

## A Message from Superintendent Dan Boyd

Welcome back to work and the 2008-09 school year! We've had a very eventful summer—and with Tropical Storm Fay, a very eventful first week of school. I hope you and your family got through the storm with no problems.

We got some very good news late in the summer. For the third year in a row, Alachua County Public Schools has earned an 'A' grade from the state for the academic achievement of our students. I congratulate all of you on the role you play to ensure that all our students are getting a quality education.

Unfortunately, not all of the news lately has been good. If you've been keeping up with the media over the last few months, you know that the district's budget situation has gotten even worse than it was since my last message in the *Employee Express* in late May. In addition to the \$14 million in cuts we knew about then, the Governor has also announced another 4% holdback in state funds. That could cost our district an additional \$4 million. State officials have also told us to expect more cuts after the November election and through the 2009-10 school year.

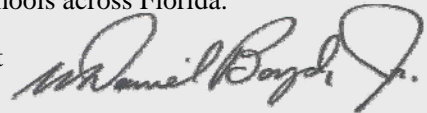
Faced with these severe state cuts, the School Board has had to make some very painful decisions in order to balance the district's budget, which is required under state law. As you are probably aware, art and music programs in the elementary schools have been reduced, as have media specialists in the middle and high schools. Overtime's been cut drastically, Prairie View Academy has been closed as a K-5 school, and bus routes have been streamlined. These and other changes are on top of the administrative and district level cuts that were implemented towards the end of the 2007-08 school year. We've also learned that the federal funding we use to pay for school nurses will be eliminated after April 1, 2009. That gives us a short reprieve, but after this school year we will not have the funding to maintain our nurses.

As you are probably already aware, the School Board did decide to place a one-mill property tax increase for schools on the November ballot. The one mill would cost the average Alachua County homeowner about \$10 a month and would last just four years. By law, the money raised must be spent on those items on the ballot, including school nurses, elementary art and music, middle school bands, elementary guidance, career/tech and academic magnet programs and classroom technology. An independent group of citizens will oversee the spending of that money.

Currently the district and our schools are providing employees, parents and other citizens with information about the one-mill increase. We are also working hard to get people registered to vote. If you are not registered to vote in Alachua County, please contact the Public Information Office at 955-7253, ext. 228 or through e-mail at [jackie.johnson@gm.sbac.edu](mailto:jackie.johnson@gm.sbac.edu) and we'll be happy to provide you with the easy-to-fill out registration form and any other information you need. You will need to be registered by October 6 to vote in the November 4 election.

On a positive note, the Florida Supreme Court voted unanimously last week to remove Amendments 5, 7 and 9 from the ballot. These amendments would have had a serious negative impact on schools across Florida.

Yes, we face many challenges in the upcoming school year, but I am confident that working together, we can weather these storms!



## Make up days for Tropical Storm Fay chosen

With input from the Alachua County Education Association, the district has selected the flex days that will now become make-up days as a result of schools being closed for Tropical Storm Fay.

School will now be held on December 19 and February 13. The district's November 10 flex day still remains on the calendar.

Flex days were incorporated into the district's calendar in the wake of several storms that hit Florida in 2004. They are pupil/teacher holidays unless a hurricane or other situation forces the closing of schools.

The School Board is scheduled to vote on the 2009-10 school calendar on October 7.

# Is your emergency phone number up to date?

Thanks to Tropical Storm Fay, Alachua County Public School employees know why it's critical to have an up-to-date phone number on file with the district.

The closing of schools because of the storm gave Alachua County Public Schools the first opportunity to use the district's Parent Link automated phone system on an emergency basis.

Unlike the district's old system, Parent Link also allows the district to send separate emergency messages aimed specifically at employees. Two phone messages just for employees were sent with information about Fay, and both reached all employees within ten minutes.

However, about 20% of the phone numbers called by the system were listed as 'bad' numbers, which means the number had been disconnected or was otherwise not in service.



If you did not receive the emergency phone call for employees from the district about schools being closed for Tropical Storm Fay, you'll want to check with your school or worksite to make sure your number is listed accurately in the district's database system. If you need to change your phone number, you should fill out an Employee Information Change Form. These forms are available at schools and worksites or from the Personnel Office at Kirby-Smith.

Employees who are also parents of Alachua County students may have received additional automated calls from the district, but those were different messages with information specifically for students and their families. About ten percent of the calls to family numbers were also listed as bad. Employees who did not receive the family emergency calls should contact their school to make sure their number is accurate.

## First Ideas and Incentives item selected

Two Alachua County Public School employees have earned a \$50 award for their cost-cutting ideas through the district's Ideas and Incentives program.

Ann Strouse, a dispatcher in the maintenance department at the Sivia Center, and Clem Hodges, who retired from teaching at Glen Springs in June, both suggested that summer school programs be consolidated. That idea will be explored by the district's curriculum division this year, which will consider both the potential cost savings and the impact on students and the programs themselves.

The Ideas and Incentives program, established

in late spring, rewards employees for submitting innovative ideas that save the district time and/or money, boost productivity and efficiency, promote safety or improve the working environment. Nearly 50 employees submitted ideas during the program's initial phase.

Another winner(s) will be selected in November. Employees can submit their ideas to [jackie.johnson@gm.sbac.edu](mailto:jackie.johnson@gm.sbac.edu) or through truck mail to the Public Information Office. A submission form is also available on the district's website at [www.sbac.edu](http://www.sbac.edu) under the Employee Information and Technical Support section.