

Email from Hays CISD Superintendent Dr. Eric Wright
Sent: February 4, 2026

Update on Hays CISD Student Protests

Dear Hays CISD Family,

Yesterday, a 12-year-old boy showed up at Lehman High School in tears – afraid and lost. He left Simon Middle School without permission during a student protest earlier that day and walked five-and-a-half miles until he found another school campus. He didn't know how he was going to get home. The outstanding staff at Lehman, of course, comforted him and helped him reunite with his parents. The incident wasn't on social media or the news, and it didn't compete for attention. It was just a simple, quiet illustration – one of many – that highlighted some of the lesser-known effects of the campus walkouts. We are doing our best to keep kids in class, but when hundreds of students simultaneously head to the doors, we don't have enough staff at each campus to stop them, nor are we allowed to physically restrain them. This is why I am again asking all parents to help us to keep kids safe by encouraging them to stay in class.

You may likely have already heard this from your child, but in addition to me reaching out to you, we have added a pop-up message on all school district student devices that reminds them they do not have permission to skip school.

Our district is not an abstract entity. It is a collective of people – employees, parents, students, community members, and taxpayers. There are tens of thousands of us and probably as many opinions. I've heard many of those perspectives in recent days. We have had people upset that the district didn't take a stand one way or the other – again because we can't. Others have infused meaning where there is none – interpreting what we say and do as reason to believe we have indeed chosen a side.

Recent national events are upsetting in so many ways. I understand that. We're not just talking about federal policy. Real lives are affected and there is real fear. It's absolutely polarizing. What we are trying to do in our school district is to escape the either/or choice presented by these national issues, over which we have no control. There is a third option for us, and that is standing for education and student safety.

Yesterday, I spoke with you about the consequences for students who walk out of class. Today, I want to tell you about the consequences for our school district. The Texas Education Agency released guidance for school districts late Tuesday regarding student walkouts. There are three key parts: (1) districts could lose funding which is based on daily student attendance, (2) teachers who facilitate protests could be investigated by the state and face sanctions against their professional teaching licenses, and (3) school districts could be assigned state monitors, conservators, or a board of managers to replace the locally elected school board.

I care about funding, but not funding instead of students. That is also not an either/or choice. I care about funding because I care about kids. The money pays for student opportunities, supplies, and salaries to keep the best teachers and staff in the state working in our district. I don't want your local tax dollars to remain in the hands of the state. I want as much of that money as we can get back in our community and invested in our children. Additionally, no one wants to see young teachers lose their careers or local voice replaced by the state. Yes, the state does have the power to replace your locally elected school board members with people appointed by the state government.

This is why we continue to implore parents to speak with children about doing what they need to do, but in the right way. If you want to be angry – be angry, but be angry at the right people. If you want your children to protest, you must sign them out of school and leave school property. Students must understand that the ramifications of their actions using schools as their platforms probably won't mean much to the federal government, but they will mean a great deal to our local community, which includes themselves.

Please continue to have conversations about the best way to express the rights afforded in our Constitution. Exercising rights also means considering responsibility. The two go hand-in-hand.

While the cause of the student protestors may well be just – it's not for me to say in my official capacity, I can say with certainty, if they keep doing it from school, they are doing it on the wrong stage.

Sincerely,
Eric