

Fort Bend Independent School District

From: Jenney, Dr. Timothy
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To: All E-Mail Users
Subject: Update March 2, 2011

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Dear Colleagues,

In my January 21st message to you, I addressed some of the concerns and issues that the district would be facing relative to the state's \$25 billion shortfall and the Legislature's initial proposal to reduce funding to all Texas public schools by up to \$10 billion. I want to update you on the current situation and what the district is facing for the next budget year.

Regardless of our efforts and funding options that may be adopted by the state, the fact remains that there will be a significant state budget deficit affecting public school districts in Texas. Applying the proposed reduction to this year's operating budget of \$488 million will result in six to fifteen percent less money for the district for next year. For us, this means a best case scenario of a \$30 million reduction and a worst case scenario of a \$74 million reduction in our operating budget for 2011-12. This is significant and will have a profound impact on the programs and services the district currently provides for its students, parents, and this community. To put this funding reduction in perspective, a \$74 million budget shortfall would return our district to basically the same operating budget we had in 2005-06 prior to the opening of 13 new campuses.

I can assure you that the Board members and I are doing everything we can to influence the Legislature's final decision relative to funding cuts. We have implemented a number of outreach strategies including but not limited to face-to-face meetings with our elected officials and attendance at legislative subcommittee meetings and general sessions. We have aligned with other school districts across the state to persuade legislators to use all of the tools at their disposal to fund public education, such as using some of the state's \$10 billion Rainy Day Fund, raising cigarette taxes, moving payments to school districts forward a month, addressing the fundamental business taxing structure, and reengineering the funding formula to ensure the equitable distribution of funds to all Texas public school districts. We have used our callout system to encourage all FBISD patrons to contact our legislators and voice their concerns, and we encourage you to do the same. On our web site, you will find information on how you can make your feelings known to our elected state legislators about the proposals for "shortchanging" public education rather than seeking other funding alternatives.

For the past few years, our salary and benefits have comprised 87 percent of the budget, and when a budget must be cut, much of the reduction has to come from these categories. Therefore, the majority of reductions must be made in the area of staffing and/or programs along with the staff members who support those programs. Here is the real challenge we are facing at this time. The Legislature is not likely to finish its work before the legal deadline imposed by Texas law for informing employees of their status for next year. Without legal relief, we lose our

option to non-renew employees using the RIF process after Monday, April 11th. Surpassing that deadline leaves us with but one option—to terminate employees.

I hope you see the difficult decisions which must be made in the near future, and I hope you know that these decisions weigh heavy on the hearts of your Board and me. To reduce the need to RIF and as a thank-you for service to the district, I am presenting a resignation incentive to the Board for consideration at its March 7th regular Business Meeting. If this proposal is passed, teachers and librarians in defined categories will receive a benefit of 10 percent of their base salary for notifying the district of their intent to resign. If you are a teacher or librarian considering resignation, it will behoove you to pay close attention to the communiqués regarding this incentive as there are specific deadlines involved. As I have said before, our goal is to reduce staff-related costs as much as possible through attrition. To this end, we have not filled approximately 75 vacant positions, choosing instead to fill most of them with long-term substitutes. In spite of all of this, it is possible that we will be forced to reduce some positions.

Currently, all areas of our budget are being carefully reviewed and analyzed. In addition to those things we reduced or eliminated last year—with an eye toward more of the same, the following additional possibilities being considered that have been presented to the Board of Trustees include:

1. Implementing an extra-curricular activity and musical instrument rental fee
2. Curtailing academy programs at the various campuses throughout the district and/or consolidating the academy programs at one central location
3. Eliminating low enrollment electives, including electives in the career and technology area that prepare our non-college bound students for the workforce
4. Limiting the number of non-district games in all sports, particularly at the sub-varsity level
5. Limiting district funding for student and sponsor participation in local, state, regional, and national competitions, events, and performances as well as transportation options for individual contests
6. Applying staffing guideline changes at all areas of the organization

In addition, we are reviewing the following:

1. Reducing funding for administrators' travel to state and national conferences
2. Identifying and eliminating programs that are no longer cost effective or are obsolete
3. Reducing catering expenses for meetings and events
4. Reducing document printing expenses
5. Raising building usage fees for community groups renting District facilities

The Board and I are very proud of the instructional opportunities we offer for students here in Fort Bend, and I think we all know that at the end of the day we will do everything possible to continue providing a quality education for our students—all 69,000 that greet us at the beginning of each and every day. You have my continued support and appreciation for the success you have garnered and for your hard work.

Tim Jenney