



2017 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Legislative Priorities for the 85th Legislature from the Pflugerville Independent School District

Introduction

Given the recent decision by the Texas Supreme Court to dismiss the lawsuit filed by more than 600 school districts (including PfISD), which asked for a re-examination of the existing public school funding formula, it is more critical than ever that our district clearly state its position concerning selected legislative issues for the 85th Legislative Session in 2017. These issues range from the overarching financing structure to more specific issues such as transportation reimbursement.

Fast-growth districts like PfISD enroll the bulk of the students who are moving with their families to Texas in droves. In the past, the state helped districts fund the impact of this business-friendly environment. There was money to help local communities offset the cost of new building debt, furniture, equipment and so forth. However, as stated in our lawsuit, the funding system is unfair and irrational, as some districts received more funding per student than others due to a locked-in formulas determined many years ago.

While PfISD is managing to do more with less, but without an adequate funding formula from the state, our schools will suffer. What could that look like? It will take the form of bigger class sizes and reduced funding for programs that make a difference in our students' lives. It means difficult decisions in the face of dwindling resources.

Inside you will find a listing of issues that PfISD believes is important and due for legislative change, as well as the impact these issues have on PfISD and its students. This includes:

1. Finance
2. Accountability

Finance

We ask for one thing – **increase the Basic Allotment by \$200 each year**. The Basic Allotment did not increase last year and is currently at \$5,140. This request would increase it to \$5,340 in 2017-18 and \$5,540 in 2018-19. This idea benefits both Chapter 41 and 42 districts equally, as each district's benefit is simply their number of students time \$200.

For a district that is in its last year of Target Revenue (Target Revenue goes away in 2017), increasing the Basic Allotment shortens the fall from its current targeted amount to what its formula amount will be for the 2017-18 school year.

Per the table below, the State's estimated contribution would not increase by raising the Basic Allotment because the incremental cost would be funded by increases in local property taxes (resulting from property values increasing) and Target Revenue (ASATR) going away in 2017-18.

Estimated Incremental Cost of Raising Basic Allotment \$200 Per Year from 2017-18 to 2018-19		
	17-18	18-19
Increase in Basic Allotment	\$ 200	\$ 400
WADA (1)	6,833,718	6,923,718
Incremental Cost of Increasing Basic Allotment	\$ 1,366,743,530	\$ 2,769,487,060
Less: Incremental Local Property Tax (2)	(1,242,969,807)	(2,570,709,613)
Elimination of ASATR (3)	(344,400,000)	(344,400,000)
State's Contribution	\$ (220,626,277)	\$ (145,622,553)
(1) Assume WADA increases 90,000 per year.		
(2) Assume property values increase 6.0% (average over last 4 years is 6.1%).		
(3) Target Revenue is eliminated after 2016-17.		

Our Story

Given the dramatic changes in cost of living in Pflugerville and the surrounding Austin area, and the challenge that our districts have in significantly raising the salaries of its teachers, the Basic Allotment must be increased. Likewise, the number of economically disadvantaged families living in PfISD has increased, making it more expensive to educate our students. The cost of living is evidenced simply by the rise in home costs – with the average cost for a home in the Austin area increasing a whopping 400 percent since 2004.

The percentage of economically disadvantaged students has grown from 34.9% in 2004 to almost 52% in 2015. PfISD's ELL population has similarly increased (more than doubled) from 10.3% to 20.7% during that same time period. PfISD has become a true melting pot with many languages spoken by families moving into our area. This requires added resources and tools to adequately meet the needs of this diverse student population.

Accountability

1. There are over 20 risk factors that account for underperformance in a school. Half of those are related to community risk factors. Assigning an A-F rating disproportionately places campus with more risk factors (and/or community risk factors) at a disadvantage. **We recommend assigning schools to peer groups to make this a more fair rating system.**
2. An A-F system needs to **emphasize growth measures** to account for schools that demonstrate high growth rates, as opposed to campuses that are higher performing, but do not demonstrate growth.
3. Language acquisition takes 6-7 years for students to develop academic language and academic comprehension. **The accountability system must take language acquisition timeframes into account.** It assumes students with an oral language and comprehension proficiency have acquired the "academic" vocabulary required to perform successfully on state assessments. **We recommend that, after three years of language acquisition, a progressive test be administered throughout each year – rather than a single end-of-course administration.**
4. Using a survey is proposed to identify college readiness at the elementary level, however this is very subjective data and is not indicative of college readiness.
5. The **breadth of the number of standards needs to be streamlined** in order to provide depth of learning.

Our Story

PfISD is making great strides in student success and completion. We utilize a variety of methods to ensure that every student has an opportunity to pursue college and career achievement. These achievements aren't necessarily reflected in STAAR testing results. A broader, more comprehensive slate of accountability ratings should be constructed to account for the risk factors listed above.

Pflugerville Independent School District
1401 W. Pecan St., Pflugerville, TX 78660
512.594.0000 • www.pfisd.net

Superintendent:

Dr. Alex Torrez

Board of Trustees:

Vernagene Mott, President
Larry Bradley, Vice President
Mary Kimmins, Secretary
Dr. Carol Fletcher
Dr. Cynthia Graves
Rob Reyes
Rena Mitchell