

Economic downturn, current Texas school finance system impact timeline for new elementary school

The downturn in the national, state and local economies, its impact on student enrollment growth and budgetary constraints resulting from the state school finance system played a significant role in the Board's recent decision to delay the opening of Elementary School No. 52.

The school, originally scheduled to open for the 2010-2011 school year, was postponed until 2011-2012. The decision to postpone the school's original opening date was made in an effort to meet the district's finance priority which states that CFISD will "continue to operate efficiently, to explore other revenue sources and to manage all district funds to maximize benefits that flow to students ..."

"We are in a position that because of legislative action and the way schools are financed in the state of Texas, we have to be very concerned about when we open schools because of the negative impact that would occur on the budget and what we would be able to accomplish for all the children in our district," said Pam Wells, associate superintendent of facilities, planning and community relations, in the regularly scheduled Dec. 11 Board work session.

Although CFISD continues to grow at a more rapid rate than any other school district in the state, she added, economic conditions have slowed that growth significantly compared to the increase that has occurred

over previous years. In some areas of the district, she said, growth is slower than what was originally projected.

"Indications [from the economic downturn] are that these conditions will continue for the foreseeable future," Wells said. "Proposed opening dates [for Bond 2007 schools] will continue to be reviewed and modified based on financial constraints and updated enrollment projections."

In addition to the economy's impact on student enrollment growth, the decision to delay opening Elementary No. 52 has been directly affected by the financial constraints placed on the district due to the state's current school finance system. Although new construction is funded with schoolhouse bonds approved by voters, the operation of new schools once they are opened are included in the Maintenance and Operations (M&O) budget.

The current funding system for the M&O budget, enacted by the 79th Legislative Session in 2005 under House Bill 1, was created based on a formula that uses target revenue data from previous years to determine how much money is distributed to school districts throughout the state of Texas for the operating budget.

With this formula, CFISD's target revenue freezes per-student funding at the 2005-2006 level, contributing to a current

finance system that:

- does not account for inflation;
- benefits the state, not the school district, when property values increase;
- lacks resources for performance mandates; and
- perpetuates inequity in per-student funding.

"Challenges for Cypress-Fairbanks ISD appear to be especially daunting considering the level of funding the state provides our district under the finance system that went into law in 2006," said superintendent of schools Dr. David Anthony in his April 2008 Key Communicator Letter.

"Keep in mind that the revenue from the state is based on a 'per-student' formula and the level of funding per student will not increase unless the Legislature changes the system."

As legislators convene in January for the 81st Legislative Session, they will address public school finance—and although a temporary solution to the current system may result from this session, school districts will have to wait for a long-term resolution.

For legislative contact information for representatives in the CFISD community, see page 2 or go to *About CFISD* on the district website at www.cfisd.net.

Criminal background review required for global volunteers

Community members who are interested in becoming global volunteers—individuals who volunteer in a school where they do not have a student currently enrolled—are required by state law to complete a criminal background review.

The only exception to this law is if the individual is a parent, guardian or grandparent of a child who is enrolled on the campus for which the person volunteers or if the individual is volunteering for a single event.

Once a candidate for global volunteerism completes an application and a criminal background review form, it is submitted and processed through the Partners in Education (PIE) office. When the application is approved, the global volunteer is notified by personnel from the PIE office via an email, a phone call or by standard mail. In the event an individual is not approved, the district will mail a confidential letter to the person's home stating the reasons why he/she was denied access to schools.

Approved global volunteers are required to wear a district badge at all times while at the designated school. They must pick up and sign for their identification badges at the PIE office, located at the Berry Center, 8877 Barker Cypress Road.

However, even with the global volunteer badge, the district monitors all individuals who enter school buildings through the V-Soft security system. All individuals, including global volunteers, are required to show a driver's license or identification card so that office personnel can scan it in through the system in order to be granted permission to enter the school on a short-term basis. Because global volunteers need permission given to them on a long-term basis for volunteering on campuses, they must go through the additional application process.

"We do this because it is the law and we thank everyone for helping us be in compliance with this new state law," said Pam Scott, director for PIE. "Most importantly, the safety and security of all CFISD students is now as it has always been, our top priority."

Each campus has a designated employee that is notified by the PIE office of all approved global volunteers that can do volunteer work at the school. Forms are available in schools, the PIE office, or online at <http://www.cfisd.net/dept2/pie/pietoc.htm>.

CFISD to host 15th Annual Livestock Show and Sale

The 15th Annual Cypress-Fairbanks School District Livestock Show and Sale will be held Jan. 29-31 at the Exhibit Center located at 11206 Telge Road.

Show times for the livestock judging on Jan. 29 are as follows:

- 8:00 a.m. Rabbit Show
- 11:00 a.m. Poultry Show
- 1:00 p.m. Lamb Show
- 3:00 p.m. Steer/Heifer Show

Show times for the livestock judging on Jan. 30 are as follows:

- 8:00 a.m. Swine Show
- 1:00 p.m. Goat Show

The Buyer's Luncheon will be held at 11 a.m. on Saturday, Jan. 31, at Arnold Middle School, located at 11111 Telge Road, and the Premium Auction will be at 1 p.m. at the Exhibit Center.

The community and all buyers are invited to attend the event to show support to the CFISD students who have worked diligently in preparing for the event.

For questions about the Livestock Show and Sale, please call 281-897-4074.