



LEGISLATIVE **AGENDA** [2021]



SCHOOL FINANCE

2021 Recommended Legislative Policies

The San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) would like to begin by thanking the legislature for passing HB 3 in 2019 and maintaining that commitment into future sessions. While COVID-19 has clearly changed the budget situation, the district is hoping to maintain its current budget, pending enrollment returns to pre-COVID levels.

a. Reimburse COVID-19 Expenses

Through federal resources and possibly others, the state should make sure that all schools have at least 75% of all COVID-19 expenses reimbursed. The state has so far committed to these terms for expenses incurred through May 20th, but it has not yet done so for expenses after that date.

b. Maintaining State Support for Funding Public Education

Education funding should be, at a minimum, adequate to cover HB3 (86R) and other commitments made by the 86th legislature; and, alternative revenue sources, including lessening tax compression measures, should be explored as ways to ensure public education is fully funded.

c. Move to an Enrollment-Based Funding System

Texas funds its schools based on attendance rather than enrollment or membership. This distinction punishes low-income campuses that tend to have lower rates of attendance than their more affluent peers. Funding based on weighted membership rather than attendance would remove another inequity in the current school finance system.

d. Continue to Fund SB 1882

SAISD has established over two dozen SB 1882 partnerships. While the funding from these partnerships fell because of HB 3 (which was ok due to the increased overall funding), it is important these funds are preserved to allow for the innovative or turnaround programming occurring at these campuses to continue.



ACCOUNTABILITY

2021 Recommended Legislative Policies

SAISD is in favor of maintaining an A-F accountability system to measure campus and district results. Having transparent results to understand school and district quality is important. We believe it is important to have an assessment in the spring 2021. The previous system with some modifications should return in the summer of 2022 for campuses but should be modified for districts this year.

a. Broaden the Scope of Individual Graduating Committees (IGCs) for COVID-19 Impacted Students

For students that have been impacted by COVID-19, the IGCs should be broadened to allow any testing student impacted by the pandemic to be able to use this process, even if they have not passed at least three End of Course exams. Students have missed opportunities to take these assessments and should not be adversely impacted as a result.

b. Modify the Laws Around D and F Campus Interventions

Campuses with a D level performance should be required to implement corrective action and be eligible for additional support. However, campuses with multiple D ratings should not automatically become Fs nor move onto a school intervention timeline. D-rated interventions should include mandated use of specific research-based resources and other academic practices that should help improve the campus' academic performance in future years. The legislature must repeal the laws that equate two D ratings with an F rating.



DIGITAL DIVIDE

2021 Recommended Legislative Policies

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the reality that too many Texas students do not have reliable broadband Internet in their homes. In today's hyper-connected world, it is essential that every student have access to a reliable and affordable Internet connection.

a. Expand High-Speed Broadband Internet Access to Every Texan

Significant financial investments should be dedicated to ensure that each and every student has access to needed technology and access to high-speed internet. Municipalities should be given tools to partner with community colleges and school districts to provide low-cost or no-cost services directly to their constituents. Providers should also be mandated to provide affordable Internet options so that price is not a barrier towards essential service.



LOCAL CONTROL

2021 Recommended Legislative Policies

While this legislative session should be focused on recovering from COVID-19, SAISD remains vigilant about the following threats to local control.

a. Local Control for School Health Conditions

Each school system within Texas should be able to set its own conditions for when it is safe to hold school in person (including specific capacity levels) and be fully funded for operations during a pandemic, severe weather event, or any other incident where in person schooling is not as feasible as it is under typical conditions. The criteria should not be set by the Federal Government, Governor, the Texas Legislature, the Texas Education Agency, or any other body that is not the locally elected school board. The local school board can work with health and other local/state officials to determine the best course of action, but the ultimate decisions and funding implications must rest with local officials.

b. Maintain District of Innovation/School Start Date Flexibility

In 2015, the legislature passed HB 1842 allowing for Districts of Innovation. This bill allows districts to be able to remove any restriction belonging to district and not charters with a two-third board vote. Most importantly to the district, these provisions include starting school before the 4th Monday in August. Maintaining these bills is important towards ensuring that our students have maximum learning time before state assessments and to recover from COVID-19.

c. Oppose any Threats to Our Immigrant Students and Their Families

With the current climate in Texas, many in our community are terrified of further crackdowns on the immigrant community. We pledge to oppose legislation that would further marginalize our immigrant students and their families, including any legislation that would require citizenship tests to be educated in any type of public school in Texas or mandating Immigration and Customs Enforcement presence at schools.





San Antonio Independent School District

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