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# News Release

## **Comal ISD trustees approve 2011-12 budget**

The Comal ISD Board of Trustees on Wednesday approved a budget for 2011-12 that is approximately \$3.2 million smaller than last year's budget, though it supports instructional services for an additional 575 students.

"For the first time since 1949, the state failed to fund enrollment growth," said Debra George, chief financial officer for Comal ISD. "Comal ISD will receive \$142 less per weighted student."

The \$137 million operations budget includes a \$10.9 million tab for the state of Texas, for costs associated with Chapter 41, \$71 million for instruction, nearly \$8 million for transportation and \$15.5 million for maintenance and operations.

The budget reflects a decrease in five professional positions and 14 paraprofessional and auxiliary staff (\$1.97 million), a reduction in utilities costs (\$600,000), capital projects (\$640,000) and state programs (\$40,000).

Administration is recommending an interest and sinking (I&S) rate of 39 cents per \$100 valuation, an increase of 6 cents over last year's tax rate, and a maintenance and operations rate (M&O) of \$1.04 per \$100 valuation, unchanged from last year. The proposed increase in the I&S tax rate is necessary to meet the district's bond payoff schedule. The school board will vote on the tax rate at the September 22 meeting.

The school board approved the transfer of \$30.3 million from the district's general fund balance to fund the construction of an elementary school off FM 306 near Sattler on land the district already owns. This school, which would open for the 2013-14 school year, would alleviate crowding at Rebecca Creek and Startzville elementary schools.

The board voted unanimously to name the district's newest elementary school, Indian Springs Elementary. Construction began this summer on the campus, located in the Indian Springs subdivision at the southern tip of Comal ISD in Bexar County. The school, which will alleviate higher enrollments at Johnson Ranch Elementary and Bill Brown Elementary, is expected to open for the 2012-13 school year.

The school board heard a report about the district's new teacher mentor program, "Buds in Bloom," by Linda Dreibrodt, curriculum and instruction coordinator and program adviser. Comal ISD retains teachers new to the classroom at much better rates than the state average, she noted. After the first year of teaching, an estimated 19 percent of teachers leave the profession in Texas, with half of them leaving after the 5<sup>th</sup> year. In Comal ISD, an estimated 9 percent of first year teachers leave the district and 27 percent leave after four years.

“Comal ISD is a great place to work and we still have the low numbers,” she said. “We don’t have the issues of teachers getting frustrated and leaving the profession.”

The three primary concerns of Comal ISD beginning teachers are:

- Time management
- Parent communication
- Classroom management.

And the district’s veteran and mentor teachers spend time with new teachers throughout the year helping them build skills and strategies to take on those three challenges, Dreibrodt said. The support comes from campus mentors, team and/or department colleagues, curriculum and instruction administrators and fellow beginning teachers in the form of group support.

The work on Comal ISD’s Bond 2008 is wrapping up as Kinder Ranch Elementary opened its doors and construction continues on Indian Springs Elementary, according to Thomas Bloxham, assistant superintendent for support services. In his report to the school board, Bloxham noted that \$2.7 million in renovations to the district’s Hill Country transportation hub is complete. The ribbon cutting ceremony for the branch of Randolph Brooks Federal Credit Union inside Smithson Valley High School will finalize the major renovations that have taken place at the school, he said, which also include a commercial kitchen for the school’s culinary arts program.