

**HISD Board of Education approves recommendation for external performance audit**

*May 10, 2018* – The Houston Independent School District Board of Education on Thursday unanimously approved a recommendation from the Audit Committee calling for an external performance audit.

The Audit Committee recommended an external performance audit be conducted in order to ensure HISD is utilizing scarce resources as efficiently and effectively as possible to inform decision-making and budgeting by the board and administration for the 2019-2020 school year and beyond, and to build public trust by exhibiting good stewardship of public dollars.

“We look forward to having fresh eyes examine how we do business so we can best serve our students even with limited dollars. Every efficiency we can identify will help mitigate the impact of our growing recapture payment. Thanks for the public’s patience while we go through this process,” HISD Board of Education president Rhonda Skillern-Jones said.

The firm selected to perform the audit will be required to present a full draft to the board no later than April 2019. Trustees will have until June 2019 to approve a budget based on recommendations from the audit. The cost of the audit is not to exceed $2.5 million.

During the meeting, district administration briefed Trustees on the results for the first administration of STAAR grades five and eight reading and math exams. Preliminary results show HISD students have improved in all four areas for which results are available. The largest district-wide gain was a six-point increase in students approaching grade level on the grade five reading assessment.

In addition, trustees voted unanimously to change the grade-level configuration for Woodson PK-8 to an elementary campus that serves students in prekindergarten through fifth grade. Sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students will be rezoned to Thomas Middle School. Thomas Middle School will receive funding through the district’s Achieve 180 initiative to continue offering professional development, support for teachers, and the wraparound services the students have been receiving at Woodson.

“This change will allow us to enhance our level of focus on the elementary students who will remain at Woodson and the middle school students who will transition to Thomas,” Interim Superintendent Grenita Lathan said.

Trustees also voted unanimously to establish an attendance boundary option for students zoned to Blackshear, Lockhart, and MacGregor elementary schools to attend Baylor College of Medicine Academy at Ryan. Currently, middle students who live within these elementary attendance boundaries are zoned to Cullen Middle School, with some students from MacGregor being zoned to Gregory-Lincoln Education Center.

The addition of an optional attendance boundary for Baylor College of Medicine Academy at Ryan will provide direct enrollment access for neighborhood middle-school students who are interested in pursuing a health/medical pathway. This boundary option will be for students entering sixth grade, beginning with the 2018-2019 school year.

In addition, trustees authorized the purchase of Zonar GPS Systems, a school bus management system that provides real-time tracking. The purpose of the system is to improve customer service for the more than 36,000 HISD students that are transported across the district, to improve routing, and create additional efficiencies in route management.

“We have been working all year to develop better ways to inform parents and guardians of any potential changes to their school bus routes,” HISD Chief Operations Officer Brian Busby said. “We already have other communications systems in place that are showing significant improvement. With the Zonar GPS System, we expect the department to inform and respond quicker, faster, and more efficiently than before.”

The new system will be implemented for the 2018-2019 school year.