

TOUGH TIMES/TOUGH CHOICES

 Focus on Student Success

The following questions were submitted during the March 24 and March 31 Budget Community Conversations. They are separated into categories.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE

1. What options will be available for students taking foreign languages?

Austin High School Vertical Team

Austin High School made recommendations for discontinuation of Japanese and Latin due to a history of low enrollment numbers in these programs.

RESOLUTION: Austin will offer two sections of Japanese in 2011-2012 to accommodate students with existing credit so that they may complete their graduation requirements. This resolution is possible through a teacher job share with LASA. To assist Latin students for 2011-2012, Austin will offer courses through the Texas Virtual Schools Network.

Small Middle School met with their CAC and made recommendations to discontinue French.

RESOLUTION: Rising 8th graders who need French IB as part of the language requirements towards graduation will have opportunities to complete the course either through summer school or the Texas Virtual Schools Network.

Bowie High School Vertical Team

Bowie High School made recommendations for discontinuation of German and Latin similarly due to a history of low enrollment numbers in these programs.

RESOLUTION: Bowie will be able to provide for a .50 to .80 FTE position and offer the needed sections of German for students with existing credit. Additionally, Bowie will offer either two or three sections of Latin in order to accommodate those students who will need Latin II and Latin III in 2011-2012.

Gorzycki Middle School made recommendations for discontinuation of French and German due to budget constraints and not possessing the funding to support these programs.

RESOLUTION: Sources of funding are being explored to help Gorzycki purchase the two sections needed for students who will continue in French IB in 2011-2012. The Middle Schools Office is awaiting approval for a request to help fund the one needed section of German IB for those rising 8th grade students in 2011-2012.

The Schools Office and the Office of Academics met with four parents representing the Bowie constituents and discussed concerns about the German and Latin program. Two specific action

steps resulted from the discussion: 1) students will be surveyed to gauge interest in German and Latin that could be used to support reinstating these programs in the future, and 2) the Department of Innovation and Development will be asked to research organizations that may provide grants in order to fund teaching positions of said programs.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

1. Education is the key to upward mobility. One of your initial goals for the district was to increase the school attendance rate, what initiatives have been started; what was the result, and how has that affected the proposed budget?

This year, the district launched several important initiatives to improve student attendance in our schools, including the *Every Day Counts!* Attendance Campaign (which has served as a platform for engaging parents about the importance of attendance and its impact on their children's future), Connecting the Dots (a community initiative to enhance graduation rates and eliminate dropouts, truancy, and chronic absenteeism), and the We CARE Dropout Recovery Initiative (a two-week dropout recovery initiative, to encourage students who have dropped out to return to school).

A few more key activities that also support our efforts to improve attendance:

- Monthly incentives to principals for improved attendance
- A comprehensive website (www.austinisd.org/everydaycounts) with helpful resources for parents about the importance of regular attendance. This website also features an online staff communications toolkit to help campuses communicate with families about attendance.
- Partnerships with the ACPTA and others to extend the reach of our attendance campaign
- Superintendent Carstarphen's "Power of Us" blog, last Spring's virtual student idea jam, and the *Every Day Counts!* attendance student video contest.
- The Attend-o-Meter, which keeps track of six-week attendance rates by campus and grade level.

Results:

In the first six weeks of this year, compared to last year, elementary school attendance was up by 1.2%, middle school by 1.8%, and high school attendance by 1.1 percentage points.

Throughout the year, some schools have made remarkable growth: Garza Independence High School had nearly an 8% increase in attendance over last year, Dawson Elementary School had a 3.8% increase in attendance, and Fulmore Middle School had a 3.6% increase in attendance over last year.

Every day a student is absent from class costs AISD \$45 in revenue from the state. If we raise the attendance rate by just 1 percent district-wide, it would result in \$5.6 million per year in increased state revenue.

- 2. How do you plan to keep students engaged with school if we cut AP courses and advanced electives (art, technology, medical microbiology, COGO)? Minds are meant to be used and engaged.**

Core AP programs will not be cut. Principals will make decisions on advanced electives based on enrollment.

- 3. What is going to happen to Gifted and Talented program? I heard that the GT Advisory person will be out very soon; so what would happen next? Also, (what is going to happen) with the GT handbook?**

The G/T program will remain as it is currently described in the GT handbook. Work with the GT advisory council will continue and this will be the group to review any changes to the handbook. The only change is the title of the Director of Advanced Academics to Supervisor for Gifted and Talented.

SCHOOL CLOSURE/REDESIGN

- 1. With the unprecedented budget shortfall and the efficiency study showing that we have at least 14 too many elementary schools, why are we not closing schools, but instead overcrowding classes?**

As part of the development of 10-year Facility Master Plan, AISD did consider the closure/consolidation of under-populated campuses to achieve greater facility efficiency and to identify potential savings. Because of the complexity of closing and consolidating schools and the potential impact on both the schools' educational programs and their communities, AISD community members made it clear that much more time was needed to fully vet these options with affected communities and requested that the District utilize them as partners in developing the final recommendations. While the Facility Master Plan Task Force brought forth ideas for efficiencies and savings, the community felt that was not the best place to start, even when the budget turned in the wrong direction. The Task Force report and recommendations were not completed in a time frame to be a part of budget discussions for next year's budget and the timing of the report did not allow time for notification to school leadership, parents, students, and other stakeholders if closures/consolidations were the case for the 2011/12 school year.

CLASS SIZE/SCHEDULING

- 1. What will the increase in student/teacher ratio be (class size) in K-4? Will there be an increase in class size for middle and high schools?**

As a result of new staffing formulas that the Board of Trustees approved on January 24, 2011, class sizes will increase as follows:

Pre-K:	18 to 20
K-4:	22 to 24
5&6:	25 target (no change)

Middle School: 5/7 w/28 students to 6/8 w /29 students

High School: 5/7 w/28 students to 6/8 w/29 students

The actual class size will vary, due to the alignment of students in regards to course and level selections.

2. The Bowie community is hearing about the possibility of block scheduling at our school. If true, is this part of a cost savings initiative or some other education enhancement idea?

Yes, Bowie High School has decided to implement "AB" Block scheduling for the 2011-2012 school year. Mr. Kane, principal of Bowie, with input from his instructional leadership team, determined that the campus would have to include 10 additional teachers in the reduction in force if they stayed with the current traditional schedule. The new scheduling format will afford the students of Bowie High School to pursue 32 credits as opposed to the current 28 credit opportunities.

FISCAL EXIGENCY

1. Does financial exigency, in addition to impacting employment contracts, impact contracts/MOUs with other businesses and non-profits (CIS and APIE)?

Fiscal exigency has no impact on vendor contracts.

BOND MONEY

1. I understand that there will be millions of dollars leftover after all the work from the last two bond packages is completed. What will happen to that money?

The Office of Facilities recently estimated that there will be \$2,005,391 remaining in 2004 Bond Program contingency funds and \$14,805,059 remaining in 2008 Bond Program contingency funds. Even though the surplus remaining program contingency funds appear significant, staff recommends exercising caution in committing these funds to other uses until it is clear that the remaining projects can be completed within their current budgets.

The following information explains the availability of and legal access to 2004 and 2008 Bond Program Contingency Funds for specified uses and uses for which these funds cannot be used. Bond program contingency funds are proceeds from school building bond elections that remain after the priority projects approved by voters have been completed.

School Building Bond Proceeds:

As a general rule, capital expenditures for the following purposes may be financed through the issuance of school building bonds, subject to approval by voters:

- acquisition, construction, renovation, rehabilitation and improvement of school buildings
- equipping school buildings
- purchase of sites for school buildings
- purchase new school buses

To be considered a capital expenditure, the expenditure must provide an asset with a useful life of more than one year. (Similarly, expenditures that do not provide an asset with a useful life beyond the current fiscal year are considered non-capital expenditures.)

Bond proceeds may not be used for non-capital expenditures/current expenses. For example, bond proceeds may not be used to pay the following:

- salaries
- utility services
- office supplies
- other similar operational expenses

TRANSPORTATION

1. **I know that the times are difficult. However, please do not consider dropping the bus service for LASA students. It is impossibly far away (24 miles one way) from my house in the south. We will be forced to take our child from LASA and enroll her in Bowie. When will you decide this matter?**

Transportation to LASA will not be discontinued. However, the service may be provided under a Hub plan. Students will be picked up and dropped off at schools near their home instead of their current neighborhood stops. It will be parents' and students' responsibility to meet the bus at schools near their home. Final approval is still pending Trustees approval of the 2011-12 budget in mid June.

2. **If all middle and high school transportation switched to a modified hub system – such as used by all AISD magnet schools now significant savings would be found. Why has this not been proposed as an equitable (not disproportionately impacting any individual school) solution that would bring far greater savings than individual transportation solutions now in the proposed budget? This is “low lying fruit” that retains basic transportation services for students.**

Magnet school students attend from different neighborhoods throughout the district resulting in less efficient bus routing than for students who attend their assigned schools. Because of the area covered and the number of students, magnet transportation is the most expensive regular transportation the district provides. By consolidating the number of stops for the schools affected, it is possible to make reductions in the number of stops and still provide transportation services throughout the district for the schools affected: Ann Richards, Kealing, Fulmore and LASA.

For our regular neighborhood riders, our procedures require students to walk to the nearest bus stop for maximum efficiency and effectiveness. Due to the proximity and the number of students, the district can achieve efficiencies by locating bus stops and the number of buses within the attendance zone for that school. The policy is posted on the main AISD website. It states "*The bus stop walk range is defined as the maximum walking distance from a student's residential address to the student's assigned stop location. The stop range for Elementary School students is one quarter mile, for Middle School students it is one half mile, and for High School students it is one mile. The stop range for cross-town busing to Magnet Schools or Academies may be longer, due to time constraints, and bus passenger capacity. Landmark locations, such as AISD school campuses, may be used to accommodate the most students possible in a timely and efficient manner.*"

Other related transportation programs the district provides are services that are mandated and cannot be reduced. It is not possible to make across the board cuts without affecting services for these programs. At the same time some open enrollment schools, such as Pease and Garza High School, receive no transportation services at all.

- 3. It has been proposed that Magnet transportation be cut for a savings of \$200,000. Apart from the negative impact that would have on the diversity of Magnet programs, aren't there tremendous savings to be found if we changed all middle and high school transportation to the modified hub currently in use for Magnet and the Ann Richards Academy?**

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STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- 1. What professional development days will be cut? Will it be actual professional development days or will it be planning and prep days/parent conference days?**

To date, the District has not cut any Professional Development days for SY 2011-2012.

MISCELLANEOUS

- 1. How much will you expect teachers to pay for health care? My data shows up to \$400 a month, so about \$5,000 a year?**

The projected employee contribution towards their health benefit is dependent upon the plan you are enrolled in. The district will offer three different health plans, a PPO1, a PPO2 and an

HSA plan. The projected employee cost for next year's plan ranges from \$50-\$80 per month for the individual depending on the plan.

- 2. What are we doing to ensure more efficiency in how we do business at the campus and district level? For example: copy expenses, supplies, energy saving plans- ex: low flow toilets, solar panels, etc. cost savings for cleaning supplies, going paperless, establishing centralized printers vs. one per classroom. Are we evaluating our vendor contracts and/or renegotiating contracts with vendors to ensure the best pricings?**

The District is making great efforts to become more efficient in its operations. In fact, the FY2012 Preliminary Budget includes over nearly \$14.5 million in savings as a result of efficiency measures in areas like fuel, energy, transportation and facilities. Page number 24 of the FY2012 Preliminary Budget Primer specifically delineates the proposed efficiency measures.

Additionally, the District contracted with the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) to provide an analysis of the District's staffing to determine whether more staffing efficiency could be realized. Their findings indicated that the District could realize greater staffing efficiency and the proposed staffing reductions in the preliminary Budget reflect many of the rightsizing opportunities identified in the TASB review.

The District has been and will continue to implement various strategies to become more efficient with its purchasing and contracting process by:

- Revising District Policies to reduce the number of bid solicitations and purchase transactions.
- Implementing a purchasing card program at the beginning of this school year so that schools could obtain needed items faster and with less effort. More than 5,000 purchase requisitions have been avoided saving an estimated 833 hours of work by the school bookkeepers.
- Implementing E-Procurement on-line ordering with major suppliers including Office Depot, School Specialty, Sargent Welch Scientific, Dell, etc. Direct entry of orders into the vendor computer systems saves time, improves accuracy, and results in approximately 5% lower costs. In the example of Office Depot, orders can be entered as late as 5:00 PM and be delivered the next day.
- Launching Strategic Sourcing which identifies commodities that we buy and the best sources to provide them to make certain that we obtain quality products at unbeatable pricing. We have also evaluated all of our vendor contracts and will continue to do so to ensure the best value for the District.
- Increasing the volume of deliveries direct to schools to reduce the costs of operating the Central Warehouse.
- We are also working on implementing: a contract management system to reduce the administrative burden on schools and departments, document imaging to go paperless, enterprise print/copy management to reduce the high cost of document production, global positioning to improve the efficiency of warehouse truck routes and mail delivery routes, and other projects.

- 3. AISD Curriculum Specialist make teachers copy curriculum rather than use textbooks, annual savings to AISD of \$13 million (5¢/copy) if 15¢/copy save AISD \$40 million?**

AE policy requires schools in Category 1-3 to use district primary resources. Any copies used are supplemental and a campus based decision.

- 4. Is there a source to obtain the figure for total dollars spent on athletics programs and dollars per participating athlete for AISD?**

Our estimated total cost for athletic programs is \$ 11, 694.190. Our projected revenue is \$846, 324. The total number of student athletes in AISD is projected to be 11,500. Based on these projections, for FY 2010-2011 our estimated cost per student athlete is \$943.29 per year.

Explanation: The number of student athletes is determined by the number of physicals we have on file. It does not consider participation for each UIL sport. That information is not available at this time. We are working on this and should have the report available in two weeks.

- 5. If this is a >10% budget cut, why wasn't athletics cut at least 10%? Especially reducing the number of football games, even if it means pulling out of UIL?**

Athletics was cut 5%, which is an additional 3% cut over the original cuts that were required of every department (see lines 13 and 33 of AISD's Draft 2011-2012 Budget Reduction Plan). In reference to reducing the number of football games, we have binding two year contracts with AISD and other district's schools for scheduled football games. The University Interscholastic League is the Texas Education Agency's appointed agency to govern inter-scholastic competition for all public schools in the state of Texas, including determining rules, and providing penalties for rules violations by school district personnel, which are consistent with the State Board of Education and the Commissioner of Education. If AISD opted out of UIL membership, the district would be forced to eliminate all games, with other public schools who are members of the UIL. Staff are currently not aware of any public schools in the state of Texas who are not members of the UIL. Also please remember that UIL governs fine arts and academic events as well. If the district were to drop from UIL, we would forfeit the ability to participate in fine arts and academic competitions as well.