



Board Community Conversation

10.04.23

Please note, questions and answers were recorded in the order in which they were received.

- Question:** There's construction going on affecting students walking to and from Lake Ridge High School. Will you be communicating a safe route for those students due to the construction?

Answer: MISD Transportation has provided a bus route that picks up and drops off at Spencer Elementary school for those in the hazardous traffic area. Those communications regarding the new bus routes were sent on 10/13/23 and 10/20/23.
- Question:** With HB 763, how does MISD plan to respond to that law?

Answer: We've had a discussion. Our board and our staff have concerns about it. What we know is the board must take a vote on it either yes or no. Some of our concern is the state just pushed it out without anything tied to it.
- Question:** My concern is speed limits. Does the district have any kind of say in regard to installing portable speed bumps? School zones are dangerous. I think 20 miles per hour is too fast.

Answer: Anything dealing with the streets like that is a city concern. When it comes to our parking lots – please contact that campus principal and he or she can work with our officer on duty to help with that.
- Question:** What are some resources – I'm friends with a bunch of older men who all talk about how Mansfield was back in the day and they are hung up on that idea of how things used to be. How do I get across to them the beauty of MISD now?

Answer: There are a lot of resources we push out that highlight all the great things our kids are doing and the news is available on the district website and social media platforms. We have a Partners in Education program that launched this year and they can come experience Mansfield today for themselves.
- Question:** Please talk a little bit more about Partners in Education?

Answer: Partners in Education encompasses mentors, volunteers and community partners. We serve several municipalities, and they want to give back – this is a way for them to do it. Our mentor program is based on a relationship between an adult and child that addresses three things everyone needs: Do you see me, do you hear me and do I matter?
- Question:** Are there any assemblies planned to address racially sensitive issues and guns in school because there was a gun brought to Summit today. I am also continuing to push that

messages go to every parent in the district when a gun is brought to school rather than just the parents at that campus.

Answer: There was not a gun at Summit today. A fake, toy gun (Orbeez toy pellet gun) was brought to school. There have been several instances of this. We need to have a serious conversation about this because they look very real. We sent something out last year saying, 'that's enough – quit bringing those to school.' It is likely necessary to communicate this again to our families so we can partner with parents in this conversation.

7. **Question:** In regard to the Evolv Express weapons screening devices: Who will be doing the screening and how are they trained to use this technology?

Answer: We added a position at each campus, and they are trained as well. There will also be additional campus staff to facilitate as a part of their morning duty station.

8. **Question:** Can you talk about the reasons the district opposes vouchers?

Answer: We are against vouchers because they take money away from public school students and teachers. Vouchers take public dollars and send them to private schools. They are basically a discount for someone who can already afford a private school. A nearby private school costs approximately \$24,000 dollars for kindergarten, and so that \$8,000 voucher doesn't go very far when you also consider the cost of transportation, uniforms, etc. Additionally, when our students leave for either private or charter schools, it impacts not only what we can provide for our MISD students, but often impacts their learning as well. For instance, our students and district outperform the majority of charters in our area, and when those students come back to us, we have to spend time catching those students up. Our educators are doing a great job. The data shows that. Finally, with public dollars comes public accountability. We are accountable for our finances and our students' performance publicly. Private schools do not have to follow those same rules, yet they would receive your public dollars.

9. **Question:** I'm brand new to the district. I found charter schools – basically anyone with an idea and some curriculum can launch a charter school. How are the charter schools vetted?

Answer: We don't get to vet a charter school. It has to be approved of by the state board of education. Expansions go directly to Commissioner Mike Morath for approval.

10. **Question:** Can we offer an incentive to our teachers – especially special education teachers - custodians, etc. like a stipend to keep them in the district?

Answer: We're all struggling with finding special education teachers right now. We are reaching out and talking to colleges to recruit. We've modified some of the criteria so we are better able to hire people who care about kids and then help them finalize certification. We have our Frances Brownlie program where we help our own employees get certified as well, and this has been hugely successful

11. **Question:** Is there a plan to incentivize SPED teachers like other districts have?

Answer: It is not in this year's budget, but that is something we can talk about for next year.

12. **Question:** What about the TASB report regarding their audit on teacher pay – can we read that ourselves? And what are we doing to keep our employees?

Answer: That report was part of the board documents from that meeting and it is online. One of the methods we're implementing to keep our employees is initiating 'stay' interviews so we can encourage our teachers to stay in the district. We also have a teacher morale committee that is in its second year and provides valuable feedback.

13. **Question:** Have all buildings been checked for wheelchair accessibility? Some doors are heavy and recently the elevator wasn't working at a particular campus.

Answer: All of our buildings are ADA compliant. There may be a better entrance at that particular building. When we call our elevator service company, they're typically out the same day to make repairs.

14. **Question:** Has the curriculum changed at the elementary level to ensure students are reading on grade level? Are we teaching phonics again?

Answer: Reading is our first Guiding Statement in our Vision 2030, 10-year strategic plan. We monitor and measure it frequently. With regard to our reading curriculum, it is exceptional. We would love to be at 100% but our kids are doing really well. We are pulling students into small groups and focusing on reading. Our teachers are sharing great practices and feedback in PLCs, focusing on students' individual needs

15. **Question:** What happened with Telehealth plan? Did it go forward?

Answer: Yes

16. **Question:** Great job on the rezoning – along the same lines I know board policy can move toward single member districts for geographic representation – have you considered that?

Answer: It can create issues because there are situations like that where everyone is focused on their own area rather than being a part of the team.

17. **Question:** Danny Jones – there are concerns with teachers' behavior toward students. Can you investigate and provide mental health or retraining for teachers who treat students poorly at school? What are you all doing – can you help?

Answer: We have a way for staff members, parents and students to log on and access Care Solace. It takes you through a questionnaire and brings up a list of providers who can help you if you are struggling with something that might impact how you interact with others. It tailors it to the need of the person. Also, every staff member has an administrative evaluator and monitoring happens. We do a required number of walk throughs. If there is a complaint about a specific staff member, that will be addressed on an individual basis that could include more frequent pop ins and other monitoring. Every situation is different. We are in and out of classrooms all the time.

18. **Question:** Are there any processes where you're systematically looking at identifying talented people for promotion? How are we developing our talent?

Answer: For years now, we've been fortunate to have top notch staff that we have been able to identify internal talent for a very long time, all the way up to our superintendents. Many have been hired from within and started at the teacher level. We've grown our own for a long time. We have a GoTo program in the district for teachers who want to be administrators, for administrators who want to move to a district-level position, and for those who want to be superintendents. Again, our Brownlie scholarship programs identifies non-professionals who want to be teachers.

19. **Question:** Did anything come from the committee on teacher morale?

Answer: We talked about what we could take off their plate. There are several things we implemented – and raised salaries. There were events that were stressing campuses out – some of those events are non-negotiables, but others we made optional. We also outsourced substitute recruitment and our fill rates have been better than they were pre-COVID. The committee's work is ongoing.

20. **Question:** Are individual schools' expenditures public – can we see that?

Answer: Those files are available via a public information request. The district presents a monthly disbursement report at board meetings, but those contain a summary by fund and are not broken out by campus.

21. **Question:** Are classrooms going to be built in the MACs to relieve overcrowding at Lake Ridge High School?

Answer: These are issues that will be addressed by the Long-Range Facilities Planning Committee.

22. **Question:** Who makes the decision about making a campus a 'choice' campus?

Answer: We have relied on the campuses to make those decisions because typically, campuses who generate the concept on their own have more support in the long run.