

PERFORMANCE BASED FUNDING

Q. As a public education advocate, what drives your passion?

A. I am driven by the belief that all students deserve the opportunity to a fair and equitable education. This is the main reason why I chose to run for my local school board. Over the years, my volunteer work and helping students succeed cultivated my desire to make a difference at the highest level – to be held in trust by my community as a Little Elm ISD School Board Trustee. Today, I am thankful to my community for the opportunity to serve.

Q. Funding our public schools is a major topic in the current state legislature. What is one important aspect that needs to be reviewed?

A. Performance based funding – synonymous to holding public school dollars hostage to student results from high-stakes testing – is being considered as a viable funding option by some legislators. This particular method of awarding incentive-pay to educators based on an arbitrary assessment test representing a snap-shot in time is archaic with growing evidence to have no effect or a negative effect in overall student outcomes.

Q. In what ways does the issue of performance based funding effect Texas public school students?

A. The current version being presented to our Texas legislature is predicted to widen the funding gap between wealthier and poorer districts. Standardized test scores generally track alongside economic status. The unfortunate truth – high performing districts will receive more money and poorer districts receiving less.

The Texas Commission for Public Schools recently submitted, “Funding for Impact: Funding for Students Who Need It Most” to the Governor and the State Legislature. Page 30 specifically proposes the following:

“[D]istricts would receive outcomes funding equivalent to an additional weight equating to \$3,400 for every low-income student achieving third-grade reading proficiency at the Meets standard and an additional weight that would equate to \$1,450 for every non-low-income student achieving proficiency at the Meets standard, producing a total outcomes funding pool of approximately \$400 million funded in 2019–2020.”

This proposal is absurd. It rewards already high performing districts with more money and less money to those who are low performing and in need of resources – further widening the gap between the two. Here is an example:

University Park Elementary School had eighty-seven percent of its third grade students achieve the “Meets” Reading standard in 2017. University Park Elementary does not have economically disadvantaged students. The school would receive \$126,150 (87 students × \$1,450) for every 100 third-graders.

Meanwhile, Dorie Miller Elementary has ninety-four percent of its students considered as economically disadvantaged. Twenty-four percent of its students achieved the “Meets” standard in Reading in 2017. Even at the higher rate of compensation for disadvantaged students, Dorie Miller Elementary would only receive \$81,600 (24 students × \$3,400) for every 100 students.

This contradicts the report’s goal of “equitable funding for students who need it the most.”

Q. How do you see this issue being resolved?

A. If the Governor and Legislature are sincere in their desire to provide equitable funding for students who need it the most, they should consider allocating additional funding to schools based on the proportion of students not meeting the standard.

Q. History provides us with inspiring quotes about public education. What is your legacy quote that we might find inspiring future generations?

A. “Lead, and do not wait for others to follow. Lead, and bring others with you.” ~Dan Blackwood