**HISD Board of Education approves**

**school bus safety measure**

*Trustees also award school construction contracts*

*June 9, 2016 —* The Houston Independent School District Board of Education on Thursday approved an updated Code of Student Conduct that requires students riding buses equipped with 3-point seat belts to wear them. The update also includes language encouraging students with access to lap belts to wear them.

The code update is in line with last year’s commitment by HISD to only buy new buses equipped with 3-point seat belts, which the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has recommended. Doing so adds about $8,000 to the cost of a new school bus. This fall, HISD will replace 60 older buses with new ones equipped with 3-point seat belts. These new buses will be assigned to the longest routes carrying elementary school children.

Today, HISD’s 1,100-bus fleet includes about 430 with lap belts and 90 with 3-point seat belts.

**Starting next school year, the state of Texas will no longer provide any transportation funding to HISD.** HISD is losing this funding because of the state’s school finance system, which now considers HISD to be a wealthy district. Three-quarters of Houston students live in poverty. Last year, HISD received $12 million in transportation funding from the state. **This year, HISD must send a projected $165 million in local property taxes back to the state because of the school finance formula.**

Other items approved at Thursday’s Board of Education meeting include:

* Renewing the optional additional homestead exemption. HISD is among the few school districts in Texas that provide property tax relief by exempting 20 percent of a homestead’s value from being taxed. This additional exemption saves HISD homeowners millions of dollars every year. A recent state law prohibits school districts that have historically offered this special property tax break from rescinding it.

Authorizing district officials to negotiate and execute a contracts funded by the [2012 voter-approved bond referendum](http://www.houstonisd.org/bond). These contracts include a new construction manager at risk (CMAR) firm for the **Northside (formerly Davis) High School** construction project. CMAR is a construction delivery method that requires the contractor to commit to completing a project within a guaranteed maximum price. Also approved Thursday was a contract for **Wilson Montessori’s** three-story addition, as well as general renovations at the Montrose-area Montessori school, which was built in 1924. The expanded facility will house 750 to 900 students. Another set of contracts approved Thursday are for general restroom renovations — including wall repairs, new partitions and flooring, and mechanical, electrical and plumbing upgrades — at 13 middle schools across the district.