



# Victoria Independent School District

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## Communications

### School Matters: Just Imagine

It's easy for us to get caught up in the present, project what we would like to see for the future, all while forgetting everything that's already happened in the past. Sometimes we all need to take a breath and reflect on everything that has gotten us to where we are today. Without these achievements, our present would be entirely different. Just imagine what that may look like.

Just imagine, if three years ago the district and the community had given up on the Children's Learning Institute's Early Childhood Center (ECC) at F.W. Gross and our Head Start partnership with BCFS. Our pre-K programs would continue to be limited, students and families would have fewer options and our community's programs would be loosely aligned or even managed by other districts. Now imagine the bright future these kiddos have in front of them due to a strong early childhood foundation.

Just imagine a few short years ago when our students had dual-credit and Advanced Placement (AP) opportunities through high school with a Career & Technology Education (CTE) option, and we thought that was great. Since then, we have added Pathways in Technology Early College (P-TECH) Healthcare, P-TECH Education & Training, P-TECH Computer Science, Texas Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (T-STEM) and more. With new opportunities to discover their genius, more students are graduating with college acceptance letters, industry certifications or military enlistment plans, and our overall performance is improving in nearly every measure.

Just take a moment to imagine how the district might look if we could go back three or four years ago and decide we didn't want to pursue Systems of Great Schools (SGS). The things mentioned above, our ECC, Head Start and new P-TECH options, would not be available for our students today. Without pursuing SGS, the door to our new two-way dual-language program at Crain Elementary may have never been opened. Our Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) program at Smith STEM Academy may have not had the support it needed to flourish. Instead, in 2021 alone, the VISD Office of Innovation has written and received a total of \$8.3 million in grants. These opportunities for VISD students have been made available at no cost to local taxpayers and provide an investment in the future of our children and our community.

Just imagine for a moment what our schools might be like if we didn't make the effort to invest in our kids' futures, and if we had not benefited from someone making a similar investment in our own education. They say it takes a village to raise a child, and we're all trying to help raise over 13,000 children.

We know that upfront, opportunities such as these seem to have a lot of costs associated with them, but we don't look at them that way. We see every opportunity as an investment for the students attending our schools. We see the potential impacts on their education for years to come. We see the future of our children and the future of our community.

We could think of the costs associated with the redesign of our ECC and Head Start programs. We could think of the costs associated with P-TECH. We could think of the costs associated

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with the decision to pursue SGS. But thinking of all these as costs makes an assumption that once we've paid for it, it has a depreciating value. This isn't true for education. These are not costs, they are investments. Education is an investment that provides all gains, no loss because learning never stops. With the education of our children, comes an overall positive impact on our community for decades to come.

The VISD has exclusively utilized state grants as an investment in our future so our local taxpayers don't have to think about costs for opportunities such as these.

We want the best for every student that walks through those doors at each of our campuses. From the time they are three years old to when we see them walking across that stage in their cap and gown at 17/18 years old, we want to be able to say we provided them with every opportunity to succeed when they leave our district. We want to be able to say we invested in each and every child.

As a community, we are asking you to decide the same for yourselves. Is the continuous improvement of our students' education an investment worth making? We know our answer, we just need yours.

Early voting started October 18th and ends October 29th. Election day is November 2nd.

*Tammy Sestak is the assistant superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, and Accountability for Victoria ISD.*