



Hays Consolidated Independent School District

Dr. Eric Wright
Superintendent of Schools

July 16, 2020

To: Governor Greg Abbott, TEA Commissioner Mike Morath, Sen. Donna Campbell and Representative Erin Zwiener

From: Hays CISD Board of Trustees and Hays CISD Superintendent Dr. Eric Wright

Like districts across the state, we at Hays CISD are hard at work in anticipation of safely reopening our schools to not only continue to educate our students, but to provide them and their families the social and emotional support to sustain them throughout their academic careers, especially during this pandemic.

Throughout this unprecedented health emergency, our leadership team has always kept the safety and well-being of our students and staff first in our minds. We are committed to implementing comprehensive plans that protect our staff and students while delivering an outstanding education, virtually and in-person, as is our duty to the community. We understand and appreciate the difficult job and responsibility that rests with our State regulatory authority, the Texas Education Agency, and are pleased that TEA will modify its previous mandate by allowing funding for virtual learning. Attempting to react to a moving target such as this makes it almost impossible to formulate a cohesive plan that will best serve students, especially those who need it most.

Our teachers and campus staff are the heart of our community. Our teachers, staff and administrators would like nothing more than to welcome every one of our over 21,000 students back to school; but when staff, many of whom have children in the District, are afraid to come back for in-person instruction due to an increase in the number of positive COVID cases, we have a problem that needs to be addressed. As conditions worsen and doubling rates increase, how can we honestly justify putting educators and their students in peril. At some point, when this health crisis levels off, it may be safe to bring everyone back into the classroom, but, as it stands right now, local school districts need the flexibility to make decisions based on a measured response to local conditions and data. As educators, we know that one size does not fit all.

Our District would like to advocate for:

- Giving local school districts the flexibility to make decisions on providing in-person instruction or online learning based on local data and community values and funding for resources that will keep students and employees safe.
- Waiving STAAR and A-F rating for 2020-2021 school year. It is absurd that, in the midst of figuring out how to reopen and being terrified of losing a student or staff member, that the State is mandating STAAR testing and labeling schools with letter grades.
- Amend acceptable uses and qualification for receipt of CARES Act funding for the reimbursement of expenditures on remediation or preventative measures necessary to stop the spread of COVID-19 rather than using it to back-fill gaps in the State budget. For example, Hays CISD was earmarked to receive 1.3 million dollars that was never

disbursed and is still needed to invest in more safety equipment, PPE, technology, connectivity and learning.

- Additional funding to supplement costs incurred by districts to provide safe and effective learning.
- A commitment to allocate current or future federal money specified for schools as a supplement to existing funding commitments by the state.

We cannot stress enough that any federal fund allocated for the health and safety of students under the CARES Act should properly be made available at the local level, especially in areas with a disproportionate amount of COVID-19 cases relative to the population. As conditions change rapidly, parents and teachers are looking for consistent, definitive plans regarding how the school year will be handled in terms of reopening for in-person instruction or if they will have a choice to keep their students at home for virtual learning. Until an effective vaccine is found, this pandemic will continue to disrupt the lives of so many families. Clear guidance from TEA will allow them time to arrange their schedules or, in the worst cases, seek alternate employment.

All of you know that the future of Texas and our nation depends on how well we prepare our children. Our existence as school districts in Texas makes it our duty and responsibility to educate our children while being good stewards of public money – our students and educators deserve it and our taxpayers demand it. Help us continue to make that a reality.

Until then, Hays CISD will move forward to implement the best, most effective plans to educate our students while keeping them and our staff safe and knowing that we are all in this together.


Esperanza Oroscó, Board President



Will McManus, Board Vice President


Raul Vela, Board Member


Dr. Michael Sanchez, Board Member


Dr. Eric Wright, Superintendent


Vanessa Petra, Board Secretary


Willie Tenorio, Board Member


Merideth Keller, Board Member