



DURÓN'S DIGEST

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Strategic Planning for the New SAISD

I want to update you on the status of a multi-phased process to develop a strategic plan for transforming our District. At the heart of this process is the belief that every child should have the benefit of a high quality education – innovative and rigorous educational programs, in modern schools with a strong learning environment.

A declining enrollment has impacted SAISD's ability to provide every student with high-quality educational opportunities. Most of our schools today are under-enrolled. The inefficiencies of managing the staffing and facilities in so many under-utilized schools – coupled with insufficient funding – has seriously limited our ability to offer all of our students the comprehensive curriculum and programs they deserve.

Citizens Committee

More than a year ago we formed a committee of citizens living within our District to study the problems associated with decreasing enrollment, and to help us find a solution. With their help, we are working to bring the community a long-range plan on how to best restructure and resize our District to meet the needs of a greatly changed environment.

The committee has made much progress, and continues to work through the critical details. They are looking at possible boundary changes, and they also will be doing the work to determine the phases of the plan, which would be implemented over the next 10 to 12 years.

With all that has to be done, I expect we will have a proposal to review some time after April. At that time, we will hold several community meetings for input. Once those meetings are complete, the committee will reconvene and make any necessary revisions; then they will take it to our Board for consideration.

Critical Need

There is a critical need for this plan – as you know, we are in a serious financial situation. When enrollment goes down in a school, there is less money to fund programs. Some of our schools have the benefit of music teachers and computer labs, while others with fewer students go without. Last year we made the difficult decision to close two middle schools. Closing those schools enabled us to provide a much more enriched program at the schools that received these students – with a combined total of 84 additional elective classes – and put \$6 million back into our schools. We must continue to merge our schools to strengthen availability of opportunities for our students.

We need to raise our standards on program offerings, and also on the condition of our facilities. With the help of the community, we want to bring science rooms, art and music to every elementary school; upgrade technology labs at every middle school; career exploration classes to high schools; competitive athletic facilities; and technology-connected campuses. We're not working toward luxury. We're working toward reasonable, basic resources that other districts have, and our students are denied.

The New SAISD

If we are to accomplish this, we must take actions to have a smaller and stronger school district – to free up money currently spread across too many facilities, and get more dollars into the classroom.

While closing schools can be difficult, I am confident that through this change we will improve our ability to fulfill our purpose – “to improve lives through a quality education,” and to achieve our mission, which is “to graduate all of our students to succeed in higher education.”

We must take action to ensure that all of our students have access to good educational options. I commit to keeping you informed as we work through this process toward the new SAISD.

Regards,