

## Monday Focus

September 17, 2007

**Enrollment is at (Non-Natural Disaster) Record-High** At 2940, Westside is at its highest enrollment ever (other than the Katrina year when we hit 3081). This is 120 students more than we expected this year. Most of these students are at ninth and tenth grade. This growth effectively negated our efforts to limit class size at those grade levels. At this point we are unable and unwilling to add teachers as it would be more disruptive than useful. I thank you for working with administration as we have tried to make adjustments to the schedule to accommodate this surge. Hopefully, this week will bring some stability and normalcy to our enrollment.

**Note-Taking in a Nutshell** Some of you have asked what “best practice” note-taking would look like. Though we would like to think our students know how to take notes, the reality is that they don’t. That means we must explicitly teach our students when and how to take notes. Try this: (1) Have the key concept your students are to learn embedded in your learner objective. (2) Have key topics, facts, and terms written on the board. (3) Before direct instruction, access prior knowledge by reviewing those key topics, facts, and terms. (4) During direct instruction, make a point to alert students when to take notes. Do not tell students exactly what to write. Instead, teach them when to write. (5) When the opportunity presents itself, try to get the students to capture or create a non-linguistic representation of the topic, fact, or term in their notes. If possible, this should be independently generated; otherwise, present them the model. (6) After note-taking, give students 3-5 minutes to review notes with a partner, high-light or underline important information, create NLR’s, and ask clarifying questions of one another or you.

**Three Weeks, Three Funerals** In the past three weeks of school, three of our students have buried a parent. To say that it has been a tough opening is an understatement. I was struck by the fact that in each case, the students returned to school within three days. In one case, the student was at school the day after the parent’s death. I talked to the student and she said that she would rather be here than at the house. I don’t know if teachers were aware of the situations in each case, but this does speak to the reality that many of our students face complex and at times, traumatic lives.

**Cheerleaders, Pride, and Band Look Great!** The Westside cheerleaders, Pride, and marching band looked fantastic at our game in Conroe last Friday night. We appreciate their support.

**Pre-AP/AP Access and Equity** One of the three goals we identified this year was to increase access and equity in our AP program. The goal is to have 87% of the class of 2011 take one AP course, AP test by graduation date. At present, only 60% of the freshman class is enrolled in an AP or pre-AP course (up from 57% last year). While this is a slight improvement, it is not close to our goal. Stephanie Matlock and I will be convening AP focus group to examine and address this major equity problem. For those who are teaching AP and pre-AP classes, your input is needed in this effort to address the gap.

**SMART Boards** The school has purchased 5 SMART boards for teacher use. If you are interested in being assigned a SMART board for your classroom, please submit a written explanation of how you would use the board to me by this Friday, September 21. All entries will be reviewed by committee and every effort will be made to place boards quickly. Applicants must be willing to attend training on the board’s use.

## Calendar of Events

- Mon Sept 17**    **ASPIRE Verification Due**  
**Lesson Plans Posted for the Week**  
**Varsity Volleyball vs. Lamar, Butler, 6:30 PM**
- Tue Sept 18**    **Fr/JV Volleyball vs. Lamar, WHS Gym, 5 PM**  
**Progress Reports Exported, 7 PM**  
Don't wait until the last minute. Assume mistakes will happen and plan ahead.
- Wed Sept 19**    **FIRE DRILL, 3<sup>rd</sup> Period**  
Follow all directions in your red folder.  
Make sure that you take your attendance list with you.  
**OPEN HOUSE, 6 PM**  
Each class will be 10 minutes long. Focus your time on what parents can expect from your classroom in terms of learning, projects, homework, and tests.
- Thur Sept 20**    **Freshman Football vs. Elsik, WHS Field, 4:30 PM**  
**WHS Talent Show, Auditorium, 7 PM**
- Fri Sept 21**    **SMART Board Proposals Due, 3:30 PM**  
Turn in to Ms. Lopez.  
**Varsity Volleyball vs. Bellaire, Butler Fieldhouse, 6:30 PM**  
**Varsity Football vs. Elsik, Butler Stadium, 7:30 PM**
- Wed Sept 26**    **SDMC/FAC Meeting**