



EAGLE MOUNTAIN-SAGINAW
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
A TEA RECOGNIZED DISTRICT

Talking Points on Public School Finance in Texas

1. The focus has been to get through this biennium. The system will not correct itself even with unprecedented economic recovery. The funding system for public education is simply not sufficient to meet the most minimum needs. We cannot reduce taxation, maintain current services (needless to say increase services), and expect to fund the system. The system was designed to fail in 2006 and will continue to fail until we address it at its most core level. Districts may fail at different times, but at some point every district in Texas will become insolvent with the current funding system.
2. There are several inaccurate perceptions in our State:
 - a. “We have had a “staggering increase” in the cost of public education.” – Most increases in costs are the result of more students being served in the state and not greater expense per child. Texas is rated as low as #48 in the country in spending per pupil and the outlook is to further reduce spending.
 - b. “Our administrative costs are too high.” – This also is not accurate. Recently, Shapiro quoted Sullivan from the Texans for Fiscal Responsibility, shows a 1-1 ratio in teachers to non-teachers. This takes into account bus drivers, cafeteria workers. The reality for Eagle Mountain-Saginaw ISD is that we spent proportionally less per child for six years in a row. We were recognized by Susan Combs in FAST for sound fiscal management. Yet, according to others we are spending too much. The costs of construction costs (especially an

issue in fast growth districts) will give the perception that we are spending more to teach students. The reality is that we use debt service to build new buildings and these costs will decrease proportionally as districts build out.

- c. "I thought property taxes were going to go down, our taxes are going up." – While this is accurate for some, it is based on the increase in property values, not taxation. The reality for most school districts is that we are taxing less than we did in the 1980's and 1990's. The burden on property owners has been reduced in terms of tax rate.
3. We need to restore local control to our school districts. Local Boards are charged with creating a budget and setting the tax rate. This is one of the greatest examples of direct democratic action. It is somewhat ironic that the political forces who tout "no taxation without representation" would not fervently support the local political entities to set the expectations for that community and to set the appropriate tax rate to pay for it. The number of unfunded mandates compound the problem and create a greater divide in the ability to have local control.
4. The current target revenue system is not logical. While we understand that there will be some need for recapture statewide, the discrepancy between districts is not based on any actual different in the costs of educating students in these different districts. The difference in the target revenue amount is arbitrary.
5. Most (if not all) districts have no problem with accountability, the new STAAR assessment, and the challenges of a growing student population. What we do have a problem with is not having adequate resources with which to support quality student instruction. The decisions made in this legislative session could take decades to fix if care and consideration is not given in this process.