

## Fort Bend Independent School District

**From:** Jenney, Dr. Timothy  
**Sent:** Friday, January 21, 2011 11:47 AM  
**To:** All E-Mail Users  
**Subject:** January 2011 Message to Staff

Dear Colleagues,

I am hoping that you had a restful and enjoyable semester break. As we begin the second semester of this school year, I want to address some of the issues and concerns that I know you have about this school year and next. As you probably know, the Comptroller for the State of Texas recently released her budget numbers; and as expected, there is a short fall in the state's budget of nearly **\$27 billion**. Although Texas school districts have been warned for several years that this shortfall was coming and to be prepared for deep cuts in the state's funding for school districts, none of this bodes well for public education; and once again we will be preparing for budget reductions to fit the different scenarios. However, because we implemented a Reduction-In-Force (RIF) last year, we hope adjusting to the shortfall this year will be less harsh on all of us this coming budget season. In fact, it is our intent to handle most staff level reductions through attrition. Nevertheless, the one consequence of this approach is that we will need to use substitutes in many situations for the rest of the year. While this may not be the most desirable approach, it does allow the district to manage or reduce the number of staff members without having to use a Reduction-In-Force.

Another issue of great interest to you all has been the Science Center proposal. Although the Center has been applauded by some and loathed by others, the fact of the matter is that overall achievement in science is still the lowest area of student performance in the district, although much improved. In fact, the House Public Education Committee just posted its interim report to the House website. The report includes the committee's recommendations for the 82<sup>nd</sup> Legislature regarding the four charges the committee investigated over the course of the interim. *Charge Four* is of particular importance in this regard.

***Charge 4:*** *Review policies to ensure the availability of quality science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) curriculum to all students in primary and secondary education. Examine strategies to increase the supply and improve retention rates of teachers in STEM fields.*

Aside from the timing of the Science Center proposal with the economic down turn, what we continued to hear were concerns related to the cost of maintenance and utilities, too little access by students, and transportation expenses. The Board of Trustees heard your concerns; and a majority of the Board chose a different direction by adopting a Board/Superintendent goal to make the most of the principles of the proposed Science and Technology Center. A plan will be developed that utilizes technology to deliver daily innovative science content to students through lessons at their home school site. This concept will replace the original idea of a "brick and mortar" building and allow us to redirect some Bond interest money for more pressing capital

improvement projects rather than perhaps holding a Bond referendum in November. As a reminder, the district cannot use Bond interest money for salaries.

One piece of great news has to do with our PEG status. The Public Education Grant (PEG) list identifies campuses with 50 percent or more of the students not passing the reading, writing, mathematics, science, or social studies portion of TAKS in any two of the preceding three years, and those that are Academically Unacceptable any time in the previous three years. By law, students from a PEG campus may leave their home campus and transfer to another designated campus in the district. The week before our semester break, TEA released the list of PEG campuses for districts in Texas.

As you can see from the chart below, there are now **no** campuses in Fort Bend on the state's PEG list for 2010. The following chart shows the decline in the number of FBISD campuses on the PEG list over the last five years.

Year	# of FBISD PEG Campuses
2006	8
2007	7
2008	5
2009	1
2010	0

This is a very positive trend for the District as it coincides with our TEA *Recognized* status and having all schools make AYP. Congratulations to everyone and to all of you for your hard work in the classroom and your leadership!

Finally, you know that teacher absentee rates have been a major concern over the last several years for multiple reasons, including the high cost of substitutes as well as the impact on student achievement and teacher-student-parent rapport. I have really good news to report on this front as well. Through your conscientiousness and commitment to our students and the district, I am pleased to report that there has been a significant drop in teacher absenteeism.

Here is the data based on a comparison of attendance rates for the month of December 2010 with December 2009:

- Among our elementary schools, Sienna Crossing Elementary School led all schools with a 78.4 percent improvement rate over December 2009, with Quail Valley Elementary School coming in a close second at 71.4 percent. Of the 45 elementary schools, 31 improved their attendance rates. Notably of those 31, ten schools reached 40 percent or better, and four schools improved over 30 percent.
- Among our middle schools, all schools improved with Dulles Middle School leading the way with a 65.5 percent improvement rate over December 2009. In this group, two schools followed by topping 50 percent, two topping 40 percent, and four topping 30 percent.

- Among our high schools, eight schools improved with Dulles High School showing the highest gain at 50.4 percent. Bush High School followed in second place with 48.8 percent improvement over December 2009.
- Among our Specialty Schools, all three schools improved 80 percent or better with the Technical Education Center topping the list at 88.8 percent.

Comparing the data shows a **25 percent** improvement in attendance across the district for December 2010, which equates to approximately \$140,000 savings in one month. I sincerely appreciate your efforts to improve our teacher attendance rates. The results are very significant. Thank you!

In closing, you have my appreciation for your hard work this year. With the second semester ahead of us, let us keep in our sights the reason why we're here – to provide each child with a quality education and to make FBISD the “district of choice.”

Tim Jenney