



Photography courtesy of Cy-Fair ISD

20 Questions with *Dr. David Anthony* *Cy-Fair ISD Superintendent*

As the Superintendent of Cy-Fair ISD, Dr. David Anthony leads the largest Recognized school district in Texas, with 63 of the district's 76 campuses receiving an Exemplary or Recognized rating by the Texas Education Agency in 2009. A busy administrator, husband, father, and grandfather, Dr. Anthony shares his views on leading a school district, Cy-Fair living, and the value of family with Cy-Fair Magazine.

1. How long have you lived in Cy-Fair?

My wife and I bought a house in Cy-Fair ISD in May 2004 after I was selected to serve as the superintendent of Cy-Fair ISD. So, we have lived in Cy-Fair for five and a half years.

2. Tell me about your family.

My family is the very best part of my life. My wife, Janie, and I celebrated our 37th anniversary on Aug. 18. We rode the same school bus together for about 10 years and, as high school sweethearts, we dated for almost five years before we were married. We have two outstanding sons, two wonderful daughters-in-law, and four, soon to be five, perfect grandchildren. Currently, we have

three granddaughters and one grandson, Caroline, 5, her sister Amelia, 2, their brother Oliver, 1, and their cousin Ellie, age one and a half. Our older son and his family live in Houston and our younger son and his family live in Cy-Fair.

3. What brought you to Cy-Fair?

I was hired as superintendent of Cy-Fair ISD. I applied for the position because Cy-Fair ISD is a premier school district in which to work and I enjoy the Houston area. As I told the board members during the interview, "I have a good job in McKinney ISD, but the Cy-Fair ISD job is the one that I want."

4. How do you balance work, civic responsibilities, and family?

I am not sure that "balance" is an appropriate descriptor, and I am sure that my wife and sons would laugh at the thought of my work, civic, and family roles being balanced. Serving as superintendent of any school district requires a great deal of time on a daily basis and certainly more than five days each week. District and civic responsibilities blend together simply because most school

districts are one of the largest employers, if not the largest, in a community. Civic organizations, chambers of commerce, service-oriented groups, and governmental agencies and their elected positions all require a certain amount of time due to the multifaceted operations of a school district. I try to put my family first, at least for the really important events in the life of a family, but I haven't always done that very well. As I have gotten older and hopefully wiser, I have done a better job with the grandkids than I did with my boys. Thankfully, they had a great mother.

5. What did you do prior to becoming superintendent of Cy-Fair ISD?

I was superintendent of McKinney ISD in McKinney for five and a half years. Prior to my tenure in McKinney ISD, I was superintendent in Texas City ISD for three and a half years, Mt. Pleasant ISD for six years, and High Island ISD for two years. I have been superintendent for almost 23 years in five school districts in Texas.

6. What are the toughest challenges you have faced as superintendent of Cy-Fair ISD?

The inequity in the state funding system has created serious challenges for Cy-Fair ISD during the past few years, which has resulted in cutting more than 500 positions and \$54 million from our budgets during the past four years. In addition to the funding debacle, Cy-Fair ISD is the fastest growing school district in Texas, which requires that we build and open more campuses than any district in the state. We have grown by 4,000 to 7,000 students every year since I arrived in Cy-Fair. Student growth requires an increase in the maintenance and operations budget, as well as the debt service budget (due to opening new campuses).

7. What are the strengths of Cy-Fair ISD?

Cy-Fair ISD has a great reputation across the state for the academic performance of our students. We are the largest Recognized school district in the state, which is the second highest accountability rating in Texas. As a matter of fact, there are many districts that are smaller than we are that are not Recognized, which makes the accomplishment even more remarkable. Cy-Fair ISD is recognized for maintaining "high performance district" status, even though we are the fastest growing district. Assimilating new students into the Cy-Fair culture and maintaining the academic standing of the district is not an easy task. We have outstanding educators across our district. I would rate their capacity for meeting the needs of students at or above any other school district employees in the state of Texas. I believe the data will support that.

8. What are your future goals for the district?

All of us in Cy-Fair ISD have only one goal and that is to be better than we were yesterday. We need to perform at a higher level, with different students and ever-increasing standards to ensure that our students are prepared for their post-secondary futures.

9. Why did you become a school administrator?

I believed that I could work with teachers to have a positive impact on more students than I could in one classroom. I wanted the opportunity to improve public education with the people who have that ability - classroom teachers and campus administrators. Legislation can help, possibly, but improvement



Motivated to help others succeed, Anthony has been a superintendent for 23 years



Anthony enjoys making a positive impact in the lives of Cy-Fair students

to public education has to come from those who are committed to students and who are not at 30,000 feet with grandiose ideas. Public education will be improved at ground level by the people who are with the students every day - their teachers and campus administrators.

10. What has surprised you during your time as superintendent?

So much has happened since 1987 that very little surprises me now. Our students are so much better prepared than when I was in high school. No matter how bad the media portrays public schools, the focus is on 1 or 2 percent of the students, because the vast majority of our students are outstanding young men and women. There are exceptions to every rule and even though society and the students we serve have changed in the technological age, parents still love their kids, kids still love their parents, teachers all want their students to be successful, and superintendents want their school district to be better than the rest. The technological impact, dread disease impact, school violence impact, and governmental intervention impact has certainly increased, but those things will always be the kind of "noise" that we have to deal with as we do our daily job of teaching kids.

11. What is the best part of being superintendent of Cy-Fair ISD?

Visiting campuses and classrooms, especially pre-kindergarten and kindergarten to regain the sense of the mission at hand, has the greatest impact on my attitude and energy. However, I am always amazed by how much middle school students know and by how much more high school students know than I did at that age. We

have great teachers and students in Cy-Fair. Participating in the celebrations of success whether at the campus, classroom, student, or teacher level, is a dream come true. That happens a lot in Cy-Fair ISD.

12. What three adjectives best describe you?

Direct, driven, and dedicated.

13. What motivates you?

Helping others to succeed and become better at achieving their dream is my motivation.

14. What would you say is your greatest accomplishment?

My greatest accomplishments are being married to my wife for 37 years, and having two great sons, two wonderful daughters-in-law, and four perfect grandchildren - what accomplishment could be greater than that? Professionally, my greatest accomplishment has been being a part of the teams that helped two school districts achieve their first Recognized rating and regaining the Recognized rating in Cy-Fair ISD for the second year in a row.

15. How would you like to see residents become more involved in the life of the district?

Since Jersey Village is the only municipality in the 186 square mile Cy-Fair ISD, our district consists of open county land. Cy-Fair ISD is the most important game in town. The quality of the school district has a great deal to do with the value of property in our district and the quality of life. We need all of our citizens to be actively engaged in Cy-Fair ISD and to understand the

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severity of the financial challenges that we are facing and that we are going to face during the next several years. The only way that we can get the attention of the legislators is to engage the more than 750,000 people who live in Cy-Fair ISD. Our residents must stay informed about our challenges and can do so by reading the district e-newsletters that are distributed to over 26,000 parents and patrons, visiting the district website that receives over 15 million hits per month, listening to podcasts posted on the website, watching Cy-Fair TV programs that are posted online or aired on Comcast Cable Channel 16, signing up as a key communicator, and volunteering on one of our campuses across the district. They will never regret it. In addition, residents must stay informed and participate in the democratic process by casting votes for local, state, and national governmental officials.

16. What do you like best about being a part of the Cy-Fair community?

Cy-Fair has such a great legacy as the home of a quality school district. No matter which city I visit in Texas, I always run into someone who graduated from Cy-Fair ISD, attended a school in Cy-Fair ISD, worked in Cy-Fair ISD, or has relatives who live in Cy-Fair ISD. I have never had anyone act as if they were ashamed for being affiliated with our community or school district. What an awesome place to live.

17. What is one fun fact people may not know about you?

I am a rock and roll junkie, especially [the music of] the 60's and 70's and a few of the big hair 80's groups, too.

18. If you could change something about Cy-Fair ISD, what would it be?

I would change the state's funding system so that our district would be funded equitably as the fastest growing, high performing district in the state. We spend well below the state average per student and less than any district in Harris County, yet our return on investment is very good. As I stated earlier, we are the largest Recognized district and we are tied for first place in annual graduation percentage among the nation's 50 largest districts. If we were funded appropriately, we would not be in a perpetual budget-reduction mode.

19. What is your vision for the school district as part of the Cy-Fair community?

Cy-Fair ISD is the fabric of the Cy-Fair community. If the school district remains solvent and effective in delivering high student performance, people who value education and a good quality of life will move to the district. If the district deteriorates due to our financial challenges, those who choose to move here will do so because of low property values rather than the quality education that we currently enjoy.

20. Where do you think you will be in 10 years?

They say if you don't think God has a sense of humor, tell him your plans. I have no idea where I will be in 10 years. I hope that I am retired in the Cy-Fair area near my children and grandchildren. One thing that I do know is that if I am alive, I will be wherever my family is. CFM

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