



Fast Growth and School Finance

THE CHALLENGE

We are proud of Northwest ISD's reputation that attracts more than 1,100 new students each year. However, with the surge of new families comes a substantial responsibility to meet the needs of our rapidly increasing student body with diminished funding.

The state's complicated school funding formula can have a very different impact on fast growth and Chapter 49 (aka. recapture, Robin Hood) school districts. While the last legislative session and House Bill 3 benefited many, it had an unexpected, negative impact on Northwest ISD and other fast-growth districts. With the unexpected continuation of required recapture (in which NISD has to send local tax dollars to the state due to our higher "property wealth") and a decrease in state funding of \$10 to \$15 million per year, we simply need the legislature to reverse the cuts made during the last legislative session as a result of House Bill 3.

LEGISLATIVE SOLUTIONS

Reverse Decrease in Golden Penny Yield

The last legislative session decreased the yield for four of our tax pennies that are not subject to being returned to the state under the Chapter 49 required recapture rate. For NISD, this resulted in a \$4.5 million loss for the 2020-2021 school year. Reverse the rate, known as the "Golden Penny Yield," to its previous value (\$135.92 per penny per WADA) to allow more local tax dollars to stay in the district to help address our fast growth.

Return to Prior-Year Values

House Bill 3 changed school funding to be based on current-year tax values instead of prior-year values. Since property values typically rise - especially in a fast-growth district - this results in NISD receiving less state funding under HB3. It also means districts are put in a difficult position of using less certain current-year property value estimates to determine their budget. The state should return to using prior-year values to provide predictability, consistency, and support for fast-growth school districts.

Assessment & Accountability

THE CHALLENGE – Assessment & Accountability

In Northwest ISD, we believe in being accountable for the education we provide our students. However, a single test cannot accurately assess 5.4 million students – especially when each community has different views of what student success looks like.

LEGISLATIVE SOLUTIONS

Provide a Local Accountability System

The state needs a comprehensive school accountability system that considers the values and desires of the local community. The current option for a local accountability system has too many unnecessary

barriers to make this a viable option. For example, during the initial year, only 12 school districts were approved for a local system and many from our region have decided to not go forward with the process. The current local accountability proposal can have a negative impact on districts – especially with the requirement that the midpoint has to be a C, which can artificially deflate the rating. The accountability system needs to be revamped so that it embraces local accountability.

Reduce the Overreliance on Standardized Test Scores

The current A-F rating system relies too heavily on test scores. One single type of test cannot capture the achievement and growth of every unique student. Our accountability system should not penalize schools for factors outside their control and state-mandated testing should not be the primary indicator of our students' and schools' success.

Following are examples of the overreliance on test scores:

- Domain 1: STAAR is the only measure for elementary and middle school and 40% of the measure for a district and high school.
- Domain 2: STAAR scores are used to compare year over year STAAR performance OR to compare the performance of one district's/campus' economically disadvantaged student performance to another district's/campus' economically disadvantaged student performance.
- Domain 3: STAAR scores are used to match student groupings to measure deficits and assign punitive measures.

THE CHALLENGE – Teacher Accountability & Reading Academies

Literacy is the foundation of a child's education, and in NISD, literacy has been an annual performance objective for many years. We have invested a significant amount of funding and training to design a strong reading program to meet the needs of our PK-3 students and our results demonstrate its effectiveness. House Bill 3 instituted required Reading Academies for teachers across the state. While this is admirable and could be a benefit to many, our training model embraces the same concepts in a manner that meets the needs of our teachers and students.

LEGISLATIVE SOLUTIONS

Northwest ISD and school districts should be allowed to continue successful practices. Districts should have local control over professional development and be allowed to develop and deliver training in a manner that supports local district goals, including how the components of the Reading Academy are presented to staff.

North Texas & NISD Growing Transportation Needs

THE CHALLENGE

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the top concerns from our NISD parents and community members was regarding the limited roadways and access across our rapidly growing school district. This lack of infrastructure is a safety concern for our 172 daily bus routes, young student drivers, and the community at large. The lack of east/west roadways and our limited infrastructure is already frustrating, but knowing that there are over 100 new housing developments in our district boundaries, with no immediate plan to address the transportation challenge is concerning.

LEGISLATIVE SOLUTIONS

The growing North Texas transportation challenge needs the support of our legislators to help expedite the process and funding in fast-growth areas – especially to provide east/west thoroughfares. New developers should be required to accommodate and help provide for regional roadways, and developers outside city limits in extraterritorial jurisdictions (ETJs) should have increased and enforced regulations for infrastructure.

School Safety & Security

THE CHALLENGE

Safety is an essential life need. Before students can learn and teachers can teach, they must feel physically and emotionally safe. The COVID-19 pandemic has added a new realm of challenges for health and safety to our daily processes and school protocols. Following the feedback from our community and our last Strategic Summit, Northwest ISD also continues efforts to implement our NISD Social-Emotional Learning Framework to help support the whole-child.

LEGISLATIVE SOLUTIONS

Public schools need continued funding to support the health, safety, and emotional health of students and staff. School districts need flexibility and local control to determine the best strategies and initiatives to meet the needs of their students and staff. While additional funding of these areas would be ideal, maintaining the funding already provided by the state is essential.