

February 25, 2019

SFDRICISD Team,

Encouraging a unified approach regarding important decisions and which must be made in the present but which will inevitably have profound effects for our District's future, clearly calls for increased sharing of information and additional conversations. While today I am specifically talking about the future of our Pre-Kindergarten/Early Childhood program, the need for this type of conversation can apply to so many decisions which have been made and others that need to be made.

We have heard real concerns about what may become of a neighborhood in the heart of San Felipe if Lamar is chosen for repurposing the early childhood programs. These are genuine concerns, and must be carefully considered. We should all be cognizant, not only of the families that are vested in their neighborhood, but also of San Felipe's contribution to our District, our progress and our history.

We have also heard other less-informed comments. For example, I have read and heard voices directly say that there is nothing wrong with the Cardwell facility that cannot be fixed. The reports of required repairs, the improvements to the visible deterioration, not to mention the protecting of our students from the elements speak for themselves. It would be more cost effective to build a new campus.

Similarly, the money invested to build the Roberto "Bobby" Barrera Elementary school at Laughlin AFB and the expenses to the Student Performance Center have all been subjects of criticism. While we should understand that these are almost natural reactions when someone's livelihood or comfort level is challenged, we should also be open to considerations that affect each of us, even beyond what is immediately observable. I am certain that only when the full effects that the Roberto "Bobby" Barrera Elementary school is having on sustaining Laughlin's current mission, as well as the development of future missions and our own communities' economic development is entirely understood, we will fully be appreciative of our District's investment. This of course, would be clearly visible and immediately understood if Laughlin AFB ceased to exist and our community lost the hundreds of jobs it now depends on. Those of us keenly aware of Laughlin's contribution to our economy hope and pray we never find out.

In a similar manner, only when students from this era fondly recall the multitude of events held at the SPC will they completely understand the concerns over today's investment. Today's students will certainly recall how they performed at the SPC; how they were recognized by our community at a Board of Trustees meeting; how they enjoyed their elementary UIL awards ceremony; how often they were rewarded with a perfect attendance matinee or how their community had a place to gather when they disagreed with an impending decision. Only then will they realize (perhaps without saying), that their community had a gathering place worthy of their talents, their commitments and their opinions.

Without the need to delve into debates about recommendations made by prior citizen's committees (which I was a part of), votes cast by Trustees or the administration's implementation of those decisions, I invite you to consider the needs that are before us and how our response (or lack of response) will inevitably have profound effects on the future.

Not only do we have the opportunity to provide our Pre-Kindergarten/Early Childhood students a comfortable campus without the need to ask our community for a \$16,000,000 investment; we also have the opportunity to save large amounts of money which will be required annually to sustain the Cardwell campus. Next, by eliminating the use of the oldest campus (Cardwell), we will also save as much as \$2,000,000 per year. These are monies that can continue to be reinvested in carrying out the vision for our school district.

The 2017-2018 Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) indicated that the number of SFDRICISD students graduating with a CTE certification (35.3%) was twice that of the state and 13%

higher than the region. The number of students obtaining college credits while in high school is reported at 50.6%, well beyond the state and regional average. In addition, 60.8% of DRHS graduates enroll in a Texas Institution of Higher Education, which is an average of 8% more than both the state (51.8%) and the region (52.5%). Finally, it is important to note that the academic growth of students in grades 4th through 9th grade in reading and math, indicates a higher or equal success rate than the region in most grade levels. When we compare the academic growth of the bilingual students in both math and reading, we begin to see the district percentages at a higher success than the region, and closing the gap in comparison to the state within 2% difference. In large part, all of this is due to the investments we have made in CTE, ECHS and the Bilingual Academies. Our vision is to continue to develop opportunities for our students by developing our CTE center into a standalone school, continue to support our ECHS by building an additional wing to more fully support course offerings; and build a Health Career ECHS. It is our vision that Del Rio students (regardless of the neighborhood they now live in) will have the opportunity to graduate from 1 of 5 distinguished programs: 1. DRHS; 2. ECHS; 3. Blended Academy; 4. The Maldonado CTE Center; 5. The Health Careers ECHS.

These are the types of investments that will provide opportunities for our students beyond our immediate borders as well as provide for our own community's economic development. We believe that all of this can be done without the need to tax our citizens beyond what is absolutely necessary. However, we must continue to make difficult (but sound) decisions, that provide opportunities for our students' growth and our communities' economic development.

Finally, we must learn from the mistakes of other school districts that did not have the vision or fortitude to make difficult decisions. We can consider the experiences of Northeast ISD, Austin ISD and most recently Judson ISD. These are examples of school districts that failed to make the types of decisions we are faced with today. As a result, they did not reinvest in truly competitive programs, lost thousands of students to charter schools, and are now faced with foregoing potential opportunities for their students; not to mention the need to close campuses and release large numbers of staff.

It should be noted that as administrators we are hopeful for the selection of the best rezoning plan, but not necessarily vested in the repurposing of one particular campus. Administration wholeheartedly believes that repurposing one campus for our Pre-Kindergarten/Early Childhood program is the best option. However, which campus is repurposed for this program is recognizably a difficult decision and requires some further discussion.

Provided below are campus options (Lamar, Chavira & Calderon) in which to house our Pre-kindergarten/Early Childhood Program and the benefits that each one provides. Similar benefits, which apply to all three campuses (such as campus security) are not listed. It should also be noted that concerns for selecting any particular campus are not listed as these can always be debatable and not conducive to making a decision. Other elementary campuses are not an option because they are either both too large or are located in parts of town that are heavily populated by active students. Selecting either one of these campuses would disrupt the entire District operations, become too much of a burden to implement, and would minimize the benefits of such a difficult decision.

In the past, we attempted to pass a bond election, that if approved, would have provided a replacement campus for our Pre-Kindergarten/Early Childhood program as well as provide a second elementary to the north of the city and much needed repairs to our high school. Although this bond failed and elementary enrollment has decreased, we continue to be faced with the same three needs.

We now have the opportunity to complete a lot of what was previously presented to our voters, just by deciding to do so. We also have the opportunity to rethink what will be presented to our voters in

the future. Most importantly, we have the opportunity to come together as a community and consider what is best for everyone concerned.

Option 1

Lamar Campus

Repurposed to House Pre-Kindergarten/Early Childhood Program

Option 2

Chavira Campus

Repurposed to House Pre-Kindergarten/Early Childhood Program

Option 3

Dr. Fermin Calderon Elementary Campus

Repurposed to House Pre-Kindergarten/Early Childhood Program