

Student's daily attendance is key to district's success

By Dr. Paul A. Tisdale
Superintendent, Biloxi Public Schools



The Mississippi Department of Education recently released the Dropout, Completion, and Graduation rates for school districts throughout the state. Of our school district's 572 students who began Grade 9 in school year 2004-05, 75 percent graduated four years later

in May 2008; another 7 percent completed school through a General Education Diploma program, summer school, or online program; 16 percent dropped out of school; and 2 percent were unaccounted for.

State law requires students to remain in school until the age of 17, when most students are in Grade 11; Grade 10 if the student has been retained in grade during his or her school career.

At the end of March, district enrollment was 4,695 students. Of those enrolled, 94 elementary students (grades K-6) had 10 or more unexcused absences; absences that cannot be accounted for due to medical or legal reasons. In grades 7-12, 192 students have 10 or more unexcused absences... 123 students from Biloxi High School alone. Seventy seven students have unexcused absences of 15 or more.

School district accreditation ratings are heavily based on state test results. Children are not likely to learn what the State of Mississippi requires if they are not present at school. The probability of students being promoted to the next grade, in almost all instances, diminishes with excessive absences.

A large factor in state funding for public schools is student attendance, so in addition to poor academic performance by many absentee students, the district loses state funding at a time when every tax dollar counts.

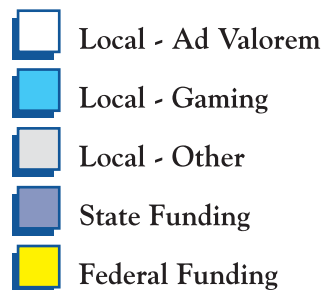
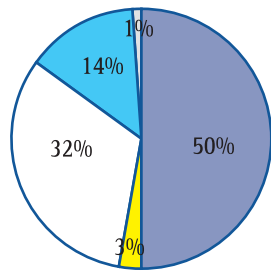
High school diplomas are a greater factor than ever before in determining the likelihood of increased lifetime earnings for our children and yet we have students who don't make it to school. Parents, help us help your child... the chance of your child receiving a quality education is significantly enhanced if your child is attending school.

We can't be successful without you!

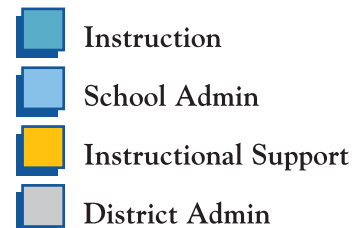
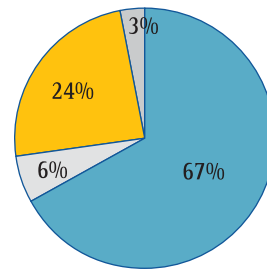
The Biloxi school district has a new information source, an easy-to-use web site at www.biloxischools.net

By the numbers

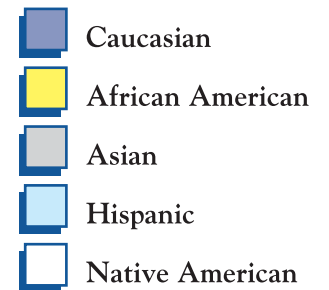
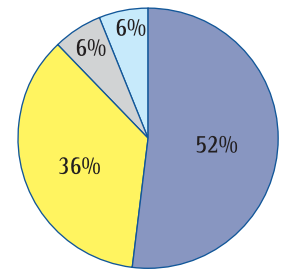
FY '08-09 Revenues
\$49.4 million



FY '08-09 Expenditures
\$47.9 million



Demographics
as of 3-26-09



Assessment / Tax Levy

School Assessment/Tax Levy (mills)	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09
Bay-Waveland School District	57.00	N/A	44.50	44.00	44.00	44.00	N/A	44.00	44.00
Biloxi School District	30.93	31.43	35.18	36.68	38.03	38.03	38.03	38.03	38.03
Gulfport School District	52.73	53.74	54.85	57.85	57.85	57.85	57.85	57.85	57.85
Hancock County School District	50.38	50.38	47.64	47.64	47.64	47.64	47.64	47.64	43.47
Harrison County School District	38.16	39.88	45.48	46.04	44.15	42.56	40.79	39.68	35.74
Jackson County School District	55.31	55.32	59.49	54.54	55.01	55.22	55.21	53.23	51.32
Long Beach School District	53.14	55.22	55.59	60.52	63.70	59.75	59.75	59.75	60.42
Moss Point School District	72.20	72.20	69.90	75.70	79.73	78.73	71.13	64.62	61.51
Ocean Springs School District	75.52	71.88	62.22	62.53	62.10	62.38	62.10	61.38	56.85
Pascagoula School District	51.94	52.94	51.64	51.64	52.39	52.39	52.39	52.39	48.39
Pass Christian School District	48.10	48.10	51.60	53.59	54.69	54.69	54.69	54.69	54.69

Student Enrollment

Pre-Katrina	School	Oct 05	Jan 06	May 06	Aug 06	Jan 07	Jan 08	Jan 09
437	Beauvoir (K-6)	219	308	306	314	313	315	412
368	Gorenflo (K-6)	84	140	170	152	146	150	143
532	Jeff Davis (K-6)	185	324	354	360	361	361	277
316	Lopez (K-6)	119	169	195	180	189	199	217
327	Nichols (K-6)	69	133	155	149	138	182	226
843	North Bay (K-6)	572	705	774	815	810	800	731
631	Popp's Ferry (K-6)	329	472	484	527	562	585	556
488	Michel (7)	266	356	384	358	361	399	354
982	Biloxi Jr. High (8-9)	535	723	740	798	796	774	779
1201	Biloxi High (10-12)	789	951	964	1019	987	1027	1002
6125	Total	3167	4281	4526	4672	4663	4792	4697

Surging fuel prices and sputtering economy boost CTA ridership



By Kevin Coggin
Director, Coast Transit Authority

In 2008 the Gulf Coast and the nation experienced the highest gas prices in history, followed by a collapse of the economy

that has turned into the worst recession since the Great Depression.

During these tough economic times people have turned to the various types of services offered by CTA to save money and maintain mobility. Total system ridership in 2008 was 769,000, which is an increase of 183,000 or 31 percent from 2007. This was the second consecutive year of a double digit percentage increase in ridership.

CTA serves a very diverse market in the city of Biloxi. We have programs for seniors, the disabled, work commute, visitors, the military and the everyday transportation needs.

The current system offers continuous service from the Biloxi Transit Center to destinations in Biloxi, Ocean Springs, D'Iberville, St. Martin and Gulfport. A person can achieve an average annual savings of \$6,648 per year by taking public transportation instead of driving, based on current gas prices, according to the American Public Transportation Association's "Transit Savings Report." CTA offers a low-cost alternative to the automobile, an alternative that is safe, convenient and environmentally friendly.

With the exception of the beach bus stations, all of our hurricane recovery projects are moving forward.

Nine new trolleys are on order and are scheduled to be placed in service in May 2009. There has been great demand to re-establish the Beachcomber route on U.S. 90 and we look forward to providing that service again in May with three new trolleys.

The \$1.7 million renovation and modernization of the main facility on DeBuys Road is scheduled for completion in February.

We are preparing to award a contract for new pre-fabricated bus stop shelters as part of a \$500,000 program to improve the system of passenger waiting

facilities. We will bid out the purchase of \$2.5 million in new 30- and 35-foot low floor buses in the next few months. We anticipate acquiring additional funding for the Beach Bus Stations from the new economic stimulus package and have these facilities under construction this summer.

We expect all recovery and modernization projects to be completed by the end of 2009 or the first quarter of 2010. When all of these projects have been completed, CTA will be operating a totally rebuilt, modernized and enhanced system that is much more user friendly and convenient than ever before.

During the last three years CTA has concentrated on rebuilding and modernizing the system. Because of the support we have received from the City of Biloxi, we have also been able to expand the system to meet the growing needs of transit customers.

Together we are building a public transit system that will truly meet the ever-changing mobility needs of our citizens, support economic development and protect our precious environment.

To learn more about the various services CTA offers call 896-8080 or visit us at www.coasttransit.com.