

# HISD PRESS RELEASE

## HISD Board approves \$54.6 million budget amendment to help students Reconnect Safely, Return Strong

*Trustees also approved changes in 2020-2021 academic calendar*

August 13, 2020 – The Houston Independent School District Board of Education approved a \$54.6 million amendment to the 2020-2021 budget, which includes a \$31 million purchase of devices and wireless hotspots to help close the digital divide and ensure students are equipped to [Reconnect Safely and Return Strong](#) when classes resume virtually on Sept. 8.

The district has provided 76,362 devices for students in need since the pandemic and plans to distribute 22,750 additional devices by next month. HISD has provided 6,628 hotspots for students in need and plans to distribute an additional 19,151 of the wireless devices by next month as well.

The added appropriations in the budget amendment will also fund additional special education positions, personal protective equipment (PPE), social distancing signage, plexiglass dividers, and instructional supports.

Also, at its Thursday meeting the board voted 9-0 to update the 2020-2021 academic calendar due to the delayed start to the school year necessitated by the pandemic. All previously approved holidays and the number of teacher preparation and professional development days are maintained in the new calendar.

### Key Dates - Updated 2020-2021 Academic Calendar

- Teachers' first day – virtual professional development and in-service: Aug. 24, 2020
- Teachers' first day - virtual instruction: Sept. 8, 2020
- Students' first day - virtual instruction: Sept. 8, 2020
- First day of in-person school: Oct. 19, 2020
- Thanksgiving holiday: Nov. 23-27, 2020
- Winter Break: Dec. 21, 2020 - Jan. 1, 2021
- Last day of first semester: Jan. 29, 2021
- First day of second semester: Feb. 1, 2021
- Spring Break: March 15-19, 2021
- Last day of school for students: June 11, 2021

The board also discussed changes and updates to emergency constraints, put in place when the pandemic began, that address the social and emotional, health and safety, academic, nutritional, and digital needs of all students, as well as the health and safety of staff.

The discussion centered around academic progress measures, the number of Wraparound Services interventions and guidance, wellness checks by nurses, meals provided, and documented access to digital equipment for students in the months ahead. Additionally, the board discussed implementation of a student and staff COVID-19 safety course as well as maintaining safety procedures on campuses and in buildings when COVID cases occur.

Trustees also voted 7-2 to postpone the vote on forming a District of Innovation (DOI) Committee to develop a plan for HISD to obtain the designation, which provides greater flexibility on school start dates, attendance, and hiring of Career and Technical Education teachers. The item will be considered at the board's next regular meeting scheduled for September 10. The formation of a committee would be the next in a series of steps required for HISD to receive the DOI designation.

Additionally, trustees voted in favor of an agreement with the City of Houston Municipal Courts Department to continue the Juvenile Case Manager Program. The program reduces juvenile referrals into the criminal justice system through effective, preventive case management and utilization of intervention procedures at almost a dozen HISD middle and high school campuses.

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The Houston Independent School District is the largest school district in Texas and the seventh-largest in the United States, with 280 schools and more than 209,772 students. The 333-square-mile district is one of the largest employers in the Houston metropolitan area, with more than 27,000 employees.

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