

STRAIGHT TALK

By Dixie District School Superintendent – Mark Rains

December, 2011

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! As we take a break from our busy schedules to celebrate this joyous season with our families, we encourage our students to enjoy their time away from school. Students will return on January 3rd, refreshed and ready to begin our second semester.

Academics are at the forefront for our school district. School administrators are visiting classrooms while students are taking mid year progress monitoring tests. We will continue to use the results of these tests to focus on student needs and strengths.

The 2011 Fall FCAT Retake scores were recently issued from the Department of Education. Dixie County High School met or exceeded the state average for students passing the FCAT Reading, FCAT 2.0 Reading, and FCAT 2.0 Math! Meeting and exceeding the state average is a district-wide goal. We are constantly seeking to improve our academics and achievement scores of our students.



Superintendent Rains meets periodically with the Superintendent's Cabinet. This group of 11th and 12th graders is selected by their peer and teachers.

A new FCAT will be administered to Florida public school students early next year. The cut scores for establishing passing rates for students and for setting school grades have not been established. Recommendations for the new FCAT 2.0 cut scores are the result of a deliberative, transparent and inclusive process involving Department of Education appointed committees. We understand that from this point forward, our students could continue to make learning gains, but our school and district grades may become lower through this process.

The Governor's Budget for 2012-2013 was recently released. Gov. Scott proposed increasing total potential funding for the public schools by \$571.7 million, which would offset the loss of the federal JOBS money. We are hopeful that the Legislature will take this proposal seriously and that they will work on a solid budget during the regular session.

I have recently assembled a District STEM Committee to investigate and discuss ways to improve programs offered to students in Dixie District Schools. STEM is a focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. STEM is a national and global focus of instruction and specialized skills to prepare our students for career paths in the 21st century.

We invite parents to sign up for a parent portal account. This allows parents the access of current information on your child's grades, attendance, discipline, etc. We currently have 125 families actively using this account. For an application and additional information, visit the school district website.

Our high school students have been afforded the opportunity to communicate with students in India via Skype. Our advanced math instructor, Mr. Kastala facilitated the arrangement with former colleagues. I talked with the school principal in India during a recent Skype session. This is a wonderful way for our students to experience international communication through technology.

At the recent Florida School Finance Officers Association (FSFOA) state meeting in Orlando, Dixie County Schools Finance Director Tonya Howell was named as one of two directors for Region 3 in North Florida. Tonya will serve a 2 year term and her responsibilities will be to coordinate conferences, promote school district networking, support

school district accounting and reporting, and improve business management practices in education. Congratulations, Tonya!

I recently attended the "Florida's First Reality Tour" production (second presentation) in Dixie County. This program is continuously proving to be successful, with over sixty attendees and more than thirty volunteers. I encourage students and parents to attend this program, with the next tour tentatively scheduled for February 13.

For current Dixie District Schools information, visit our website at <http://www.dixie.k12.fl.us>. We welcome your suggestions in making this a user friendly website for students, parents, and the community.

The way to a child's mind is through the heart.



Mark A. Rains, Superintendent
Dixie District Schools