

I Am AISD. The students on my bus are a family. We do projects together that help people, such as adopting a needy family for the holidays and volunteering at Children's Hospital. These projects help the students learn that they can make good things happen, that they can improve our community.
Samuel Thomas, Bus Driver
Travis High School



Budget & Bond Construction

Austin School Trustees approved a \$731 million budget for the 2004-05 school year—one that they say will strengthen teaching and learning across the District and improve employee compensation.

Included in the budget is a pay increase that averages 4.2 percent for all District staff, as well as an additional \$351 per year for employee health insurance. Overall, this is a compensation increase that averages five percent for teachers and other employees. The budget also sets the starting pay for a bachelor-degreed teacher with no prior experience at \$35,080—the highest in Central Texas.

"This District is committed to the highest standards in teaching excellence," Board President Doyle Valdez said. "A cornerstone of that initiative is employee compensation that attracts and retains the best teachers."

Several additional measures to improve student achievement, as well as to address professional development and working conditions for teachers include:

- A reduction in twelfth grade class size.
- An increase of 6.5 elementary art, music, and PE positions to reduce large class sizes at a few campuses.
- An increase in Special Education teachers.
- An International High School on the Johnston campus to serve AISD's immigrant students.
- Additional duty days for both lead high school counselors and campus data clerks.

To ensure greater campus security, the budget also includes items proposed by the *Community Safety Task Force*:

- An additional school resource officer or security guard at each high school.
- Funding for the presence of middle school security guards during the after-school hours of 4 to 6 p.m.
- The purchase and installation of 30 additional bus cameras.

Major budget reductions are:

- A reduction of \$22.5 million in the District's obligation to so-called property-poor school districts, under the state's share the wealth concept of public school finance. The payment for 2004-2005 is \$135 million.
- A reduction in the budget for the cost of worker compensation payments.

To support the budget, Trustees also renewed a Maintenance & Operations tax rate of \$1.50 per \$100 of assessed valuation. With debt repayment, this makes AISD's combined tax rate of \$1.623 the lowest among Central Texas school districts. As stewards of taxpayers' dollars, President Valdez said Trustees are mindful of their responsibility to ensure value for educational spending.

"Austin citizens rightfully expect that we will spend prudently and spend on programs and services that increasingly yield results in student achievement. This budget makes that assurance," he said.



I Am AISD. I am the secretary to the principal at Austin High School and have been for 10 years. I love my job and have the privilege of working with a wonderful group of teachers and staff. I cherish the interaction I have with the students. I learn from them every day.
Renee Fairchild, Secretary
Austin High School



I Am AISD. As the Ombudsman, I am committed to helping students, parents, and the community communicate more effectively with District personnel. I am proud to work in a district as forward thinking as Austin ISD. We are one of four school districts in the state with an Ombudsman.
Beverly Reeves, District Ombudsman
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