

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALDINE  
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. GREEN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GREEN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to associate myself with the remarks of the gentlewoman from Texas [Ms. JACKSON-LEE], my colleague from Houston. That championship game last week was exciting not only for those of us who are from Houston, but all across the country.

Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to be here on the floor of the House and pleased to announce the high performance rating for a school district in Houston, Aldine Independent School District. It was recognized by the Texas Education Agency for the quality of their program.

As the parent of two graduates of Aldine schools, and my wife who teaches in the Aldine schools, and representing, along with the gentlewoman from Texas [Ms. JACKSON-LEE], about half the district, it is a pleasure to see the school district receive the recognition that it deserves.

According to the latest data released by the Texas Education Agency, Aldine ranks among the Texas high performance school districts. This rating was based on 1996-1997 Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, our Statewide TAAS scores, attendance records, and low dropout rate.

Aldine is the largest recognized school in the State with a student enrollment of approximately 48,000 students. To earn a recognized rating, 75 percent of all students in each students group, district-wide, must pass each TAAS subject area. In addition, the dropout rate for all students cannot exceed 3.5 percent. They must also maintain an attendance rate of at least 94 percent.

Only a few schools have reached the high performing level of recognized or exemplary and Aldine is one of the four "recognized" school districts in Harris County, TX.

By achieving a recognized designation from the State, it is a great honor for everybody in the school district. But it is more than that. It recognizes each individual's hard work and commitment to education.

More specifically, a special thank you for the dedication of the curriculum program directors, principals, the teachers, the teaching assistants, and the students. It is a collaborative effort by these individuals which guarantee the continued success of the school district.

One of the reasons for the success of the Aldine Independent School District is their curriculum. The staff development focuses on teamwork and giving teachers of all subject areas the chance to support academic success. Each teacher in the district receives the same materials containing the same common strategies throughout the district. Program directors from different

subject areas then work with the teachers on integrating those common strategies into their curriculum.

The curriculum is based on the continual assessment of student performance, analysis of student performance data, and the development of benchmarks, targets, and then implementation. It is a structured system to ensure that the skills are mastered and applied to each student's learning.

Not only has there been success for Aldine Independent School District, but there has also been success for the State of Texas. Students across the State of Texas have improved their performance on TAAS testing, TAAS is a statewide assessment of skills, from 55 percent in 1994 to 73 percent in 1997. In comparison, Aldine ISD students have improved their mastery from 49 percent in 1994, to 75 percent in 1997.

For the State of Texas as a whole, the figures show an increase in the number of highest performing districts and a decrease in the number of lowest performing districts statewide, despite tougher performance standards for the years 1996 and 1997. Again, each year the performance standards get tougher, as we know, the worldwide competition gets tougher.

Texas has the most high school seniors taking the SAT test than any State in the country, at 48 percent, and these scores have continued to improve. Texas has brought education to the forefront. It is a priority for everyone, and that is an important distinction.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I am glad to be here this evening and recognize the contribution and the success of the Aldine Independent School District to the education of our children.

LISTENING TO THE AMERICAN  
PEOPLE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. HULSHOF] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. HULSHOF. Mr. Speaker, continuing the tradition that we have tried to begin as newly elected Republican Members focusing on positive success stories across the district, as you know just as our Nation's children are returning to schools all across this great land, we lawmakers are returning here to Washington and I think probably sharing some of the mixed emotions that our schoolchildren have as far as returning here to this establishment.

What we do here, of course, is very important with the bills and the debates and our struggles here. But I think what we do pales in comparison to the real life struggles that our constituents, the American people, are facing each and every day.

We talk about this 4-week period of time here in August, or just as August past, as a recess or a vacation. And I

know many of the newly elected Members did not consider it as a vacation, as a recess. It was a very good time to get back home to really probe the minds and listen. And I think if anything that we have been able to accomplish that has been the most fruitful is that we stop shouting long enough in this body to listen to what the American people have to say.

And when we began to listen to those men and women that have been struggling to keep a roof overhead and keep food on the table, what we heard them tell us is that they were working longer and harder and yet had less to show for it at the end of the month and wondering where their tax monies had gone.

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Basically what I was hearing, in a series of town hall meetings, was that the people back home in Missouri's Ninth Congressional District wanted us to change our ways here in Washington so that they would not have to change their ways back home.

I know certainly that there has been a wide difference of opinion on the budget agreement that we put together. Certainly future political candidates, I was flipping around the channels and watching C-SPAN and some of the speeches where future politicians or those seeking higher office have talked about what we did in a negative way. Yet I did not sense that at all. A series of town meetings in the Ninth Congressional District of Missouri were overwhelmingly positive.

The folks that came out recognized that we were on the path to a smaller, smarter government. They were appreciative of the fact that the centerpiece of our budget agreement, the tax relief package, was a child credit that will benefit the parents of 41 million children across this country, and the fact that nearly 2 million households will not have a Federal income tax liability just because of this \$500 child credit.

They were appreciative of the child health initiative that we have commenced, that we put together in this budget plan to help the Nation's most vulnerable that are uninsured. And I tried to explain and made clear that this was not a new Federal entitlement that we had imposed but a way to reach out with local innovative solutions to this national problem of uninsured children.

They were certainly appreciative, as education is very much on the minds of the folks in the Ninth Congressional District, that we have education tuition credits that we are putting in place so that children that dream of college can actually get there, and those that have been laboring under the weight of a student loan might have a little bit of his or her burden eased by allowing the deduction of interest on that student loan.

Certainly we recognize that a strong economy is vital because as we help educate and invest in our children, the