

## **Keep Robert Louis Stevenson Elementary School in Cottage Grove!**

The academically-recognized elementary school in Cottage Grove, originally founded as the result of a bond election held in 1914, has a questionable future.

The Stevenson community and friends have another opportunity to discuss the situation with HISD representatives at the meeting the district has scheduled to be held Sept 9 at 5:30 pm in the school's cafeteria. Enter the campus at 2116 Radcliff to attend the meeting and help remove the question mark about the school's future.

The community of Stevenson's friends includes neighborhood residents, PTO and civic club members, students, generations of alumni, pastors, and The Greater Houston Preservation Association. We invite you to contact StevensonsFriends @ yahoo.com to let us know of your interest. Friends may help remove the question mark about the school's future by sending an email to the board of education trustees at sharri12 @ houstonisd.org. Ask the board of education to maintain Robert Louis Stevenson as a public school asset. To reach Stevenson's Trustee, Ms. Diana Davila, include her name in the subject line.

Friends may also help secure Stevenson's continued use as an elementary school by participating in the Painting and Planting community activity day between 8:30 am and 3 pm, Sept 20. Friends of Stevenson also plan to continue attending HISD board meetings until a positive outcome is realized. The remaining meetings this year are scheduled for Sept 11, Oct 8, Nov 12 and Dec 11. Board meetings start at 5:30 pm and are held at 4400 West 18th Street. Speaking up at a board meeting requires advance registration.

The question about the future use of Stevenson's campus first became known to the public in August 2007, when community members found the school's name listed in the HISD Facility Capital Plan. The plan listed Stevenson, and three other urban elementary schools, as consolidation candidates and noted them as potentially surplus properties starting sometime in 2009. These four schools were not discussed or included in the November 2007 school bond election proposals. After considerable public outcry from capital-plan and bond-proposal school communities occurred, the Board of Education delayed all consolidation and closure decisions to allow time for further consideration and community involvement in the decision making process. During the months before and after the bond election, many district trustees, Mayor White and several City Council members articulated very significant reasons to maintain quality neighborhood schools in the neighborhoods that they primarily serve. During July and August of 2008, the trustees have only voted to close schools located in communities favoring the changes the bond funds bring. The trustees have also voted to keep open three of the four urban schools named in the facility capital plan. Stevenson remains alone, still threatened by the plan recommendations.

The Stevenson community has requested that HISD and elected officials work with the community to keep the public elementary school open for the sake of current and future students. Friends of Stevenson have been politely pro-active, providing volumes of data and input since the consolidation question was first raised. At the suggestion of trustees and district administrators, the Stevenson community has worked with the inspiring school faculty to build enrollment.

While a questionable future erodes the school's net enrollment gains made each semester, startup enrollment has inclined over last year's numbers. Neighborhood residents and parents living in other attendance zones and school districts choose to enroll 77 new students this semester at the charming, successful school in Cottage Grove. The schools use and facility assessment rates compare favorably with other schools.

New and tenured families who call Cottage Grove home believe keeping Stevenson open for current and future students, is the most appropriate use of public assets. While residents choose to live in Cottage Grove for various reasons, many families make that choice because there is a quality elementary school located at the neighborhood's core. The school's campus is also conveniently close to thousands of employment destinations. Stevenson offers a fully-integrated gifted and talented program, a 4-year old program, a fine-arts after school curriculum, and students and teachers who earn the school a recognized academic status. The school also has a much-admired special needs program for kinder and first-grade students. The campus operates in a well-equipped and small footprint, where the community-friendly faculty and staff help children of increasingly diverse incomes and cultural backgrounds learn to succeed.