



In Pursuit of Excellence . . .

Denton Independent School District

Denton Independent School District Legislative Advocacy Positions

The Denton ISD supports the efforts of the Texas Association of School Boards, the Texas Association of School Administrators, and other affiliated agencies in their development of Core Principles on School Finance and their own Legislative Priority Statements. The District fully supports these principles and encourages our elected legislative and congressional officials to use the 2009 sessions for the purpose of finding and authorizing appropriate funds and formulas to address the compelling needs of public education in Texas and the United States of America.

Toward these ends, additionally, the Denton Independent School District Board of Trustees has identified their following legislative priorities that reflect needed relief of local problems and concerns:

1. **School Finance.** The current Texas public education system is not funded adequately to meet the needs of an increasingly demographic diverse community and student body.
 - a. **Adequacy.** The District supports an inflation-indexed educational funding structure that provides increased state funding commensurate with the escalating cost of education, including the rising costs of utilities, transportation, and the ever-increasing standards and expanded expectations for student performance.
 - b. **Equity.** The District supports an equitable formula-driven school finance system that allows community access to equal amounts of total revenue per local tax effort, allows school districts fully to capture the benefit of increasing local property values and associated student population growth, and recognizes communities' unique demographic challenges.
2. **Career and Technology.** The District supports increased funding for CTE courses; new curriculum mandates; expanding the 4x4 curriculum to encompass career and technology (CTE) courses beginning in the middle school; state funding for student certification exam costs; and funding of multi-district cooperatives (at local option) to provide students with expanded CTE opportunities.
3. **Pre-K School.** The District supports educational opportunities for Texas students through an expanded pre-kindergarten program (at local district option) including funding for expanded eligibility or full-day classes.
4. **Vouchers.** The District opposes private-school vouchers, tuition tax credits, scholarships and any other such public-school tax/revenue diverted from Texas' primary constitutional responsibility.
5. **Unfunded Mandates.** The District supports state or national funding of the actual cost of any required programs and services to be implemented by external laws, rules, or regulations, and opposes the imposition of any new unfunded or under-funded mandates.
6. **Review and modify the 50-cent test that the Attorney General uses to evaluate new bond issues before the bonds are approved for issuance.** Under current law, Denton ISD must demonstrate that it can meet its existing debt obligations and any proposed issuance of new voter-approved bonds with an I&S tax rate of 50 cents. The growth in the district's tax base almost always results in an adopted rate below this level, but because the district is fast-growth and because the costs for construction have significantly increased, Denton ISD, as well as other fast-growth districts, are being faced with selling bonds with longer maturities in order to receive Attorney General approval. The current approach merits legislative review and modification.
7. **Facilities Funding. (Instructional Facilities Allotment, Existing Debt Allotment)** The District supports legislation that would increase and guarantee equalized facilities funding for the Instructional Facilities Allotment (IFA) and Existing Debt Allotment (EDA), as well as legislation that automatically would roll forward the EDA each biennium for any bonded debt not covered by IFA.
8. **Professional Organization and Association.** The District opposes legislation that would limit the ability of professional associations, such as TASB, TASA, and TASBO, to represent school boards or districts and administrators, as governmental/legislative liaisons on issues vital to the performance of their missions. Constitutional issues of freedom of association and freedom of speech are essential components of successful school district advocacy and public service obligations.

Texas Association of School Boards 2008-2009 Legislative Advocacy Positions

1. **Salary & Benefits (Combined with Teacher Shortages).** TASB supports state funding for competitive salary and benefit packages for all school districts with an annual cost of living adjustment to attract and retain qualified employees.
2. **Adequacy.** The current education system is not adequately funded. TASB supports an inflation indexed educational funding structure that provides increased state funding commensurate with the escalating cost of education, including rising costs of utilities, transportation, and the ever-increasing standards for student performance.



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3. **Students – Career & Technology Programs.** TASB supports increased funding for CTE courses; expanding the 4x4 curriculum to encompass career and technology (CTE) courses beginning in the middle school; state funding for certification exams; and funding for multi-district cooperatives at local option to provide students with CTE opportunities.
4. **Technology.** TASB supports increased technology funding to provide districts with necessary resources for online testing and virtual courses.
5. **Finance Equity.** TASB supports an equitable formula-funded school finance system that allows community access to equal amounts of total revenue per local tax effort, allows school districts fully to capture the benefit of increasing local property values, and recognizes communities' unique challenges arising from differences in student populations.
6. **Pre-K School Finance.** TASB supports educational opportunities for Texas students through an expanded pre-kindergarten program at local option, including funding for an expanded eligibility or a full class day.
7. **Dropout Rates.** TASB supports increased funding for the implementation of programs in public schools that identify and provide interventions and curricular opportunities for at-risk students beginning at the elementary school level to decrease dropout rates.
8. **Unfunded Mandates.** TASB supports funding the actual cost of any required programs and services implemented by laws, rules, and regulations, and opposed the imposition of any new unfunded or unfunded mandates.
9. **Vouchers.** TASB opposes private school vouchers, tuition tax credits, scholarships and other such programs funded with public tax dollars.
10. **Facilities Funding (Instructional Facilities Allotment, Existing Debt Allotment).** TASB shall support legislation that would increase equalized facilities funding for both the Instructional Facilities Allotment (IFA) and Existing Debt Allotment (EDA), as well as legislation that would automatically roll forward the EDA each biennium for all bonded debt not covered by IFA.
11. **Alignment of the State and Federal Accountability Systems.** TASB supports a single, less complex accountability system that rewards individual student progress, reduces state testing, and implements constructive measures before sanctions.

Proposed Federal Legislative Priorities

1. **Adequate Educational Funding.** The District endorses and supports federal legislation to remedy the two most seriously under-funded federal mandates presently impacting school districts throughout the Nation:
 - a. **Title I Grants.** Increase appropriation by \$ 2.5 billion to rectify shortfall for No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)/ Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).
 - b. **IDEA Grants.** Increase appropriation by \$ 2.5 billion for Special Education programs and services mandates by Congress and court decisions, partially to fulfill the long-standing (and unfulfilled) Congressional promise to provide such support to the 40% level.
2. **No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) Reauthorization.** The District supports and endorses the immediate reauthorization (present Act expired December, 2007) of NCLB. The District declares that Congressional action is imperative to remove the sanctions and other financial and punitive consequences likely to fall upon local districts across the nation via present legislation.
3. **Medicaid Reimbursement.** The District supports restoration of full access rights to federal reimbursement for required administrative activities and transportation costs associated with services to low-income children with disabilities. Present regulations and compliance modes of CMS are punitive and cost-prohibitive to local school districts.
4. **E-Rate Program.** The District supports legislation to continue E-Rate (discount provisions) allowing school districts to initiate and to maintain internet services and connectivity and to maintain exemptions from F.C.C. rulings related to the Anti-discrimination Act, properly to allow school districts to join and keep abreast of utilization of 21st Century technology for teaching and learning.
5. **D.C. Voucher Program.** The District supports allowing to expire this highly questionable program. In no case, even on a pilot program basis, should any public tax dollars be diverted to support or subsidize in any manner private schools through vouchers, tax credits, or any other erosion of public school financial revenue.

