



News release

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Bay Area School Superintendents address huge shift in demographics

BAY AREA HOUSTON, TEXAS – Five school superintendents recently joined other members of the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership to discuss the changing demographics in our schools. They shared their perspectives in regard to best practices and future strategies. The meeting was hosted by BAHEP’s Education and Workforce Development Committee.

Bob Davee, a Clear Creek Independent School District trustee, and Sergio Lucero, an engineer with Orbital Sciences Corp., served as moderators for the discussion. Superintendents taking part in the meeting were: Dr. Lloyd Graham, La Porte ISD; Trish Hanks, Friendswood ISD; Dr. Kirk Lewis, Pasadena ISD; Dr. Greg Smith, Clear Creek ISD; and Dr. Leland Williams, Dickinson ISD. Dr. Michael Marquez, principal of CCISD’s McWhirter Elementary, gave a PowerPoint presentation on McWhirter Elementary, as well.

Clear Creek ISD

Dr. Smith stated that it’s critical to make connections with students and families. Numbers for lower socio-economic families will approach 26 percent in 2011. He stated that there is a sense of urgency to address these demographic changes that are occurring.

Dr. Marquez said that engaging parents is vital to letting them know what is available for both themselves and their children. He noted how important it is that parents feel welcomed when they enter McWhirter Elementary.

Dickinson ISD

Dr. Williams reported that the percent of DISD’s low socio-economic students hovers around 60 percent. Two schools in his district have between 70-85 percent low socio-economic sector students, and they are his two exemplary campuses. He sees the Hispanic, family-oriented

culture as a strength. The culture of the school, the expectations that are established, relationships and caring are what matters, Dr. Williams emphasized.

La Porte ISD

Dr. Graham stated that poverty tends to manifest itself in historically under-represented groups, our minority groups. The fastest growing demography in this state is the impoverished child. He stated, "I don't want anyone to think that this problem is new to these school districts or to the people who are running them or to the people who are mentoring your children, because it's not. We've been dealing with it for our entire careers."

Friendswood ISD

Hanks reported their economically disadvantaged students have more than doubled in the past seven years while their Hispanic students have more than tripled. FISD is taking on the role of advocate for those students whose parents are unable to do so.

Pasadena ISD

Dr. Lewis represented the largest school district of those in attendance. Pasadena ISD's Hispanic population is about 80 percent this year. He noted that several years ago they realized that a traditional K-12 education would not work in PISD. They've instituted flex programs as well as early college high school programs. Passion, care and concern by the teaching staff on behalf of the kids have changed substantially over the last 10-15 years, and that has made a huge difference, he concluded.

Time is key

General discussion followed the presentations by the superintendents. It was noted that time is a real key, because it is going to take many of the students five years to finish high school as opposed to four. There was a general consensus that learning should be fixed, but time should be flexible.

Dr. Williams stated that we still have product measures in a process world. He reported that the amount of information in the world is doubling every 17 months, and the amount of time keeps decreasing. "There hasn't been an original thought about education since Socrates," he said and then added, "Critical thinking and processing are needed, because children cannot contain enough facts to be successful today."

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The Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership is a member-driven organization that provides the leadership to stimulate regional economic development and employment in southeast Texas. Its members include more than 260 investor companies, business professionals, local governments, and educational institutions encompassing 13 cities, Galveston and Harris counties, and the Port of Houston Authority. Visit www.bayareahouston.com.

Space Alliance Technology Outreach Program is administered by the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership. It is a State of Texas funded initiative designed to transfer the knowledge

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