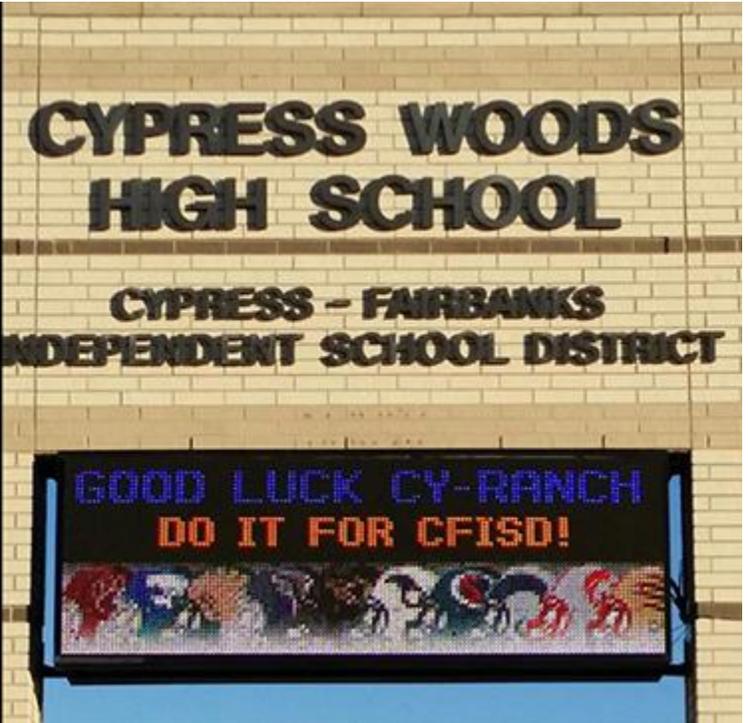


Remember that you can purchase 75th Anniversary commemorative items such as the [cookbook](#), [Arts & Literary Book](#) and [Cy-Fair-Opoly](#) board game through the [75th Anniversary E-Store](#). They make great gifts for the holidays!

This semester has indeed been a fun ride, but I am pleased to say it will extend one more day for the Cypress Ranch High School Mustangs, who compete in the Division I Class 6A state championship game on Saturday.



After defeating Converse Judson at the Alamodome last weekend, the Mustangs will meet Allen High School at 8 p.m. on Dec. 20 at AT&T Stadium in Arlington. For those unable to [make the trip](#), the game will also be broadcast live on [Fox Sports Southwest](#). I encourage you all to show communitywide support for Cypress Ranch as they follow the road to state and use the #CFISDMustangs hashtag on social media. I am so proud of gestures like these that have already been displayed:



I know we are all looking forward to a break as we spend time with loved ones this holiday season. Thank you for a great year. I'll see you back safe and sound in 2015.

Sincerely,

Mark Henry, Ed. D.

Superintendent of Schools



Nov. 20, 2014

“Keep your eyes open to your mercies. The man who forgets to be thankful has fallen asleep in life.”

— Robert Louis Stevenson

Dear CFISD Community,

Happy Thanksgiving! It is hard to believe, but we are at that point of the year where we surround ourselves with loved ones and express appreciation for all we have been given. For me, it’s also the time of year when I hide the scales and allow myself to enjoy an extra slice of pie (or three)!

Please remember that all schools and facilities will be closed Nov. 24-28 as we celebrate this special holiday.

A recent story I read about survival helped me put “thankfulness” in perspective:

A 23-year-old soldier was among 1,700 selected for genocide by an opposing force, simply because they practiced a different religion. The young man miraculously survived the slaughter by pretending to be dead.

He lay there four hours among his deceased fellow troops before escaping to a riverbank, where he hid three days while eating insects and plants. He eventually linked up with friendly strangers who helped transport and shelter him for two weeks before reuniting him with his family. He was the only one out of 1,700 to survive.

I don’t share this harrowing story to bring you down, but instead to bring perspective to how good we have it here. It’s easy to lose sight of how blessed we are to live in a nation where we are free to believe what we want. While many throughout the world daily contemplate what they will eat and where they will sleep, our worst problem of the day is often the bad traffic on 290.

This Thanksgiving, I hope you will take a moment to refocus and remember all the gifts you have in life. Cherish and enjoy the week ahead of you.

Sincerely,

Mark Henry, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools



Feb. 27, 2015

"Nurture your minds with great thoughts. To believe in the heroic makes heroes." —Benjamin Disraeli

Dear CFISD Community,

Heroes are all around us in Cypress-Fairbanks ISD. One week I'm reading about some of our [student athletes who saved a teammate's life](#), and the next I'm seeing an [administrator come to the rescue of a middle school student](#).

How appropriate that these stories led up to the "Superheroes for Kids" [Second Annual Superintendent Fun Run](#) on Feb. 21. We raised more than \$40,000 as a community for student scholarships for the Cy-Fair Educational Foundation (CFEF), which was about \$10,000 more than the first annual event. Everyone who participated—be it staff, students, business partners or residents—is a superhero for the graduates who rely on the CFEF's support to have a successful future.



And while we were handing out medals to our top Fun Run finishers, several student athletes were winning gold at state. Our Cypress Ridge High School girls' wrestling team won its second state championship in three years last weekend in Garland. Congratulations, also, to head Coach Tim Ray for winning Class 6A Girls' Coach of the Year.



Cypress Ranch High School junior **Victoria Roubique** won the state championship in the 100-meter breaststroke event of the UIL State Swimming and Diving Meet in Austin. I am so incredibly proud of the achievements taking place in CFISD!



I have been making several trips to Austin myself during the 84th Texas Legislative Session to advocate for important issues related to our school district and children. Among the issues are a continued reduction of standardized testing and equitable funding for all school districts, accounting for the rapid growth in districts like CFISD. Find more information on the [Community Leadership Committee](#) page of the district website and in updates to my blog.

It's hard to believe, but spring break will be here before we know it, followed by testing season and the stretch run until graduation. Thank you for your support as we race to the finish line!



Sincerely,

Mark Henry, Ed. D.

Superintendent of Schools



Jan. 26, 2015

Dear CFISD Community,

It's the most wonderful time of the year—yes, that's right, the Second Annual Superintendent Fun Run is right around the corner!



I invite the entire community to join us on **Feb. 21 from 8 to 11 a.m. at the Berry Center** for this incredible event that drew more than 3,000 people and raised more than \$34,000 for the Cy-Fair Educational Foundation in its inaugural year.

The theme is once again “Superheroes for Kids,” and by participating and helping raise money for CFEF student scholarship and staff development grants, you will truly be a real-life superhero.

[Please view and share this brief promo video](#), read the [press release](#) for more information and spread the word about our social media giveaway opportunity: anyone who uses the #CFISDFunRun hashtag and shares their real-life superhero will be entered into a drawing to win a football autographed by Houston Texans safety D.J. Swearingen.



Here's a great example of a real-life superhero, shared by one of our business partners, Mark McShaffry:

MY REAL-LIFE SUPERHERO

Lynda Zelenka with Cy-Hope. There was a speech Lynda gave one day with the church that made me call her the next day and tell her I wanted to be involved with it. It's such a great program and everything they're doing to help the kids in Cy-Fair was so meaningful I had to be involved.



Mark McShaffry, owner
The Backyard Grill and
BYG Burgers & Brew



Feb. 21

Deadline to register is **Jan. 31**

For more information visit
www.cfisd.net/fun-run2015

#CFISDFunRun

Superheroes for Kids

Be sure to sign up by **Jan. 31** to guarantee advance goodie bag items. [Here is a link to the event registration.](#)

So, who is *your* real-life superhero? You will be one for many if you sign up today! See you at the Fun Run,

Mark Henry, Ed. D.

Superintendent of Schools



April 13, 2015

“Democracy is the only system that persists in asking the powers that be whether they are the powers that ought to be.” – Sydney J. Harris

Dear CFISD community,

The 84th Texas Legislature is in full swing, and I, along with other district leaders, have been making frequent trips to the State Capitol to ensure that Cypress-Fairbanks ISD has the support of its elected officials.

I want to thank the CFISD Community Leadership Committee (CLC), which has met regularly since August and developed a list of 84th Legislative Session Priorities that we are urging our representatives to pursue for the benefit of public education. The brief summary of these priorities, which are [listed in detail on the district website](#), asks our state for:

- an equitable school finance system;
- the support of school choice available within the current system;
- support of existing transparency laws, including clear and concise ballot language; and
- a reduction in the overreliance on state assessments.

School vouchers appears to be a hot topic once again, as the Senate education committee recently conducted hearings on four voucher-related bills.

One of them, **SB4**, will be headed to the floor of the Senate very soon. Misleadingly referred to as a “taxpayer savings grant,” this voucher bill would hurt public schools that rely on per-pupil allotments for fixed expenses. [This helpful policy brief by Raise Your Hand Texas](#) (RYHT) provides a summary of the issues and concerns surrounding vouchers. Please express your opinion to your senators!

A high-quality pre-kindergarten bill, **HB 4**, passed through the House on April 8 and is headed to the House Public Education Committee. I encourage you to [watch this pre-k video made by RYHT](#) and contact your senators about this bill as well.

Additionally, we are still hopeful for a more equitable state funding system. **HB1** passed the House and **HB1759**, sponsored by Jimmie Don Aycock, would increase the basic allotment to benefit all districts. It will be heard in the House Education committee **tomorrow (April 14)**, so please express your support to your legislators.

I encourage you to utilize some of the helpful resources available on our [CLC webpage](#), including a [Communication Tips sheet](#) that gives an easy-to-read overview of the Texas Legislature Online, a diagram of the all-in-one TexLege app and tips for sharing with your legislators. Our [legislative contacts sheet](#) provides all the contact information for every official who represents a piece of CFISD, and you can easily find out who represents you by [entering your address on this site](#).

I will continue to send out and post updates to my blog, so stay tuned as we collectively seek a brighter future for public schools in Texas and CFISD.

Sincerely,

Mark Henry, Ed.D.
CFISD Superintendent