

Talking Points – DISD Budget Issues and Proposed Staffing Cuts

Under federal law, NCLB, in order for a state and district to receive federal funding (Title I), the district must submit a comparability report that ensures all schools have a per pupil expenditure that is within a specified range called the 90-110 percentage range. The per pupil expenditure is calculated by taking a school's total budget (staffing, supplies, etc.) and dividing by the number of students. Like schools are then compared to each other (grade span, size, etc.) to ensure equity in funding across campuses. No school can be funded at less than 90% of this average, and no school can be funded at more than 110% of this average. If a single school falls outside this range, the district does not meet the comparability standard. The amount of money at stake for DISD is \$175 million. This money is used to pay the salaries of 900+ employees in high need schools and areas.

Historically, when DISD has submitted their comparability report, they have placed all of the magnet schools and the learning centers on an "exceptions" list. This was done and had been approved by TEA in the past since the magnet schools and the learning centers were created from the federal desegregation order of 1976. In February 2009, the Texas Education Agency notified the Dallas ISD that they could no longer place the magnet schools and learning centers on an exceptions list. According to TEA, this was not permitted under their current interpretation of the statute.

When the district ran the comparability report, it was found that the magnet schools and the learning centers were above the comparability range of 110%. (The rules state that the general operating funds – those funds from state and local revenue – are the only funds that can be used in making the calculations.) Because 85% of any school's budget is personnel, the district looked to staffing as a way to bring the schools into compliance. As they have made adjustments in the funding, the average keeps changing. In the first report sent to the DISD Board of Trustees (March 26, 2009), Booker T. Washington HSPVA needed to cut \$14,027 from its budget to come into the 90-110 range for comparability. Subsequently, as they have made further adjustments, the number has changed multiple times and has grown. At the same time, the district has begun to look at staffing at the schools as a means to control the comparability range figures. To accomplish this goal, they have applied the staffing formulas used at the regular high schools.

When this formula was applied to BTW, the report posted on the DISD Board of Trustees website (May 5, 2009), showed BTW should lose 23 teachers. After meeting with the Board, the DISD Central Administration adjusted this number to 13.5.