

Chalkboard

Guest Author- *Larry Cozens*, Gentry Middle School Principal

The report to the public outlines what we are doing at the Gentry Middle School. Some things have changed but most have not. One thing that is different is that we have five new members to our faculty. They are Mrs. Geneva Cockrill, Mrs. Terrie Metz, Mrs. Christie Smith, Mr. Brea Harper, and Mr. Jeremy Mabry. They are all fitting into our program very well and providing our students with an excellent opportunity to learn. Which is all that we can ask of any of our staff.

We are starting our second year of the WATCH DOGS program. I was very pleased with the results of our first year. I am expecting to see more dads around the school, the hallways, and the classrooms this year. They have been a good addition to the school. It provides an extra set of eyes and students do enjoy having their dads at school.

In dealing with the curriculum very little has changed from last year. We are still working hard to see that every child is scoring proficient or advanced on the Benchmark test in both literacy and math. Those students for whatever reason that do not score at the proficient or advanced levels are provided extra help to see that they improve to meet those levels. The state has put some teeth into the plan for those students to improve the next year. It states an Academic Improvement Plan shall be developed to help students achieve at least at a proficient level on the Benchmark test next year. Those students in grades 1-6 that do not participate in the program shall be retained if they do not score at the proficient level. If they do participate in the Academic Improvement Plan and do not score at a proficient level then they may be promoted to the next grade if they meet all the other requirements for promotion.

We have just received the scores from the test taken last year. They will be going out with the report cards on the 21st of this month. Parents of students not scoring proficient or advanced on one or both areas of the test will be contacted to discuss the Academic Improvement Plan to be used with their child for the rest of this year. This is a big change but we have a plan already in place to meet those needs. We will be using 8th hour to see that those students get extra help in the areas of need. We have set this time up so that students can move from one class to another to get the help that they need. We also have Mrs. Holt who is teaching an extra reading class and Mrs. Summers who is teaching an extra math class for any student that may need another class of either reading or math.

Another big change for the Gentry Middle School came from the Department of Education with the rules governing nutritional and physical activities standards. There are six areas that these rules address: 1.) A school nutrition and physical activity advisory committee must be formed, 2.) General requirements for foods and beverages are set for Public Schools, 3.) Set nutrition standards are developed, 4.) Nutrition education will be taught in public schools, 5.) A healthy school environment will be developed, 6.) Physical education and physical activity standards will be set.

Some of the changes that have occurred with these new rules were you could not sell or give away any food or drink until after lunch was over for 30 minutes. Then any food or drink would have to meet certain standards. The right amount of calories, right amount of fat content, and the right amount of sugar all had to be correct. None of the drinks and very few of the snacks we had fit into the standards. We just took out all the students' vending machines.

Another change that will be taking place comes from these rules. It states that all public schools must establish strategies to achieve thirty (30) minutes of physical activity each day in grades K-12 and must have begun implementation of those strategies before the end of the 2005-2006 school year.

With all changes that we make it is what we feel is the best for the students. Whether it is to build their physical bodies or to build their minds. We are preparing them to meet the world where they are going to live.