

Questions and Answers from Town Hall Meeting

February 6, 2018

What if the campuses make it? Do we still have to do it?

We are working hard to insure that our students perform well on the state assessments. If the elementary and junior high school campuses achieve Met Standard this year, we would still have to implement the In-District Charter partnership. We have to agree to the partnership before we receive the results on the state assessment. We want to make sure that the partnership contains opportunities that we want for our students whether our schools are Improvement Required (IR) or not.

Can you give us an example of who the education partners might be?

Education partners might be representatives from universities, public independent school districts, governmental entities that have a focus on education, individuals with educational backgrounds, business and community leaders, etc.

How will this affect our school taxes?

Establishing an In-District Charter partnership with an Advisory Board will not and cannot affect the local taxes. Only the Board of Trustees has the legal authority to change the tax rate in Hearne ISD.

Is the funding provided to them or from the state?

The funding for this program would come from the same budget we currently support our campuses with. Any additional funding would come from the state to Hearne ISD.

How would this program be affected by the STAAR Interim Assessment Pilot?

The STAAR Interim Assessment Pilot will not be affected by the partnership. Campuses and students will still have the option to participate in the STAAR Interim Assessment Pilot. It is not required.

The last Board Meeting was the first time we heard of this. Why are we just now hearing of this?

The H.B. 1842 (2015 legislation) which requires the closure of campuses that are IR for more than three years in a row or the state appoint a Board of Managers was discussed in the September 11, 2017 board meeting. S.B. 1882 (2017 legislation) became an option for the district to consider in October of this school year. However, the Texas Education Agency has stated that they will not have the final regulations and rules written until February 28, 2018. We can only communicate what we believe the final regulations will allow.

In District Charter will allow us to have flexibility and additional resources, right?

Correct. If the district is granted an In-District Charter partnership we will receive the same opportunities or waivers that independent charters receive, such as, more flexible school calendars, more options for certifications of personnel, longer school day, etc.

Will this benefit all students in Hearne ISD?

Yes. Unlike other charters the Hearne In-District Charter partnership will serve all the students on both the Hearne Elementary and Hearne Junior campuses. No students that reside in Hearne ISD will be denied acceptance to these schools.

What's the difference between Board of Managers and Charter Advisory Board?

A Board of Managers is appointed by the Texas Education Agency with no direct input from the district. The Hearne ISD school board in collaboration with the superintendent establishes an In-District charter.

With the funds we receive now, will they be affected? Will TEA give us more money? Will property taxes change?

Establishing an In-District Charter partnership will not affect the funds we receive now from the state. The district may receive additional funding that is based on a formula applied by the state if the In-District Charter partnership is approved. Taxes will not change if the In-District Charter partnership is approved.

If a district Charter is created, are their recommendations mandatory?

To answer this question, we will need to see the final regulations. I would believe that any recommendations made would be something that the administration and board would want to support.

Are you aware of any district that has been successful in turning around an IR school? Who would be our potential partners?

Yes, there are numerous school districts around the area and state that have been successful in turning around IR schools and yes some have volunteered already to partner with Hearne ISD.

Shouldn't we look for successful schools that do this at our grade levels?

Yes and we are looking for successful schools who do this at our grade levels and who have worked with similar demographics that we have.

Will you make sure that special education and ELL students are included?

Yes, we are actually identifying in our In-District Charter application the desire to work with these two specific programs district wide, which would include Hearne High School.

Explain why we need a 501(C) 3?

This is a requirement from the Texas Education Agency. I can only assume since the application is coming from the charter division and charters are required to have a 501 (C) 3 is why this requirement is in the application.

Will we get less money?

No, we may actually receive more funding for the students on these campuses.

What will happen to sports and fine arts?

We will continue to offer sports and fine arts as we currently do.

What level of education will these students get?

The goal we have now is to provide all students with a quality education and that goal will not change with an In-District charter.

Will employees be replaced by people from A&M?

No, whomever we partner with will only be focused on what the campuses can do to improve instruction and learning.

Do the parents have a “Say “vote on the advisory board?

Parents will have input into the process through these Town Hall meetings, by communicating with me and/or elected officials and through surveys. However, the membership of the advisory board will be designated by the administration and approved by the Hearne ISD Board of Trustees and the Texas Education Agency.

What about the higher level children?

The district is already making plans to focus more on higher level performing students and we believe the In-District Charter partnership will enhance our plans.

Who writes the grants?

The district and the partnership will pursue grants.

Who are the partners and what are their goals?

We are only in the discussion phase with potential partners and I believe their goals are the same as ours- quality education for all of our students,

So when the Board meets again, you will do the letter of intent?

Yes, the plan is to have the board approve the non-binding letter of intent at the next regularly scheduled board meeting.

Will this change the staffs TRS or benefits?

No. Staff that are in the Hearne In-district Charter partnership will continue in the Texas Teacher Retirement System (TRS) and receive the same benefits they currently have in Hearne ISD.

The final comment was provided by a community member.

The biggest fear was not knowing what kind of Charter this was; now I understand.