

Information Regarding Alternative Education Programs of GCISD

Introduction

GCISD has two alternative education programs, they are VISTA and Bridges. Only one of the programs, VISTA, receives students with discipline infractions. VISTA is a disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP) mandated by the State of Texas. It is designed to provide a safe, respectful environment for students to continue their education while providing additional support services to improve behavior. Students are placed for violations of the GCISD Student Code of Conduct and/or the Texas Education Code. Bridges, the other alternative program, offers an individualized learning program for high school students allowing them to accelerate their studies. Students must apply for enrollment in the Bridges program.

The VISTA Program

It is important to know that only certain discipline infractions require placement of a student in VISTA. To fully understand which students are placed in VISTA, please refer to the GCISD Student Code of Conduct. (The GCISD Code of Conduct is available online through the District's website at <http://www.gcisd-k12.org/resources.html>.) The GCISD Student Code of Conduct specifies which discipline infractions result in a placement in VISTA for up to a period of thirty (30) successful school days. Some behavior infractions only require discipline administered by the campus, while other infractions of a rather serious nature require expulsion to the Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP). The JJAEP is not a GCISD program and students referred to JJAEP do not attend school in any GCISD facility. Therefore, VISTA is a program to address infractions occurring between the campus discipline level and JJAEP. An example of student behavior that would result in a VISTA placement is a student who is found consuming alcohol at a school activity. Upon successful completion of the VISTA placement, students return to the home campus.

The VISTA program continues the student's coursework in the core courses and offers additional support services such as counseling and drug education to students within the alternative educational setting. Presently, the District maintains a 5-to-1 student/teacher ratio and 4-to-1 student/adult ratio within the VISTA program. VISTA is required by law to educate students ranging from age six through grade 12. The number of students in the program fluctuates. The number of

students at VISTA during any given week in 2004-05 was 25 or less. In total, less than one percent of GCISD students were placed in VISTA last year.

VISTA has a comprehensive Behavior Plan that is introduced to the parents and students at an initial orientation conducted after placement. Students are tested on the expectations and consequences so they clearly understand what is required for a successful placement. Days are added to the placement time if a student fails to meet behavior goals. If a VISTA student fails to abide by District and VISTA rules, they may be expelled to JJAEP. This has been the rare case over the 10 years of VISTA's existence. Experience shows that most of the VISTA students are students who have simply made poor choices. The majority of VISTA students do not return to the program. They return to their home campus to continue their education without further incident. VISTA serves its purpose, which is to help the student learn from past decisions and return to the home campus with improved skills.

The common discipline issues that occur once the student is attending VISTA include failing to comply with an adult's request, being disrespectful, disrupting a quiet learning environment, and being truant.

VISTA students typically arrive at school by driving or being delivered by a parent or other designated adult driver. The VISTA staff monitors its students from the time they arrive until the time they leave the campus. An observer can see staff members in the parking lot awaiting the student's arrival and watching them depart.

The VISTA Program has existed for 10 years and has been a good neighbor to any community in which it has been located.

Proposed movement of VISTA Program to the vacated CES

Under the proposed bond program, students attending Colleyville Elementary School (CES) will move to a new school with entry/exit off of Pleasant Run Drive. Students attending Colleyville Middle School will continue to enter/exit off Bogart Street. Students attending the VISTA program in the vacated CES will enter/exit the campus from Highway 26. Students from VISTA, crossing paths with other students, are most likely going to be in a vehicle. That is not to say that a VISTA student would never walk to school in or near the CES and CMS sites, but given the proposed location and the entry/exit point it seems less

likely. Currently VISTA students could walk and cross paths with Timberline, Cross Timbers, and Grapevine High School students.

The VISTA school day is staggered to ensure separation between its three programs. VISTA currently follows the schedule below, but may be altered once it moves to the new location to ensure optimum safety.

VISTA Elementary School	8:15 a.m. – 2:45 p.m.
VISTA Middle School	8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
VISTA High School	8:45 a.m. – 3:15 p.m.

During the design phase of the bond program, the District will review requirements of all programs. It is at this time that the District will determine and consider whether additional fencing, beyond what already exists at CES, is needed. The one interior camera and the exterior cameras that currently exist in the facility will also remain in place, adding a visual monitoring system that does not exist at the current VISTA location. Because of the small student/teacher ratio, it would be readily obvious if a VISTA student was missing from class or activities. During the past ten years, this has not been an issue. Additionally, students who are placed at VISTA are forbidden to be on any other school district property or attend any school-sponsored activities under penalty of arrest or ticket for trespassing.

The new location will offer a gymnasium to VISTA students, which they do not currently have. Some activities, allowing the student to exercise and release energy, will be conducted in the gymnasium and others will be conducted outdoors while monitored by staff.

The Bridges Program

Bridges is **not** a discipline program. It provides an accelerated learning program on an individualized basis for students who prefer a setting different from the traditional high school. Bridges serves students in grades 9 – 12 with the majority being 11th and 12th grade students. **The most important thing to understand about Bridges is that it is a school of choice. Students must apply and be accepted to attend Bridges.**

The Bridges program has seven full-time teachers and four adults in administrative and support roles. The average student/teacher ratio is 9-to-1. The average adult to student ratio is 6-to-1. Bridges averages 65 students at its highest enrollment. The peak months of enrollment are January and February.

Bridges students are required to abide by the District Code of Conduct, as any other GCISD student. During the seven years of Bridges' existence at its current location, there has not been any incident requiring the police and there have not been any fights. There is zero tolerance for inappropriate behavior in a program designed for accelerated learning. The most common discipline issue at Bridges is tardiness.

Bridges students typically arrive to school by driving, walking or being delivered by parents or other adult.

Proposed movement of Bridges to the vacated CES

Members of the Bond Steering Committee decided that Bridges should consider expansion of its program to include middle school. Often, students who do not enjoy the traditional school setting prefer a program like Bridges and this reduces consideration of dropping out of school. In the current location, Bridges cannot expand. In the proposed new location the District could explore expansion of the program.

Under the proposed bond program, students attending Colleyville Elementary School (CES) will move to a new school with entry/exit off of Pleasant Run Drive. Students attending Colleyville Middle School will continue to enter/exit off Bogart Street. Students attending Bridges in the vacated CES will enter/exit the campus from Highway 26. Students from Bridges, crossing paths with other students, are most likely going to be in a vehicle. That is not to say that a Bridges student would never walk to school in or near the CES and CMS sites, but given the proposed location and the entry/exit point it seems less likely. Again, students do not attend Bridges because of discipline issues.

The general school schedule for Bridges is 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. TARGET Evening Education courses operate from 4:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Students attending TARGET pay course tuition and may be GCISD students or students from surrounding districts.

The new location will offer a gymnasium to Bridges students, which they do not currently have. Some activities, allowing the student to exercise and release energy, will be conducted in the gymnasium and others will be conducted outdoors while monitored by staff. Bridges students must complete the high school P.E. credit, thus, basketball, volleyball, and walking/running laps are part of the curriculum.

Summary

Members of the Bond Steering Committee (BSC) recommended the movement of VISTA and Bridges to the existing CES facility in order to locate the programs in permanent facilities. Currently, VISTA is housed in three portable buildings and Bridges is housed in an old restaurant that has structural problems. Another factor in the decision to move VISTA and Bridges was the high renovation costs of the current facilities, estimated at \$1,667,000. Discussion regarding these programs and the decision to move them is reflected in both the minutes from the BSC and the presentation given by the committee to the Board of Trustees. Both documents are available through the bond planning website.