

Superintendent's Point of View

By John Chapman

First, I would like to say thank you to all CISD employees for implementing a great first week of school. I have to admit the Chapman household was a little more chaotic than usual, but if any of you know our two boys, chaos usually is the norm in our little part of the world. You get to a point that you don't even call it chaos, just life. Honestly, majority of parents can probably relate to the hectic pace the beginning of school generates. However, in the grand scheme of things, I don't think I would change a thing.

Now, let's switch gears to other more unique issues like the continuing saga of the Boys and Girls Club, a.k.a.-BGC, and the Comfort Area Youth Commission, a.k.a.-CAYC. I would like to take this time to send out a most sincere apology to all Comfort Bobcat fans and Bangs fans alike. On Friday night, as fans walked to their cars in the parking lot, they were met with a form of graffiti littering their windshields. Please remember that our recycling bin is housed at the elementary campus.

In order to fully understand the issues surrounding the CAYC and BGC, it would be appropriate to give a little history revolving around CISD's affiliation with each organization. Indulge me as I remember my first three months on the job. As I visited with several families, the need for an elementary after-school care was very apparent. Not a babysitting service, but a bonafide program that mentored students while giving them a place to do their homework and have organized activities until parents came and picked them up. I met several single parents who worked not only one job, but two jobs just so they can give their children what many of us take for granted...clothes and food on the table. I guess you could say that I made it my subtle mission to find something after school for their kids that would put their minds at ease about safety issues while at the same time allowing it to be affordable.

In February 2008, the district asked the Boys and Girls Club if they would be interested in starting an after school program at Comfort Elementary. Why the Boys and Girls Club? The organization is a nationally recognized organization with over 4300 clubs. The Boys and Girls Club has a proven program funded by the state with many grants at their disposal that would benefit Comfort ISD and the community. The Boys and Girls Club also agreed to charge parents a \$10 fee for their child to be a member. By paying that once a year membership fee, their children were allowed to be in the elementary after-school program until 6:00pm giving parents adequate time to get off work. As a parent, community member and administrator, I am at peace knowing the children have a safe, secure place to stay until a legal guardian or parent can pick them up at 6:00pm.

Well, you ask, what does this have to do with CAYC? CAYC has done a great job organizing the Cat's Den, a house owned by the Lutheran Church next door, for junior high students to enjoy and be mentored after school. They are a community based organization that has built basketball courts and assisted the community in various ways. I applaud their efforts for service to our students, and I hope they will continue to support our Jr. High students. CAYC and BGC agreed to work collaboratively with the Jr. High program. I hope plans will continue to be in place for our middle school children to get the services they desperately need.

In February 2008, Comfort ISD and BGC agreed to work collaboratively with the elementary students. The BGC developed an organized elementary after school program for students in 1st grade to 5th grade. The program is housed in the elementary cafeteria and gym. I welcome and support volunteers to assist the district, but in today's world the district must follow several laws and regulations before an individual decides to walk in the school and volunteer their services. The district will never turn down parents or community members that want to volunteer their time to our youth, but criminal history checks and other appropriate steps will be taken first.

The Comfort Elementary will continue to run an after school program sponsored by the Boys and Girls Club until October 20, 2008 in the elementary cafeteria. This will be only on an interim basis. The district wants to keep things consistent until further action can be taken. The Boys and Girls Club does not have a resolution or agreement with the district nor have they had from the beginning. Now that the CAYC is interested in running our elementary program, the district will go out for bids. The administration will put together an RFP. An RFP is a list of criteria and requirements the district is seeking in an organization that will fund, support and deliver a sound after school program for our elementary youth (not our Jr. High students...CAYC is doing a great job with this program. (Why disturb a good thing?) A bid request will be posted in the newspaper for two weeks. This will allow interested organizations the opportunity to review the RFP and complete a resolution. Unfortunately, this will cost the district additional monies to complete the process. The Board of Trustees will have an opportunity to review the organization's resolution and approve or deny a program on October 20, 2008. The Board could have a tough decision to make, and shouldn't.

I fear that a political dispute has weakened the links of two great organizations causing clouded judgments and slandering remarks. I urge you, members of both organizations, to remember whom we are setting examples...the very children we are supposed to be teaching positive conflict resolution. The CISD administration is trying to be as neutral as possible. I have great respect for each organization's dedication to children and hope something can be mutually agreed upon without further negative repercussions within the Comfort community.

Please feel free to come and visit with me if you have any concerns or suggestions on how to better the lives of our families that need us most.