

Message from the Superintendent sent to FBISD employees:

From: Jenney, Dr. Timothy
Sent: Friday, February 12, 2010 11:23 AM
To: All E-Mail Users
Subject: Message 2

Dear Fort Bend ISD Staff Members,

Thanks to every one of you who participated in the budget survey and provided your ideas on how the district could reduce expenditures to address our projected \$18 million deficit. As noted in an e-mail sent to all employees earlier this week, we want to share with you a summary of the suggestions. We had great response to the survey and received many ideas from you that will be taken into consideration as we finalize our budget strategies over the next few weeks.

Although we received more than 1,000 individual replies to the survey, clear trends developed as the top cost-saving ideas were repeated many times over. In summary, the following list reflects the top ten cost-reducing suggestions that received the most comments:

1. Reduce energy consumption: Several ideas were submitted to help reduce the use of energy and related costs including: turning off lights, computers, and copiers in all buildings when not in use; ensuring that thermostats are working properly so we are not over cooling or over heating buildings; turning up thermostats a few degrees in warmer months and a few degrees lower in cooler months; and reducing the use of campus and athletic field lighting at nights and on weekends. Also, several suggestions were related to reducing fuel costs for school buses (see # 5).
2. Rethink the best use of helping teachers and various subject area specialists: Many of you said that it may be better to repurpose these positions to classroom teaching positions. This strategy could help the district reduce the need for hiring new teachers for new or vacant positions.
3. Reduce paper consumption: There were numerous suggestions to reduce costs by reducing paper use. Many said that paper use in some instructional programs, such as character education at the elementary level, could be greatly reduced by posting the information on the district website. Other suggestions included posting testing and assessment documents, report cards, calendars, newsletters, handbooks, lunch menus, and other common printed documents on line (website/parent portal or district Intranet). Some suggested eliminating “nice” but not “necessary” printed information such as the annual Convocation poster sent to all teachers at the beginning of the year. Several suggested eliminating the use of disposable trays in the cafeteria.
4. Reduce transportation costs: Ideas included reducing or eliminating field trips and activity buses; reducing bus transportation for students enrolled in special programs; reducing bus route mileage through less stops by increasing the distance middle and high school students walk to their bus stops; ensuring buses are running with a student load at or near capacity; reducing participation in out-of-district athletic events and strictly adhering to the two-mile limit.
5. Modify summer work/school schedules: Many employees suggested we use a compressed four-day work week during the summer to reduce energy consumption. Many suggested we

could save money by changing some 226 day employees to 210 day employees; closing the district down for one or two weeks in July; closing all campuses the month of July; and offering one rather than two summer school sessions.

6. Offer early retirement incentives: Several comments suggested that the district research the possibility of offering a retirement incentive to eligible employees. This is no longer possible as the education code was changed by the legislature in a previous session to disallow the payment of retirement incentives to employees.
7. Reduce administrative costs: Suggestions included eliminating or combining administrative positions where possible, reducing administrator salaries, and not giving raises to administrators.
8. Reduce use of outside consultants: Several staff members noted that the district could save a significant amount of money by limiting the use of outside consultants for staff development training and other services.
9. Reconsider plans for the Global Center for Science and Technology: Many of you said we need to postpone plans to build the Center, or not build it at all. While many of you noted the instructional benefits that such a facility could provide to our students—and the enriched staff development opportunities for teachers, you said that now is not the time given our financial constraints. I agree and will recommend that the project opening be delayed until at least 2012. We will, however, continue with our planning for the Center so we will be positioned to move forward when financial conditions improve. Some of you suggested that the money we could save by not building the Center could be used to cover the deficit. That is not possible, as construction money can not be used for general fund expenditures.
10. Miscellaneous: Additional suggestions included re-evaluating the number of classes taught--some teachers have a lighter load; eliminating food served at meetings; reducing or eliminating employee travel; postponing new building and renovation projects; postponing the opening of new campuses; rezoning students to campuses with smaller enrollments; eliminating the Employee Service Award Banquet; holding graduation ceremonies at Wheeler or Mercer rather than Toyota Center, etc.

So, you can see we received a lot of suggestions, and I assure you we will consider your ideas as we develop final budgeting strategies. Thanks again to all of you who participated in the budget survey. I know many of you live in the district and are taxpayers as well as employees—so your ideas reflect the ideas of our entire Fort Bend ISD Community. I appreciate your honest feedback and the continued commitment you exhibit to your students and fellow colleagues.

Sincerely,

Tim Jenney