



# 2015 HISD TEXAS LEGISLATIVE SESSION WRAP-UP

## HISD REDUCES FINANCIAL IMPACT OF ‘ROBIN HOOD’

Rising local property values placed HISD in a unique situation at the start of the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session. Our school district's increased property wealth meant that we would have to send around \$200 million to the state in local taxpayer dollars during the 2016-17 biennium, a process called "recapture." The state would then use HISD's dollars to fund property-poor districts elsewhere. Despite being property wealthy, however, we are student poor. More than 80 percent of our kids qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. As a result, our legislative team fought hard to keep HISD out of recapture for both years of the biennium.

Unfortunately, the legislature did not pass Chairman Aycock's school finance bill, which kept HISD out of recapture for both years of the 2016-17 biennium. The budget conference committee for HB 1 adopted the Senate's proposal for public education funding, a \$1.5 billion increase over current levels. Fortunately, the budget bill (HB 1) and the property tax relief bill (SB 1) reduced HISD's recapture payment for 2016-17. In 2015-16, HISD is required to send about \$197,000 to the state. In 2016-17, the payment goes up to \$138 million.

## HISD SCORES MAJOR WIN ON DUAL CREDIT PARTNERSHIPS

For several sessions, HISD has tried to get the flexibility to work with more than one community college. State law previously locked us into Houston Community College (HCC). However, HISD proposed, the Legislature passed, and the governor signed SB 1004. This bill gives school districts in Harris County the ability to work with the four community colleges in the county: HCC, Lone Star, San Jacinto, and Lee College. Sen. Paul Bettencourt and

Rep. Senfronia Thompson sponsored the bill and carried it across the finish line. Research shows students are more likely to enter and complete college if they have taken dual-credit courses in high school, especially at-risk students. The bill passed will give more Houston-area students a greater number of community colleges and a stronger list of dual credit programs to choose from.

## HISD SECURES MORE PRE-K FUNDING

HISD set a high priority on securing formula dollars, or guaranteed long-term funding, for Pre-K this session. We strongly supported House Bill 4, the governor's Pre-K bill, as it moved through the legislature. HISD operates a full-day program at 162 campuses. We educate 14,518 three- and four-year-olds and employ 775 Pre-K teachers. The governor visited

one of HISD's elementary campuses in February and saw our high-quality Pre-K program at work. HISD already meets the criteria required in HB 4; however, the additional funds districts would receive would be grant dollars, not formula funding. Next session, we will continue to encourage the legislature to add Pre-K to the formula.