



DURÓN'S DIGEST

UPDATE FROM SUPERINTENDENT ROBERT J. DURÓN

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Moving ahead in 2012

I'd like to update you on a couple of significant undertakings that provide a means to help level the playing field in our offerings for students.

Bond update:

Developments continue with our bond implementation, with Bond 2010 helping SAISD to begin creating a level playing field in terms of facilities. Last night, the Board of Trustees voted to keep in the track at the stadium and put in a minimum-sized professional soccer field. The option provides for track, soccer and football to be offered to our students at the stadium. The decision also enables the District to move forward with the design process and to finalize details on the many renovations to both the stadium and Convocation Center.

The passage of the \$515 million bond package in November 2010 provided the district with funding for much-needed capital improvements to aging facilities. Currently, the Alamo Stadium and the Convocation Center renovation is the most visible of the many bond-funded projects, as evidenced by media reports regarding options related to the field. But it's important to remember that the bond provides for safer campuses and the extensive renovation and upgrading of 22 schools, which will have a significant impact on student learning.

We know that there were many strong opinions in the community on options for the stadium. We all want what is best for SAISD students, and we are committed to keeping the community informed on the progress of the renovation plans as we work to bring this great facility to a quality comparable to neighboring districts.

Equity in funding:

Another endeavor gaining momentum is the challenge against the state's system of funding public schools, with a fourth lawsuit filed a few weeks ago. About half of the state's more than 1,000 school districts, including SAISD, have joined the effort and are challenging various aspects of the funding system.

Joining this fight is one of the most important things we can do for our students. We must speak out for them by advocating a rational, cost-based funding formula that treats children and districts equitably. Like other Texas districts, we are doing the best we can with limited resources for daily operations. In the past five years, SAISD has moved toward greater efficiency, cutting millions of dollars from our operating budget, first proactively and then out of the necessity created by a reduction in state revenue.

SAISD became the first school district in Bexar County to file suit, signing on to a petition filed by the Austin-based Equity Center in October, on behalf of the Texas Taxpayer & Student Fairness Coalition. Since then, nearly all Bexar County districts have joined one of the four lawsuits.

The Legislature approved changes to the state's public school funding system in 2006, funding districts at a "target revenue," which guaranteed school districts would receive no less – and no more – than a set amount of money per student. That set amount was the same amount the districts received in 2006-07 – and funding per student has changed little since that time.

Under this arbitrary system, there is great disparity among school districts. Some receive a thousand dollars or more per student than others, despite being located in the same city or having the same tax rate. It's important to note that the children in these districts are held to the same accountability and graduation standards and will be expected to compete with one another in colleges, universities and in the workforce.

We are not asking that the state reduce funding for other school districts as a means to achieve an efficient system. Most districts are already underfunded at their current per-student funding level. What's important is to re-establish a rational, cost-based formula system and fund it adequately so that districts can educate students on a level playing field.

We will continue to share updates about developments impacting the District, and appreciate your continued support and all that you do for SAISD.

Best regards,