

NORTHWEST ISD

2019 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

SCHOOL FINANCE

- Advocate for an adequate and equitable school funding system that reduces the state's overreliance on recapture and property value increases. Advocate for local discretion on spending to ensure that the needs of students, staff, and communities are met.
- Commit to historic levels of state investment in our schools by investing the dollars the state gains from increased property values into the Foundation School Program.

Foundation School Program

- Advocate for adequate and equitable funding and oppose any cuts to the FSP. Support an updated and adequately funded formula-based school finance system, which takes into account student and district characteristics when determining appropriate levels of funding to meet state and local standards.

Enrichment

- Increase access to "Golden Pennies" beyond the current \$1.04 - allowing School Board discretion without a mandatory election.
- Calculate all Chapter 41 Recapture including enrichment at the Austin Yield.

Local Property Value & Property Tax

- Oppose the state benefiting from rising property values that taxpayers assume is benefiting public schools. Advocate that the full value of this funding benefit public education and not be used to fund other state initiatives or decrease the share of public school funding. Advocate for the creation of an index that adjusts the Basic Allotment for the biennium based on the percentage increase for the statewide property value per student.
- Support fast-growth school districts need for flexibility and ability to exceed the \$0.50 debt cap due to rapid enrollment growth and construction needs, as well as allow locally elected school boards and voters the ability to effectively manage the total tax rate.

Allotments

- Amend the Transportation Allotment (\$.80 per mile) to better reflect current transportation costs.
- Advocate for increased funding for the Technology and Instructional Materials Allotment (TIMA) to adequately fund instructional materials and support the new, long-range education plan for 1:1, infrastructure, and internet support. Oppose any carveouts from TIMA that decrease the amount of funds to school districts, and support local control and flexibility in district use of the TIMA funds.

Pre-K

- Advocate for funding full-day PreK programs for all students regardless of eligibility requirements.

Vouchers & Charters

- Oppose any state voucher plan, tax credits, taxpayer savings grants, tuition reimbursements, or any program that diverts public tax dollars to private entities, homeschool students, or parents with little or no academic or financial accountability to the state, taxpayers, or local communities.

- Oppose the further expansion of charter schools, including increases in the number of campuses under existing charters, unless they are subject to the same accountability and transparency rules as traditional public schools including, but not limited to: public notices, school discipline, transportation, bilingual programs, policy notices, employment contract policies, special education requirements, lunch programs, and nepotism statutes.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND ASSESSMENT

- Establish a comprehensive accountability system that looks beyond high-stakes, multiple-choice exams to meaningful assessments that incorporate facets of the whole child, as well as measures what the community deems as a priority. Oppose A-F campus and district ratings.
- Advocate that the state student assessment program be limited to only those assessments required to meet ESSA (federal) requirements, and redirect the fund savings from the reduction in assessments to help fund TIMA.

SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY

- Advocate for additional and ongoing funding for school safety initiatives. Advocate for flexibility in how districts utilize these funds to meet the needs of local schools and communities. Oppose any new requirements that are not funded as they are created.
- Support funding for data security (staff and student), including cybersecurity funding dedicated to support all school districts.

LOCAL CONTROL

- Support enhanced decision-making authority for those governmental entities closest to the citizens and oppose state/federal overreach.

TEACHER RETIREMENT SYSTEM OF TEXAS (TRS) FUNDING

- Advocate for the continuation of the current defined benefit pension program for TRS members.
- Advocate for increased state funding to assist with increased healthcare costs associated with TRS-Care.
 - Both of these priorities are critical to supporting recruitment and retention in the teaching profession. Many recent teacher retirees have to return to work or make significant lifestyle changes due to the increased cost of TRS-Care. Others face the predicament of working years past their retirement eligibility date until they are eligible for Medicare.

NORTH TEXAS TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

- To accommodate the rapid growth in Northwest ISD and North Texas, support efforts and funding to expand East/West thoroughfares and to expedite the construction of roadways as public schools are planned and built.