



**Dr. Brent Hawkins**  
LISD Superintendent

# Hawk's Talk

Thursday, July 22, 2021

## Summary of July Board Meeting

Livingston ISD Board Vice-President Scott Paske opened the July meeting of the board of trustees. Livingston ISD Chief Financial Officer Ben Davidson conducted the budget workshop. He reviewed the projections of an average daily attendance of 3,557 students. Plugging this number into the revenues equates to \$19,108,994, \$1,928,907 in tax collections and \$850,000 in general fund revenues.

The district budgeted 3,600 students last year so the estimated revenues are down from 2020. The district staffing is based on student numbers so some positions were not necessary to fill saving the district \$335,000. The last payment to Ideal Impact will be made this year, fuel pricing is locked in with TASB and because of the purchase of new school buses, the district will have a savings of \$200,000 in annual maintenance.

In order to stretch the funds received from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) for five years, the funds can be supplanted. Davidson explains, "In year four and five, we will run a deficit budget and will pull the money from the fund balance because we are supplanting the funds there now."

Livingston ISD Superintendent Dr. Brent Hawkins presented the report on student success. "The state projected that students were six months behind. The ESSER funds will be used to help students recover from learning loss. In the state of Texas, 24,000 Kindergarten students did not attend school last year. Multiply that figure by \$6,000 and you can see how much impact that made in district budgets in the state of Texas not to mention the loss of instructional opportunities. There are thousands of students since March 2020 that have not been in school. These students will come back to public schools across the state with little to no instruction over the past 18 months and further depress the state scores. The state projected that students were approximately six months behind prior to releasing the state averages. The state did not allow for these students in their data. My professional opinion is that we are in worse shape

than what the data indicates so things may get worse before it gets better.

Hawkins continues, "Regarding the STARR (The State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness) results, the State average is twenty percent more affluent than LISD. The third-grade results for "approaches" in the state of Texas are 61, Livingston ISD scores are 81. We matched the state scores or higher in the Elementary grade levels. At the junior high level, the scores remained constant and we have interventions in place to surpass state levels. The narrative of these scores clearly shows the students and staff of Livingston ISD did not follow the state trend as we were competitive with the state averages or we increased our scores and outpaced the state. I know that many folks have a disdain for the state testing and I was opposed to giving the exam at a cost of 75-80 million dollars because it simply showed what we already knew. The good news is that no matter what your opinion on state testing is, we are positioned with the strongest instructional staff in my tenure at LISD to address our students' needs. It will take a tremendous amount of heavy lifting by all involved, but our students deserve an A education and we are making great strides to reach our goals. I am honored to be in a position of positive growth in our scores and not the doom and gloom of many news reports that we have seen in the media as of late.

"The decisions you made as a board of trustees was spot on. The decisions the teachers made in the classroom were spot on. In the worst challenges in public education following the pandemic, our students continue to progress." The opportunities that await our students are remarkable and we are only getting started. Truly what starts here is changing lives, our community, and ultimately the world.

The personnel update was given by Dr. Brent Hawkins. "The district has turned over 52-542 teachers per year in the last three years which is a 17-18% turnover consistently in the last three years. This is within the state average and double-digit better than schools or our socioeconomically disadvantaged makeup like us. We have hired 49 teachers this year which is a win for our students. We have been fully staffed for our students since July 5th and that translates into once again beating the norm.

**WATCH today's  
LISD Facebook  
LIVE VIDEO**

**Dr. Hawkins shares  
information about  
the start of school**  
[facebook.com/livingstonisd](https://facebook.com/livingstonisd)

Dr. Hawkins covers  
the following topics

- Registration
- Meet the Teacher
- First Day of School
- COVID Protocols
- Closed Campuses
- Extra-Curricular Activities

**WELCOME  
BACK!**

**District  
Convocation**

Monday, Aug. 2, 8 am

**Polk County  
Commerce  
Center**

Many schools in the state will start the year understaffed and have higher student-to-teacher ratios.

Dr. Hawkins shared a report on the 21st Century Community Learners Grant. The district worked with the Boys & Girls Club in submitting a federal grant that will help to fund an after-school enrichment program at the junior high school. This opportunity was awarded to Livingston, Crockett, and Nacogdoches. The proceeds will fund a project director and core subject tutors. The \$750,000 grant will be distributed over five years.

Under the consent agenda, the board approved Property and Casualty Insurance, the purchase of instructional reading materials from Fountas and Pinnell and Saddleback for \$75,000. Also approved was the LISD Planning Forward Document for the 2021-2022 school year. Hawkins shared, "The State of Texas has one page of medical guidance for the new school year. Campuses will continue to be closed but access will be granted to parents and community members with an educational purpose. The district will continue to test for COVID although there is no longer a close contact definition. There is currently no virtual school bill passed by the state legislature. Last year, with virtual school, absences or funding were minimized. There is currently no remote learning statute. We will have to be vigilant in cleaning and handwashing and will encourage students ages 12 years old and older to be vaccinated. There are no COVID leave days for employees. The biggest changes are in extracurricular activities. The gym and stadium will be opened to 100% capacity. We are waiting to hear if buses will have a masking requirement and we expect a decision soon."

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## **SUPERINTENDENT DR. BRENT HAWKINS**

Under action items, the board approved the student code of conduct. Legislative bills from the 87th Legislative Session affected the Student Code of Conduct.

- House Bill (HB) 375 amends the offense of continuous sexual abuse of a young child or children under Texas Penal Code 21.02 to include continuous sexual abuse of "a disabled individual" and amends the name of the offense to reflect this change.
- HB 785 amends Chapter 37 with respect to disciplinary placements, restraint procedures, and behavioral intervention or improvement plans for students with disabilities. While revisions to the text of the Code of Conduct were not necessary as a result of this change in law, Editorial Notes regarding this bill have been updated in the section Discipline Management Techniques – Students with Disabilities.
- HB 957 removes a firearm silencer from the list of prohibited weapons in Texas Penal Code 46.05. The bill also repeals the definition of a firearm silencer from Chapter 46 of the Texas Penal Code and adds a chapter to the Texas Government Code regarding firearm suppressor regulation.
- Senate Bill (SB) 248 expands the definition of e-cigarette under Texas Health and Safety Code 161.081 to include a consumable liquid solution or other material aerosolized or vaporized during the use of an e-cigarette or other device, as defined by law.
- SB 530 expands the offense of harassment under Texas Penal Code 42.07 to include publishing on a website, including a social media platform, repeated electronic communications that are reasonably likely to cause emotional distress, abuse, or torment to another person, unless the communications are made in connection with a matter of public concern, as defined by law.
- SB 768 creates a new penalty group under the Texas Controlled Substances Act for fentanyl and related substances. The other action item approved by the board was to amend Board Policy DEC (Local) regarding employee leaves and absences. With the elimination of extended sick leave, the board wanted to offer compassion to employees with catastrophic illnesses while providing fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayers. The amendment will allow employees three options. (1) to join a "Sick Bank" which would require the donation of one vacation day after being employed with the district for one year. A maximum of thirty days may be requested. (2) Sick Leave Pool, employees will not be required to buy-in. At any time, an employee may donate days to another employee with a catastrophic illness. (3) 5 state days + 2 local days. In the past, employees were required to use the two local days or lose them at the end of the year. Under the new plan employees may accumulate up to 20 local days.