

August 10, 2000

Remarks to Congressman Doggett/Class-Size Grants Award

I want to thank Congressman Doggett for his leadership in fighting for the public schools of this nation and this city. His efforts on behalf of schoolchildren make him a great ally as we work to make Austin's schools the premier urban schools in the country.

Today I want to particularly thank him for his support for the class-size reduction legislation that for the second year will benefit Austin primary students across the district. Over the two years of funding, this legislation has provided AISD with more than \$3 million, allowing us to add 61 teachers in our early grades and reducing class size in those critical early years of learning.

In all, children in 42 AISD elementary schools will have smaller classes thanks to this legislation. A large majority of these schools are our Account for Learning schools, with high numbers of low-income children. The students of Wooldridge Elementary are among those in our district benefiting from these funds. Wooldridge is hiring two additional teachers this year in kindergarten and first grade after being able to hire an additional third-grade teacher last year. Blackshear Elementary will hire five additional teachers this year with funding from this grant.

Each child in these smaller classes will receive more individual attention from the teacher. This is particularly crucial as these children are learning to read and beginning to understand mathematics.

This is an exciting time for students in AISD's schools. And for their teachers. This morning we had a district-wide seminar for all administrators and teachers on the Principles of Learning and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). It was a historic occasion for this district—all 5,000 educators learning together, thanks to Channel 22. Dr. Lauren Resnick, our partner from the Institute for Learning at the University of Pittsburgh, joined me in conducting this seminar, answering questions from around the district and helping us begin to speak a common language about teaching and learning.

Class-size is important, but it only makes a big difference if it is accompanied by improvements in teaching and learning. That's what we're doing. The Principles of Learning and the TEKS will allow us to compound the value of decreased class size. With partners like Congressman Doggett, the children of Austin public schools come out way ahead.

Pascal D. Forgione, Superintendent
Austin Independent School District
1111 West 6th Street
Austin, Texas 78703-5300
Office: 512-414-2482
Fax: 512-414-1486
superintendent@austin.isd.tenet.edu