

The Top Stories in Grapevine-Colleyville ISD

Grapevine-Colleyville Scholar's Journal

Issue 2 | Winter 2023

**Stay Connected.
Stay Local.
Stay Informed.**

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**GCISD
News**

The Grapevine Colleyville Scholar's Journal is a 501(c)4 non-profit social welfare organization doing business as "GCISD News." Our sole purpose is to provide high-quality, useful information about GCISD. We are an independent news source that is both reader and sponsor supported. **While we advocate for GCISD, we are not affiliated with it.**

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Letter from the Board of Directors

Our Core Beliefs

- #1** Schools are the center of every community
- #2** The purpose of school systems is to educate children
- #3** Strong schools and a strong community are directly related

Seasons Greetings Grapevine Colleyville ISD!

We're incredibly excited to finish off this calendar year with a holiday edition of GCISD News for you to enjoy! We have so many wonderful traditions to honor in our community, all focused on family and fellowship.

As with our September issue, this issue will continue to uplift our school district by bringing you the highlights of all of the goings on for the past couple of months. As an independent news publication and 501(c)4 nonprofit, we advocate for GCISD without being directly affiliated with it.

Our mission continues to be to uplift our school district to create a better tomorrow for us all. We are sincerely grateful for the support of our donors and sponsors in aiding this mission!

Have a wonderful and safe holiday everyone!

Joel Loua, Robert Smullin, and Zariyan Stark
Board of Directors, GCISD News
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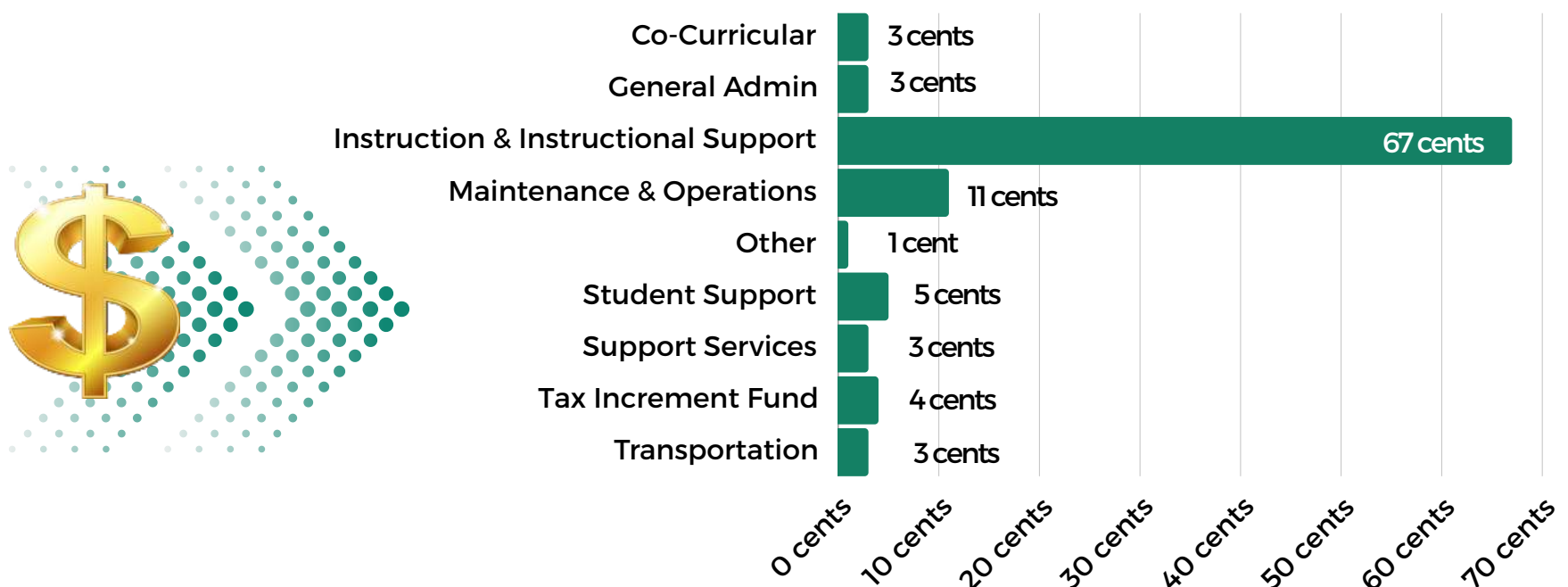


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How is One Dollar Spent in GCISD?



Source: GCISD.net/page/bond-advisory-committee



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*Merry
Christmas*

Teacher Feature



Photo & Story Courtesy of GCISD: [GCISD.net/article/1246123](https://www.gcisd.net/article/1246123)

Glenhope Alumni Returns to GCISD to Teach

GCISD first-year teacher Jenna Flamm is not only starting her career in the school district that she graduated from along with many of the district's new educators, she is also starting her professional career in her former elementary school, Glenhope.

"I always wanted to be an elementary school teacher and always wanted to come to GCISD just because of the wonderful teachers that I had and the great experience that I had growing up here," she said.

After graduating from Oklahoma State University with a degree in elementary education, she applied to several districts, but all along her heart was set on GCISD.

"When the opportunity came [at Glenhope], I thought 'what a cool thing to be back where it all started.'"

Walking up her first day was also a walk down memory lane, since the bricks that were added to the front of the school as a fundraiser when she was a student are still there, and one of them has her name as well as that of her brother and sister.

There's two other things that attracted Flamm to GCISD.

Her mother was a teacher in GCISD and taught for many years at Bear Creek Elementary School before retiring.

"I grew up in a family of teachers," she shared. "My mom and my sister were both teachers and I saw the positive impact that they had on students. That's something that I wanted to do with my future students."

The second reason she was drawn to GCISD was that she saw the difference teachers can make.

"Growing up and being in schools, especially at Glenhope, I had such amazing teachers," Flamm explained. "Just getting to have that opportunity to have that impact on students and make them excited to come to school and make them feel cared for was something that I wanted to give back that all my teachers had given me."

What does the future hold for her?

"The thing I'm most excited about is just getting to know my students. Getting to help them grow not only academically, but also helping them grow in their confidence and abilities, just like many teachers here in GCISD did for me."

Congratulations!

2022-23 STARS of GCISD!!

- October **Mrs. Martin**, Bear Creek Elementary
- November **Mr. Rees**, Grapevine High School
- December **Mrs. Solomon**, Timberline Elementary
- January **Irma Sandoval**, PDEC
- February **Juana White**, Silver Lake Elementary
- March **Kristin Donovan de Iturrino**, Grapevine MS
- April **Laura Jean Couch**, Grapevine Elementary
- May **India Maine**, Dove Elementary
- July **Laura Lisenbee**, Central Administration
- September **Danielle Mckee**, iUniversity Prep
- October **Debbie Hoard**, Colleyville Heritage

Stars of GCISD

Celebrating its 1st Anniversary, The "Stars of GCISD" program is about recognizing the individuals working in GCISD who always put their best foot forward and make this district a great place for all of us.

In coordination with community partners like Wise Guys Pizzeria and EECU, GCISD shines light on the winners of this award by giving a cash prize in addition to a gift certificate for services!

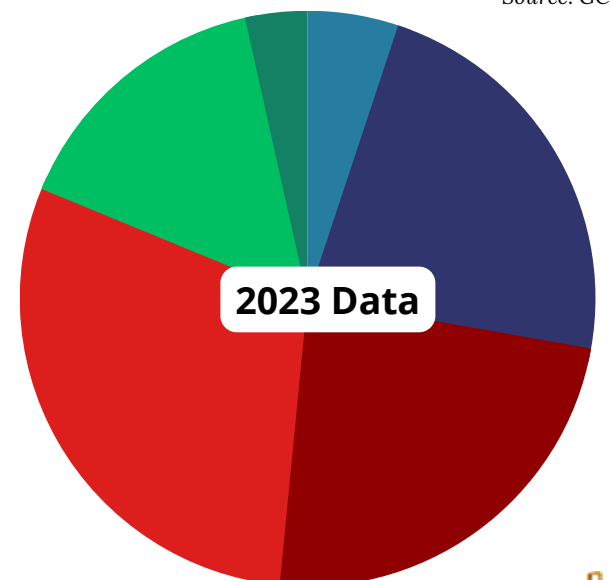
Anyone can nominate the next Star by visiting the district's website and filling out the form. Nominations first reach the nominee, then their supervisor, and then are entered into that month's selection pool.

[GCISD.net/page/stars-of-gcisd](https://www.gcisd.net/page/stars-of-gcisd)

Teacher Years of Experience in GCISD

Source: GCISD

- 30+ years **3.5%**
- 21-30 years **15.3%**
- 11-20 years **29.7%**
- 6-10 years **23.8%**
- 1-5 years **22.7%**
- Beginner **5.1%**



Career & Technical Education (CTE)



truBOND Veterinary Center Supports GCISD Student Programs

It seems like all kids want to be Veterinarians at some point, simply because they love animals. Some of those kids follow through to become full-fledged Vets and care for our fluffy family members. Currently, the competition to get into the field is particularly fierce. One Colleyville business is helping GCISD students push through those barriers to realize their dreams of becoming Veterinarians: truBOND Veterinary Center.

Two years ago, GCISD student Daniel Aponte approached the owner of truBOND, Dr. Chris Dietrich, requesting that the practice host Daniel for the GCISD Veterinary Science Practicum which would allow him to get a certified veterinary assistant credential upon graduation. The business had just opened and it was in the middle of Covid, so Dr. Dietrich was hesitant.

Daniel then let him know he needed to identify a host hospital by the end of the week or he couldn't participate in the program. He also needed a hospital he could walk to because he did not have a car. He and his mom had moved from Puerto Rico and he was in no position to purchase a vehicle at the time. Located at Heritage and Glade Road, the truBOND clinic was in an ideal spot for Colleyville Heritage High School students. At that point, Dr. Dietrich couldn't say no. In fact, he told Daniel that if there were any others who needed a hospital, they'd be happy to help. **Soon after, truBOND was hosting 5 students in the clinic to learn about veterinary medicine!**



truBOND's Dr. Dietrich with pocket puppy patient



truBOND's Vet Tech, Kailyn, with rescue kitten

Fast forward to the summer of 2022, and truBOND hired its first student, CHHS graduate Daniel Aponte, as a part-time kennel assistant. He recently came on full-time. They also hired another student this summer, Ellie LaCroix, and hired a former CHHS graduate who was in her second year of undergraduate pre-veterinary studies at TAMU, Jordan Wallace (Jori). Jori worked full-time at the clinic during her summer break and has come back every summer, winter, and spring break since that time to work at truBOND. Last year the clinic hosted another 4 students, and this year there are 3 more. **All of these GCISD students will have a huge advantage in the job market!**

Getting into veterinary school is incredibly competitive, since there are only around 32 veterinary schools in the United States. In Texas, there was only one option for many years – Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine – until 2 years ago when Texas Tech opened their College of Veterinary Medicine. With only 2 programs in Texas, many qualified candidates are declined each year due to limited space in each class, even though there is an incredible shortage of veterinarians and veterinary technicians nation-wide.

The Veterinary Assistant program offered through GCISD is just one mark of excellence in preparing students for the future career they desire. And thanks to the local business partnership with the truBOND Veterinary Center, GCISD's students will gain the experience and knowledge to help them get accepted to veterinary school and become excellent veterinarians!

Choosing Career Pathways

CTE programs are designed to give students a connection between the real-world and their coursework. In GCISD, there are 11 Career Clusters for GCISD's CTE Program, each with multiple Programs of Study.

The vet technician pathway specifically falls under the "Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources" Cluster, and then under the "Animal Science" Program of Study. There are 7 courses available in that Program with 3 potential prerequisites.

Typically, students and parents are educated on these details by guidance counselors starting in middle school, as some of the Career Cluster pathways begin then. Students must be sure to sign up for the appropriate prerequisites at that time.



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GCISD's CTE Partnership Opportunities

Business Type Needed	Program of Study
Veterinary Practice	Animal Science
Veterinary Practice	Applied Agricultural Engineering
Veterinary Practice	Environmental & Natural Sciences
Veterinary Practice	Plant Science
Digital Advertiser	Digital Communications
Marketing Company	Marketing & Sales
Early Learning Center	Education/Early Learning
Early Learning Center	Education/Teaching & Training
Travel Agency	Lodging & Resort Management
Hotels & Resorts	Travel, Tourism, & Attractions
Security Business	Law Enforcement
Technology Company	Information Technology Support Services
Medical Facilities/Clinics	Healthcare Therapeutic (CNA, EMT, CMA, Pharmacy Tech)

Business Partnerships

Business-school partnerships are vital to growing GCISD's Career and Technical Education program. Within the 11 Career Clusters, some of the pathways require a "Practicum" course toward the end of the Program of Study. This looks like an internship with a local business and gives students real-world experience and knowledge. Currently there are 13 "Practicum" courses available to GCISD students, and all require business partnerships.

Career and Technical Education pathways have been a focal point in GCISD since before the new Technology Education and Career Center (TECC) building opened in 2013. These pathways are part of the

overarching College, Career, and Military Readiness (CCMR) standards established by the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

The current job market's need for high levels of specialized knowledge or expertise have been the largest driver in the emphasis in career readiness. Simply put, many students need to be ready to enter the workforce upon graduation, and others need more specialized education while still in high school to prepare for careers that require further college education. In the case of Veterinary Sciences, those students needed earlier preparation for college readiness, and GCISD's CTE department and extern program through truBond Vet Clinic met that need.

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Silver Lake "Stars" Visit Main Street

This Fall, the "Stars" of Silver Lake Elementary's 3rd-grade class embarked on an exciting adventure as they took a "field trip" to the vibrant heart of Grapevine, Main Street, to dive into the fascinating world of business entrepreneurship. Since Silver Lake is neighbors with Main Street—just a short mile away—they were able to stroll there with a police escort!

During their visit, these eager students had the wonderful opportunity to engage in conversations with several business owners, unraveling the intricacies of the entrepreneurial world. Shop proprietors generously shared their personal stories, offering valuable insights into the joys and challenges of running a business. They told the tales of their entrepreneurial journeys, underscoring both the trials they've faced and the sweet victories they've savored along the way.

At Bermuda Gold & Silver, gracious owner Debi Meek unraveled the fascinating history of her shop. It was once a bank, famously robbed by the notorious Bonnie and Clyde in 1932! Mrs. Meek also expressed her heartfelt gratitude to the Grapevine Convention & Visitors Bureau for their unwavering support in marketing Main Street businesses. Their contributions have significantly lightened her load as a business owner, making her entrepreneurial dreams flourish with ease.

This heartwarming and educational outing to Main Street was a valuable experience that left our young learners with an enriched perspective on entrepreneurship, local history, and a sense of the limitless possibilities that lie ahead.

Magic on Main Street



Grapevine's 44th Annual Parade of Lights

This year marks Grapevine's 44th Annual Parade of Lights, featuring floats from all of GCISD's elementary schools and many local businesses. Each parade has a special theme. This year's theme is "Sights and Sounds of the Season." The parade itself is a collaboration between GCISD, the City of Grapevine, and the Grapevine Chamber of Commerce. This parade is the largest lighted Christmas parade in North Texas!

The Grand Marshall leading the parade last year was Grapevine Citizen of the Year, former GCISD Superintendent Dr. Robin Ryan. He was selected for this honor by prior citizens of the year. The parade begins with city officials, including Grapevine City Council and the GCISD Board of Trustees. Immediately following are numerous floats, marching bands, and cheer groups representing the schools as well as a variety of commercial and community entries.

Every elementary school in GCISD submits an entry every year. Typically, the Dad's Clubs from the school construct magnificent floats that represent the school and the theme. Sometimes students get to ride on the floats to show their school spirit! Most elementary school PTAs secure a "meeting" place in or around Main Street for families to gather. They usually share hot cocoa, pizza, or some other tasty treats together as they celebrate the holiday season and cheer on their school's float!

The entire parade is judged for a winner (excluding commercial entries). The winning float is announced by the Chamber of Commerce by 10 a.m. the next business day and receives prize money that goes to the school. Last year, Cannon Elementary won the elementary school contest, bringing an impressive \$1,000 to their school! The 2nd place winner earns \$750; 3rd place earns \$500. There are also awards for "Best Marching Group" and "Judge's Merit" float. Judges are selected from outside of the Grapevine community to ensure impartiality.

Unbeknownst to many spectators, there are a few special rules surrounding this parade. The most important rule is that there is only 1 Santa. He is always at the end of the parade for the finishing showstopper! Additionally, no candy, toys, glitter, or other items can be thrown from the floats or distributed to the spectators. Horses are not permitted (the marching band and dance teams are grateful for this detail), and all entries must have lights.



You're Invited

Join in the holiday spirit!

Thursday, December 7th

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Main Street Grapevine



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Making the Grade

The Nuts and Bolts of GPA, Class Rank, & AP Classes

After last September's article "The GPA Game," a number of detail-oriented questions arose about GCISD's academics. This Q&A is meant to answer those questions.

Why do students care about class rank and GPA?

Students who are academically inclined generally aim for a position in the top 10% of their graduating class, as this may secure them automatic admission into some Texas colleges. Aside from reducing stress by earning automatic admission, GPA and class rank can be linked to merit-based academic scholarships for college-bound students.

How does my student compete for class rank?

The primary way for students to compete for class rank is for that student to take as many AP (Advanced Placement) classes as possible. The Grade Point Average (GPA) in these classes is weighted higher. If AP classes are not available (because of lack of prerequisites met, for example), then taking courses labeled "Advanced" is the next best option.

What is an AP course?

"AP" stands for "Advanced Placement" and is placed beside the name of a course to indicate that the course focuses on college preparedness. Students who choose to take those courses will have the opportunity to be exposed to more rigorous coursework, similar to what they would expect to see in college. Also, they can take an AP exam through the course writers (the College Board) to potentially earn college credit for the course while in high school, lowering college costs later. The exams are about \$50 each, unless students qualify for a waiver or subsidy.

Top 10 AP Classes Taken in GCISD

1. World History: Modern (Soph.)
2. English Language & Composition (Jnr.)
3. U.S. History (Jnr.)
4. Human Geography (Fresh.)
5. U.S. Government & Politics (Snr.)
6. English Literature & Composition (Snr.)
7. Physics 1 (Fresh./So.)
8. Microeconomics (varies/Snr.)
9. Statistics (Jnr./Snr.)
10. Psychology (Jnr./Snr.)



Student Success

PSAT & AP Capstone Milestone

This year's Class of 2024 boasts 14 National Merit Semifinalists & 36 National Merit Commended students.

Selection is based on the 2022 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®). Over 1.3 million juniors in about 21,000 high schools entered to take the PSAT, which served as an initial screen of program entrants.

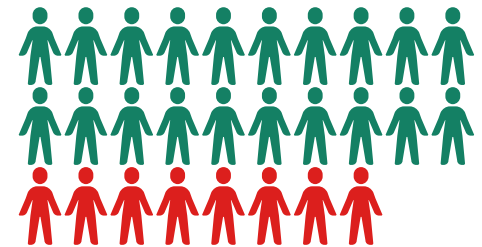
Semifinalists represent less than one percent of U.S. high school seniors. Commended Students placed among the top 50,000 students in the nation.

*AP is a registered trademark of the College Board.

What are the most popular AP courses students in GCISD choose to take?

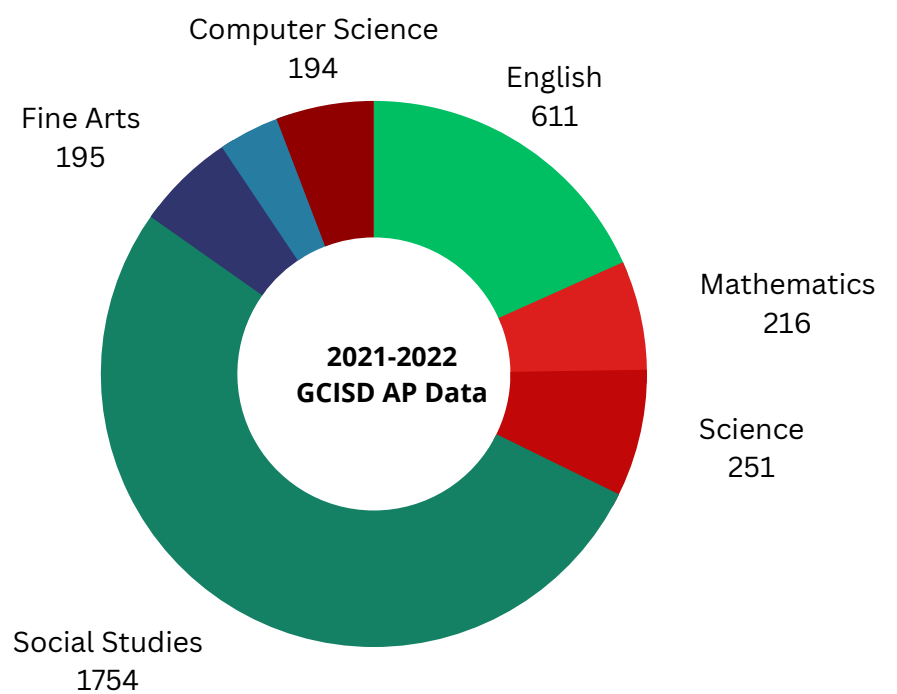
GCISD students are 2.4 times more likely to take a Social Studies or English AP exam than to take a Math or Science AP Exam. This is, in part, due to the types of AP courses available through the test maker (the College Board) and GCISD then providing those courses. Over 50% of AP classes are in Social Studies/Social Sciences; almost 20% are English courses. The most popular AP classes nationally are English Language and Composition and Modern World History.

GCISD students are 2.4 times more likely to take a **Social Studies or English AP exam** than to take a **Math or Science AP Exam**.



Another contributing factor to fewer tests taken in Math or Science in both GCISD and nationwide is the requirement of prerequisites. If a student has not completed the appropriate sequence of courses in time, that student will not have access to some of those higher level math/science courses.

Number of Students in Specific AP Classes



Source: GCISD

*Light Blue = Languages (120)

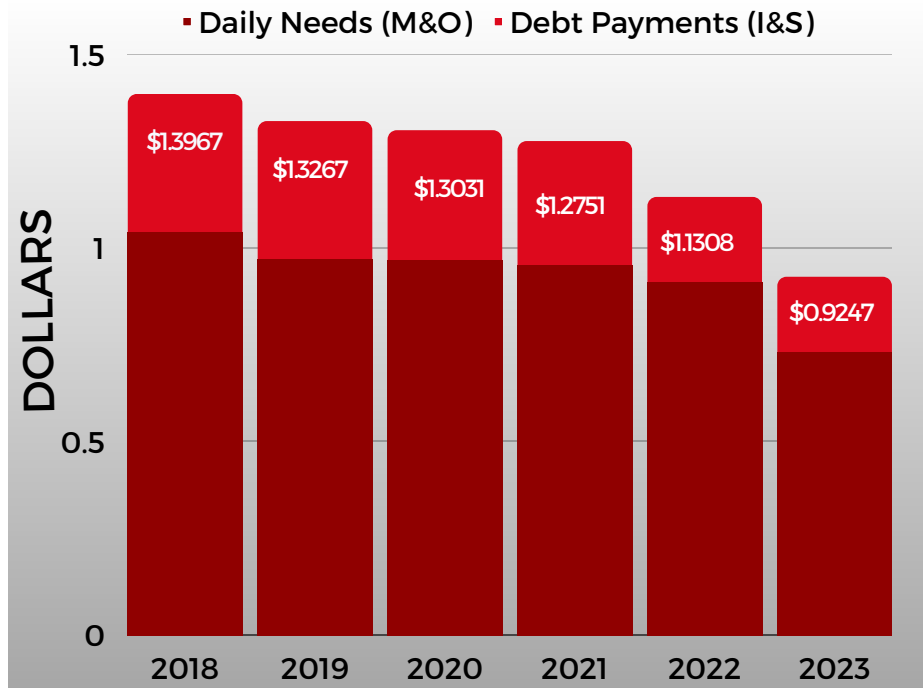
A record 46 GCISD students from the Class of 2023 earned the College Board's Advanced Placement® (AP®) Capstone Diploma.

AP Capstone is a College Board diploma program based on two year-long advanced placement (AP) courses: AP Seminar and AP Research. Students must earn scores of 3 or higher in AP Seminar and AP Research and on four additional AP exams of their choosing.

This outstanding achievement is acknowledged on any AP score report that is sent to colleges after the award has been conferred, aiding with more competitive college admissions.

Tax Decrease

- ▶ The District's total tax rate decreased by 47.2 cents over the last 5 years.
- ▶ Taxes in 2023-24 reduced by 20.61 cents.



Tax Decrease Details

GCISD's Board of Trustees has voted to reduce taxes for 5 consecutive years. The current tax rate is the lowest that it has been since 2007. The 2023 total tax rate will be \$0.9247 per \$100 valuation for 2023. This is 20.61 cents less than the total 2022 tax rate. Over the last five years, GCISD's total tax rate has been reduced by 47.2 cents.

Board President Shannon Braun commented on this decrease, saying that "[o]ver the past three years, we have been able to give nearly 40 cents back on the tax rate, and while state compression plays a role, the Board is responsible for the debt service tax rate, which we have been able to lower considerably." She continued, saying "[t]his is real savings, and our constituents will pay less on their GCISD taxes."

Bond Update

GCISD's Bond Advisory Committee, which consists of GCISD taxpayers, has made progress in deciding what sort of bond package to submit to the Board of Trustees for their approval to put on the ballot in May.

The committee is developing two separate bond packages. Bond Package 1 items consist only of short-term, basic and fundamental needs for the district; Bond Package 2 items are for future growth and long-range capital management. Only Package 1 will be presented to Trustees for their approval to place on the ballot this May. Current estimates for the needs-based Bond Package 1 are between \$150 and \$200 million.

<https://www.gcisd.net/page/bond-advisory-committee>

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The Fight to Fund Our Schools

Source: GCISD

Schools Districts Team Up to Get Legislature's Attention

Last September, the Board of Trustees directed Superintendent Schnautz to initiate a letter to state lawmakers explaining concerns about funding and transparency in taxation regarding public education and recapture dollars.

Dr. Schnautz collaborated with Christy Rome, the Executive Director of the Texas School Coalition, to create and distribute a joint letter addressing the burden of Robin Hood on Texas Schools.

Ms. Rome shared that letter with the "recapture" Coalition members across the state; Dr. Schnautz shared it with the non-Coalition members. **The goal was to get signatures by September 29th to be able to share the joint letter with state leaders prior to the start of the upcoming special session in October.** Together, they received signatures from 52 other districts.

On **October 5th**, a team of Trustees and PTA officers from GCISD personally hand-delivered this letter to the Austin office of every senator, representative, and the Governor to ask for help with public education funding.

This joint letter to legislators had 3 major points:

1. Public school funding needs to reflect the rise in inflation
2. The legislature needs to fund its own mandates (like the officers in every school)
3. Taxpayers deserve to know how much of their taxes are going to the state's recapture fund and how much are staying in their local school district

On **October 9th**, another letter was sent, this time addressed to Chairwoman Joan Huffman (Senate Committee on Finance) echoing all of the requests above, and referring back to the earlier joint letter. In addition, **this new letter emphasized that even the highest-performing districts in Texas are in jeopardy because of these funding concerns**, which affect all Texas schools. It was signed by a coalition of neighboring school districts, including Argyle, Carroll ISD, Grapevine Colleyville ISD, and Keller ISD.

On **October 24th**, all GCISD families received an email from the school district requesting their support in contacting state legislators to get them to make school funding a priority. Other adjacent school districts have made the same request of their taxpayers.

In the battle to secure adequate funding for our schools, the collaborative efforts of Dr. Schnautz, Christy Rome, Trustees, PTA leadership, and numerous concerned individuals have brought to light the pressing issues surrounding public education funding and taxation transparency.

The joint letter to state lawmakers, signed by 52 districts, resonated with the urgency of the matter and delivered a clear message. Subsequent letters and appeals underscored the gravity of these concerns, uniting neighboring school districts in this fight. The coordinated efforts of these individuals and communities underscore the collective commitment to ensuring a better future for our schools. Now it falls upon state leaders to recognize the imperative of prioritizing school funding and addressing these pressing issues.

The Basic Allotment

Most of GCISD's funding comes from collecting local property taxes. The amount is capped at \$6,160 per student (known as the "basic allotment") and has been stagnant since 2019. Anything above that amount goes back to the state through "recapture." For the 2022-23 school year, **GCISD returned more than \$60 million dollars of local money to the state.** This is about one-third of the total operating budget. Meanwhile, **the state has a record surplus of over \$33 billion** dollars that it has collected through recapture over the years.

No Additional Revenue

During the regular legislative session, the state provided \$2.6 billion to Texas schools, but not for the basic allotment or for pay raises. The state's funding increase was offset by the reduction made to local property taxes (by the state). **This means GCISD received no additional revenue in spite of 40-year record inflation.** On top of that, the state simultaneously sent school districts a mandate to put armed officers in every school, costing GCISD's local taxpayers about \$3 million.

5 GCISD Finance Facts

- #1** Recapture is a mandatory payment of local taxpayer money to the state of Texas. It pulls funding from some public schools and gives it to others.
- #2** GCISD has reduced its tax rate locally for the past 5 years. Increases in property taxes do not equate to more money for schools. Instead, those additional taxes result in higher recapture of funds back to the state.
- #3** The "basic allotment" provided by the state is the maximum amount of taxpayer money GCISD is permitted to keep for its students (\$6,160 per student). The rest of the money is returned to Austin for redistribution. Last year GCISD returned \$60+ million to the state (2022-23).
- #4** The state provided \$2.6 billion back to Texas schools. This increase was offset with the reductions the state gave to local property taxes. GCISD will not see any additional funds.
- #5** Record high 40-year inflation is crippling public school districts statewide. This means GCISD's expenses have increased, but its revenue has stayed flat.

Recapture from GCISD to Austin

AUSTIN HAS "RECAPTURED" \$900 MILLION FROM GCISD BETWEEN 1996-2023



\$60+ MILLION "RECAPTURED" THIS YEAR
AUSTIN NOW HAS A \$33 BILLION SURPLUS

Special Needs Feature: Pediatric Dentistry

Featured Author, Sandra Armstrong, DDS
Board-Certified Pediatric Dentist

The purpose of this article is to provide information regarding oral health and issues surrounding special care needs, which include home care, sedation dentistry, and a myriad of other components that make up a healthy smile for a lifetime.

Guiding Question

My 4-year-old was recently diagnosed with severe autism and is not compliant when we are trying to assist him with brushing, flossing, etc. Do you have any suggestions which could potentially make it easier for us to help him so that he can remain cavity free?

While regular office visits are important, practicing oral hygiene at home is crucial. The best thing you can do is provide consistency with routine cleaning, an adequate natural diet, and persistent home care.

What to Look for in an Office Visit

Communication and Sensory Adaptations: Since children with special needs may have difficulty with communication and sensory sensitivities, it is important to create a comfortable and calming environment during dental visits. Your office should use visual aids, tell-show-do, soothing music, weighted blankets, and a lot of loving care.

Desensitization and Gradual Exposure: Many children with autism have sensory sensitivities particularly regarding touch, taste, and smell. It is important for dentists to gradually introduce your child to dental tools and procedures in a non-threatening way. This allows your child to become more comfortable with a dental office environment over time.

Routine Dental Visits: Consistent dental visits are essential for preventative care. These visits help identify dental issues early and allow for intervention. Regular dental cleanings and check-ups can help prevent more complex dental problems from developing.



Special Needs Pediatric Dentistry Patient

What to Do at Home

Provide Regular Assistance: Teaching and reinforcing a proper oral hygiene routine at home is crucial. Parents should assist their children with brushing their teeth with gentle techniques.

Use the Proper Tools: Special needs children have special sensory needs. To ensure the smoothest routine possible, use a soft-bristled toothbrush. Fluoride toothpaste is ideal for helping to maintain oral health. To get adequate and regular cleaning, use schedules and timers.

Diet and Nutrition: Proper nutrition plays a significant role in oral health. Encourage a balanced diet with limited sugary and acidic foods and beverages to prevent tooth decay. Provide nutritious snacks like whole fruits, vegetables, and cheese. Avoid sticky candies, raisins, gummy vitamins, and the like.

Final Thoughts

It is essential to consult with pediatric dentists experienced in treating children with special needs, as they can provide professional care tailored to your child's needs. Due to their educational background and special training, they are more adept at managing behavioral challenges and ensuring a positive dental experience.

I hope this article has provided you with useful information to care for your child. Have a wonderful holiday season enjoying all of your loved ones!

Dr. Armstrong

<https://www.gigglesandgrins.org/special-needs-dentistry/>



Dr. Armstrong



Dr. Watts



Dr. Capeci

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Dr. Armstrong & patient



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2023

The Grinch visits
Giggles & Grins!

GCISD Community Comes Together to Fulfill Student Dream



Photo Credit: GoFundMe "I Roll With Zak"

CHHS Homecoming King Steals Hearts

CHHS Homecoming King, Zakai Clay, has cerebral palsy and requires specialized transportation for his 350-pound wheelchair. But this doesn't stop him from being part of the Panther Football team!

Originally set to be crowned King at the Homecoming football game on September 15th, the game was canceled due to lightning, so the court was named the next evening at the homecoming dance instead.

Because the court's game-time recognition was cut short, it was decided that it would also be celebrated during the September 22nd football game. In both cases, GCISD's special education services coordinators reached out to transportation services, who were more than happy to step up to make sure Clay could attend this school-related event.

Jaime Foster, Clay's mother, expressed her incredible gratitude for the love and support that she and her son have received since Clay began as a student in GCISD in Kindergarten.

"GCISD is like family," Foster said. "The things that they have done to accommodate Zakai since he's been in kindergarten, I just don't have the words for it."

On September 15th, Foster established a GoFundMe campaign to seek assistance in purchasing a van able to accommodate Clay's wheelchair so that the family would be able to transport Clay independently.

On September 22nd, Foster's GoFundMe campaign updated to include that the **Grapevine Elks Lodge #2483 had raised \$26,000** and the ATI Foundation awarded a \$10,000 grant toward the goal. On October 5th, Milner Wrecker Service donated an additional \$15,000. A day later, EZ Flex Sports Mats put in \$1,000 more. Both the CHHS cheer and football teams put together a fundraiser selling T-shirts that raised almost \$5,000 more dollars. By October 9th, Mobility Works brought over two vans, Zak and Foster chose one, and the consultant said that a private donor would pay the remaining balance of the vehicle!

Thank you to every individual and every business that made this miracle happen for Zak!

Grapevine Elks Lodge Gifts \$26,000 Grant to GCISD Special Needs Student

In a heartwarming display of community spirit and unwavering support, the Grapevine Elks Lodge #2483 has emerged as the #1 donor to help GCISD student, Zakai Clay, get a specialized vehicle to accommodate his disability. This donation is a testament to their commitment to making a positive impact in their community. With a history spanning over 150 years, this premier charitable and patriotic organization has been dedicated to uplifting the lives of GCISD's children and schools since 1972.

The Grapevine Elks Lodge assists local families through the Santa Cops program (Christmas presents for underprivileged children), hosts a Hoop Shoot (a national free-throw contest with scholarships for the winners), participates in the Elks National Drug Awareness Program (focused on drug prevention in primary grades), and provides financial assistance through grants to families in need.

When they saw Zak's need, they immediately stepped up to donate \$26,000 toward Zak's van! Their "Special Grants" are available for children up to age 18 who are Texas residents. Their purpose is "to assist children with special needs not fully supported by insurance, government agencies, or other grant programs."

The Grapevine Elks Lodge is well-known for its desire to support GCISD's special needs students and has done so before. A further fantastic opportunity that the Lodge provides GCISD's kids as part of their state-wide effort is hosting the "Texas Elks Camp," a FREE 6-day summer camp for children with special needs spread out over half a dozen sessions divided up by age (registration opens in January). www.elks.org

In a world where kindness and support are paramount, GCISD's local Grapevine Elks Lodge stands as a shining example of the power of community, proving that together, we can achieve extraordinary things.



More than 200 generous individuals in our community and multiple businesses and nonprofits stepped up to Roll with Zak!

Timeline of Giving

- Sept. 15:** Zak's mom, Jaime, starts the GoFundMe
 - Sept. 22:** GV Elks Lodge (\$26,000) & ATI Foundation (\$10,000)
 - Oct. 4:** CHHS Panther Cheer & Football (~\$5,000)
 - Oct. 5:** Milner/Dispatch Wrecker Service (\$15,000)
 - Oct. 6:** EZ Flex Sports Mats (\$1,000)
 - Oct. 9:** Mobility Works private donor for the remaining need
- 200+ individuals donated throughout the fundraising effort

What a wonderful community!



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