



Pflugerville ISD U.S. & State Legislators

U. S. Senators

John Cornyn
221 West Sixth St.
Suite 1530
Austin, TX 78701
512-469-6034

Ted Cruz
815 A Brazos, PMB 550
Austin TX, 78701
512-637-8777

Texas State Senators

Charles Schwertner
P.O. Box 2448
Georgetown, TX 78627
512-863-4563

Kirk Watson
P.O. Box 12068
Austin, TX 78711
512-463-0114

Texas State Board of Education

Tom Maynard, District 10
P.O. Box 2885
Georgetown, TX 78627
512-763-2801

U. S. Representatives

Michael T. McCaul
5929 Balcones Dr.
Suite 305
Austin, TX 78731
512-473-2357

John R. Carter
1717 North IH 35
Suite 303
Round Rock, TX 78664
512-246-1600

Bill Flores
14205 Burnet Road, Suite 230
Austin, TX 78728
512-373-3378

Texas State Representatives

Dawnna Dukes
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768
512-463-0506

Larry Gonzales
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768
512-463-0670

Mark Strama
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768
512-463-0821

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Executive Director of Curriculum & Instruction



Pflugerville Independent School District
1401 W. Pecan, Pflugerville, TX 78660
(P)512.594.0000
www.pfisd.net



Pflugerville ISD Legislative Priorities 2012-13 for the Texas 83rd Legislative Session

The Pflugerville Independent School District believes public education is the cornerstone of our society. PISD provides a place where students of all backgrounds and abilities are given the opportunity to grow and learn. The district believes local control of schools and school programs is essential to the success of public schools across the state.

Based on research conducted by the Texas Comptroller's Office, PISD has been identified as a district having both high student achievement and low operating costs. PISD is advocating for the adequate and equitable funding of Texas public schools, and believes that every student in our state, regardless of their geographic location or economic circumstances, should have access to similar educational opportunities.

To find out who represents you and additional contact information, visit www.capitol.state.tx.us

Pflugerville ISD Legislative Priorities 2012-13

Instruction & Accountability

Concern: Over reliance on high-stakes testing

Desired Remedy:

- Reduce the volume of testing by developing a more reasonable approach to assessment
- Develop a reasonable exemption from assessments for English language learners
- Consider testing at fewer grade levels or in fewer subjects

PISD's Story: When all state-mandated testing dates are taken into consideration, PISD campuses spend 40 days per year testing students. Although not all students on a campus are involved in testing, the campus climate is significantly altered on testing days, and instructional time is reduced.



Concern: State accountability system presents unreasonable hurdles for school districts and the students they serve

Desired Remedy:

- Move End-of-Course (EOC) testing closer to the end of the school year, and improve the turn-around time for test results so intervention can be scheduled in a timely manner
- Provide local flexibility concerning the EOC 15% rule, and allow districts to determine how EOC scores factor into students' grades
- Eliminate the requirement that students achieve a minimum cumulative score on EOC tests
- PISD supports EOC exams in all core content courses, and believes that required passing in English II, Algebra I and Geometry should be sufficient to meet graduation requirements.
- Develop a state standard and protocol for converting EOC exam scores to course grades

PISD's Story: The district is required to provide interventions in a timely manner, but official test results take 10 days to receive, which is a valuable loss of instructional time. Students are not required to achieve Level II: Satisfactory Level for the assessment to count toward the cumulative score. A student may make a minimum score which is not Level II: Satisfactory Level and have the score count toward the cumulative score.

After three years, a student's minimum score on his/her first assesment may result in the student not meeting the cumulative score, and thus, not graduating.

Concern: Lack of coordination between state and federal ratings

Desired Remedy:

- Better align state and federal standards by adopting the Common Core

PISD's Story: Most PISD campuses met state standards for student achievement but did not meet federal standards. These ratings are confusing for parents and community members and do not reflect the quality of instruction taking place in PISD classrooms.

Concern: Required summer school intervention not funded

Desired Remedy:

- Provide funding for required intervention

PISD's Story: Districts are required to provide intervention for students who do not pass assessments, and with the implementation of End of Course (EOC) exams, the number of students needing intervention is expected to grow. PISD spent \$135,000 on Student Success Initiative (SSI) in 2012.

Concern: Inadequate teacher training programs result in districts spending additional money on professional development to prepare teachers to provide quality instruction to a growing number of low income students, and English Language Learners.

Desired Remedy:

- Develop rigorous standards for both traditional and alternative certification programs that better prepare aspiring teachers

PISD's Story: PISD believes quality classroom instruction is the key to student achievement. In 2012 the district spent nearly \$200,000 to help new-to-the-profession teachers learn basic skills such as classroom management, how to use data to monitor and assess student learning, best instructional practices, and understanding state standards (TEKS).

Finance

Concern: A complicated school finance system that is neither adequate nor equitable, and results in districts like PISD offering fewer opportunities for students than surrounding districts

Desired Remedy:

- An easily understood and equitable funding system based on student need, not an arbitrary per-student allotment
- If funding is restored this session, it should be formula driven and based on student need.



PISD's Story: PISD is consistently rated one of the most efficient school districts in the state. In the recent Financial Allocation Study for Texas (FAST) report, PISD earned a 4-star rating from the state. Out of 17 districts in the state with student enrollment between 20,000 and 30,000, only five had a FAST rating higher than PISD. Of these five districts, only one had lower per-pupil spending and a higher percentage of economically disadvantaged students. PISD displayed academic progress in the top 70th percentile of Texas school districts, while the district's spending remained low compared to its fiscal peers. Pflugerville is the second-lowest funded district in Central Texas. If it had the per-student funding of neighboring districts, it would receive between \$12 million to \$20 million more in funding each year.

Local control

Concern: State-mandated school start date

Desired Remedy:

- Provide districts local control over start date

PISD's Story: PISD has very little flexibility to develop a calendar that best meets the instructional needs of its students. Local control over the school start date would provide PISD the ability to adjust holidays, staff development days and days in each semester to ensure the best calendar for students. The district receives feedback each year that indicates district stakeholders desire school to conclude before Memorial Day. PISD competes with charter schools that enjoy greater flexibility regarding school start date.

Concern: 50-Cent Test

Desired Remedy:

- Remove the cap and give local voters control

PISD's Story: The 50-Cent Test hurts PISD by forcing it to choose between either being fiscally conservative or providing the instructional facilities its community supports. PISD is widely recognized for its outstanding financial management and has only issued two bonds that were financed for more than 20 years. However, given the district's continued fast growth and the fact that taxable property values have not increased over the last three years, it is likely that the district's future bonds will have to be financed over 25 to 30 years. Borrowing for this longer period of time will significantly increase interest cost that could be avoided via a higher tax rate and would allow the district to repay its debt over a shorter period of time. By capping the debt service tax rate at fifty cents, the state imposes artificial limits on how districts can best meet capital improvement needs, even if voters would approve higher tax rates.

The 83rd Legislative Session is now under way, and PISD will be advocating for these and other priorities throughout the session. To keep up with PISD's advocacy efforts, and to learn more about how you can get involved, visit the Pflugerville ISD website:

www.pfisd.net

