



# BARBERS HILL INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

## MONT BELVIEU, TEXAS

P O Box 1108 • 9600 Eagle Drive  
Mont Belvieu, Texas 77580

281/576-2221 (LOCAL)  
281/385-6038 (METRO)

**AN EXEMPLARY  
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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*Middle School*  
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*D.A.E.P.*

September 27, 2010

"The present economic crises has revealed fundamental weakness in our state funding system for public education in Texas." A headline taken from a Texas newspaper, it would appear. The article goes on to call for a complete abolition of the general property tax and an emphasis on a statewide income tax or an increased sales tax earmarked specifically for public education. One has to look twice at the date of the publication to verify... May, 1933 in the Texas Outlook Magazine. It would appear doom and gloom and the financing of our public schools have gone hand in hand since practically the beginning. Still, the state of Texas has always been a leader and public education is no exception. Our ability to educate one of the fastest changing demographics in the nation is the envy of said nation. We have done so with a financial system that has always been maligned, abused and politicized.

How could public education in Texas be productive in spite of a maligned financial/support system? Local control is the resounding answer. Any board member, regardless of the size or wealth of the school district, will wince at the mention of "unfunded mandates". This sinister device is a manner in which the state "controls" decisions and forces a redistribution of existing district funds-- a virtual robbing of local control. As any school district (and state) will tell you, "Give us the ability to control our own destiny and then get out of the way". One has only to look to Washington to see the consequences of top-down government. The first viable third political party in recent history is evidence of the people's discontent with this style of dictatorial governance.

How do school districts insure local control? The taxing of local property is the only time proven-method. The ability of local districts to set their own tax rate, on a product that is completely unique to that school district, guarantees local control. The high percentage of passing tax rollback elections, even in dire economic times, is proof-positive of people's willingness to support a tax increase if they feel the monies are controlled by board members whom they have elected to specifically advocate for the children of said district. Do we believe a vote on a state income tax would have the same likelihood of passing?

There is much discussion about adequacy and equity in the debate on how to finance our public schools. In the din and clamor of a rancorous debate, let's not lose sight of the one element that has successfully sustained public education in Texas since its inception... the property tax. May Texas never make the mistake of the current Federal administration, to delude ourselves into thinking Washington/Austin knows best. The people know best, and while all taxation is distasteful, local property taxation is the most productive method to insure success for the children of this great State.

Greg Poole, Ed. D.  
Superintendent  
Barbers Hill Independent School District