

BELTON ISD FREQUENTLY ASKED BUDGET QUESTIONS

Questions:	Answers:
1. How does property tax affect the Belton ISD budget?	Belton ISD does not receive additional funds when local property values increase. The basic allotment is \$6,160, which is the base amount school districts receive per student. Local tax collections and state funding contribute to the basic allotment. As property values increase, tax collections also increase, which means the state contributes less funding toward our allotment. The current funding formula keeps the basic allotment the same, even when property values increase.
2. Why don't we ask for another bond or tax increase?	Bond funds are primarily used for new construction projects or facility renovations. Bond funds cannot be used for daily operational purposes within the general fund. A tax rate increase would have to be approved by voters. BISSD can only increase the maintenance and operation tax rate (which addresses the general fund, such as salaries, benefits and other operating costs) by another 3.17 pennies by law. If a Voter Approved Tax Rate Election was called and voters approve the tax rate election, then BISSD could collect an additional 3.17 pennies.
3. What's the difference between money from bonds and our local operating budget?	Bond funds are primarily used for new construction projects or facility renovations. In order to use bonds for facilities, propositions must be approved by the voters. Bond funds have a separate bank account. We cannot legally use bond funds for local operating purposes. The BISSD operating budget relies primarily on property tax collections and state funding.
4. Is our budget deficit isolated to Belton ISD or is it a state-level issue?	School districts across Texas are experiencing projected budget shortfalls and funding gaps for the same reasons we are.
5. Did we know COVID-19 stimulus funding was temporary and did we plan accordingly?	Yes, we knew the COVID-19 stimulus funding was temporary and are working on strategies to absorb those expenses into the general fund.
6. Will there be layoffs or a reduction in force?	No. We are not considering layoffs or a reduction in force. We are approaching staffing changes through resignations and reorganization.
7. Are we using attrition or a hiring freeze to address staffing?	We are using resignations and reorganization to address staffing reductions. We are assessing positions that become available through resignations and are reviewing the roles and responsibilities.
8. How might class sizes be affected?	<p>Belton ISD is evaluating staffing ratios. We currently staff based on the following ratios:</p> <p>Pre-kindergarten - 1:11 Kindergarten through fourth-grade - 1:22 (BISD can apply for waivers for up to 23 and 24 students as set by the state) Fifth-grade - 1:25 Sixth through 12th-grade - 1:26</p> <p>COVID stimulus funding allowed BISD to staff below this staffing ratio in response to post-pandemic challenges. We will now more closely adhere to our current staffing guidelines.</p>
9. Will we lose programs or certain electives?	It is possible that courses with low enrollment may not be offered. We are reviewing master schedules to identify efficiencies and balance classes. Our goal is to minimize the impact on the student experience. There is no plan to eliminate any specific course offerings.
10. Could we see cuts in salaries or benefits?	Belton ISD is not considering reductions to current salaries or changes to the types of benefits being offered. Benefit costs are set by our providers i.e. TRS ActiveCare.
11. Will yearly raises be impacted?	No decisions have been made regarding salary increases. We are currently analyzing budget scenarios based on the impact of reductions. A compensation plan will be presented to the Board of Trustees at their June meeting.
12. Will staff hours be reduced?	No. Employees will not have a reduction to their normal regularly scheduled hours.
13. If staff have requested to transfer interally to a different campus, will that request still be considered?	Transfer applicants will continue to be considered for any open and active vacancy.
14. If BISSD is trying to minimize the impact on classrooms with reductions, can positions be consolidated at Central Office?	Leaders will review vacant positions and explore efficiencies, including consolidating responsibilities when possible. This process will continue as positions become available. The responsibilities of each position will be considered.

15. Will the availability of supplies be reduced?	All departments and campuses are reducing their budgets. We will strive to protect essential supplies for instruction and programming requirements. There are some needs, such as cleaning supplies, fuel, utilities, and safety needs, that will also remain a priority as we make adjustments.
16. Will planned facility improvements be delayed?	All 2022 bond projects are appropriated through funds approved in the May 2022 election. Many projects will be complete by summer 2024. By law, bond funds cannot be used for payroll and benefits, or campus and department budgets.
17. Is BISD considering switching to a four-day school week to save money?	We are not considering implementing a four-day week at this time. More data is needed on the effectiveness of four-day week as a cost saving measure. Additionally, we are researching the impact of four-day weeks on families, student learning and instruction. Of the 1,207 public school districts in Texas, only 83 (mostly rural) have implemented a four-day week.
18. What's the plan for filling teaching vacancies? Can staff with relevant certifications fill in temporarily?	We will fill teaching vacancies that are validated through our staffing guidelines. Staff could potentially be used to provide coverage in short term situations. Our goal is to staff schools in alignment with our guidelines.
19. Will BISD continue to focus on student attendance and truancy enforcement?	Yes. Our community should expect additional communication on the importance of regular school attendance.
20. Is enrollment down because more parents are homeschooling?	We monitor this number and are not seeing significant changes in the number of families choosing homeschooling each year.
21. What's the timeline for budget decisions? When will we know more?	Campus and district staff are working to identify potential reductions to our budget. Information will be communicated as final budget decisions are made. Additional information will be provided in early May.
22. Can staff provide suggestions or help address the deficit?	Yes, suggestions for budget reductions and revenue generators may be submitted via this link .
23. Can we share this information with parents and the community?	Yes, BISD will update our Legislative Priorities and Budget implications webpage as information is available.
24. Are there plans to advocate to legislators about inadequate school funding?	The BISD Board of Trustees approved legislative priorities for the 88th Legislature in October of 2022, before the session began in January. Trustees and administrators met with lawmakers throughout the regular session and discussed issues that are important to BISD. The district's priorities for the Legislature were to address school finance, improve support for student learning and growth and increase local control. Since the session ended without an increase to the basic allotment, district leaders have continued to be in frequent communication with lawmakers.
25. How will the possibility of vouchers impact our budget?	It has been the priority of BISD to communicate funding needs with our State Representatives through our legislative priorities. It is unclear on the financial implications for Texas public schools if vouchers pass.
26. What does "Campus Support" mean in the budget breakdown slide in the "Texas School Finance 101 and Implications for Belton ISD" slidedeck?	Campus support includes auxiliary and paraprofessional positions.
27. What does the "Contract Services" line item in the budget include?	Contracted services are those services provided by outside vendors. For example: utilities, auditors, technology subscriptions, etc.
28. What is the district's current stance on Impact Aid?	We are proud of our partnership with Fort Cavazos and our military-connected families, who now comprise almost 30% of our student population. Impact Aid is a federal grant program for districts that have lost local property tax revenue due to the presence of non-taxable federal land. Because our military-connected population has grown, we will work with our military partners, and the federal government, to ensure any available funds are being realized to help meet the needs of our students and families.
29. Is there anything "off the table?"	All ideas are being considered.