

The Ector County ISD Board of Trustees held its April board meeting on the 16th. A recap of the agenda is below.

1. Roll Call.
2. Verification of compliance with open meetings requirements.
3. Jaden Walker from Odessa High School led the pledges of allegiance.



4. Dr. Steve Brown, ECISD Trustee, gave the invocation.
5. In the special presentations, we announced ECISD Chief Technology Officer (CTO) Dr. Kellie Wilks was recently awarded the national [CTO of the Year Award](#) by CoSN; recognized 10 Permian High School students who have qualified for the International Thespian Festival this summer; introduced via video more than 100 students who qualified for Career & Technical Education state contests; and announced the recipients of this year's Spirit Scholarships.
6. In his opening comments, Superintendent Dr. Scott Muri talked about "award" season beginning as we move into the final weeks of the school year. He reminded them of the ECISD Outstanding Teachers picnic at a RockHounds game coming up in two weeks. This is the annual celebration of the campus teachers of the year, and the two teachers of the year will throw out the first pitch of the game.
7. In public comment, Permian High School senior Sapna Yadalla spoke to the board about her experience in band. She said fine arts programs create spirit, require discipline to practice and improve, and expand a

student's mind in ways textbooks cannot. She thanked the school board for supporting fine arts in a big way.

8. Bond 2023 Update – Trustees received an update on the progress of Bond 2023 projects. A local Career & Technical Education (CTE) committee is studying ideas for the new CTE Center. The committee has met three times so far and has made two site visits to existing CTE Centers – CTECH in Hobbs, New Mexico, and the LIFT Center in Abilene. Another committee is at work studying middle schools. This committee has met twice and has scheduled a site visit to Griffin MS in Lewisville for May 3. This Friday, two architect firms will host project planning sessions for the Transportation Center, Permian HS auditorium, JROTC projects, and the middle school. The Fine Arts Department has now ordered 135 instruments at a cost of \$372,000 and 26 of those have arrived and are on campus being used by students. In regard to interactive flat panels, the IT Department anticipates installation will be complete in all classrooms by June. In the finance update, money has now been encumbered for land purchases, architect services, technology items, fine arts instruments, and athletics projects. A little more than \$20 million has been encumbered, which is about 5% of the total bond cost. Looking forward, two Requests for Qualifications are currently posted for Geotechnical & Special Testing and Construction Manager at Risk, and contracts are being finalized with architects DLR for the new Transition Learning Center and with JSA for the new Agricultural Farm.

9. Action items

A. Trustees voted 7-0 to approve purchases over \$50,000. One item was on this list this month, \$165,339 to Grande Communications for internet connectivity.

B. Trustees voted 7-0 to allow the superintendent to negotiate and enter into a lease agreement with Sunset Golf & Country Club, LLC. (9301 Andrews Highway.) ECISD is under contract to purchase this property for future growth (not related to Bond 2023). When the sale is finalized, the District will agree to lease the property back to the current owner in order to operate the golf course through this summer.

10. Trustees voted 7-0 to approve the Consent Agenda. The consent agenda is a group of routine, or previously discussed items presented together for a single approval vote. This month's Consent Agenda included minutes of meetings; bills for payment; acceptance of donations over \$10,000*; and out-of-state travel for Odessa High School and Permian High School Business Professionals of America students to travel to Chicago for BPA National Leadership Conference; out-of-state travel for Odessa High School Future Educators student to travel to Washington D.C. for the national competition; the certification of provision of instructional materials survey from TEA; and a low attendance waiver from January 16 due to weather.

11. Reports

A. Trustees heard a presentation from the Fine Arts Department. Ector County ISD boasts some of the finest fine arts programs in Texas. Including elementary school music and art, 25,978 students (or 79% of ECISD students) receive some sort of fine arts instruction each week. Data shows students who stay in fine arts graduate at 90.8%, nearly 20% higher than students not in fine arts; 91.9% of students who stay in fine arts pass End of Course exams about 14% higher than those not in fine arts; a 5th-Grade Strings program is now at 15 elementary schools with more than 400 students involved; and community support continues to grow. Bond 2023 brought \$18.5 million for fine arts and JROTC (which is under fine arts). A complete renovation of Permian High School's auditorium (\$12.5 million) is the largest part of that, followed by replacement of outdated instruments (\$3.5 million). The impact of the bond is

already being felt; to date 135 new instruments have been ordered at a cost of \$372,310, with 26 having already arrived and been distributed for students to use.

- B. Trustees continued their discussion of budget priorities for the 2024-25 school year. ECISD is in the same position as school district across Texas, cutting budgets due to the Texas Legislature's inaction regarding school funding during the last legislative session. The state has not increased the basic allotment for public education since 2019 while costs have risen dramatically. Money is available and set aside for public education, but it has not been distributed. Legislators will not meet again until January 2025, so Trustees must consider that it looks like schools will wait until next summer to learn if public education will receive new funding. **Because of the uncertainty around funding, board members expressed hesitancy to give raises, which become a permanent part of future budgets. They looked at a plan to give employees a one-time Retention Incentive/Stipend to current full-time employees who return to ECISD next year. The incentive would be approximately 3%, which equals a cost of about \$6 million. The remaining ESSER 3 federal funds will help allow ECISD to do this for its employees but freeing up fund balance for this incentive. It would be about the size of a typical raise – the average teacher could see about \$1,950 and the average hourly employee could see about \$930; the minimum would be \$500. This incentive would be paid in the fall, and some part-time employees would not be eligible for the incentive.** The District is anticipating a budget deficit of about \$24 million for next year, that is with mostly the same expenses but without any additional revenue expected. Operational costs continue to rise, and fund balance must be kept at recommended guidelines so significant cuts will need to be made. Among potential areas to reduce the budget, Trustees discussed software and contracted services agreements, choosing not to fill vacancies among central office staff and elementary school paraprofessionals, reorganizing middle school double-block schedules, and increasing class sizes (25 to 28 in elementary and 24 to 30 in secondary core classes). These reductions would shrink the potential budget deficit from \$24 million to \$12 million and fund balance could be used for the remaining amount.
- C. Trustees received a report on their continuing education requirements. All Trustees are in compliance.

12. Trustees moved to closed session to discuss personnel matters.

- A. Trustees voted 7-0 to approve 2024-25 contract renewals for administrators, teachers, and other professional support employees.
- B. Trustees voted 7-0 to approve Stephanie Moran as the principal at Buice Elementary. Stephanie is currently serving as the interim principal at Buice. She began her career with ECISD as a teacher and coach in 1997. She served eight years as an instructional coach and five years as an assistant principal at Bonham Middle School and Odessa High School. She was a participant in ECISD's Aspiring Principals Academy.
- C. Trustees voted 7-0 to approve Anthony Garcia as an executive director of leadership. Anthony is the principal at Odessa High School and before that was the principal at Wilson & Young Medal of Honor Middle School. He has five years of experience as a principal and four years as an assistant principal. He is one of seven ECISD principals taking part in the Holdsworth Campus Leadership Program, a two-year program designed to grow stronger school leaders.
- D. Trustees voted 7-0 to approve Taylor Roy as executive director of guidance, counseling, and wellness. Taylor is currently the director of guidance and counseling for ECISD. She has 10 years of public education experience with four years as a counselor serving both

elementary and middle school in ECISD. She also has five years of elementary and middle school teaching experience prior to joining ECISD.

13. Information Items – <https://meetings.boardbook.org/Public/Agenda/1406?meeting=629222>

14. In his closing remarks, Dr. Muri announced Dora Flores, currently the principal at Burleson Elementary, will be transferred to be the principal at Cavazos Elementary for the 2024-25 school year.

15. The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

*\$100,000 from the Education Foundation of Odessa for SKYOP (drone robotics program)

\$75,000 from the Education Partnership of the Permian Basin for Energy Program equipment, curriculum, training