

# From the Superintendent



As we move closer to the midway point of the Texas legislative session, the uncertainty continues. Funding for public education is being threatened as various, some may say unbelievable, scenarios are proposed to meet the state's budget shortfall. I cannot pretend to understand how some of these scenarios could benefit the students of Texas or further our state goals. Reducing public education funding will only make our students suffer, result in a less-educated workforce and ultimately weaken the economy.

Eanes ISD is not immune to this uncertainty. Early projections have Eanes ISD's 2011-12 budget suffering cuts between \$8 million to \$11 million. The District's operating budget after recapture, or Robin Hood, is \$66 million, so the potential impact is both devastating and disheartening.

Obviously, an \$11 million funding decrease would have a significant effect on our District. However, as we continue with budget planning, we are estimating closer to a \$5 million decrease, assuming a more realistic scenario that the legislature will make other adjustments to the state's shortfall. This \$5 million is on top of previously planned budget reductions, bringing the total estimated shortfall for Eanes ISD to \$6.3 million for 2011-12.

## Our Strategy

We believe we can meet the shortfall by implementing a three-prong strategy: 1) use a portion of the fund balance, 2) increase revenue and 3) reduce expenditures. First, our district's planned use of fund balance already scheduled a \$3 million reduction in fund balance. Now facing a state revenue shortfall, the Board has authorized an additional \$2 million to be taken from the fund balance.

Second, the Board also charged the administration with augmenting revenue by \$1 million. We will explore increasing community education and facility use fees, work with the Eanes Education

Foundation to further strengthen its Teacher Fund, implement fees for transportation for field trips and investigate accepting more transfer students into the District. Currently, Eanes ISD is able to save from recapture approximately \$6,300 for each transfer student allowed into existing classrooms. This would add very minimal additional expenses, as the classrooms and teachers are already in place for residential students.

Finally, we believe we can decrease expenditures by \$3.3 million in four areas. Ideally, we would like to keep any budget reductions out of the classroom; however, since today's classroom is touched by so many support professionals, it is inevitable that the classroom will be affected. We will accomplish this through reductions in four areas:

- 1) **Non-personnel areas** such as energy and fuel costs, supplies and contract services. An example of cost-savings includes a grant we received to convert some of our buses to natural gas, which will bring a cost-savings to the District. Also, the current proposed projects for the 2011 Bond include equipment and systems that are energy-efficient.
- 2) **Additional compensation** such as stipends, overtime and supplemental pay for extra duties. This keeps our workforce in place, but we may have to forego additional duties for which staff are compensated.
- 3) **Support positions** outside of the classroom. Valuable positions such as teaching assistants and custodial staff are unfortunately part of the equation.
- 4) **Classroom positions**, which will result in downsizing approximately 48 positions. We recognize that the state's budget problems are not inclusive to

one year, so we anticipate working over the next two years to attain a reduced level of staffing through a strategy of attrition. This means not filling some vacancies as current employees leave or retire and possibly shifting staff to fill vacancies of those who leave.

## Eanes ISD Budget Options

1. Use of Fund Balance (current balance \$30M) is additional to previously planned use of \$3M	\$2 M
2. Increase Revenue (Transfer Students, Transportation Fees, Community Ed Fees, Facility Use Fees, Eanes Education Foundation)	\$1 M
3. Budget Reductions (Non-Personnel, Non-FTE Compensation, Personnel Outside Classroom, Personnel in Classroom)	\$3.3 M <sup>+</sup>

Eanes ISD is known for its excellence in education, as evident in all nine campuses and the District receiving Exemplary ratings from the Texas Education Agency for two consecutive years. This is a feat that only five percent of school districts in Texas can boast. We are committed to providing quality instruction and a safe environment for our students and employees. However, depending on the legislature's final budget proposal, I am worried that our standard of excellence may be compromised.

I recognize that tighter budgets in the coming years are a reality but continuing our mission to provide an excellent education is crucial. I encourage you to tell our legislators to protect and preserve funding for our schools. Please contact your legislators with the message that a balanced state budget should not sacrifice the quality of public education.

Sincerely,

Nola H. Wellman, Ph.D.  
Superintendent