

CASIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
2006-2007 Highlights

As we bring this school year to a close, I wanted to share with you some of the major accomplishments of which we – faculty, parents, students, and community members – can be particularly proud. Of course, so many great things happen over the course of a year, both large and small, seen and unseen, that we can highlight only a few. We have worked hard to build on Casis' outstanding record of achievement and continue its tradition of excellence. As we prepare for the next school year, we thank you for your support of Casis Elementary and our commitment to excellence. Have a great summer!

ANOTHER GREAT YEAR

TAKS scores

Casis students continue to perform exceptionally well on standardized tests that are a part of the state's accountability system. During this school year, all 3rd, 4th and 5th graders took the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) tests. Below are the percentages of Casis students passing the different tests. Congratulations to everyone for such great TAKS scores!

3rd grade reading—99%
3rd grade math—96%

4th grade reading—100%
4th grade math—98%
4th grade writing—98%

5th grade reading—100%
5th grade math—99%
5th grade science—97%

Annual Survey

Each year Casis conducts a comprehensive survey of our staff and community. Overwhelmingly, survey results continue to show Casis to be a place where people — students, parents and teachers — want to be. This year, 98% of the staff members completing the survey reported they like working at Casis. 100% of the staff believes that the PTA is an effective organization and that they have adequate supplies and technology resources. According to the parent/guardian survey, 99% of the parents who responded said they feel welcome at Casis, and almost 98% reported satisfaction with their children's education. The surveys were analyzed to determine which questions were most highly correlated to overall parent satisfaction. As we would have hoped and predicted, overall parent satisfaction was highly correlated with faculty expectations and quality of instruction. Overall, the survey results highlight the need for maintaining the many good things happening at Casis and sustaining our focus on continual improvement. As always, we are working hard to challenge students appropriately in a nurturing and supportive environment. We are grateful to Casis parents Mary Beth Kiser for inputting data and to Mike Baselice for putting the survey results into a professional format and useful perspective. We are grateful to the Casis community for its ongoing support.

Casis Anthology, *Cougar Tales*

For the fourth consecutive year we published *Cougar Tales*, our campus-wide anthology, which features the authentic, creative writing of each Casis student. Thanks to the generosity of the Casis PTA, each student and teacher also received a copy of his/her grade level book. Casis is a school where student writing is honored and celebrated.

Author Visits

In February, award-winning author Jack Gantos spent a day visiting our campus, talking with students, teachers, and parents about the writing process. We were inspired, entertained and educated by his stories and presentations. In October, Sarah Weeks returned to Casis to share her stories and expertise. The authors that visit Casis love to come here because our students and parents are appreciative readers. Again, the financial and volunteer support of the PTA helps to make the authors' visits happen.

Leadership Casis

Approximately three-fourths of our 5th grade students participated in Leadership Casis this year. Students worked on projects at meetings after school and put in service hours on their own. Leadership Casis students hosted a new student reception; led a Coats for Kids drive; participated in student mentoring; sponsored an absentee prevention hand washing campaign; wrote cards for troops; made dolls and positioned pillows for the children at the Children's Hospital; collected blankets and clothing for Manos de Cristo; collected more than \$4,000 for Wish for Kids - Make a Wish Foundation; decorated for the International Festival; weeded the organic & butterfly garden; collected soft drinks for Carnival; organized the Book Fair dinner; made the author visit banner; created snack bags for Allen Elementary 5th graders TAKS tests; ran a healthy snack campaign; created a scrapbook; made PA announcements; led a PTA meeting; assisted during Kindergarten Round Up and Fun Run; and sponsored the Ecology Project CO2 Prevention Campaign. Thanks to Leadership Casis students and parent volunteers, whom Partners in Education nominated for a spirit award.

Music, Spanish and Technology Open Houses

Students had an opportunity to demonstrate what they do in Music, Spanish and Technology during Music In-Class Performances and Computer Lab and Spanish Open Houses. To find out more about Spanish at Casis, you can visit the Casis Spanish website at www.casisspanish.com.

Casis Cares (Social Skills Program) and Read Alouds

In its sixth year, our Casis Cares/Read-Aloud Program continues to be refined and improved. This comprehensive social skills program focuses on empathy, impulse control, anger management, resilience and bullying. Our goal is to create and maintain a safe and nurturing learning environment where students are thoughtful, caring and respectful. We are grateful to the more than 200 parents who volunteered for Casis Cares and/or Read Alouds on Wednesday afternoons. Austin Partners in Education recognized this program by nominating Casis Cares for a special project award.

Technology Update

Our technology instruction and integration continues to improve. Thanks to the financial support of the PTA, we have a technology teacher who teaches students each week and a technology specialist who supports the operations of the computer lab, LCD projectors and maintenance and upgrades of over 250 computers here at Casis.

Study Trips

5th grade students went on the 8th annual overnight study trip to Port Aransas, where they investigated various marine habitats up-close and hands-on. The trip serves as a culminating interdisciplinary activity, since each grade level at Casis learns about a different marine habitat every spring. This year, the 5th grade received funding from the annual Fun Run. As a part of their study of Texas history, our 4th grade students visited the Institute of Texan Cultures and the Alamo in San Antonio, as well as the Texas History Museum in Austin. Thanks to generous parent support, all students at Casis take a variety of curriculum-related field trips to make learning relevant and meaningful.

Parent Education

In March, more than 75 parents attended an early morning PTA sponsored session with local author/psychologist Dr. Carl Pickhardt. Dr. Pickhardt shared strategies for setting realistic and firm expectations to develop responsible and self-disciplined children. We all enjoyed his practical approach to parenting young adolescents. In May, Casis Librarian Barbara Nichols and Reading Specialist Cheryl Swanson presented useful and worthwhile information to parents about reading. They are planning to repeat the presentation during a PTA meeting in the fall.

A Learning Community

Casis staff members are also constantly learning! Many teachers attended a variety of conferences and workshops in order to learn more about their field and returned to campus with new information and insight to share with their grade-level teams and the entire faculty. Many Casis teachers were also selected this year to present professional development sessions, and to write curriculum for Austin ISD. One more Casis teacher, Mia Roldan, earned her National Board Teacher Certification this year and we hope to add others to the list in the fall. This summer, many Casis teachers will spend much of their time studying and learning, increasing their own knowledge and skills so that they can better teach their students. We are proud of the extra efforts of our faculty and truly believe that improving their own learning contributes to students' success.

Gratitude

We want to thank the many parent and community volunteers that make this school special. We recognize the creativity and hard work that you dedicate to Casis. The PTA was recently named the PTA of the Year at the Partners in Education banquet. For the past six years in a row, parent, Leslie Winter, has devoted hours and hours of her time to create our Casis yearbook, a wonderful keepsake for all Casis students. Thank you, Leslie!

STILL TO COME

A variety of campus and personnel changes will occur this summer. New windows will be installed throughout the 100 wing of the building. The teacher parking lot and the circular drive will be rebuilt. The play slab will be resurfaced and a shade canopy will be installed. Drainage work will occur and a new portable will be brought in to accommodate our increase in enrollment. Most importantly, we will very carefully recruit and select new staff members.

At Casis, we'll continue to learn and improve. The positive partnership between home and school, parents and teachers, continues to be a significant factor in the quality of education at Casis. Our PTA executive board members, committee chairs, and volunteers work closely with the school to foster enhanced learning opportunities for students and to supply teachers with needed instructional resources, professional development, volunteer assistance and time for planning. We'll continue to strive for the delicate balance between the academic, social and emotional needs of each Casis child. We'll remain committed to creating an environment where students, faculty, parents and community members feel welcomed and encouraged to discover, teach and actively participate in a thoughtful learning community.

We look forward to seeing you in August, ready to begin another productive and exciting school year at Casis Elementary.

Sincerely,