

**NEWS****School districts applaud economic stimulus plan**[Print Page](#)**By ADRIANA ROBERTS**
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Over a two-year period, Rusk County public school district could have an additional \$2 million in their budgets, according to a study conducted by Strategic Partnerships, Inc, an Austin-based research and procurement consulting firm.

Education funding is one of the priority investments in the \$825 billion federal economic stimulus bill under consideration in the U.S. Senate.

Last week, the U.S. House of Representatives passed President Obama's economic stimulus plans and sent it to the Senate for debate.

"This is great news for schools, good news for the economy," said Mary Beth Fitzgerald, Henderson Independent School District human resources director. "Anytime we have additional funding that we can use for the success of our students, we are grateful."

The funding will provide Texas schools with additional funding for facilities, programs and technology while opening new contracting opportunities for private-sector businesses to sell their goods and services to school districts, which is designed to provide needed boosts for local economies.

The potential increase is broken down into three categories, Title I-A, construction and IDEA. According to school officials, Title I-A is the category designated for students who live in lower socioeconomic status households.

"We receive additional funding annually for the percentage of students who live in lower socioeconomic households," Fitzgerald said.

School officials said their districts currently receive approximately \$700,000 for Title I-A students. The proposed bill would increase Henderson ISD's Title-IA funding by \$222,000, raising the total in that category to \$922,000 for 2009-10.

In 2010-11, Henderson ISD would see another \$222,000 added to its Title I-A funding.

Henderson ISD is considered a Title 1-A district in grades pre-kindergarten through eight. "This means we are able to use our Title I-A funds for grades P-K through eighth," Fitzgerald said.

The proposed stimulus bill would also add \$744,000 to the district's construction fund in academic year 2009-10. In its current form, construction funding would not increase the following school year.

Area school officials said the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) category encompasses additional funding for their special education program. The bill could increase funding for school district special education programs by \$372,600 in 2009-10 and \$451,700 in 2010-11.

If education funding provisions in the House version are signed into law, the Texas Education Agency would determine any guidelines for spending the money.

"We won't know exactly what we can do with the additional funding until the TEA determines and establishes guidelines for Texas schools," Fitzgerald said.

Funding is aimed at improving public school classrooms, laboratories and libraries for students across the nation and is part of the Obama administration's American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan aimed at providing increased education opportunities for school students while creating jobs and moving the nation's economy forward.

"Any additional money we get would be greatly appreciated," said Mike King, West Rusk County Consolidated School District superintendent. "We would appreciate the opportunity to improve the education of our students and the stimulus could allow us to do that."

To reach that goal, an estimated \$41 billion in funds could be pushed to local school districts nationwide.

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