

Paw Prints

JANUARY 2025



NOT A SIMPLE SPONGE

The end of the word is nigh in Bikini Bottom and we need a hero to save it. Who will rise to the occasion? Elgin High School presents "The SpongeBob Musical" this weekend. See page 6 for details.

**SITE SELECTED FOR MIDDLE
SCHOOL NO. 2: PAGE 3**

**STUDENTS COMPETE AT JUNIOR
LIVESTOCK SHOW: PAGE 5**

From Dr. Rueter



The 89th Legislative Session Overview

This fall marks the beginning of the 89th Legislative Session. Elgin ISD has worked diligently to develop a set of Legislative Priorities that align with our strategic goals and compelling purpose: ensuring every student has access to engaging, innovative learning experiences that provide them with choices and opportunities for their future. At its January meeting, the Elgin ISD Board of Trustees unanimously approved these Legislative Priorities, reaffirming their commitment to advocating for initiatives that benefit our students and community.

In crafting the District's Legislative Priorities, the administration conducted an extensive review of relevant information from state associations and other school districts. Common concerns emerged across the state, and efforts were made to align with affiliate associations, reflecting shared challenges and goals. These priorities are guided by our compelling purpose, driven by district needs, and grounded in data from associations such as the Fast Growth School Coalition (FGSC), School Finance Equity Center, Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA), Texas Association of School Boards (TASB), and Friends of Texas Public Schools (FOTPS). Input was also gathered from the District Advisory Council, district and campus administration, staff, and various community leaders.

A critical issue for Elgin ISD is the state's funding formula, which has remained unchanged since 2019. Meanwhile, \$4.5 billion, originally intended for public education and education savings accounts, was left unallocated after the 2023 session. This has renewed focus on enacting a voucher program during the current session. As a fast-growth district, this raises significant concerns for Elgin ISD. The state's Comptroller has also announced \$194.6 billion in available General Revenue for the 2026-27 budget cycle, including \$23.8 billion carried over from the current cycle and the aforementioned \$4.5 billion left unallocated. Additionally, the state's Rainy Day Fund is projected to reach \$28.5 billion by the end of fiscal year 2027.

Elgin ISD remains committed to advancing our strategic priorities and looks forward to collaborating with our state representatives to achieve these goals in support of our students and community. Your campus principal will have information to share to help you with a voice of advocacy for our lawmakers to fund public schools in Texas that you can use to send emails, letters, and make phone calls in support of these needs. It is a great time to join your campus PTA group to join the parent voice for our students. Thank you for your support and partnership!

2025 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

During the 89th session of the Texas Legislature, Elgin ISD will support legislation that aligns with our strategic priorities and compelling purpose: every student deserves access to engaging, innovative learning experiences so that they are provided choice and opportunity for their future. The Elgin Independent School District will focus on supporting the following priorities in the upcoming legislative session:

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Site Selected for Middle School 2

Project Among Those in 2024 Bond Package

Elgin ISD has selected an architect and location for Middle School No. 2, one of the projects in the 2024 school district bond package.

DLR Group will perform the design work for the new campus, targeted for a fall 2027 opening. Design is expected to take nine months to complete.

Middle School No. 2 will be situated on a 140-acre site on FM 1704 in Bastrop County, just north of Lower Elgin Road, and about five miles south of Booker T. Washington Elementary School.

Elgin ISD is working with Bartlett Cocke General Contractors to finalize a contract for construction manager at risk following board approval last month.

Elgin ISD voters last year approved a \$375 million bond referendum addressing rapid enrollment growth, student safety, career and technical education, and priority maintenance projects. The bond package will maintain the district's current tax rate.

Among the 2024 bond projects in the referendum are Middle School No. 2, Elementary School No. 6, career and technical education improvements, athletic improvements, new buses, Phase 2 of the new Transportation Center, and campus upgrades.

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Construction is currently ongoing on 2021 bond projects, including Trinity Ranch Elementary, additions at Elgin High School, district-wide safety improvements and the Transportation Center.

Harvest Ridge Elementary and the district Multi-Purpose Facility are among the completed 2021 bond projects.



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INVEST IN OUR STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS

- Increase the basic allotment funding to address rising costs, mandated safety requirements, and to allow for equitable, sustainable funding for teacher compensation
- Transition from attendance-based to enrollment-based funding
- Fully fund Pre-Kindergarten and individualized special education allotments
- Remove the statutory limit on Fast Growth Allotments

ENSURE TRANSPARENCY WITH PUBLIC DOLLARS

- Prioritize the use of public dollars for public schools
- Provide equitable funding for all public schools, including local districts and charters

SUPPORT THOSE WHO SUPPORT OUR STUDENTS

- Increase the number of those entering the field of education by providing for competitive compensation and improving the affordability of college and certification programs
- Increase state funding to assist with rising costs of healthcare associated with TRS-ActiveCare and TRS-Care plans
- Offer flexible certification pathways to address teacher shortages, especially in areas where local certification through District of Innovation plans are not allowable, including, Pre-Kindergarten, Special Education, and Bilingual Education

PROVIDE FOR FAIR & TRANSPARENT SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

- Reform standardized testing by focusing on essential standards and limiting assessments to those that are federally required
- Restructure accountability systems to emphasize student growth over summative ratings
- Hold all schools accepting public dollars to equivalent standards and expectations for testing and accountability

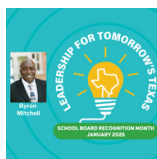
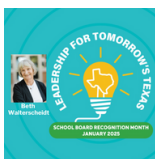
EMPOWER VOTERS & LOCALLY ELECTED OFFICIALS

- Increase local control and decision-making authority for unique district needs
- Support measures to increase local flexibility in meeting the instructional needs of our students
- Simplify and ensure transparent ballot language to reduce voter confusion, particularly for bond and tax rate elections
- Continue flexibilities offered through local District of Innovation (DOI) plans



School Board Recognition Month

Elgin ISD this month honors the work of our Board of Trustees during School Board Recognition Month. Local school board members work closely with parents, educational professionals, and other community members to create an educational vision for our students. Campus representatives thanked Trustees and presented gifts to them during Monday's school board meeting. #❤️OurSchoolBoard



ROUNDING UP RIBBONS

Students put hard work on display at Junior Livestock Show

Saturday, Elgin FFA livestock exhibitors showcased their animals at the Bastrop County Junior Livestock Show. These students bought their projects months ago and have worked at raising, feeding, exercising, and caring for each animal.

Students and their respective entries:

Rabbit - Meat Pen:

- Celeste Rivera: fourth place
- Alicia Alvarez: sixth place
- Noah Cooper: eighth place
- Madison Woehl: ninth place
- Cody Bermudez: 10th place
- Samantha Howard: 15th place

Rabbit - Fryer:

- Madison Woehl: Reserve Champion (made auction)
- Alicia Alvarez: eighth place
- Celeste Rivera: 10th place
- Noah Cooper: 11th place
- Samantha Howard: 15th place

Rabbit Showmanship:

- Madison Woehl: Grand Champion

Broilers - Cockerels:

- Preston Maass: Grand Champion (made auction)
- Noah Cooper: fifth place

Broilers - Pullets:

- Preston Maass: Grand Champion (made auction)
- Noah Cooper: fifth place

Boiler Showmanship:

- Preston Maass: Grand Champion

Pigs - Barrows:

- Gabriela De La Cruz: third place

Pigs - Gilts:

- Hayden Wenzel: second place
- Macy Heine: third place
- Hayley Wenzel: third place

Sheep:

- Dagan Smith: third place
- Aislyn Plummer: fourth place

Goats:

- Noah Cooper: fourth place

Cattle - Heifers:

- Paloma Ortiz: third place



Additionally, students had the opportunity to make Youth Fair projects. These are divided into six different categories and include arts/crafts, woodworking, photography, baking and metalworking. They must also fill out a job log and talk about exactly how their project was made, materials used, and the amount of time spent on it. The following students placed high enough in order to make auction with their projects.

- Preston Maass: Reserve Champion: Cedar Kitchen Table
- Macy Heine: third place/Judges Choice: Wishing Well Planter
- Madison Woehl: third place/Judges Choice: Bird Photography
- Paloma Ortiz: third place/Judges Choice: Wooden Bench

'The SpongeBob Musical'



BEST DAY (AND NIGHT) EVER



See if SpongeBob can prove to be more than a simple sponge with the help of Patrick, Sandy and an ensemble cast in Elgin High School's presentation of "The SpongeBob Musical" this weekend. Shows are at 7 p.m. tonight, 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Saturday and 3 p.m. Sunday.

Tickets are available online at: my.hometownticketing.com .

"The SpongeBob Musical" is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals and is based on the television series by Stephen Hillenburg.

Basketball Season in Full Swing

Girls Basketball: Your Elgin Wildcats varsity basketball team took on Connally High School on Jan. 3, 2025 on Senior Night at EHS. The Wildcats varsity and JV both lost hard-fought contests.

Boys Basketball: Your Elgin Wildcats varsity basketball team took on Belton on Dec. 17 at home. Before the game, the team presented an autographed basketball to the family of former basketball coach T. Berry. Berry, who passed away recently, coached Galveston Ball High School to the state championship game in 1982. The graduate of Elgin's Washington High School coached for 21 years, including in Elgin, and finished 431-158 overall.

Middle School Games Ahead:

- Jan. 22: Farley at EMS boys basketball (8th Grade)
- Jan. 23: Wagner at EMS girls basketball (8th Grade)
- Jan. 27: Liberty Hill at EMS boys basketball (7th Grade)
- Jan. 30: Almquist at EMS girls basketball (7th Grade)



High School Soccer:

- Jan. 17: Temple at EHS boys soccer (4:15 p.m., 5:30 p.m. and 7:15 p.m.)
- Jan. 20: EHS girls soccer at Bastrop (3 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.)
- Jan. 20: Bastrop at EHS boys soccer (5:30 p.m. and 7:15 p.m.)
- Jan. 24: Hendrickson at EHS boys soccer (4:15 p.m., 5:30 p.m. and 7:15 p.m.)
- Jan. 28: Weiss at EHS girls soccer (5:30 p.m. and 7:15 p.m.)
- Jan. 31: Georgetown at EHS boys soccer (4:15 p.m., 5:30 p.m. and 7:15 p.m.)



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE EXPERT SPEAKS AT EHS

Elgin ISD welcomed Applied EQ CEO Dr. Adam Saenz as guest speaker for its Wildcat Learning Conference 2025 on Jan. 6 at Elgin High School. Staff members heard from Dr. Saenz before taking part in professional development sessions on Monday and Tuesday throughout the district.

Dr. Saenz is an author, licensed psychologist, ordained minister and emotional intelligence expert who has delivered state and national keynote addresses based on his research, which focuses on stress management, as well as the dynamics of effective relationship building, personality assessment and emotional intelligence.



WILL YOU IMPROVE YOUR WELLNESS IN 2025?

Elgin ISD employees have access to SupportLinc Employee Assistance as part of their benefits package. There, employees will find self-guided resources to improve focus, well-being, emotional fitness, nutrition and more.

District employees may access SupportLinc Employee Assistance by creating an account at www.SupportLinc.com using the code "ElginISD".

We hope 2025 will be Something To Cheer About for our staff members.



Elgin ISD Wellness

Monday, Jan. 20 is a student and staff holiday for Elgin ISD. All schools and facilities will be closed.

Classes resume at regular times on Tuesday.



PHOENIX STUDENTS KICK OFF BOARD MEETING

Phoenix High School students led the Pledge of Allegiance at Monday's Elgin ISD School Board meeting at the Elgin ISD Administration Building. Leading the Pledge were Ellyanna Kravitsky, Juan Jaimes and Reagan Carter.

