

# HISD PRESS RELEASE

## **HISD Board approves budget amendment to increase safety measures against COVID-19**

*Feb. 11, 2021* — The Houston Independent School District Board of Education unanimously approved a budget amendment which includes an additional \$41 million for COVID-19 related expenses to help mitigate the spread in schools and facilities and increase safety measures. So far, the district has spent approximately \$109 million on COVID-related expenses to help ensure the health, safety, and well-being of its students and staff and their families.

At its Thursday evening meeting, trustees voted to engage HISD graduates who are currently students at Houston Community College (HCC) to provide application, financial aid, and enrollment guidance to HISD seniors who wish to attend HCC. The HCC student-advisors will be hired by the college.

The board also voted to accept a \$70,000 grant for Austin High School from the Greater Houston Community Foundation to support the Hess LEAP 2.0 Program. It is a dropout-prevention program that aims to increase positive factors in students' lives, instill a commitment to learning, equip students with the tools and perseverance to graduate and inspire them to attend college or a vocational training institute after receiving their diplomas.

Additionally, the board agreed to provide tutoring, college application guidance and mentoring to students at Worthing High School, utilizing University of Houston students from the Advancing Community Engagement and Service Institute (ACES). The UH ACES Institute will also provide consulting to Worthing faculty, staff, and administrators to assist with the school's early college program.

The board voted to provide internships in the HISD athletic department for Texas Southern University students who are interested in careers as athletic trainers. The students will receive training from HISD's licensed athletic trainers during athletic events at the district's four stadium complexes.

The board voted 8-1 to postpone the vote on a resolution to dissolve the district's relationship with the HISD Student Congress, as well as establish a new student advisory committee in its place. Based on the resolution, the Student Congress currently does not have representation from the majority of the district's high schools. The proposed new student advisory committee would be composed of student representatives who are selected by their peers and every high school in the district would be represented. The item is to come before the board again no later than August of 2021.

Also, at the meeting, board members voted to omit the Student Performance category of the Teacher Appraisal and Development System for the 2020-2021 school year, in light of the state's decision to waive accountability ratings and in fairness to educators who are learning to instruct students using new methods and tools during the public health crisis. Educators' total ratings will be calculated based on 70 percent instructional practice and 30 percent professional expectations.

Additionally, trustees approved a \$10 million contract to acquire hardware and software technology to engage students in instruction and activities through live streaming.

The board also approved a donation of hand sanitizer from Farouk Systems valued at \$638,000. The donation amounts to 50 pallets of hand sanitizer to assist HISD in its efforts to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus among students and staff.

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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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