

# Big Hollow School District #38

## PRESS RELEASE

In the last seven years Big Hollow School District #38 has seen an unprecedented increase in its student population due to new home developments in the community. The student enrollment of 459 in 2000 has grown to 1443 in 2007 and is projected to be around 2100 students in the year 2012. In anticipation of the growth, the Board of Education requested and the community approved the necessary funding to acquire land and build a new, world-class school district campus.

Unfortunately, under and un-funded federal and state mandates (such as Special Education and No Child Left Behind) and PTELL (the tax cap) have prevented the operational revenues (which are separate from school building construction funds) from keeping pace with the operational expenditures over this same time frame. Recent efforts to address this revenue shortfall in the form of operational rate referenda have failed to secure community approval. In fact, the last time the community approved an operational rate increase was 23 years ago in 1984. As a financial consequence, during the past three years the Big Hollow School District has been forced to borrow \$1.2 million, \$1.8 million and \$2.4 million in the form of Tax Anticipation Warrants (TAWs) to fund school year operational expenses. Despite having trimmed and managed operational costs per pupil at a level of 25% below the state average, the school district faces the 2007-2008 school year with the need to increase the amount of TAWs again. If this borrowing progression is left unchecked, the program and cost consequences are simply compiled and passed on to future students and community members.

After thorough research to make cuts in the budget with the least amount of impact on educational programming, and consideration of the comments and suggestions resulting from open discussion with the community, the school board has authorized the following program and fee changes effective for the 2007-2008 school year:

- Keep the bus reductions (piloted in February 2007) for the 2007-08 school year
- Eliminate Art and Music class for grades K-8
- Eliminate Computer class for grades K and 6-8
- Moratorium on Ed Fund capital outlay
- Take back of LOP program from SEDOL
- Eliminate funding for extracurricular activities, sports officials, athletic conference and IESA dues and fees, which become 100% pay-to-play
- Increased student fees at registration to help cover cost of consumables such as library periodicals, art supplies, PE supplies, science supplies, workbooks
  - Fees paid before the August 17 deadline will remain at \$150 per child in grades K-8
  - Fees paid after August 17 will be \$175 per child in Kindergarten and \$200 per child in grades 1-8

These changes result in a net positive impact to the district operational funds of approximately \$750,000. The Board does not consider these program changes permanent and will continue to re-evaluate program viability as District #38 finances merit.

The Board is thankful for all the continued community support, ideas, and involvement and welcomes constructive input. The Board acknowledges the importance of community partnering to help meet the financial and educational challenges associated with population growth and also remains committed to offering the district the best possible programs in a fiscally responsible manner to ensure the continued, long-term success of the district.