

October 18, 2004

Staples in the News

Odessa American (TX)  
Teachers ready to use Staples cards  
By Ginger Pope

Teachers have wasted no time in gathering their Staples classroom-supplies cards this year. Hays Elementary Principal Lisa Wills said soon after she received a stack of the credit cards worth \$175 each, they were gone.

“The teachers were thrilled,” Wills said. “They got them as quickly as they could. They were very pleased.”

Bruce Revell, executive finance director for the Ector County Independent School District, said each of the 1,700 teachers got \$75 more than last year for supplemental classroom materials.

The cards were sent to school principals last week, who in turn distributed them to teachers.

The cards were made possible by a matching grant the district received from the state, Revell said. Earlier this year the district was awarded \$60,000 in funds, which the district matched.

The total value of the Staples cards issued is \$290,000, Revell said. He credited finance staff member David Harwell for locating the grant money.

Hays kindergarten teacher Erlinda Lozano said Thursday she hadn’t used her Staples card but she was preparing a shopping list.

“I’m one of those people who spend a lot of money out of their own pocket. I’ve already spent \$300 to \$400 of my own money this year,” Lozano said. “I’m so looking forward to using my Staples card.”  
Lozano, a teacher for more than 30 years, said budgets for supplemental classroom materials have been tight.

Lozano said she bought Leapfrog Learning Center materials and a reading couch with her own money. With her Staples card, she plans to buy pencils, staples and construction paper.  
Revell said the district has allotted \$3.8 million districtwide to be used for school instructional materials. Each school is allotted about \$10 per student so the amount each campus receives varies, he said.

The Staples cards are part of a two-year agreement between the office supply store and ECISD. The cards are \$175 this year. They were only worth \$100 last year.

Revell said his office wants more choice in the stores they can purchase cards from. However, that creates an auditing challenge, he said.

Staples provides Revell’s office with a listing of what teachers have bought and that satisfies an external auditor, he said. Other stores such as Wal-Mart have no means of supplying the district with a report of what the teachers have bought, and Revell said he cannot chase down receipts from teachers.

“Having 1,700 teachers turn in receipts would be mindboggling,” he said.

The district has to ensure that the cards are not used to purchase anything such as alcohol or tobacco products, Revell said.

“Nothing at Staples is illegal in the classroom,” he said.

Revell said another benefit with Staples is that teachers can go online and find a product they need and have it ordered through the store.

Revell said last year all but \$35,000 of the total contract with Staples was used by teachers. The district will be refunded that \$35,000. Revell said teachers need to realize that their card expires at the end of the school year.