

# 2005 Legislative Priorities

The Plano Independent School District believes the first priority of state government should be ensuring that public education is adequately funded throughout the state and that districts are provided with adequate funding to enable them to recruit and retain excellent teachers.

Additionally, the state has an obligation to guarantee an equitable and effective means of funding the education of our public schools that is not dependent on drawing down the resources of a few property rich school districts. Plano ISD believes strongly in maintaining the authority for issues that are truly local.

## Superintendent's Presentation

Plano ISD Superintendent of Schools Dr. Doug Otto is a founding member and president of the Texas School Coalition. He also serves on the board of directors for the Texas Business and Education Coalition. The Texas School Coalition is organized for the purpose of bringing together independent school districts that have an interest in improving the school funding laws for all school districts. The Texas Business and Education Coalition was formed in 1989 to bring business and education leaders together in a long-term effort to improve the performance of the Texas public school system.

Dr. Otto has spoken to several school and community groups regarding Plano ISD's "Legislative Issues." In the following PowerPoint presentation, he outlines PISD's 2004-05 budget cuts (due to the financial impact of the current "Robin Hood" state school finance system) and provides information about funds recaptured from Plano ISD by the state (as related to the weighted average daily attendance - "WADA").

[Legislative Issues Presentation \(464k \)](#)

## Principles of School Finance

The Texas Business and Education Coalition Board of Directors have adopted a statement, Principles of School Finance, stating the coalition would support a new system of funding Texas public school finance. In addition, the Texas School Coalition and the Coalition to Invest in Texas Schools adopted similar core principles. Plano ISD supports these principles.

1. Equity – The public school finance system must provide substantially equal resources to districts regardless of their property wealth.
2. Adequacy – The provision of financial resources to school districts must be related appropriately to the highest performance expectations established by the state. In addition, adjustments in funding must be made for known cost factors.

3. Capacity for Growth – The school finance system must provide increasing resources to school districts over time to accommodate enrollment growth, changes in the composition of the student population, raised performance expectations, inflation, and other cost drivers.
4. Efficiency – State policy should encourage actions that result in improved student achievement and increased operational efficiency.
5. Local enrichment – Allow districts to locally supplement to meet individual community’s expectations.

## **Financial Program**

The state’s school funding program must take into account the needs of school districts saddled with inadequate resources. To that end, the PISD Board of Trustees recommends that the legislature develop an Education Finance Plan which adequately funds public schools throughout the state and reduces reliance on a few so-called “property wealthy” districts.

Key points of that new finance plan should include:

- Increasing the percentage of the state budget allocated to public schools.
- Updating the Cost of Education Index.
- Reducing, if not eliminating, the “recapture” provisions of the current plan.
- Implementing financial incentives to reward campuses that have demonstrated high levels of student academic growth, significantly closed performance gaps in the core curriculum, and performed at the highest standards established by the state.
- Resisting funding initiatives which would erode PISD’s ability to maintain and enrich current educational programs.
- Appropriating adequate funds to cover fully the cost of any new program mandated by the legislature and providing sufficient lead time to allow for effective planning and implementation.
- Restoring the \$1,000 health care supplement pass-through to all educators.
- Adopting a plan to provide sufficient funding for Texas students enrolled in PISD eSchool classes as part of their daily school schedule.
- Maintaining the equity gains of the past decade.
- Providing funds to schools to support intervention for students identified at risk of failing at the various checkpoints of the Student Success Initiative (3rd grade reading, 5th grade reading and math, 8th grade reading and math, and 11th grade exit-level tests).
- Resisting the funding of additional charter schools, private or parochial schools in the form of vouchers, or other aid.

## **Learning Program**

Curriculum and instruction are the core of a school district's program. The Plano ISD Board of Trustees believes that the state should not impose unfunded educational mandates on local school districts. The board also supports initiatives to guarantee that all students read by the third grade while leaving the process to the local district.

The Board also supports legislation which:

- Maintains the present student assessment and public school accountability systems for several years, at least through 2008.
- Supports the ongoing efforts that allow for a state testing program which provides a means for determining accountability for student performance growth.
- Provides quality Spanish translation for all testing documents.
- Releases per student funding for textbooks to local districts for special needs students functioning above or below their assigned grade level.
- Provides funds from the state to purchase computers and software for all students and explore ways the state can support and encourage enhanced use of technology.
- Continue the development, promotion, and implementation of the early childhood education initiative.
- Seeks to restore local authority to districts for school calendar preferences with regard to start/release dates, holidays, and professional development.
- Provides automatic admission and sophomore standing at any public higher education institution for students completing the IB diploma program.