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Sent: Thursday, June 13, 2024 6:06 PM
To: SISD_Staff <allstaff@sisd.net>
Subject: Updates

Dear SISD District and Campus Faculty and Staff,

As we work daily to refine our systems for the good of the district, I would like to commend you for keeping your focus on our students and planning for a successful upcoming school year. We must remain positive so that we can maintain and build on the great work that has been accomplished at our schools.

With that said, I would like to re-emphasize that I believe we are better together, and I am 100% committed to collaboration and open communication as we strive to move Socorro ISD forward through our challenges. In the spirit of transparency, I am taking this opportunity to share with you a couple updates regarding items identified by our Texas Education Agency (TEA) conservators as they are helping to guide us through our current budget situation and get our district back on track.

As shared before, our budget deficit is not something that happened overnight. The fact that the state legislature has not passed a bill to properly fund public schools has exacerbated our budget situation.

Another major piece of the public school funding puzzle is Average Daily Attendance, or ADA. This is critical because state-based funding provided to the district is calculated on our ADA not our enrollment, as is often confused. Our ADA figure is set by starting with our total enrollment, subtracting half of our PreK enrollment (as the state funds PreK at 50%), multiplied by the district's attendance rate. This school year we averaged approximately 94% of enrolled students attending school each day. Prior to the pandemic our rate averaged 96%, therefore our students attending school every day matters so much both for their education and for us to receive state funding.

In reviewing the enrollment and ADA that was presented at the June 3 board workshop, I would like to clarify that enrollment and ADA figures presented were projected numbers and not actual numbers realized through the course of the year. This year's enrollment was approximately 47,200 and our ADA was approximately 42,280.

While we do anticipate and have budgeted for a decline in enrollment for next year, we do not anticipate it being as drastic as can be perceived by some of the data we shared earlier this month. I apologize for the oversight and for not portraying an accurate picture; and I am sorry for any misunderstanding this may have caused.

In addition, working with the conservators and closely examining the district's finances it was discovered that the Maintenance and Operations (M&O) tax rate assessed for this past year exceeded the maximum compressed rate determined by TEA by .0166 cents. For a \$246,000 home (with the homestead exemption) this equates to approximately \$24 total for the year. We are not alone in this situation; 10 districts in the state are in a similar scenario this year and last year 100 Texas school districts also faced this issue.

In consultation with our conservators, the district will make an equal reduction in the tax rate for the 2024-2025 school year – that is the assessed M&O tax will be .0166 cents less for the upcoming year. While we regret this predicament, we are confident that through the guidance of the conservators, this will rectify the situation.

With all of that said, I am happy to provide a couple of silver linings to our situation. We will not close the aquatics center and we will not relocate the Pre-K classes from the Escontrias historical building to the newer facility. After much deliberation and listening closely to our employees, parents and community, it is in the best interest of our students and district to leave the programs as they are. Thank you to everyone who shared their invaluable input.

While we continue to navigate the challenges, it is important for me to personally inform you of our situation. I want to reassure you that we are actively working to move the district forward, which includes providing regular updates to inform you of our efforts to right our path.

I appreciate your attention and continued commitment to being all in for our students and community. I hope you are having a great summer!

Thank you,

Jim

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