NORTHWEST ISD

REASONING & EXAMPLES

Prioritize Public School Funding

Engage Your Voice: Fund schools first.

- Ensure the state's constitutional obligations to public education are fully met before considering or developing any private-school voucher or Education Savings Account program. The Texas Constitution, Article 7, provides a commitment to support and maintain public free schools.
- With more than 90% of students in Texas in public schools, those students deserve full funding for their schools before any discussion of diverting taxpayer money for private school subsidies. They are Texas' future workforce.
- A voucher or Education Savings Account program would create a significant new financial commitment for the state while Texas public schools remain underfunded.
- Voucher programs in other states regularly grow well beyond their projected costs. In Arizona's universal voucher program, the cost grew from a projected cost of $65 million to an actual cost of $900 million in two years – an increase of 1400%.
- Private schools can pick and choose which students to admit while public schools proudly welcome all students with all needs.
- Education savings accounts and similar voucher plans allow for tax dollars to be spent without transparency or accountability. Texas public schools adhere to state-mandated academic and financial accountability standards. Private schools are not required to meet the same academic standards as public schools, and they do not report test results, graduation rates, and other performance measures to the public.

Increase Basic Allotment to Match Inflation

Engage Your Voice: Increase the Basic Allotment to $7,500.

- To keep pace with inflation, the Basic Allotment should be increased to $7,500 to keep pace with inflation, an increase of $1,340.
- The Basic Allotment, the base funding mechanism for all Texas public school districts, has not been adjusted from its current amount of $6,160 since 2019.
- Establish a formula-driven increase to the Basic Allotment based on the rate of inflation so it does not have to be manually adjusted.

Fully Fund Full Day Pre-K

Engage Your Voice: Fully fund full day Pre-K.

- School districts currently receive only half day funding for providing full day Pre-K programs for qualifying students.
- The state is requiring all school districts to provide full-day Pre-K programs for qualifying students by 2026; however, the state has not addressed the additional expense of transitioning from half-day to full-day program.
- Currently the state only funds approximately $2 million, but costs NISD an extra $1.2 million each year.
- The funding in the Early Education Allotment for Kindergarten – 3rd grade is not sufficient to fund Reading Academies, early literacy programs and full day prekindergarten programs.

Increase Weighted Funding for Special Education and Bilingual students

- The unique needs of special education and bilingual students often require additional resources.
- While school districts receive additional funding for these needs, this funding does not adequately cover the actual cost of the services.
- The state has required so many mandates to support special education and bilingual students that there are costs that are necessary to meet requirements but are not accounted for and remain unfunded. Examples: student to teacher ratio is sometimes one to one, behavior needs have increased greatly requiring behavior interventionists to support teachers and students, cost to test students, ARD requirements (teachers, counselors, administrators, legal counsel), outsourced specialized services, paraprofessional staff to assist, modifications to rooms, nursing costs to administer medicines, feeding tubes, etc.
- The allotment from state was $35,398,820 for 2023-24. The intent of the allotment is that 55% is spent directly in SPED salaries and supplies, while the remaining 45% should help with indirect costs such as items listed above. However, with no real increase to the allotment and increases in costs and mandates, NISD spent $38,753,253 for SPED in 2023-24 or $3.3 million more than funded and no funds for all the other mandates and indirect costs.
- The funding weight of the Special Education, Emergent Bilingual, and other student group allotments should be increased to more adequately address all associated costs, both direct and indirect.
- The Special Education and Transportation Allotment should be increased to fully fund the transportation of students as mandated. Not only does the allotment not adequately cover the actual cost, but it also does not take into account the related expenses, such as the paraprofessional who assists a student while riding the bus. In Northwest ISD, the district receives $1.08 per mile from the state for special education transportation, but the actual cost is more than $4.31 per mile.

Increase Transportation Funding to Match Inflation

Engage Your Voice: Increase transportation funding to match inflation.

- The transportation allotment has not been adjusted since 2019 and does not address the rising cost of inflation.
- While not a requirement (other than qualifying students under Special Education), students must be able to get to and from school in order to attend school.
- The state allotment for transportation is underfunded, covering roughly 25% of the actual cost.
- The state currently provides $1 per mile for general education students and $1.08 per mile for qualifying special education students. In Northwest ISD, the actual cost is $4.31 per mile for a total of $12.7 million.
- While transportation is not a requirement and fully funding may not be feasible, the transportation allotment should be increased to at least match the rate of inflation.

Fund Security Mandates Based on Local Costs

Engage Your Voice: Fund security mandates based on local costs.

- In the last legislative session, many security mandates were approved under House Bill 3, but the state did not provide adequate funding to address the actual costs of the new mandates.
- The School Safety Allotment should be increased to fully fund the mandates based on actual costs incurred by school districts.
- The state should support local decision making and allow for the differences among school districts.

- For example, one of the new mandates was the requirement to have armed security at every school. In Northwest ISD, the district is spending $2.3 million to meet this requirement, but only receives $750,000 in state funding, a loss of $1.6 million.

Eliminate or Reduce Recapture

Engage Your Voice: Reduce or eliminate the burden of Recapture.

- Recapture began as a limited revenue source for education funding, but it has grown exponentially — now taking nearly $5 billion in property taxes from Texas public school districts per year.
- Northwest ISD has sent $52.8 million in local property taxes to the state over the past four years.
- Recapture could be reduced by providing/reinstating the discount for districts that make early
- recapture payments.
- Recapture would also be reduced if the Basic Allotment is increased. When the Basic Allotment increases, Recapture decreases.
- When local school districts send Recapture funds to the state, the funds go into the state's General Fund.
- All Recapture dollars should be spent on Texas public school districts, as originally intended. A separate, dedicated, transparent fund should be established to end the practice of the state funding its General Fund with property tax dollars.

Reform Accountability System

Engage Your Voice: Reform the current accountability and assessment system.

- The current accountability system is not beneficial or in the best interest of students. The system relies on a single-day, high-stakes, high-stress test which has been found to be unreliable.
- Public accountability is necessary and beneficial when based on meaningful and diversified data.
- A comprehensive accountability system should be established that includes meaningful, diversified data points, as well as flexible measures that parents and local communities value.
- Whenever the state revises its standardized assessment platform, a moratorium should be issued under the accountability rating system to provide schools the appropriate time to implement the new changes required of them.