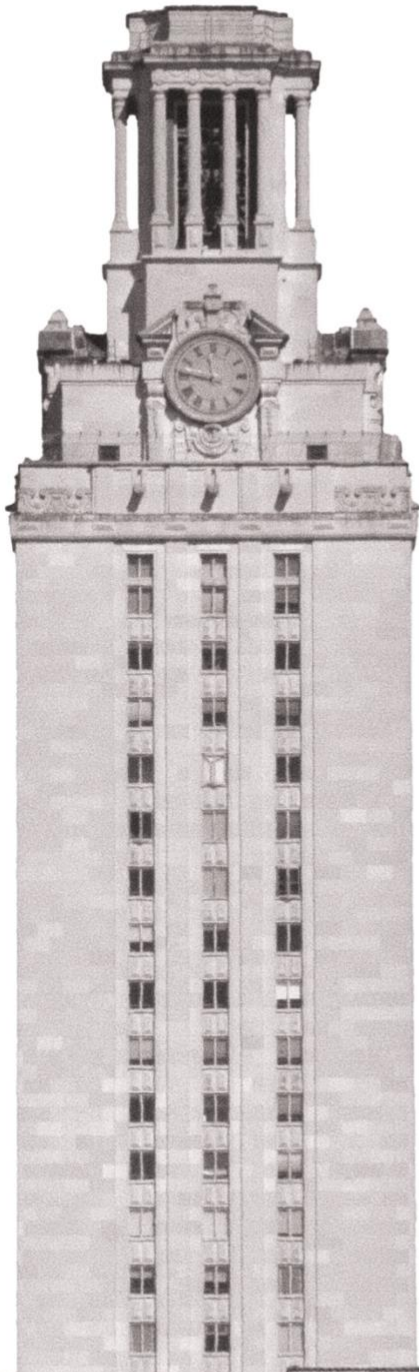


Limited Government ♦ Individual Liberty ♦ Free Enterprise ♦ Traditional Values



*Texas Conservative Coalition
Research Institute*

Education Choice & Workforce Task Force

FINAL REPORT

January 2025

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TCCRI

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Introduction

Public education in Texas is one of the most important public policy areas in the state, and the number of topics under that policy umbrella are numerous and far reaching. The Texas Conservative Coalition Research Institute (TCCRI) remains a strong supporter of public education. Indeed, TCCRI supports fully funding public education and providing teachers and administrators with the tools they need to educate a new generation of Texans. The analysis does not stop there, however.

There are real issues to address within public education. Directly within the public school system, the number of children in Texas who do not test at grade level is staggering. Children are often geographically assigned to public schools that do not properly serve their needs, despite their best intentions and efforts. Public charter schools continue to be viewed by the traditional public school establishment as a competitor, rather than another option that children might benefit from. Virtual education in Texas remains underdeveloped.

In terms of school safety, a justifiable fear exists that students are not as safe as they could be should a dangerous incident occur. More can be done to harden targets and protect children while also attempting to minimize the invasive nature of protective measures.

TCCRI believes that parents are the most important influences in a child's life and should be treated as such, especially by the public school system to which they entrust their children. Parents should be properly informed of everything being taught in the classroom and they should have an informed say in the materials made available to their children and used in classroom lessons.

Parts of the public school system in Texas are deeply entrenched with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, which discriminate on the basis of race, and cause real harm and division.

The state's testing and accountability system are the target of opposition from a variety of coalitions. The state's system has real issues to address, but testing is

the best tool available for assessing whether or not students are learning and retaining in line with state standards. The state's A-F accountability system remains one of the most important education reforms ever passed by the state legislature. It empowers parents with information about how their local schools are performing. It should be protected and strengthened.

Over the course of the 88th Legislative Session's Interim, TCCRI held meetings to discuss many of these topics. Those meetings informed the research and policy proposals contained in this report, as did TCCRI's research and work in other areas, including legislative testimony, white papers, and public policy summits. TCCRI hopes that you find the research and policy proposals helpful and informative.



School Choice

*Note: The following section on School Choice is adapted from a recent TCCRI white paper, *The Path to School Choice in Texas*.¹*

The Texas Conservative Coalition Research Institute (TCCRI) has long been a strong advocate for school choice in Texas. In 2023, TCCRI published *Outstanding Opportunities: The Case for Education Choice in the Lone Star State (Outstanding Opportunities)*, which methodically lays out exactly what the title suggests.² There is overwhelming data on the benefits and successful outcomes of school choice taken from more than two decades of school choice programs implemented in states all over the nation.³ That includes improved test scores for both children using choice programs as well as the children who remain in traditional public schools when a choice program is available to them.⁴ In other words, choice programs tend to improve education for everyone through competition. It includes positive social outcomes, such as improved racial and ethnic integration, which refutes the oft-repeated falsehood that advocates for school choice have racist ends in mind.⁵ It highlights several dozen empirical studies showing that school choice programs are a more efficient way to spend money on education than the traditional approach.⁶ Indeed, they tend to produce better outcomes for less money.

In 2024, TCCRI followed *Outstanding Opportunities* with *The Path to School Choice in Texas*, which goes beyond the case for school choice by arguing against the status quo. Indeed, it is not enough to make the case for school choice. The shortcomings of the current system are real and can be seen in outcomes data. There is a reluctance to acknowledge these issues, but a problem must be acknowledged in order to recognize the need for a solution.

The problems within the current system are myriad, and the forces protecting it from change, powerful.

First, the public school system in Texas is larger and more vast than most people realize. In the 2022-23 school year, more than 5.5 million students enrolled in public schools in Texas.⁷ They attended over 9,100 campuses spread across more than 1,200 school

districts and charter schools, each with its own school board and/or administrators.⁸ Those districts and schools employ more than 370,000 teachers,⁹ which is greater than the populations of all but seven Texas cities.¹⁰ Were the Texas public school system a Fortune 500 company in the United States, it would be the third largest.

Figure 1

Texas Public School System Employs More Personnel Than Most Major US Employers

Rank	Corporation	Employees
1	Walmart	2,300,000
2	Amazon	1,608,000
3	Texas Public School System	765,337
4	Home Depot	490,600
5	FedEx	484,000
6	Target	450,000
7	Kroger	420,000
8	United Parcel Service (UPS)	400,945
9	Starbucks	383,000
10	Berkshire Hathaway	372,000
11	UnitedHealth Group	350,000

Source: US Global Investors "Top Largest Fortune 500 Employers In The U.S." (October 2022¹¹) & Texas Education Agency¹²

Second, that vast public school system is strong, mobilized, and capable of thwarting efforts they perceive as a threat to the status quo. The teachers are represented at the Texas Capitol by several organized and well-funded teacher unions (e.g. *Texas AFT*¹³; *Texas State Teachers Association*¹⁴; *Association of Texas Professional Educators*¹⁵; *Texas Classroom Teachers Association*¹⁶). School districts pool their resources to form coalitions, associations, and interest groups (e.g. the *Fast Growth School Coalition*, made up of 63 school districts). The school boards are collectively represented by their own group (*Texas*



*Association of School Boards*¹⁷), as are the school administrators (*Texas Association of School Administrators*¹⁸), and the school business officials (*Texas Association of School Business Officials*¹⁹). The rural area schools in Texas even have their own association (*Texas Association of Rural Schools*).²⁰

Additionally, well-funded independent organizations, including *Raise Your Hand Texas*, exist for the sole purpose of advocating for public schools.²¹

Third, not only do these groups make their own voices heard at the Capitol, but they deploy an army of lobbyists to advocate on their behalf. The following table highlights the number of lobbyists registered as of October 11, 2024 on behalf of the aforementioned interest groups and others who share a similar mission:

Figure 2

Sample of Public Education Interest Lobby

Association / Organization	Registered Lobbyists
Texas AFT	3
Texas State Teachers Association	10
Association of Texas Professional Educators	12
Texas Classroom Teachers Association	6
Texas Association of School Boards	8
Texas Association of School Administrators	13
Texas Association of School Business Officials	4
Coalition for Public Schools	1
Coalition for Education Funding	1
Fast Growth School Coalition	10
Texas Association of Rural Schools	1
Raise Your Hand Texas	17

Source: Texas Ethics Commission

In addition to the army of hired public school system advocates, school districts also hire their own lobbyists directly. 27 different independent school districts in Texas paid lobbyists to advocate on their behalf at the

Texas Capitol in 2024.²² These include four of the five most populous school districts (Houston ISD, Dallas ISD, Cypress-Fairbanks ISD, and Austin ISD), which range from approximately 70,000 to 190,000 students, but also a number of smaller districts, population-wise, including Seminole ISD (approximately 3,000 students) and Fort Stockton ISD (approximately 2,250 Students).²³

It is not uncommon for a state representative in rural Texas to represent 20, 30, or even 40 or more different school districts.²⁴ The number is much greater for state Senators. When a perceived threat to the public education status quo is discussed at the Capitol, an elected official’s office may take calls from the superintendent or school board members of dozens of school districts, any number of the thousands of teachers employed there, parents urged by those same teachers and administrators to call their Senator or State Representative, as well as dozens of lobbyists who are paid by public education interests to advocate on their behalf. This provides a disproportionate representation of district interests relative to the rest of an elected official’s constituency.

The message from those powerful interest groups and paid advocates is clear and united: *maintain the status quo*. To hear them tell the story, the status quo is working fine. School districts and their schools are performing well, students are ready to move on to the next level at the end of the year, and graduates are ready for life beyond K-12. To the extent that a problem exists, they argue that the state’s testing requirements are too stringent, or that schools are underfunded, or both.

Their message is not true, the kids are not alright, the schools are not performing well, the students are behind across the board, the districts are well funded yet woefully inefficient, and it is time to recognize these facts. The status quo is not working. It is time for fundamental change.



The Public School System is Failing Millions of Young Texans

A common refrain from public education interest groups—and one generally accepted as true by legislators and outsiders alike—is that Texas’ system of public schools is excellent. They never explain the standard by which this would be true and they neglect to acknowledge the data that tell a much different story.

The state standards for what students should know and understand are called the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).²⁵ TEKS are adopted by the state for each grade, K-12. In third grade, for example, the TEKS include English Language Arts and Reading, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Languages Other Than English, Health Education, Physical Education, Art, Music, Theatre, and Technology Applications. The TEKS are quite detailed in the knowledge, conceptual application, and practical application that students in each grade should be expected to obtain. The following is a short excerpt of the TEKS for third grade Mathematics:

Figure 3

Grade 3 - TEKS Mathematics Sample

Knowledge and skills.

- (1) Mathematical process standards. The student uses mathematical processes to acquire and demonstrate mathematical understanding. The student is expected to:
 - (A) apply mathematics to problems arising in everyday life, society, and the workplace;
 - (B) use a problem-solving model that incorporates analyzing given information, formulating a plan or strategy, determining a solution, justifying the solution, and evaluating the problem-solving process and the reasonableness of the solution;
 - (C) select tools, including real objects, manipulatives, paper and pencil, and technology as appropriate, and techniques, including mental math, estimation, and number sense as appropriate, to solve problems;
 - (D) communicate mathematical ideas, reasoning, and their implications using multiple representations, including symbols, diagrams, graphs, and language as appropriate;
 - (E) create and use representations to organize, record, and communicate mathematical ideas;
 - (F) analyze mathematical relationships to connect and communicate mathematical ideas; and
 - (G) display, explain, and justify mathematical ideas and arguments using precise mathematical language in written or oral communication.

Source: *Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills by Grade Level (Elementary) – Grade 3*²⁶

In order for the state to know how well its public schools are teaching the TEKS, schools are required to administer The State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR), a series of standardized tests specifically aligned with the TEKS. Tests are administered as follows:



Figure 4

STAAR Examination Requirements

Grade Level	STAAR Examinations Administered
Grade 3	Mathematics Reading Language Arts
Grade 4	Mathematics Reading Language Arts
Grade 5	Mathematics Reading Language Arts Science
Grade 6	Mathematics Reading Language Arts
Grade 7	Mathematics Reading Language Arts

Grade 8	Mathematics
	Reading Language Arts
	Science
	Social Studies
High School (Grades 9-12)	Algebra I
	English I
	English II
	Biology
	U.S. History

Source: Texas Education Agency

The results of each examination are placed into four categories of student performance within STAAR: masters grade level, meets grade level, approaches grade level, and did not meet grade level. These performance level categories are defined as follows:

Figure 5

STAAR Performance Levels

Category	Description
Masters Grade Level	Performance in this category indicates that students are expected to succeed in the next grade or course with little or no academic intervention. Students in this category demonstrate the ability to think critically and apply the assessed knowledge and skills in varied contexts, both familiar and unfamiliar.
Meets Grade Level	Performance in this category indicates that students have a high likelihood of success in the next grade or course but may still need some short-term, targeted academic intervention. Students in this category generally demonstrate the ability to think critically and apply the assessed knowledge and skills in familiar contexts.
Approaches Grade Level	Performance in this category indicates that students are likely to succeed in the next grade or course with targeted academic intervention. Students in this category generally demonstrate the ability to apply the assessed knowledge and skills in familiar contexts.
Did Not Meet Grade Level	Performance in this category indicates that students are unlikely to succeed in the next grade or course without significant, ongoing academic intervention. Students in this category do not demonstrate a sufficient understanding of the assessed knowledge and skills.

Source: Texas Education Agency²⁷

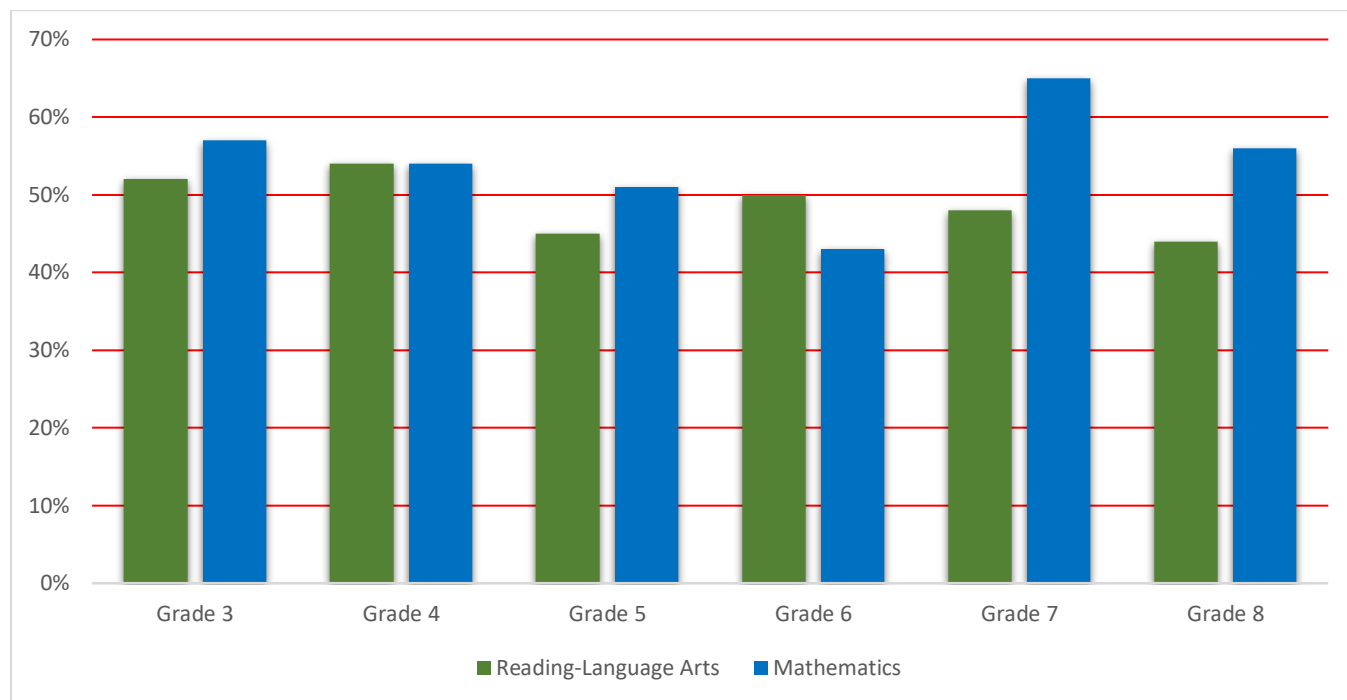
Essentially, two of these categories—*Approaches* and *Did Not Meet Grade Level*—denote a failure of the school to successfully educate a student in a manner such that they are capable of performing on grade-level materials in a given subject area. On the other hand, the other two categories denote success in either meeting the minimum standard or exceeding beyond

that standard. For our purposes, we combine the two categories above the line and the two below the line for a simple metric showing what percentage of kids are performing at grade level (“Meets” serves this purpose as “Masters” is already included in its calculation) and what percentage are below grade level (calculated by subtracting “Meets” from 100%).



Figure 6

Students Testing Below Grade Level (STAAR 2023)



Source: Texas Education Agency²⁸

The results are alarming. A strong majority of kids in grades 3-8 are not performing at grade level. The best result is 6th Grade Mathematics, in which only 43% of students test below grade level. On the other end, an astounding 65% of 7th Graders are below grade level in Mathematics.

These poor results are seen in both the state’s largest school district and smallest school district.^{1 29}

In no setting or context are these acceptable outcomes. It can be viewed only as a monumental failure on the part of the public school system. More importantly, however, these results should be viewed as a betrayal of the trust placed in Texas’ public schools by parents.

Public Schools in Texas are not Underfunded

A common line of argument is that Texas’ public schools are underfunded, and this is often used as an explanation to dismiss poor performance.³⁰ *If schools only had the resources they need*, the argument goes, *they would do a better job educating kids*. This is also used as a basis for opposition to school choice, that more choices would not be needed if only the existing options had more money to perform better. The premises and logic behind these arguments are false.

Schools in Texas are fully funded, and funding increases every year. Public education is well-established as the state’s top spending priority, With

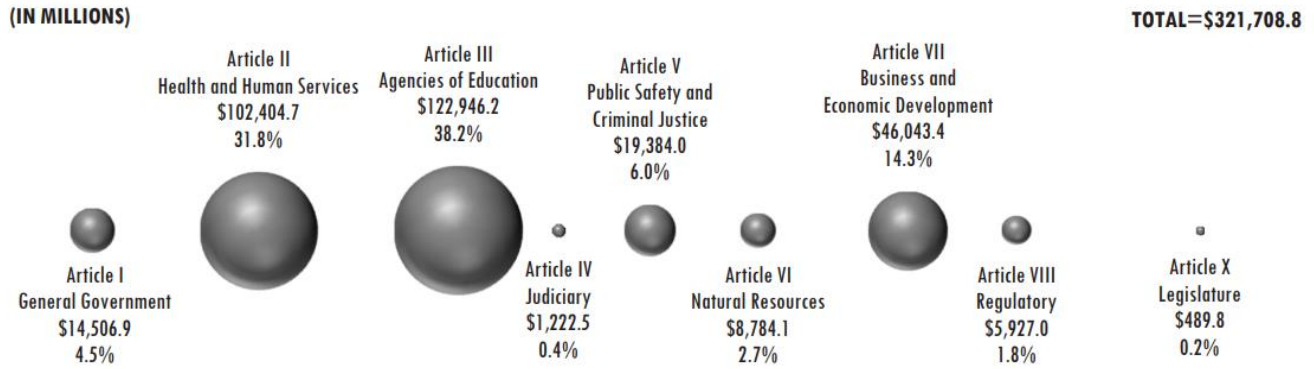
¹ In the state’s smallest school district, Divide ISD, only 50% of students tested at “Meets Grade Level or Above.” The state’s largest school district, Houston ISD, has graded so poorly that it merited a state intervention.



Article III Education funding accounting for 38.2 percent of the 2024-25 state general revenue budget.³¹

Figure 7

Funding by Article, All Funds



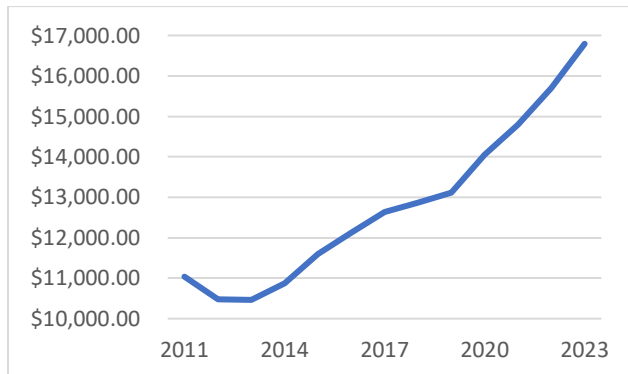
Source: Legislative Budget Board³²

The allocation of tax revenue is a balancing act amongst a variety of public interests. Public education is allocated a plurality of the general revenue budget because it is seen as an investment in the future of Texas.

And invest in the future, Texas has. Over a twelve-year period, the state and local school districts have increased per-pupil spending from approximately \$11,000 to approximately \$17,000 for an over 50% increase, according to data from the Texas Education Agency.

Figure 8

Statewide Per Pupil Spending (2011-2023)

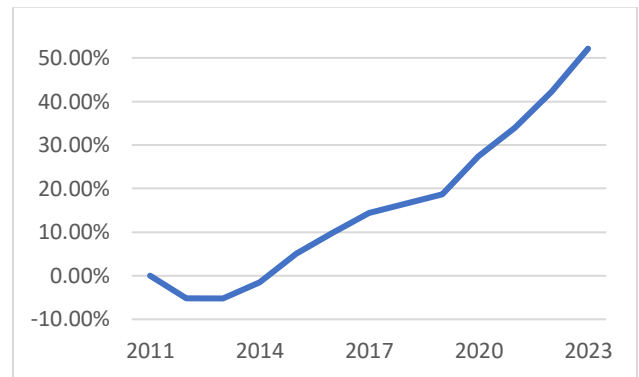


Source: Texas Education Agency³³

The same trend is found in increases to per-pupil spending year over year:

Figure 9

Percent Increase in Per Pupil Spending (Statewide), 2011-2023



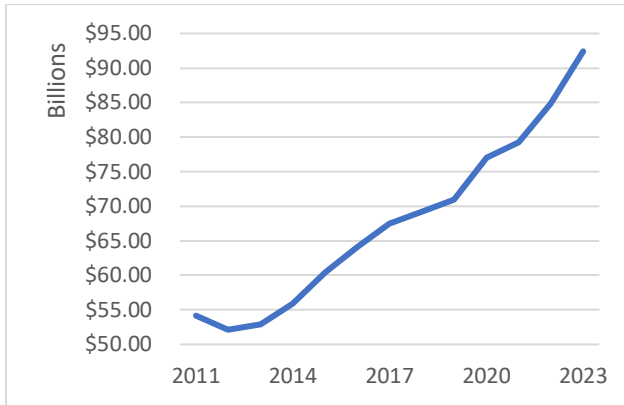
Source: Texas Education Agency³⁴

Statewide public education expenditures are no different.



Figure 10

Statewide Public Education Expenditures, 2011-2023

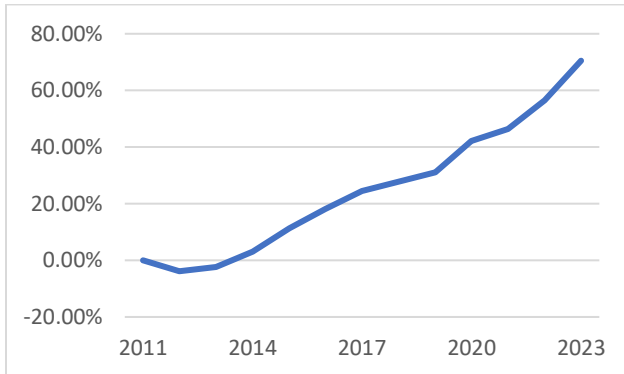


Source: Texas Education Agency³⁵

Again, charting the percentage increases in public education spending tells the same story:

Figure 11

Percent Increase in Public Education Expenditures (Statewide), 2011-2023



Source: Texas Education Agency³⁶

With a 70% increase in public education funding—approximately \$40 billion over a twelve-year period—there is no question that schools have adequate funding, or that the legislature, school districts, and taxpayers have met their funding obligations.

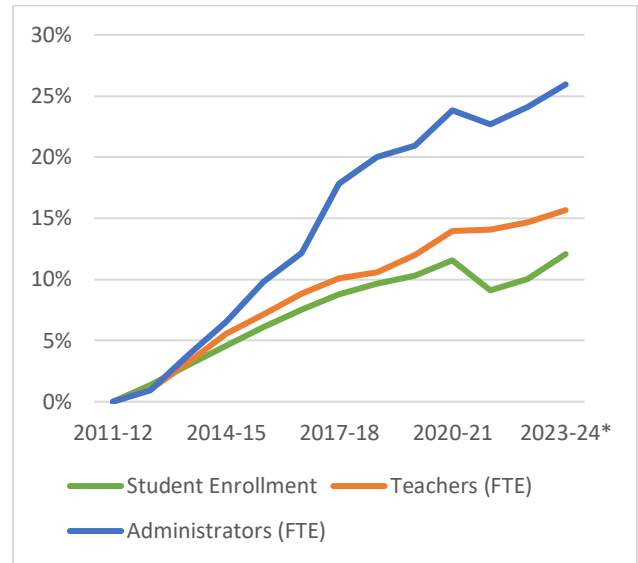
There are, however, legitimate questions surrounding how that money is spent. Indeed, if one were to predict how increased funding for education is spent, it would be rational and logical to predict a strong correlation

between increased student enrollment and teachers hired to educate that increased population. The truth is quite different.

Between the 2011-12 and 2023-24 school years, student enrollment increased by 10.03%. During that same period, the number of full-time teachers increased by 11.02%, outpacing student growth.

Figure 12

Increase in Teachers, Administrators, and Student Enrollment, 2011-12–2023-24



Source: Texas Education Agency^{37, 38}

* Excludes Instructional Coach as Administrator which previously was considered support staff

The growth of full-time teachers is somewhat in line with projected student enrollment pre-COVID-19, which explains the student enrollment dip in 2021-22. Had the pandemic not occurred, the correlation would likely be much closer. There is no reasonable explanation, however, for an over 25% growth in full-time administrators. Administrator growth is *more than double* that of student enrollment growth. More teachers are needed to educate more students. Administrators, however, should be fixed, and certainly should not be outpacing student and teacher growth as the fastest growing public education expense.

Teacher pay remains a strong proportional majority share of total base pay in education expenses, but it is

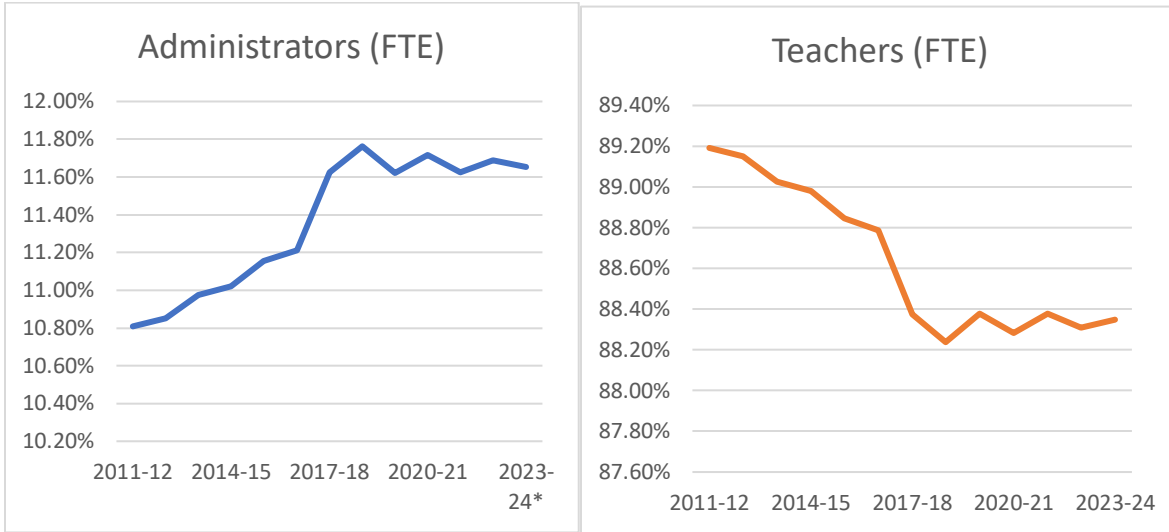


easy to see how the growth of administrative offices eats into funds that would be better spent in the classroom. Indeed, over a twelve-year period, the teacher share of total base pay expenditures in public education

declined from 89.19% to 88.35%. The administrator share of total base pay expenditures in public education increased by a proportional amount.

Figure 13

Pay as a Share of Combined Total Base Pay, 2011-12–2023-24



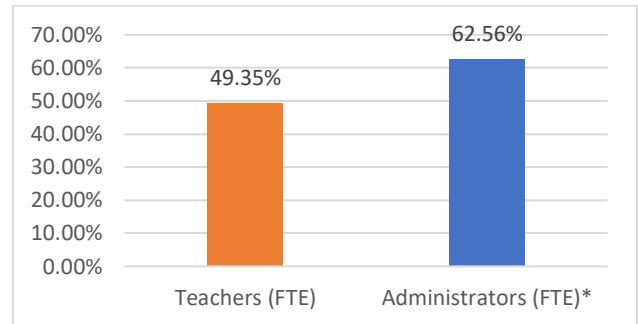
Source: Texas Education Agency³⁹

* Excludes Instructional Coach as Administrator which previously was considered support staff

Not only is the issue one of administrator growth outpacing the growth of classroom needs, but administrators are paying themselves more and more each year. To be part of the growing administrator class is to earn more and receive greater base pay increases year over year than classroom teachers.

Figure 14

Increase in Money Spent on Total Teacher and Administrator Base Pay, 2011-12–2023-24



Source: Texas Education Agency⁴⁰

* Excludes Instructional Coach as Administrator which previously was considered support staff

Ironically, it is often the administrators who travel to Austin to tell the Legislature that school districts and their schools need more money—money that they are actively syphoning out of the classroom to themselves.



In a national context, Texas has far more public education employees per capita than other large states. As of 2021, Texas has 256 school employees per 10,000 in population, which is more than California (157), Florida (152), and New York (214).^{41 42} Among the 10 most populous states, Texas has the second-highest per capita number of state and local government employees in elementary and secondary schools. This is second only to Ohio, which has a population half the size of Texas.

Article 7, Section 1, of the Texas Constitution requires the Texas Legislature to “make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools.”⁴³ The legislature has made “suitable provision,” but the system is far from “efficient.” Indeed, the inefficiency of spending within public education undercuts the more than adequate funding it receives. The size and cost of administration and support functions in Texas’ public education system place a strain on education funding despite adding little or no value to the essential functions of a school: *teaching and learning*.

The legislature should remain committed to funding public education, but it is time to end the misplaced and generally accepted belief that public schools in Texas are underfunded. The conversation should shift to one in which the primary focus on education funding is how dollars can be better utilized to provide the best opportunities and outcomes for Texas Children. School choice should be a central focus of that conversation.

Policy Recommendations

School choice supporters should always be willing to negotiate, but they should plan for the 89th Legislative Session as though they have the votes to pass any school choice bill they want. The best bill possible should be the starting point. What should such a bill look like? Consider the following as a starting point:

Policy Recommendation 1

Pass a Universal ESA Program

The legislature should pass a universal ESA program. There should be no priority or preference given to any one child over another child based on family income, socioeconomic status, or any other category of qualification. Any child eligible to enroll in public school in Texas should be eligible for the program. There should also be no public school prior-enrollment requirement. Parents should not be forced to enroll their children in a failing school for any period of time before utilizing the program. The program should not be capped by appropriations. There is a natural harmony with the Foundation School Program in that if a student enrolls in the public school system, the local district or charter receives funding for that student. If the student does not enroll, the money should follow the child to the educational option chosen by that child’s parents.

Policy Recommendation 2

The Amount of the ESA Contribution Should be at Least 90 Percent of the Statewide Funding Average Per Student

In HB 1 (88(4)), the ESA contribution to a student’s ESA account amounted to 75 percent of the estimated statewide average amount of funding per student in average daily attendance for the applicable school year, as determined by the education commissioner. This would have amounted to roughly \$10,500 per participating child per school year. SB 8 (88R) proposed a similar amount. These remain taxpayer dollars used to publicly fund education for taxpayers. Allowing the school district to retain 25% of funding for a student it is not tasked with educating is a windfall and a concession lawmakers should not make. This should also apply to homeschoolers, education pods, and micro-schools.

Policy Recommendation 3

Education Savings Account Funds Should be Allowed to Pay for a Broad Selection of Education Related Expenses



Education savings account funds should be allowed to pay for a broad selection of education related expenses. This includes private schools, public schools (transfer tuition), tutors, curriculum, and materials. It should be allowed to be pooled to create pods and micro-schools. It should be available to homeschoolers as well. It is acceptable to have a list of approved providers and materials, but that list should cast a wide net and expand with requests to use funds on otherwise acceptable expenses not on the list.

Policy Recommendation 4

Public Schools Should Not Be Held Harmless for Declining Enrollment

Public schools should not be held harmless for declining enrollment. SB 8 (88R) included a hold-harmless provision for school districts with fewer than 20,000 students enrolled. It would have required that those districts receive \$10,000 for each student in the first two years that the student leaves the district school to participate in the ESA program. Much like allowing a school district to keep a large portion of funding for students it is no longer tasked with educating, this can only be seen as a windfall for school districts. No similar concession is made when a child moves away to another school district, which results in an indistinguishable loss of funds for the district attached to that child. In an environment in which the votes for a major school choice program are presumed to exist, such a provision should not be part of the conversation.

Policy Recommendation 5

Increased Funding for Public Schools or Teacher Pay Should Not be Used as Bargaining Chips for a School Choice Bill

Increased funding for public schools or teacher pay should not be used as bargaining chips for a school choice bill. On the presumption that a major school choice bill can pass in the 89th Legislative Session, major increases in public education—the type of which were included in both SB 8 and HB 1—should not be used to bargain for passage of a choice bill. That is not to say that such funding should be opposed. Only that

there should not be a price on passage of a strong education reform in the form of ESAs.

Policy Recommendation 6

Students Utilizing an Education Savings Account Should not be Required to Sit for State Assessments

Students utilizing an Education Savings Account should not be required to sit for state assessments. The purpose of state assessments through STAAR examinations is to demonstrate how well the public schools to which students are geographically assigned are performing with respect to teaching the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) curriculum requirements. In the past, many have insisted that students attending a private school using an ESA be required to sit for state assessments as well. This should be rejected. When a parent enrolls a student in a private school, that parent is aware that private schools do not teach to state standards, may emphasize much different areas of study, and are not required to teach to the TEKS. Moreover, unlike a public school to which a child is zoned, a parent seeks out a private school for any number of reasons and can withdraw the student from that school for any reason. This fundamental form of accountability is not present for most parents whose children are enrolled in public school.

Policy Recommendation 7

The Bill Should Include the Parental Rights Component of SB 8 (88R)

Parents know what is best for their own children. Schools should have no authority to interfere in parental choices and they should have an obligation to inform parents of all meaningful developments in a child's life that occur within school walls. Under no circumstances should they hide such things, much less aid, assist, or encourage a child to do so.



Policy Recommendation 8

The Bill Enacting an Education Savings Account Should Contain Protections for Participant, Provider, and Vendor Autonomy

Language should be enacted along with the ESA to protect the independence of participants, providers, and vendors with respect to religious or institutional values and methods used to educate the provider's students. It should also make clear that receiving money distributed under the program may not be conditioned upon a modification or adoption of specific creed, practices, admissions policies, curricula, performance standards, employment policies or assessments. In short, private schools offering services to ESA users should be protected from being forced to become more like public schools.

Policy Recommendation 9

Fix and Improve the State's Public School Choice Options

Senate Bill 8 contained several provisions intended to improve accessibility and transferability among public schools in Texas. It would have removed a school district's authority to charge tuition to a transferee, instead only allowing a transfer denial when a school is at capacity. These reforms should be included in a larger education reform package, as they were in SB 8.

Conclusion

Opponents of school choice regularly misrepresent the data on choice programs, but the data in favor of school choice is overwhelmingly positive. Indeed, despite a clear body of evidence to the contrary, choice opponents will make false arguments across the board. Legislators in Texas should know what the research actually says about the nearly one million students participating in the 73 private school choice programs across 31 states (and Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico).^{44 45}

As of June 2024, nearly 190 different studies have looked at these programs to answer all manner of inquiry, including test score results for program participants, test scores for non-participating students in public schools, educational attainment, parent satisfaction, promotion of civic values and practices, success in racial and ethnic integration, and, of course, fiscal effects of choice programs.⁴⁶ What do the nearly 190 empirical studies say about choice programs on the highlighted outcomes?

- **Higher Test Scores Among Program Participants:** 17 empirical studies have examined whether students who receive and use choice programs to attend private school achieve higher test scores than students who apply for, but ultimately do not use choice programs. Within those seventeen studies, 11 showed positive effects on the scores of participants, while only three showed negative effects.⁴⁷
- **Educational Attainment:** Seven empirical studies have examined the effect that choice programs have on a student's likelihood to graduate high school, enroll in college, or attain a college degree. Five of those studies found positive effects on educational attainment for participants and two found no effect at all. No studies showed negative effects.⁴⁸
- **Test Scores of Students Who Remain in Public Schools:** Of the 29 studies that have looked at this question, an astounding 26 found positive effects of choice programs on the traditional public schools they affect. Only two studies found negative effects on public schools. Opponents will cherry-pick those two studies and pretend like the 25 do not exist, but the only reasonable conclusion one can draw from this data is that the competition proponents carry the day.⁴⁹
- **Parental Satisfaction:** 33 empirical studies have been conducted on this question, looking to measure the extent to which parents are satisfied with the choice programs in which they enroll their children compared to the satisfaction with their pre-program schools or to parents of non-program students. 31 of



those studies showed positive results. Only two showed a negative effect.⁵⁰

- **Racial and Ethnic Integration:** Eight studies have examined the effect of education choice programs on racial and ethnic diversity in schools. Seven of those studies found positive effects on racial and ethnic diversity. One found no effects and not a single study found negative effects.⁵¹
- **Fiscal Impact of Choice Programs:** 75 empirical studies have looked at whether education choice programs generate net savings, net costs, or are cost-neutral. The results are beyond question. 69 of 75 studies (92%) found that choice programs created savings for taxpayers. Five studies found that the programs were cost-neutral. Only five studies found that choice programs resulted in net costs.⁵²

This data is discussed in further detail in a report by TCCRI called “Outstanding Opportunities: The Case for Education Choice in the Lone Star State.”⁵³ As legislators are inundated with claims that choice will harm public schools, that choice programs don’t work, that private schools discriminate, that programs only benefit the rich, and that rural parts of Texas will not benefit from school choice, know that **these arguments are all demonstrably false.** The Report discusses them all in great detail and explains why.

TCCRI’s expectation is that Texas’ ESA program—like those enacted in other states—will have a demonstrably positive impact in a variety of ways, including educational outcomes, attainment of higher education, parental satisfaction, and in terms of fiscal impact.

More than half of the states in the nation have some form of education choice that includes private options. Texas is not one of them. Continued failure to advance choice in education while controlling statewide offices and both chambers of the legislature would be a profound missed opportunity for conservatives in Texas. The 89th Legislative Session will likely present the best opportunity yet for passage of a major school choice bill that includes Education Savings Accounts with private options.



Charter Public Schools

Texas has a robust public school choice program through the establishment of open-enrollment charter schools. Charter campuses are public schools. They are funded based on daily attendance, just like traditional public schools. They must comply with state and federal laws relating to special education and academic accountability. The two main areas in which charter public schools differ from traditional public schools are, first, that they do not receive funds from local tax revenue, and second, they have considerable leeway in operations and ability to innovate that traditional public schools lack.

Background on Public Charter Schools

The Texas Legislature authorized public charter schools in 1995 with the passage of Senate Bill 1.⁵⁴ SB 1 supporters argued that:

charter schools allow educators to be more innovative and creative and give parents and community leaders more input in public education on the local level.⁵⁵

Indeed, the charter school provision in SB 1 was adopted, in part, because the state:

recognized that it is important to waive certain regulations to allow schools to try innovative programs. Charter schools would give teachers and parents who want to try new ideas the maximum flexibility they need without having to request a waiver from the education commissioner.⁵⁶

Charter schools in Texas accept students on a first-come, first-served basis, using lotteries when school capacity is reached. While subject to the same academic and accountability standards as traditional public schools, charter schools have considerable flexibility in terms of operational structure, practices, and personnel. This flexibility provides charter schools

with the ability to meet the needs of diverse communities and students. The charter model allows schools to react to market forces, creating schools that focus specifically on college preparation, high-tech and STEM-focused fields, or create campuses that focus more heavily on the arts, to name a few examples. Above all else, charter schools are important because they bolster the ability of parents to choose the best education for their child. The growing demand for public school choice serves as evidence that the traditional public school inside a district-drawn attendance zone is not always the best option for each of the nearly 5.5 million public school students in Texas.⁵⁷

Public Charter School Success

A 2020 report from the Texas Charter School Association discusses the first “25 Years of Texas Public Charter Schools,” and its findings leave no doubt about how important charter schools are for children in Texas. Key findings from the report discuss how competition from charter schools has made all public schools better. Indeed, “[f]rom 2012 to 2019, as total charter enrollment nearly tripled, the average district raised its student achievement between 4% and 8%, depending on grade and subject tested.”⁵⁸ More specifically, “[f]rom 2016 to 2019 . . . 82% of ISDs with charters in their attendance zones boosted their fifth-grade reading scores—compared to 67% of ISDs without any charters.”⁵⁹

Other reports detail the successes of charter schools in Texas. One 2019 report shows that public charter schools are sending 4% more of their students to college than traditional public schools.⁶⁰ Charter school graduates who attend college are also 3% more likely to complete college than a graduate from a traditional public school.⁶¹ That can be attributed, at least in part, to charter schools producing graduates who are more prepared for colleges, as measured by TEA data and metrics such as AP course credit.⁶² Charter schools achieve all of this while serving greater proportional numbers of historically disadvantaged demographic groups such as black, Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, and English language learners (ELLs).⁶³ They also serve nearly the same proportional number of special needs children.⁶⁴ In fact, while enrolling “one third more ELL students than traditional public



schools,” charter schools have had greater success. According to a 2021 report:⁶⁵

Six percent more public charter school ELLs were on grade level in English Language Arts (ELA) (23% vs. 17%) and 7% more in Social Studies (17% vs. 10%), compared with traditional public schools.⁶⁶

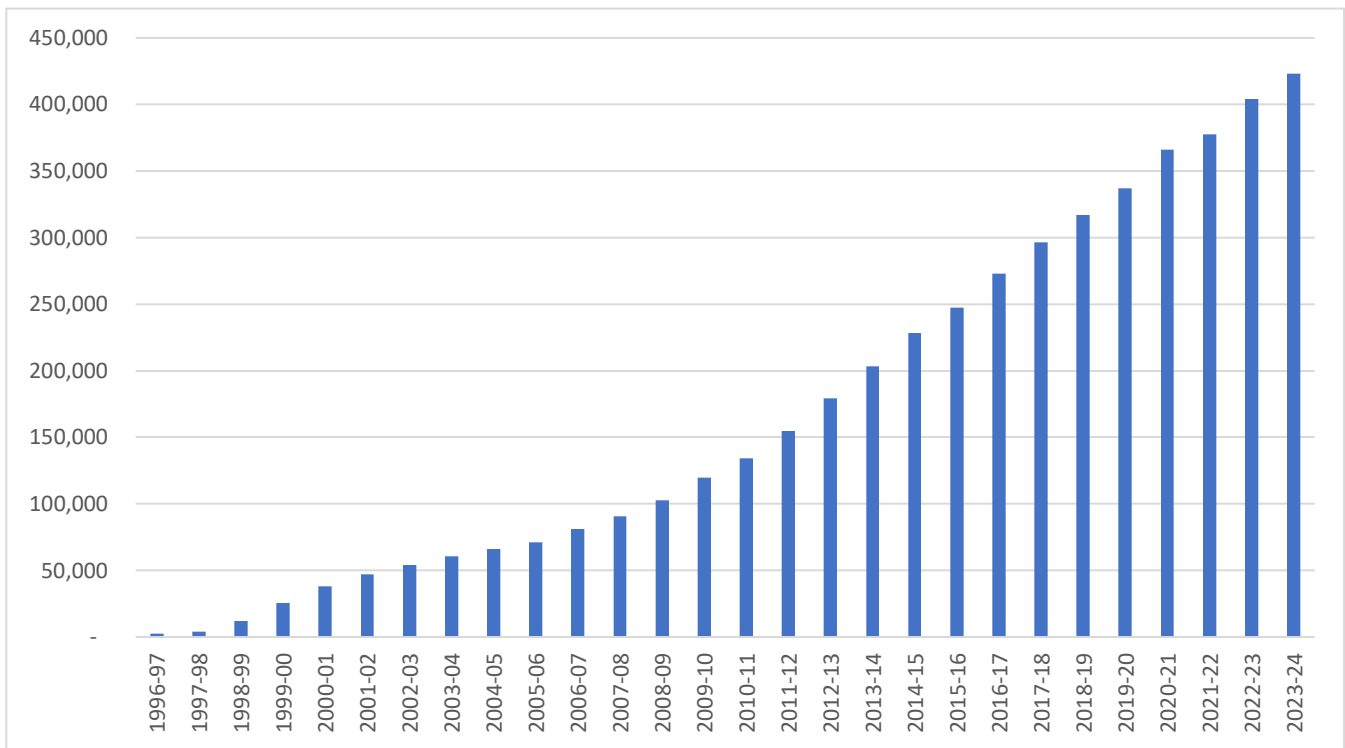
Charter School Enrollment Trends

Since the charter school program’s inception, students have enrolled at a rapidly increasing pace.

Since the charter school program’s inception, students have aggressively enrolled.

Figure 15

Total Public Charter School Enrollment



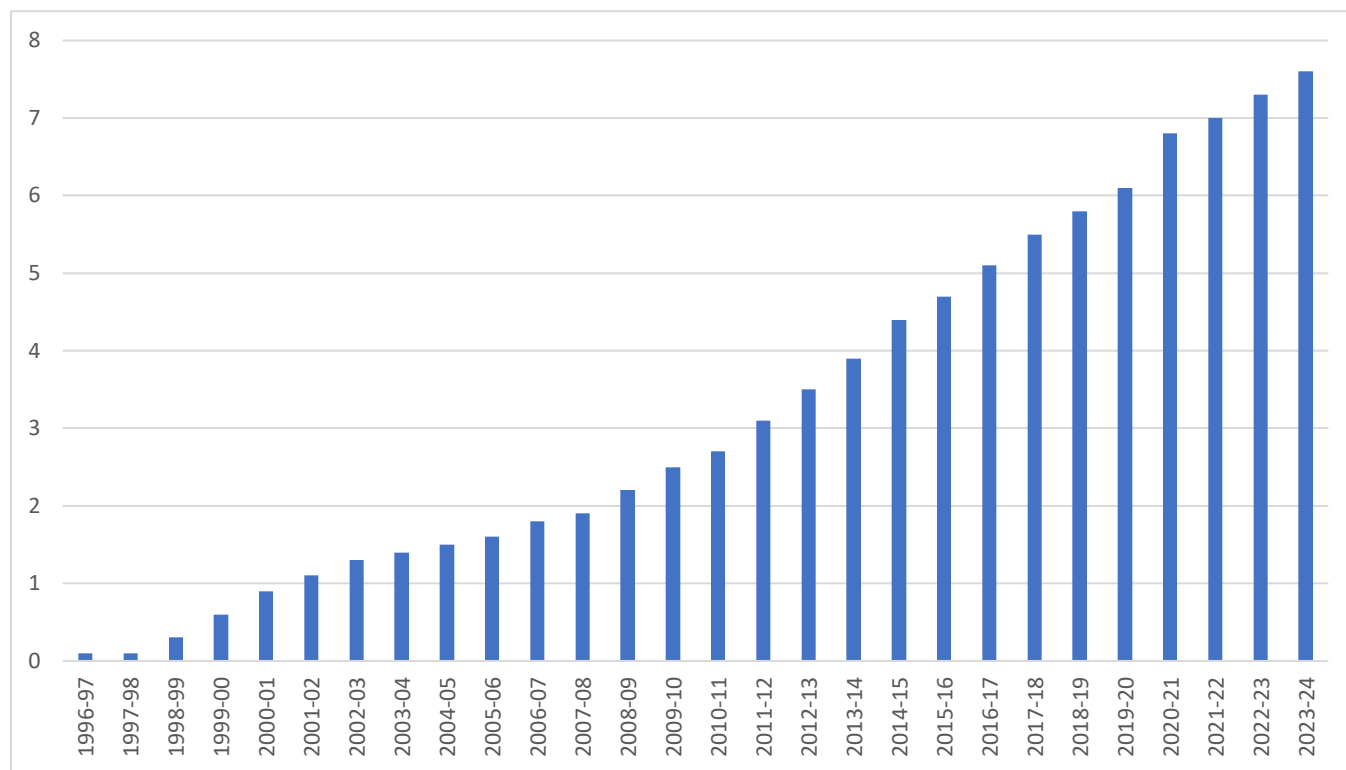
Source: Texas Education Agencies⁶⁷

As enrollment has increased, so too has the share of public school students enrolled in public charter schools.



Figure 16

Representation in Public School Enrollment (%)



Source: Texas Education Agency⁶⁸

Public charter schools in Texas are most popular among Hispanic students, who account for 62.9% of all public charter school enrollees.⁶⁹ African American students are a distant second, making up 16.8% of enrollees, followed by white (12.1%) and Asian (5.6%) students.⁷⁰ This strong minority majority student population cuts against anti-charter groups who claim charters lack the diversity of traditional public schools. In fact, public charter schools serve a strong majority of economically disadvantaged students as well, with 72.2% of the student population falling within that category.⁷¹

Charter School Opponents

Despite public charter school success and popularity, and despite charter schools also being public schools, proponents of traditional public schools oppose public charter schools. As Thomas Sowell pointed out in his

book, “Charter Schools and Their Enemies,” there is no doubt that teachers’ unions and the public education establishment will do anything they can to hinder charter schools. TCCRI touched on this point in a June 2020 commentary for LIFT Perspectives:

If there’s any doubt about [who the enemies of charter schools are], just look at the witness list to see who is for or against any bill that touches on things like creating new streams of funding for charter schools, making it easier for successful charters to take over failing traditional public schools, making the admissions process for charters more onerous, placing geographic restrictions on where charter schools can open, or adding red tape to charter admissions processes, to name a few examples. There’s a pattern.

There are also roadblocks in Texas that make it difficult for new charters to be granted, or for existing charters to add new campuses. These are



discussed in TCCRI's 2019 School Choice and School Finance Task Force Report, which points out that "charter school expansion in Texas has stagnated," the approval process "has become so cumbersome that it is difficult to be granted a charter in the first place," and there is open bias against out-of-state charter applicants.⁷²

Opposition to policies beneficial to charter schools is only one side of the coin. Charter opponents in Texas aggressively push legislation to harm charters. One need only look at the legislative priorities of traditional public school advocates for evidence.

For example, the Texas Association of School Boards' "2022-2024 Advocacy Agenda"² includes expanded veto authority for the State Board of Education over charter expansions approved by the commissioner of education, exclusion of charters from funding allotments they're otherwise entitled to, prohibiting charter schools in areas where the traditional public schools have extra capacity, to name a few.⁷³ The Texas Association of School Boards literally passed a resolution to include in its advocacy agenda their opposition to charter schools calling themselves public schools.⁷⁴

The Texas Association of School Administrators includes in its legislative priorities a declaration to "oppose the further expansion of publicly funded charter schools."⁷⁵

The Current State of Charter School Policy in Texas

Charter school expansion in Texas has stagnated. Much of that has to do with the process of gaining approval, which has become so cumbersome that it is difficult to be granted a charter in the first place. As Adam Jones and Amanda List explain in a case study on Texas charter schools, "it has never been more difficult to be granted a charter in Texas than it is today."⁷⁶ Despite many positive efforts at TEA, and

support from Commissioner Mike Morath, that statement remains true. Furthermore, after being granted a charter, charter schools face unique regulatory burdens that traditional public schools do not. For instance, while traditional public schools are permitted to issue district teaching permits to non-degree teachers in non-core courses, charter schools are not. engage in the following activities, charter schools are not.

Policy Recommendations

The legislature should improve charter schools by removing unnecessary regulatory burdens and improving the process of being granted a charter.

Policy Recommendation 10

Provide a Better Process for Out-of-State Charter Applicants and Eliminate the State Board of Education's Veto Authority Over Charter Applications

The State Board of Education has shown an open bias against out-of-state charter applicants.⁷⁷ An organization without an already established presence in Texas takes on considerable risk when applying for a charter in Texas. The process is cumbersome and expensive, which is discouraging enough, but the notion that a charter may be approved on the front end only to be vetoed on the back end must have a chilling effect on out-of-state operators with a desire to establish schools in Texas. Moreover, as Adam Jones and Amanda List explain, "the SBOE veto does not lead to better outcomes in charter authorization and increases the risk for any charter organization to try to operate in Texas."⁷⁸

The SBOE veto should be repealed from statute. The process for charter approval is extensive. In any given year, as many as 37% and as few as 9% of applications are ruled incomplete and discarded. Of those deemed complete, only a small fraction of applications is sent

² A prior version of the Texas Association of School Boards Advocacy Agenda was utilized as a result of the organization restricting access to its current agenda to its members.



to the SBOE for approval. Any charter application sent to the SBOE should be given an opportunity to open a campus start educating children. Innovation produces both successes and failures. Charters that survive the application process, but still do not perform, can be revoked, but they should be given a chance to succeed.

Between eliminating the SBOE's veto authority, modernizing the application process, and reforming the external review of charter applications to make it a less rigid stage, Texas could return to a system in which innovation and risk are highly valued components of the state's most significant school choice program.

During the 88th Legislative Session, House Bill 2890⁷⁹ would not lessened the SBOE's veto authority by requiring a two-thirds majority for a veto in place of the simple majority found in current law. HB 2890 passed through committee last session and was placed on the General State Calendar. That bill's successor—House Bill 1176 (89R, Cunningham)⁸⁰—should be supported during the 89th legislative session.

Policy Recommendation 11

Allow Charter Schools to Authorize Crossing Guards

According to the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT):

In 2023, there were 748 traffic crashes in Texas school zones, resulting in one death and 14 serious injuries.⁸¹

To reduce these incidents, TxDOT recommends that children “always obey crossing guards.” This is not possible if there is no crossing guard present. While public charter schools have access to crossing guards, they are not considered a local authority and therefore cannot authorize crossing guards alone. To safeguard children, the 89th Legislature should pass a bill that would consider public charter schools as a “local authority” for the purpose of designating school crossing guards.

Policy Recommendation 12

Allow Charter Schools to Issue District Teaching Permits

Under Section 21.055 of the Texas Education Code, Traditional Public Schools can issue school district teaching permits to individuals teaching noncore academic career and technical education (CTE) courses. These individuals must demonstrate:⁸²

- (a) subject matter expertise such as professional work experience, formal training and education, holding an active professional relevant industry license, certification, or registration, or any combination of work experience, training and education, or industry license, certification, or registration, in the subject matter to be taught.

This allows subject matter experts to share their expertise with students without the burden of obtaining teaching credentials that are otherwise irrelevant to their field. Unfortunately, this program excludes charter schools, thereby creating an unfair advantage for traditional public schools and taking innovative tools away from those charter schools that may be more inclined to use them. As a result, the 89th Legislature should pass a bill to create parity between traditional public and public charter schools, allowing both to issue district teaching permits.



Virtual Education

Virtual schooling and remote learning technologies have long been fully integrated at institutions of higher education in Texas, with full courses available online across a broad spectrum of degree plans and schools for more than a decade. Higher education offers fully online schools and degrees, such as Western Governor's University, founded in 1997.⁸³ K-12 public education in Texas has not taken advantage of the innovative advances in technology the same way that higher education has. In fact, rather than embrace these technologies as tools that increasingly compliment traditional in-person schooling, state policy with respect to K-12 virtual learning prohibits more innovation than it welcomes. Where Texas once innovated and incorporated new technologies into public education, it is now stuck in a decade-long stagnation in which entrenched interests have successfully thwarted efforts to modernize a woefully outdated state policy. The few fully online public schools offered in Texas exist under a patchwork of laws and regulations⁸⁴ and remain available through the 2024-25 school year by virtue of a waiver issued by Governor Abbott.⁸⁵ Indeed, few areas of public policy in which Texas was once a leader have atrophied the way virtual schooling in Texas has.

The State's Stagnation in Virtual Education

TCCRI has long advocated for a greater number of virtual choices in K-12 public education and has written extensively about how COVID-19 exposed the state's failures vis-à-vis virtual education. TCCRI's *2020-2021 Education & Workforce Task Force Report* contained an entire section dedicated to explaining how "traditional public education institutions and interest groups have successfully thwarted efforts to bring virtual education into the 21st century, leaving Texas unprepared for the pandemic."⁸⁶ It further lays out in "public education in Texas could have been prepared for a pandemic" the numerous opportunities the legislature has had to update, modernize, and expand the state's existing Virtual School Network.⁸⁷

In subsequent publications, TCCRI has laid out a vision for the state's virtual offerings:

Texas does have the Texas Virtual School Network (TVSN), but it has been neglected since its creation in 2007. Its offerings are limited and further underutilized by statute and rules that are exclusionary in both effect and intent. Texas needs to completely overhaul and modernize its virtual offerings across K-12 with the objective being the implementation of a top flight menu of virtual offerings to use in the event that millions of children are once again forced to learn from home. Content and curriculum should be aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and should require state approval before going live. State accountability measures should be applied to everyone using these offerings or making the content available so that parents, regulators, and policymakers can compare results, emphasize and promote what works, and discard what does not. There should be few restrictions on the type of provider, be it public, private, non-profit, or corporate. The more, the better. So long as providers are producing the educational tools the state needs and meeting standards, the state should welcome those tools.⁸⁸

This vision was shared by former Texas State Senator Larry Taylor, who filed Senate Bill 27 (87R) to largely codify it into law. As TCCRI explained in April 2021:

Had such a system been in place before 2020, the pandemic shutdown would have looked much different for kids in public schools, and quite familiar for many. A tested infrastructure for remote and virtual learning would already have been in place with multiple providers and platforms, each with a track record of success or failure tied to the state's accountability system. School districts could have turned to virtual and remote learning in March and August of 2020 with a realistic expectation of what type of product they were delivering to millions of school children being forced to adapt.⁸⁹

Senate Bill 27 did not become law. It was strongly opposed by all of the usual public education advocacy groups who place the status quo public education system above the interests of students. The witness list



in a hearing for SB 27 shows strong support from individuals and parents. The only parties on record against the bill are the aforementioned public education advocacy groups:

Raise Your Hand Texas
League of Women Voters of Texas
Association of Texas Professional Educators
Coalition for Public Schools
Texas State Teachers Association
Texas Association of School Administrators
*Texas Association of School Boards*⁹⁰

These groups generally oppose any education reform that removes decision-making authority from the public education establishment and gives it to parents. This certainly includes virtual schooling.

Texas Commission on Virtual Education and Efforts in the 88th Legislative Session

In lieu of meaningful virtual education reform, the 87th Texas Legislature passed House Bill 3643 (King, Ken), which established the Texas Commission on Virtual Education (the “Commission”).⁹¹ HB 3643 established the Commission “to develop and make recommendations regarding the delivery of virtual education in the public school system and state funding for virtual education under the Foundation School Program.”⁹² To that end, the Commission met several times, and ultimately issued a Report laying out its findings and recommendations.⁹³

The recommendations of the Commission on Virtual Education set out the following policy objectives:

1. Increasing access to high-quality virtual school options to ensure families can choose the best modality for each student.
2. Ensuring course access and promoting work-based learning advancement through streamlined supplemental course catalog.

3. Ensuring learning continuity for students and schools in the face of known and future challenges.
4. Building educator readiness and skill to deliver virtual learning with excellence.
5. Creating aligned and appropriate accountability and planning expectations across schools, regardless of modality.
6. Establishing adequate and equitable virtual learning funding mechanisms to support clarity, consistency, and success.⁹⁴

Senate Bill 1861 (Bettencourt) would have enacted law advancing many of these objectives. The bill would have replaced the existing Texas Virtual School Network with a more appropriately modernized statutory framework, repealed the expiration date for online schools currently operating under a state waiver, and removed the cap on the number of students that may be enrolled in the Local Remote Learning program established by Senate Bill 15 (Taylor, 87(2)) in 2025. The bill also would have incorporated these programs under one new unified policy structure. Under the bill, school districts and open-enrollment charter schools would have been allowed to offer individual virtual courses, full-time virtual schools, and full-time hybrid schools. SB 1861 did not become law and the 88th Texas Legislature did not pass a bill to advance the state’s virtual offerings. The current state of affairs is the status quo, and the state’s full-time online schools operate by virtue of a waiver issued by Governor Abbott, which is set to expire in 2025.⁹⁵

The 89th Texas Legislature will have the opportunity to once again consider what might proactively help future Texans by modernizing a woefully out of date virtual learning infrastructure.



Policy Recommendations

Policy Recommendation 13

Overhaul the State's Virtual Schooling Infrastructure

Senate Bill 27 (87R, Taylor) would have overhauled the state's virtual offerings by converting the Texas Virtual School Network into the state Online Learning System with a statewide course catalog and full-time virtual programs. First, it would have removed several existing barriers to course enrollment, including the current law allowing school districts to deny a student's enrollment in an online course that the district already offers in person, and it would have removed a cap on the number (3) of online courses that a district or school may pay for on behalf of the student. More importantly, the bill would have authorized school districts, charter schools, and public or private institutions of higher education to offer full-time virtual school programs, operated either themselves or through contracts with education vendors. These programs could serve a broad range of students. The bill would have created a full-time virtual program dashboard that would have provided information to the public regarding the performance of the programs available. Built into the program were a host of accountability measures ensuring clarity on which programs performed better than others. The bill passed out of the Senate Education Committee with 7 yeas and only 2 nays, but never received a vote on the Senate floor.

SB 1861 would have enacted similar reforms to SB 15, but was more specifically tailored to the Texas Commission on Virtual Education's Report recommendations.

The Legislature should once again consider passage of legislation similar to SB 15 or SB 1861 in the 89th Legislative Session.

Policy Recommendation 14

Allow All Grades to Enroll in Virtual Courses Through the Virtual School Network

Under Chapter 30A of the Education Code, courses through the state virtual school network are available only to grade levels three and above. At least twenty-four states in the nation offer full-time virtual school options, including Texas, yet Texas is the only state to exclude kindergarten through second grade.⁹⁶

The difficulty that some children have with the traditional learning model does not begin at third grade. It often begins when students are first enrolled. It is no doubt a small number of students who would utilize virtual learning at such an age, but denying them that opportunity is an arbitrary decision with no basis in fact or data.

Policy Recommendation 15

Repeal the Expiration Provisions Related to Virtual Learning and Make them Permanent

The passage of Senate Bill 15 (S2, Taylor) authorized public school districts and open-enrollment charter schools to provide full-time virtual schools, off-campus instruction, and off-campus hybrid programs if those schools or districts offered such during the 2020-2021 school year. The bill provided a funding mechanism based on average daily attendance in the virtual and remote settings. The provisions of Senate Bill 15 expired on September 1, 2023, but were extended by virtue of a waiver issued by Governor Abbott and are now set to expire in 2025. This sunset should be repealed and the programs allowed to continue in perpetuity.



School Safety

School safety became a key issue in the 88th Legislative Session as a result of the Robb Elementary shooting, which claimed the lives of two teachers and 19 students.⁹⁷ The tragedy brought into question the training of law enforcement and the security of K-12 institutions.

After-Action Report and House Committee Report

The After-Action Report (AAR) for the shooting, conducted by The Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) Center, revealed key issues that led to the tragic outcomes in Uvalde.⁹⁸ These included campus security issues and an unacceptable period between the initial arrival of law enforcement and their contact with the shooter.

Similarly, The Texas House of Representatives Investigative Committee's report concluded that "Robb Elementary had a culture of noncompliance with safety policies requiring doors to be kept locked, which turned out to be fatal."⁹⁹ According to the report "if the door had been locked as policy required, the attacker likely would have been slowed for some period of time as he either circumvented the lock or moved to another point of entry into the building."¹⁰⁰ Advanced recognition and resolution of these issues could have stopped the shooter or minimized the loss of life through the course of the incident.

Legislative Action

In response to the shooting and the findings of these reports, the 88th Legislature passed a series of reforms to improve the security of K-12 institutions. Most of these reforms were passed through the omnibus school safety bill, House Bill 3 (88R, Burrows).¹⁰¹ HB 3 includes an expansive list of key provisions spanning from target hardening measures and new allotments to increased law enforcement coordination.

Target hardening is a crime prevention method that employs improved security to deter or prevent criminal activity. HB 3 has a variety of provisions that use this method to decrease the likelihood of school shootings in Texas. Specifically, the bill requires every campus in a district to have at least one armed security officer present at the school during school hours. HB 3 also improves statewide campus security by requiring a review of building standards for instructional facilities every five years. This review verifies that standards reflect best practices for student safety. The bill ensures local compliance with these standards by requiring the monitoring and auditing of school district safety and security requirements.

To guarantee that local districts can remain compliant with these standards, HB 3 codifies a per-student ADA allotment in school funding for school safety. The allotment is in the amount of the greater of the following:

- (1) \$10 for each student in average daily attendance, plus \$1 for each student in average daily attendance per every \$50 by which the district's maximum basic allotment under Section 48.051 exceeds \$6,160, prorated as necessary; and
- (2) \$15,000 per campus.¹⁰²

To make sure that these monies are used efficiently and effectively, HB 3 requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and Texas School Safety Center to coordinate to designate certain technologies that a school district may purchase from an approved vendor, using funds allocated under the safety allotment. The bill authorizes TEA, in coordination with the Texas School Safety Center, to determine if entering a statewide contract with a vendor for the provision of a technology would result in cost savings to the district. If so, with the approval of the Legislative Budget Board and the Governor, TEA may enter into a contract with a vendor to provide that technology to each district that uses these funds.

Outside of HB 3, the 88th Legislature passed additional meaningful reforms to improve statewide school safety. These included Senate Bill 838 (88R, Creighton)¹⁰³ and Senate Bill 1852 (88R, Flores).¹⁰⁴ SB



838 requires school districts and open-enrollment charter schools to provide every classroom with silent panic alert technology. This alert system allows for immediate contact with first responders and law enforcement entities, thereby improving response times in the event of an incident. Similarly, SB 1852 positively impacts response efforts by requiring peace officers to complete 16 hours of ALERRT courses on responding to an active shooter.¹⁰⁵

Policy Recommendations

The Legislature's efforts have improved the security of K-12 institutions, but there are still additional reforms that can further safeguard Texas' youth.

Policy Recommendation 16

Expand the armed security requirement of HB 3 to include high-attendance events that take place outside of regular school hours.

Sporting events like football games frequently yield a high attendance of students and members of the community, alike. To ensure that attendees are well protected from potential offenders, the state should require similar armed security for these events as those present during regular school hours.

Policy Recommendation 17

Revisit House Bill 2 and House Joint Resolution 1 from the 88th Legislature's fourth called special session.

House Bill 2 (88(4), King, Ken)¹⁰⁶ and House Joint Resolution 1 (88(4), King, Ken)¹⁰⁷ would have created a dedicated fund to assist school districts and charter schools in Texas' goal of keeping students safe. The passage of these bills would have assisted local districts in implementing the provisions of bills passed during the regular session. Unfortunately, HB 2 and HJR 1 failed to become law. The 89th legislature should pass bills similar to HB 2 and HJR 1 to ensure that there is ongoing funding for school safety in Texas.

Policy Recommendation 18

Set minimum standards for active shooter training and exercises.

Conducting exercises that simulate K-12 mass shootings is a sound practice by school districts and local law enforcement. To ensure that these exercises are as beneficial as possible and do not instill a false sense of confidence, the state should use its resources to promulgate standards for such exercises.

Policy Recommendation 19

Incorporate the fundamental concepts of incident command system (ICS) and unified command (UC) in active shooter training.

The failures of the Robb Elementary School shooting response appear to have been, in part, due to a lack of command structure during the incident. The legislature should address this issue by requiring that the fundamental concepts of the FEMA-developed incident command system (ICS) and unified command (UC) be implemented into future training for active shooter scenarios.

Policy Recommendation 20

Educate teachers on the training options available to them, and provide the necessary funding.

Teachers who are well-trained to respond to a mass shooting can save many lives. The state should provide funding to pay for teachers who wish to take a firearm proficiency class and/or civilian ALERRT classes, and educate them about this benefit.



Parental Empowerment

Made famous by Hillary Clinton, the phrase *it takes a village to raise a child* was once an unchallenged slogan, casually accepted as an earnest acknowledgement that Americans have a collective interest in preparing future generations of Americans for the world. What has become clear over time—particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic—is that a fundamental divide exists over this concept. While one side views parents as unchallenged authority who may delegate certain responsibilities to other parties, the other side views the “village” as a collective, with authority that in many ways is equal to that of parents. The latter belief may have been fringe in 2021—when candidate and former Governor of Virginia, Terry McAuliffe declared: “I don’t think parents should be telling schools what they should teach”—but it remains common amongst the nationwide debate on parental rights.

President Biden stated at the 2022 Teacher of the Year ceremony that school children don’t belong to their parents “when they’re in the classroom.” Indeed, the President elaborated, stating:

They’re all our children. And the reason you’re the teachers of the year is because you recognize that. They’re not somebody else’s children. They’re like yours when they’re in the classroom.

In Michigan, the state’s Democratic Party came under fire for a January 16, 2022, Facebook post that stated:

Not sure where this “parents-should-control-what-is-taught-in-schools-because-they-are-our-kids” is originating, but parents do have the option to choose to send their kids to a hand-selected private school at their own expense if this is what they desire.

The purpose of a public education in a public school is not to teach kids only what parents want them to be taught. It is to teach them what society needs them to know. The client of the public school is not the parent, but the entire community, the public.

In 2023, a teacher in Arizona parroted this ideology during public testimony on Senate Bill 1700, a parental rights in education bill, stating:

I have a master’s degree because when I got certified, I was told I had to have a master’s degree to be an Arizona-certified teacher. We all have advanced degrees. What do the parents have? Are we vetting the backgrounds of our parents? Are we allowing the parents to choose the curriculum and the books that our children are going to read?

I think that it’s a mistake, and I am just speaking from the heart. The one line that I love is:³ “We must remember that the purpose of public education is not to teach only what parents want their children to be taught, it is to teach them what society needs them to be taught.”¹⁰⁸

At best, these individuals view the government as a co-parent. At worst, they believe the government has better insight into a student’s educational and medical needs than their parents.

This is exemplified by the passage of Assembly Bill 1955 in California. AB 1955 prohibits school districts from requiring employees to share critical medical information with parents. Under this law, schools cannot inform parents of discussions surrounding their child’s sexual orientation or perceived gender identity or expression.

At the same time, California requires the following of their *Required Comprehensive Sexual Health Education and HIV Prevention Education* program:

5. Instruction and materials shall affirmatively recognize that people have different sexual

³ Referring to the since-deleted Michigan Democratic Party Facebook Post.



orientations and, when discussing or providing examples of relationships and couples, shall be inclusive of same-sex relationships.

6. Instruction and materials shall teach pupils about gender, gender expression, gender identity, and explore the harm of negative gender stereotypes.

While parents can opt out of the instruction, if they want their children to receive sexual health and HIV education, then they must consent to their child receiving sexual and gender orientation instruction. This demonstrates that the state is more comfortable with discussing sexual orientation and gender with students than facilitating that discussion with parents. These items should not be the focus of public schools.

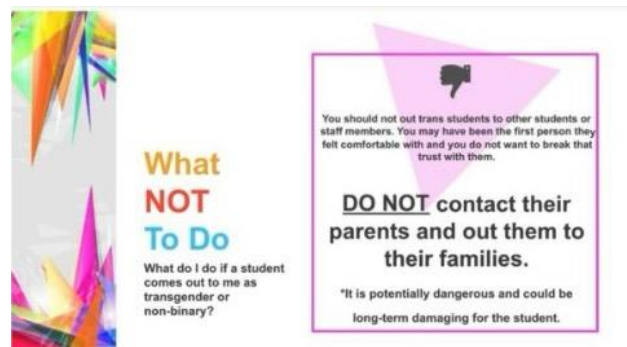
Texas Public Schools Stray from Their Mission

Texas public schools have exhibited similar behaviors. Because policies on withholding information from parents and instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity are not codified under Texas law, school districts have taken it upon themselves to institute these policies.

In 2023, a public records request showed that Round Rock ISD provided the following instruction to staff:

Figure 17

Round Rock ISD Staff Training



Source: *Parents Defending Education*¹⁰⁹

This slide was part of a presentation that advised district staff on what to do and not to do in the event a student told them they identify as transgender or non-binary. The instruction also advised teachers to do the following:

You should correct students in your class who use the incorrect name or pronouns as well. Explain that your classroom is a place of mutual respect and refer to your social contract.

This may be acceptable under the condition that a parent agrees to their child being addressed by another name or set of pronouns. However, the instruction explicitly directs teachers to withhold this information from parents. This creates a dynamic where a teacher is encouraging a student to make potentially life-altering decisions without the knowledge or consent of their parents. Similarly, this “social contract” requires students to adhere to a cultural worldview they may not agree with or are too young to understand.

Instead of acting as a conduit for cultural indoctrination, schools should focus on educating children in the traditional disciplines of math, science, and language arts. In fact, this is the express goal of the public education system according to Section 4.002 of the Texas Education Code (TEC):

GOAL 1: The students in the public education system will demonstrate exemplary



performance in the reading and writing of the English language.

GOAL 2: The students in the public education system will demonstrate exemplary performance in the understanding of mathematics.

GOAL 3: The students in the public education system will demonstrate exemplary performance in the understanding of science.

GOAL 4: The students in the public education system will demonstrate exemplary performance in the understanding of social studies.¹¹⁰

Despite these goals, school districts continue to host culturally motivated events and activities.

Austin ISD, for example, hosts an annual Pride Week in March, in which posters, pride flags, and pronoun buttons are distributed to students by the schools in the district.¹¹¹ This includes elementary schools. In fact, Doss Elementary School in Austin ISD became the focus of national media attention during 2022 Pride Week when materials for “Pride Week Community Circles” for grades Pre-K through Second Grade were leaked to the press. These materials appeared to instruct children as young as five and six years of age not to tell their parents what they discussed in Pride Week Community Circles:

Figure 18

Doss Elementary Pride Circle Instructions

PRIDE Week Community Circles: PK-2

- Introduction**
 - Welcome to the group. Introduce yourself as the circle leader.
 - Mention the purpose of today's circle (The purpose of this circle is to share about...)
 - Wednesday: families
 - Thursday: respecting differences
 - Friday: No Place for Hate
- Review the circle process**
 - This is a "guided" conversation.
 - One person speaks at a time without interruption.
 - We will use a talking piece, which helps to focus our attention on the person who is speaking, and gives everyone an equal chance to participate. When you have the talking piece, you are invited to speak, but you may pass. When you do not have the talking piece, you will listen.
- Review the agreements.**
 - Bring your full attention to the person talking and be a good listener.
 - Talk to everyone in the circle, not just one person.
 - Stay on topic.
 - Do not name specific people when giving examples.
 - Be as honest and kind as possible.
 - Listen and speak with respect for others.
 - Please do not interrupt a speaker or talk out of turn.
 - Respect privacy: "What we say in this room stays in this room."
 - We can think different things as long as we continue to be respectful.

Would anyone like to add anything? Will everyone follow the agreements?

PRIDE Week Community Circles: 3-5

2. Friday: Does PRIDE Week have a meaning/significance for you or your family?

Review agreements at any time if necessary. (I would just like to remind the group that we agreed to ...)

Close the Circle
 (I want to thank everyone for participating in the Circle and for sharing your thoughts and listening to each other with respect. Please remember that we agreed to keep what happened in this Circle confidential.)

Source: Washington Examiner¹¹²

The prevalence of such programs and ideologies is not only concerning, but indicative of a desire to pursue a *cultural* education over the core responsibilities of an academic public education.

Parental Rights Legislation

Parental involvement is the best way to ensure public schools stay on track. With more involvement, public schools can focus their efforts on meeting the primary goals of the public school system rather than ancillary cultural material. This is accomplished by improving transparency and reinforcing that parents—not teachers—have the fundamental right to decisions regarding their child’s health and education.



Several states have accomplished this goal by passing parental rights legislation. The most notable of these bills was signed into law by Florida Governor Ron DeSantis in 2022. House Bill 1557 protects parents’ prerogative to decide for themselves whether their young children should receive instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity.¹¹³ The bill prohibits such instruction in the classroom in kindergarten through 3rd grade and also requires school districts to adopt procedures to notify parents when a change in the child’s mental, emotional, or physical health is observed.¹¹⁴ The passage of HB 1557 was made controversial by a national media that assisted opponents of the bill by using misinformation to label the bill the “don’t say gay” bill. Kevin D. Williamson provided a strong critique of this approach in National Review Online:

The recent dispute about these issues in Florida resulted in the mendaciously nicknamed “Don’t Say Gay” law. “Don’t say gay” is a willfully dishonest account of what the law requires, but — now that you mention it — “don’t say gay” is a reasonable position to take vis-à-vis kindergartners and first-graders, for whom the ins and outs of homosexuality are rather low on the list of immediate educational needs. It isn’t the people who don’t want schools to instruct eight-year-olds about transsexualism who are the fanatics.¹¹⁵

Indeed. It is entirely appropriate to shield young children from topics they do not yet have the capacity to understand fully. Florida was right to pass such a law and several other states have followed suit, including:

Figure 19

Parental Rights Legislation

State	Bill Number
Arizona	House Bill 2161 ¹¹⁶
Georgia	House Bill 1178 ¹¹⁷
Iowa	Senate File 496 ¹¹⁸
Louisiana	House Bill 122 ¹¹⁹ and House Bill 369 ¹²⁰
North Carolina	Senate Bill 49 ¹²¹

Source: *Future Ed*¹²²

These laws vary in scope and effectiveness, but all improve public education by increasing parental rights and limiting the discussion of sexual topics and the dissemination of obscene materials to children.

Defending Parental Rights in Texas

Chapter 26 of the Texas Education Code lists some of the educational rights of parents and more generally asserts that a “board of trustees, educator, or other person may not limit parental rights.” The rights provided under this chapter are non-exclusive, meaning it “does not limit a parent’s rights under other law.”¹²³

Figure 20

Parental Rights Under TEC 26

Access to student records, state assessments, teaching materials, and board meetings
Complaints and requests for public information or instructional material review
Full information concerning student



Information concerning special education of students with learning difficulties

Notice of supplemental educational services and offerings through the State Virtual School Network

Consent for certain activities and exemption from instruction

Refusal of psychiatric or psychological treatment

Request a change assigned class or teacher, addition of a specific class, enrollment in a class above grade level, and early graduation

Source: TEC 26¹²⁴

There are persistent efforts to violate the spirit and letter of this chapter. For instance, the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) disseminated recommendations to school districts across the state on “working with students if a parent ‘does not support’ their gender transition.” The recommendations are similar to AB 1955 in California, implying that district personnel should obfuscate and withhold key developmental information from parents.

In addressing a situation where a student does not want district faculty to inform their parent of their perceived gender identity, TASB suggests that:

It may be possible to reach an agreement with the student and parent that satisfies everyone: for example, schools have instructed staff to call a transgender student by the student’s preferred name at school but to refer to the student by the name on the birth certificate in all communications with parents.

Notably, the recommendation differs from the example given. The recommendation seems to suggest that a district should inform parents. In contrast, the example indicates that schools should perform social gender transitioning in the classroom without parental knowledge. The following passage from the same document further implies that TASB recommends district personnel withhold information from parents:

Texas educators typically work with parents to decide on appropriate accommodations for transgender students... Nonetheless, it is important to keep in mind that transgender students are at particular risk of harm, including self-harm, when a parent disagrees with the student’s gender identity.

This recommendation violates the spirit of TEC 26.008(b), which states:

(b) An attempt by any school district employee to encourage or coerce a child to withhold information from the child's parent is grounds for discipline under Section 21.104,¹²⁵ 21.156,¹²⁶ or 21.211,¹²⁷ as applicable.⁴

Grievance Procedures

Parental rights are flagrantly disregarded due to a lack of accountability. Outside of the disciplinary measures under TEC 26.008(b), grievance complaints are the only enforcement mechanism in defense of these rights. A grievance complaint is heard by the board of trustees for the school district in which the complaint was made. These trustees are tasked with developing their grievance procedures and are only required to:

(a) address each complaint that the board receives concerning violation of a right guaranteed by this chapter.

Notably, the statute does not include a time frame in which these complaints must be addressed. This allows a board of trustees to delay adjudication of complaints until they are no longer relevant.

The subsection also contradicts the aforementioned non-exclusionary clause found in Chapter 26 of the Education Code. Under current law, a board of trustees is only required to hear complaints about those rights listed under Chapter 26. This stipulation considerably limits accountability for the violation of rights that are not specifically mentioned. The legislature must expand the rights this chapter protects,

⁴ Discipline includes termination or suspension without pay.



address loopholes, and incorporate a rigorous appeal system.

Obscene Materials

Directly related to parental rights is the issue of inappropriate reading materials in public school libraries, which parents became aware of when they became more engaged in public education during the period of COVID-19 school closures. This has been a major issue nationally, but also in Texas. State Representative Jared Patterson engaged on the issue after a search produced at least 28 titles containing explicit sexual material.¹²⁸ Another 282 sexually explicit books were found in McKinney ISD proving this to be an endemic problem which requires resolution.¹²⁹

Representative Patterson attempted to address this issue with passage of House Bill 900, which tasked the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, with approval from the State Board of Education, with creating school library standards prohibiting sexually explicit material and harmful materials as defined by Section 43.24 of the Penal Code. These standards also permitted the exclusion of materials that are pervasively vulgar or educationally unsuitable.

Under HB 900, written parental consent would have been required for students to access sexually relevant library materials in a school district or open-enrollment charter school. A rating system pertaining to sexually relevant and explicit material would also need to have been developed by schoolbook vendors. These vendors also would not be able to sell a book containing sexually explicit material to a school district or open-enrollment charter school and must submit to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) a list of each book containing sexually relevant and explicit materials previously sold to school districts and open-enrollment charter schools on September 1, 2023. Going forward, each year on September 1st, these vendors would have been required to submit a list detailing each book containing sexually relevant and explicit materials sold to school districts and open-enrollment charter schools during the course of the previous year. TEA would then post this list on their website as soon as practicable.

House Bill 900 was called the Restricting Explicit and Adult-Designated Educational Resources (READER)

Act. The READER ACT passed into law, but was challenged in court. In January 2024, The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a trial court's preliminary injunction against enforcement of the READER Act, holding that the plaintiffs in the case were likely to succeed on the merits of their First Amendment claims against the Act.¹³⁰ The Court took did not take issue with the state setting standards by which books could be excluded from school libraries as inappropriate.¹³¹ The injunction was upheld on the basis of an objection to compelling book vendors to review and label books based on the state's standards and to inform the state of those ratings, which in turn determine what they are permitted to sell to the state or public schools in the state.¹³²

Policy Recommendations

In addition to the READER Act, numerous other parental rights in education bills were filed in the 88th legislative session.¹³³ These bills addressed:

1. Grievance procedures;
2. Instruction on human sexuality and gender identity;
3. Access to instructional and library material;
4. Consent and notification policies; and,
5. Curriculum and material reforms.

While these bills failed to become law, they created a reliable roadmap for defending parental rights in the 89th legislative session.

Policy Recommendation 21

Update the READER Act

Representative Patterson has filed House Bill 183 to remedy the READER Act with respect to the Court's determination. It creates a process by which parents initiate the review of material in public school libraries for a determination on which rating material should be awarded. The bill is an important update to state law protecting children from inappropriate content in public schools



Policy Recommendation 22

Standardize Grievance Procedures

Parental rights legislation only matters if there are stringent enforcement mechanisms and adjudication procedures. The requirements for grievance procedures do not provide ample deterrence from violating parental rights, nor do they provide expedient remedies for complaints. To address this issue, the legislature should pass legislation similar to Senate Bill 86 (89R, Hall),¹³⁴ which would require school districts to adopt the following as a part of their grievance procedures:

1. The board of trustees for the school district must respond to a grievance complaint not later than 30th day after receipt of the complaint by:
 - a. Resolving the issue that gave rise to the complaint; or,
 - b. Providing the complainant with a written explanation of the district's reason for not resolving the issue.

In the case that a board of trustees fails to respond by the 30th day after receipt of the complaint or decides not to resolve the issue, then the complainant may bring a civil action against the district to obtain appropriate injunctive and declaratory relief. A court may award damages and shall award reasonable attorney's fees and court costs to a prevailing complainant.

Additionally, the legislature should consider further punitive measures to ensure these rights are not continually violated. These measures should include fines, such that if a complainant prevails, then the school district is fined the amount of weighted average daily attendance¹³⁵ funding received for each impacted student. The TEA would seize this funding. Additionally, employees who violated parental rights should have their employment contract with the school district terminated.

Policy Recommendation 23

Improve Chapter 26 of the Education Code

The rights guaranteed by Chapter 26 of the Texas Education Code must be expansive to compensate for a school district's board of trustees' ability to ignore any complaint that is not based on an enumerated right under that chapter. While the legislature could remove this clause, doing so would make it difficult to include enforcement mechanisms and would promote illegitimate grievance complaints. Instead, the legislature should expand the rights guaranteed by this section.

Examples of rights that could be included are a parent's right to:

1. Access their student's written or electronic records, including:
 - a. Attendance records;
 - b. Test scores;
 - c. Grades;
 - d. Instructional or library materials;
 - e. Disciplinary records;
 - f. Counseling records;
 - g. Psychological records;
 - h. Applications for admission;
 - i. Health and immunization information;
 - j. Teacher and school counselor evaluations;
 - k. Reports of behavioral patterns; and,
 - l. Records relating to assistance provided for learning difficulties, including information collected regarding any intervention strategies used with the child.
2. Be notified of each healthcare service offered at their student's school and the option to withhold consent or decline any specific service;
3. Be provided with well-being questionnaires or health screening forms before administration to their student; and,
4. Receive request for consent from the school district before:
 - a. Conducting a social or psychological experiment on students;
 - b. Administering a student well-being questionnaire, health care screening form, or survey, unless it is required



- under federal law requirements for special education;
- c. Providing instruction on human sexuality; or,
 - d. Permitting a student to join a student club that promotes themes of sexuality, gender, or gender identity.

The intent of these reforms should be to expand parental rights and clarify those that are enumerated under current law. This would close loopholes, allow for consistent redress of grievances, and inform school districts of prohibited actions. To achieve this goal, the 89th legislature should consider legislation similar to SB 86 (89R, Hall)¹³⁶ and Senate Bill 112 (89R, Hall).¹³⁷

Policy Recommendation 24

Create a Parental Bill of Rights

The legislature should propose a constitutional amendment to ensure the fundamental right of parents to raise their children is protected in perpetuity. This “Parents Bill of Rights” should be similar to House Joint Resolution 85 (88R, Burrows),¹³⁸ which would have established the following:

1. The liberty of a parent to direct the upbringing of their child including the right to direct their child’s:
 - a. Care;
 - b. Custody;
 - c. Control;
 - d. Education;
 - e. Moral and Religious Training; and,
 - f. Medical Care;
2. The state and its subdivisions are prohibited from interfering with these rights unless that interference is:
 - a. Essential to further a compelling governmental interest; and,
 - b. Narrowly tailored to accomplish that compelling governmental interest.

Examples of legislation from the 89th legislative session that would propose a “Parents Bill of Rights” include House Joint Resolution 28 (89, Vasut).¹³⁹

Policy Recommendation 25

Prohibit Withholding Information from Parents

Outside of instances of abuse or neglect—as defined by Chapter 261 of the Texas Family Code—there are no circumstances in which district personnel should withhold information from parents. As such, the legislature should prohibit school districts and school district personnel from refusing to notify parents of:

1. Changes to their student’s mental, emotional, or physical health or well-being, including changes to their student’s perceived gender identity;
2. A change in related services; and
3. Decisions affecting a student’s mental, emotional, or physical health or well-being.

The legislature should also require school districts and personnel to:

1. Notify parents of changes to services or the monitoring of their student’s mental, emotional, or physical health.
2. Notify parents of each healthcare service offered at their student’s school and the option to withhold consent or decline any specific service.
3. Provide parents with any requested records—written or electronic—related to their student.

Additionally, if a district employee is found to have withheld this information or encouraged a student to withhold this information from a parent, the legislature should prohibit a school district from renewing their employment contract.

Policy Recommendation 26

Ensure Appropriate Instruction and Materials



Parents, not teachers, are responsible for instructing their children on human sexuality, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Furthermore, it detracts from the core responsibilities of public education. To ensure that public schools desist from having inappropriate conversations with minors and remain focused on the traditional disciplines of education, the legislature should prohibit public schools from providing classroom instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Policy Recommendation 27

Close the Obscene Materials Loophole

Section 43.24 of the Penal Code makes it a crime to sell, distribute, or display harmful materials to a minor. Harmful materials include material that:

- (A) appeals to the prurient interest of a minor, in sex, nudity, or excretion;
- (B) is patently offensive to prevailing standards in the adult community as a whole with respect to what is suitable for minors; and
- (C) is utterly without redeeming social value for minors.

Parents have a right to know what their children are being taught in public schools and the manner in which they are being taught.

It is a defense to prosecution under Section 43.24 if the materials are provided to a minor “by a person having scientific, educational, governmental, or other similar justification.” Representative Patterson has filed House Bill 267 to modify this affirmative defense, making clear that obscene materials meeting the above standard are inappropriate for minors no matter who provides them. The Legislature should consider this legislation in the 89th Legislative Session.



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in K- 12 Public Schools

Critical Race Theory as “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion”

Critical Race Theory (CRT) stems from the “philosophical writings of Derrick Bell in the 1970s and early 1980s” where he, alongside Alan Freeman and Richard Delgado, utilized critical theory as a basis for studying race in the United States.¹⁴⁰ Critical Theory itself is a “Marxist-inspired movement in social and political philosophy.”¹⁴¹ Accredited to Max Horkheimer,¹⁴² Critical Theory is “a philosophical approach to culture, and especially to literature, that seeks to confront the social, historical, and ideological forces and structures that produce and constrain it.”¹⁴³ This is done through the lens of the oppressed, oppressor, and oppressive systems. Essentially, the theory suggests that systems were built for and by “the oppressor” to ensure that the “oppressed” remain that way. In the context of critical theory, the oppressed are the proletariat (working class), and the oppressors are the bourgeoisie (middle and upper class). Since upward mobility is accessible in the United States like nowhere else in the world, such rhetoric is not palatable for Americans. Instead, race was inserted into Critical Theory, creating CRT, where minority groups are viewed as “the oppressed” and white people are seen as “the oppressors.” This generates a far more toxic form of Marxism with a racial foundation that seeks to divide Americans on the basis of their heritage.

Doctor Quintin Bostic is a former Georgia State University teacher specializing in early childhood education. Until recently, Bostic worked for *Teaching Lab*, a non-profit organization with a self-described “mission to fundamentally shift the paradigm of

teacher professional learning for educational equity.”¹⁴⁴ In January of 2023, Bostic was caught on video by an undercover journalist explaining how curricula developed for K-12 schools can include Critical Race Theory (CRT) by calling it Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI).¹⁴⁵ The context for the conversation was a 2022 Georgia law—House Bill 1084 (2021-2022R, Wade)¹⁴⁶—that prohibited teaching “divisive concepts,” such as those commonly present in CRT. Bostic states in the video that “If you don’t say the words ‘Critical Race Theory,’ you can technically teach it.”¹⁴⁷ While this does not appear to be accurate when analyzing the text of HB 1084,¹⁴⁸ it showcases how advocates of CRT are willing to lie and deceive to ensure that their message reaches the youth, and this message originates from Marxist ideology.

As made clear by Dr. Bostic, teachings on this ideology are entering classrooms under the guise of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives. The prevalence of DEI in America has become a topic of discussion as Chief Diversity Officers (CDO) are present in a variety of organizations from Fortune 500 Companies, like Meta, and, of course, local school districts.¹⁴⁹

CDOs use DEI as the foundation of their work, a core tenet of which is equity. Equity is often misconstrued with *equality* when, by definition, it is in direct opposition. Equity is the proposition that “each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome,” whereas *equality* stands for the proposition that everyone should be treated the same, without discrimination.¹⁵⁰ Equality is the basis for both the 14th Amendment’s guarantee of “equal protection of the laws”¹⁵¹ and Martin Luther King Jr.’s dream that his children would “live in a nation where they [would] not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.”¹⁵²

Equity may sound nice, but it is a fundamentally discriminatory ideology when put into practice. Because the goal of equity is to *impose* equality of outcomes, it requires the removal of equality of opportunity. In real life, this manifests in a variety of unjust ways that have been universally rejected in the past: hiring and advancement practices based on race and gender and the removal of reward and advancement based on merit.



The imposition of *equity* in public education takes several observable forms. Take, for example, the attempted removal of gifted and talented programs in New York City.¹⁵³ Parents seek inclusion in these programs because they reward and encourage merit. Equity requires the elimination of these programs as incompatible with equality of outcomes. The goal of equality of outcomes is more easily achieved by imposing lower standards for everyone than it is by offering higher standards to everyone.

Imposing DEI Causes Real Harm

The harm caused by DEI is easily observable. A 2002 scandal in Fairfax, Virginia serves as an example. In 2022, “Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJ)... withheld National Merit commended-student awards.”¹⁵⁴ Students entered the National Merit Scholarship Program (NMSP) by taking the Preliminary SAT (PSAT) and if they were within roughly the top 3% of test takers nationally, they became commended students.¹⁵⁵ Receiving this commendation placed the students in a pool for the National Merit Scholarship, which positioned the students well for college admission and numerous scholarship programs. Many of these students, however, never had the opportunity to take advantage of these programs because they were never informed of their achievements, or their parents were deliberately misinformed about what those achievements meant. Viewed through DEI, a program that awards excellence is fundamentally in opposition to the principle of equality of outcomes. Therefore, DEI proponents at the school sought to minimize the program’s benefits for standout students. One teacher at the school wrote in an email that she did not agree with the awards as she has negative “thoughts on using the PSAT as an indicator of success.”¹⁵⁶ This rejection of merit-based awards appears to have been done to maintain equity and seemingly corrupted the entirety of the institution. 2,000 pages of additional emails obtained via the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests show:

TJ staffers and administrators, seemingly motivated by the pursuit of so-called equity, willfully engaged in a deliberate pattern and

practice of withholding awards, devaluing their worth, and deceiving parents in the process.¹⁵⁷

No one benefitted from this imposition of equity; many students were harmed.

The institution of Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, like many others, is overrun with ideologies dedicated to equity. Examples in the district include:¹⁵⁸

1. The removal of the “merit-based, race-blind admissions process;”
2. District administrators “fawn[ing] over” the controversial Ibram X. Kendi; and,
3. Accosting Asian-American students over cultural appropriation for salsa dancing in a social-emotional learning lesson.

All these items are hallmarks of an institution that has bought into the teachings of DEI. Pairing this knowledge with the actions of staff shows that not informing students of their accolades was not a result of a “one-time human error” or a “staffing issue” but rather the pursuit of equity. The teachers and staff of this school seem to believe the PSAT and by extension, the NMSP is overrepresented by “privileged students” and therefore, they simply do not deserve commendation. They stripped this opportunity from students who are part of a protected minority group, as Asian-American students make up about “75% of semifinalists” in NMSP, and the student population of TJ is a majority Asian-American.¹⁵⁹

DEI Programs Discriminate

Equity programs and practices are not only discriminatory in their own right, but when placed in the context of DEI, this discrimination is imposed along racial and ethnic lines. Promoters of this ideology believe that the current system concentrates resources on already-privileged students and significantly underrepresents ‘students of color.’ Interestingly, this often excludes Asian Americans as ‘students of color’ because of the demographics’ high academic performance measures—making them inconvenient. This can also be seen in affirmative action, which, for example, incorporates race-based



standards in admissions as seen in the recent Supreme Court case *Students for Fair Admissions Inc. v. President & Fellows of Harvard College*.¹⁶⁰ In reference to affirmative action, Justice Clarence Thomas believes that “Black people are the ‘main victims’ of race-conscious admissions,” with his biographer Corey Robin stating, in relation to race-conscious admissions, that “not only are [Black people] subjected to White paternalism, but it stigmatizes Black people’s achievements as less than that of White people’s.”¹⁶¹ As affirmative action stems from similar theories to that of DEI it is safe to suggest that DEI-based education may result in similar stigmatization of the achievements of those in minority groups, therefore harming those it seeks to benefit. Indeed, under an equity standard, outcomes need to be the same. That is nearly impossible to achieve while also striving for the best of every individual. Therefore, standards must be lowered, the achievers must be taken down, and a universal *equitable* outcome imposed.

DEI is Deeply Entrenched in Texas Public Schools

The prevalence of such programs and ideologies in K-12 education is concerning. A 2021 study published by Jay P. Greene and James D. Paul of the Heritage Foundation researched the prevalence of “Chief Diversity Officers (CDOs) charged with promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)” in public schools.¹⁶² The findings in reference to Texas were that 16% of Districts with at least 15,000 students enrolled had a CDO. The schools that employed a CDO were as follows:

Figure 21

2017 CDO Prevalence

School District	Fall 2017 Enrollment	CDO Title
Austin ISD	81,650	Director, Equity, Leadership & Planning
Dallas ISD	156,832	Chief of Staff and Racial Equity
Fort Worth ISD	86,234	Executive Director, Division of Equity and Excellence
Frisco ISD	58,450	Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategist
Houston ISD	214,175	Executive Director, Equity and Outreach
Lewisville ISD	52,472	Director of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
Mansfield ISD	35,054	Director, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
Mesquite ISD	41,022	Director of Leadership and Empowerment
Plano ISD	53,952	Director for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Richardson ISD	39,314	Director, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
Round Rock ISD	49,086	Chief Equity Officer
Spring ISD	36,134	Chief of Innovation and Equity
Wylie ISD	15,769	Director of Diversity and Inclusion

Source: *The Heritage Foundation*¹⁶³

The prevalence of CDOs in a school district, however, is not the only measure of DEI activities in K-12 education. When examining a random sample of the first twenty Texas school districts in alphabetical order, we find that eleven of them (55%) either have a CDO, advertise their commitment to equity, or overtly engage in equity-based activities.¹⁶⁴ These activities range from Superintendents being associated with equity groups,¹⁶⁵ the incorporation of equity plans,¹⁶⁶ and even the formation of Diversity and Inclusion Action Teams,¹⁶⁷ which involve students in the school district's



commitment to “equity and inclusivity, advocating for and celebrating diversity, and preparing students, staff, and stakeholders for a global society.”⁵

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has even partnered with the “National Association of Partners in Equity (NAPE),” which provides training to assist in providing professional development to districts.¹⁶⁸ This may help to explain the further expansion of this ideology into smaller districts with a population of less than 15,000 students, as indicated by the sample.

with CRT and DEI. This can be done by the passage of a bill similar to SB 17 that removes DEI programs and DEI offices from K-12 education.

Policy Recommendations

The legislature has already taken several steps to prohibit these divisive race-based concepts in education. For instance, the 87th Legislature passed House Bill 3979 (87R, Toth), which prevents curriculum from suggesting one race is superior to another and that any individual is inherently oppressive, racist, or sexist, because of their sex or race.¹⁶⁹ The 88th Legislature passed Senate Bill 17 (88R, Creighton), which prohibited universities from practicing DEI, maintaining DEI offices, or employing DEI officers.¹⁷⁰ The legislature should continue these efforts in the 89th legislative session.

Policy Recommendation 28

Eliminate and Prohibit DEI Programs in K-12 Public Education

While Institutions of Higher Education are no longer able to retain DEI offices and K-12 institutions are prohibited from expressly including CRT ideology in their curriculum, Dr. Bostic and similar advocates will continue to find loopholes to insert their ideology into public education. As a result, it is imperative that such loopholes are closed, and further legislation is implemented to prevent harmful CRT and DEI initiatives from continuing to infiltrate our K-12 institutions. To ensure this pervasive and harmful ideology does not continue to infiltrate our schools, legislation should prohibit K-12 institutions from incorporating the ideologies and initiatives associated

⁵ The entirety of the DEI activities in the examined school districts are available in the appendix.



Public School Testing and Accountability

Public school accountability in Texas is based on several metrics. The state looks at college, career, and military readiness, measured under roughly a dozen different factors, such as graduation under certain degree plans, whether the student obtained some kind of certification or associate degree while in high school, whether the student earned dual-course credits while in high school, and how the student performed on college prep courses, to name only a few examples. Accountability in public schools is also measured by the school and district graduation rates over four, five, and six year periods.

Of course, accountability for elementary and middle schools in Texas is measured using criterion-referenced testing in the form of the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) examinations. STAAR tests are aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), which are state curriculum standards for what a student is expected to learn in each grade and subject in the Texas public school system. The STAAR examinations provide an objective measure for how well the TEKS are being taught and learned. STAAR exams are administered annually as follows:

- Reading - Grades 3 through 8;
- Mathematics - Grades 3 through 8;
- Science - Grades 5 and 8;
- Social Studies - Grade 8;

HB 3906 (86 R) charged the Texas Education Agency with updating the STAAR. These changes included capping the percentage of multiple-choice questions, eliminating writing tests in grades 4 and 7, and moving to an online format. Additionally, end-of-course (EOC) assessments are required for high school

students in these specific courses: English I, English II, Algebra I, Biology, and U.S. History.

These factors are used to assess three main accountability criteria: student achievement, school progress, and how well schools and districts are closing the gaps in performance between different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups.

School and district performance in these measures are used to produce “A-F Accountability Ratings,” which provide a shorthand for school performance that parents and interested parties can use to make decisions about public education.

Misguided Opposition to Accountability

The public education establishment opposes both testing and the state’s A-F accountability system. Establishment interest groups and teachers’ associations will use the pandemic to further their goals of diminishing assessment-based or outcomes-based accountability.

Teacher associations argue that it’s time to “**end the overemphasis on the STAAR,**”¹⁷¹ an understandable sentiment, until one gets to the crux of the complaint, which is that “schools and school districts should not be graded—much less taken over—based on standardized test scores.”¹⁷² These quotes are taken from the Texas American Federation of Teachers’ 2021 and 2022 Legislative Priorities.¹⁷³

The Texas Association of School Administrators’ (TASA) position is to “oppose A-F campus and district ratings” and to limit state assessments to only those required to meet federal guidelines.¹⁷⁴ Similarly, the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) advocates for the Texas Legislature to “continue to reduce state assessments” and to prohibit state assessments “from serving as the primary indicator of school and student performance.”¹⁷⁵ Whilst this opposition comes directly from associations purporting to represent school teachers, administrators, and school board members, these positions are not uniformly held by school employees and board members.



Most of the interest groups are highly aligned with the efforts of Raise Your Hand Texas and its “Measure What Matters” campaign. The organization claims to have administered an online “poll” to more than 15,000 Texans - more than half of whom self-identify as someone working within the school system. The campaign’s report states that, “Texas deserves a school assessment and accountability system that clearly tells our schools, our families, our communities, and our business partners how well we are preparing all of our students for the futures they want and deserve.”¹⁷⁶ What the report fails to disclose is that fewer than 1 in 3 students are proficient in grade-level math, and fewer than 1 in 2 students are proficient in grade-level reading, both key markers of preparation for the workforce. The main purpose of STAAR and the accountability system is to let parents and lawmakers know how strongly or poorly schools are performing so that they can demand improvement. The current system that these groups would like to get rid of is screaming for fundamental improvements to the public school system. Advocates like Raise Your Hand Texas would prefer to adopt a system that hides this truth from parents.

Issues to Address in the State’s Accountability System

According to the Texas Education Agency (TEA), in 2022, roughly 23 percent of students in grades three through five did not meet grade level on STAAR reading language arts (RLA) assessments.¹⁷⁷ Similarly, TEA reported that in 2022, around 29 percent of students in these grades did not meet grade level on STAAR Math assessments.¹⁷⁸ While a quarter to one-third of students not meeting grade level is alarming, it does not paint an accurate picture. The reality is far worse.

The current design of STAAR and the A-F accountability system assigns students to one of four performance-level categories, based on STAAR results:

1. Did not meet grade level;
2. grade level;
3. Meets grade level; and,

4. Masters grade level.¹⁷⁹

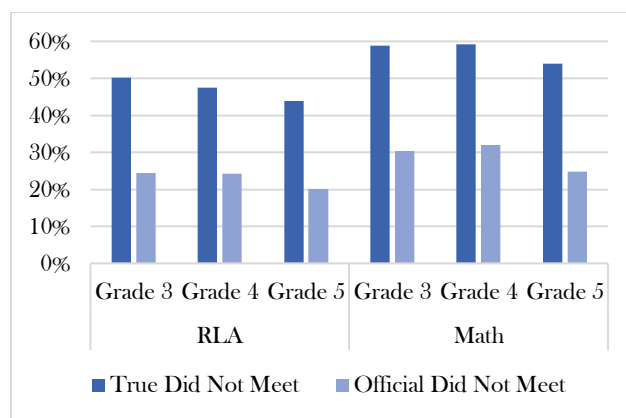
In STAAR, performance in the “approaches grade level” indicates that:

Students are likely to succeed in the next grade or course with targeted academic intervention. Students in this category generally demonstrate the ability to apply the assessed knowledge and skills in familiar contexts.¹⁸⁰

Essentially, the “approaches” category—like the “did not meet” category—denotes a failure of the school to successfully educate a student in a manner sufficient to perform at grade level in a given subject area. As a result, a student who approaches grade-level expectations, by definition, does not meet grade-level expectations. Rightfully considering these students as not meeting grade-level expectations reveals far more striking results. In this case, roughly 47 percent of students in grades three through five did not meet grade level on STAAR RLA and 57 percent did not on STAAR Math.¹⁸¹

Figure 22

Students Not Meeting Grade Level on STAAR, 2022



Source: STAAR Performance Standards, TEA¹⁸²

Including the “approaches” category is a detriment to education accountability in Texas. It obfuscates the truth from parents and minimizes the failures of Texas’ public schools. The reality is that more than half of



students in grades three through five are failing in public schools, but the approaches category makes it appear as though only one quarter are failing. The intent of STAAR and the A-F accountability system is to ensure that children receive a quality education, not to shelter public schools from accountability.

Texas cannot properly address reading and math readiness until this issue is rectified. Without this change, schools and districts that fail to have students meet grade-level expectations will continue to be rewarded in Texas’ accountability systems.¹⁸³ As a result, less pressure will be placed on these failing schools by parents and the state, and these schools will continue to fail more students.

Reading & Math Readiness

Improving reading and math proficiency does not require the creation of new programs. Rather, Texas must ensure that taxpayer dollars allocated to the education of students are being used for that purpose. The size and cost of administration and support functions in Texas’ public education system place a strain on the state’s ability to educate while adding little or no value to the essential functions of a school: teaching and learning. Administrative spending, no matter how important to the management and operation of a school, diverts resources from classroom instruction and increases the cost of education while not contributing to improved educational outcomes.

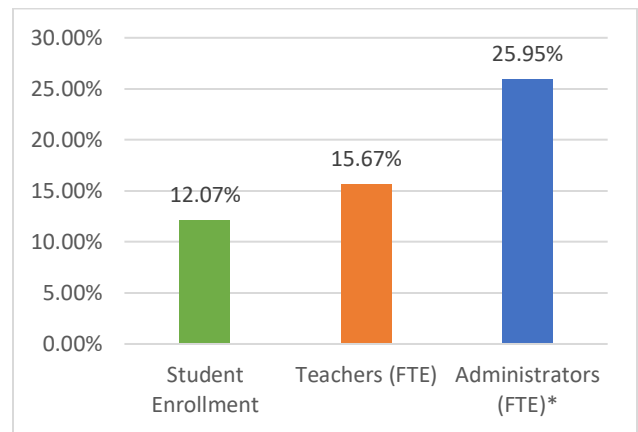
Teachers are the essential core of the educational system, yet they currently account for less than half of all public school system employees. This is a trend that is increasingly concerning given that over the last 12-year period, the percentage of teachers as a share of all staff has decreased by 0.77% while in that same period, the share of campus and central administrators has increased by 20.37% and 24.31%, respectively.¹⁸⁴ This shows that the rise in funding for public education in the last ten years has not gone toward the education of children but rather further administrative bloat.

To put these figures into perspective, in the 2022-2023 school year, Texas school districts have 1 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) employee for every 7.1 students, and 1 FTE classroom teacher for every 14.5 students.^{185 186}

This is most concerning when considering that this outsized administrative growth trend has been persistent from the 2010-11 school year to the 2022-23 school year. . This incongruent growth has amounted to a 36.07% increase in administrators as compared to a 11.02% increase in teachers and only a 10.03% increase in student enrollment.¹⁸⁷

Figure 23

Percentage Increase in Teachers, Administrators, and Students, 2011-12–2023-24



Source: Texas Education Agency¹⁸⁸

These figures show that Texas does not need to create new programs or increase funding to improve math and reading readiness. The state simply needs to reset its priorities and ensure dollars spent on administrative functions are redirected toward teaching students.

Testing Reform

The state has an opportunity to make these changes alongside the implementation of other reforms like the Texas Through-Year Assessment Pilot (TTAP). TTAP was created as a result of the passage of House Bill 3906 (86R, Huberty)¹⁸⁹ which “required the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to develop and pilot an innovative, through-year assessment model as a possible replacement of the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) summative tests.”¹⁹⁰ According to the TEA, a through-year assessment program refers to:



A progress monitoring system that provides students multiple opportunities throughout the school year to demonstrate their mastery of standards and to contribute to their summative performance level reported at the end of the year.¹⁹¹

Essentially, students participating in TTAP take multiple STAAR assessments throughout the course of the school year, each potentially contributing to the student's cumulative score.

The pilot program tests students three separate times through the course of the school year in November, January, and March. A student's final or "cumulative score" is recorded as the higher of either:

1. The student's spring score; or
2. The weighted average of all three scores¹⁹²

The tests themselves are full-scope, multi-stage computer-adaptive assessments. According to materials provided to TCCRI by the TEA, a full-scope assessment means that each of the three tests incorporates all content that a student will be taught in the school year. This is in contrast to curricular-aligned design which only tests students on what they have been taught. The reason for this design choice is that a curricular-aligned design would require all districts in the state to adopt statewide curricula, not allowing for innovation at a local level. Another benefit of a full-scope assessment is that it allows for the examination of within-year growth measures, meaning a student's performance growth in a given subject throughout the school year.

The other design component of TTAP is that it is a multi-stage computer-adaptive assessment. According to the aforementioned provided materials, this type of assessment responds to the answers of the test-taker, altering the test to the needs of the student. This allows for a shorter test than a static exam that requires test-takers to interact with every question on the exam, while still providing an accurate assessment of performance.

Another benefit of TTAP is that it is administered via computer as compared to the written STAAR

assessment, eliminating many costs associated with the materials and logistics of administration. This decrease in the cost of materials makes up for the increased expense of a more complex design.

Overall, the implementation of TTAP as the standard for STAAR assessments would benefit students by decreasing assessment time and allowing teachers to track the progress of students throughout the year. In this way, teachers could adjust their curriculum during the year to ensure that students are meeting grade-level expectations or provide more targeted interventions for struggling students.

This design would also greatly benefit parents providing them with an unbiased assessment of the performance of their child's school. While STAAR does also have this benefit, parents do not receive results until near the conclusion of the school year, not allowing for intervention. A through-year assessment would instead permit parents to see these results while they can still act on them. With a design like TTAP, parents can employ a tutor, investigate their student's curriculum for deficiencies, and—with the passage of school choice legislation—place their child in a different school.

TTAP simply enhances the currently available accountability tool that STAAR is.

Policy Recommendations

The legislature has an opportunity to build upon prior successes and mistakes to improve education in Texas. Instead of creating elaborate targeted intervention programs to improve reading and math readiness, the legislature should improve the education and accountability system as a whole. This can be done by investing in children over administratively bloated systems, accurately tracking the performance of students and public schools, and providing parents with greater agency over their child's education.

Policy Recommendation 29

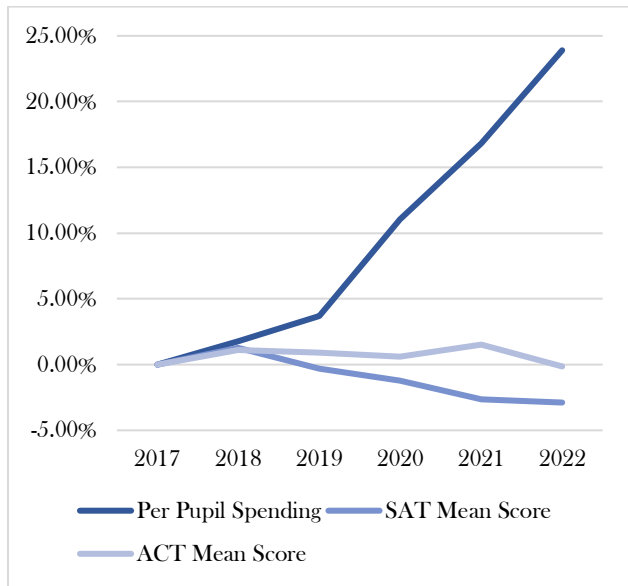
Reallocate Funding from Administrative Bloat to Essential Educational Functions



Education funding is being spent frivolously and to the detriment of students. This is exemplified by the increase in per-pupil spending within the context of stagnant or declining SAT and ACT scores. The state need not spend more money for poorer results.

Figure 24

Per Pupil Spending and Standardized Test Scores, 2017-2022



Source: Texas Education Agency^{193 194}

To rectify this issue the state should enforce Art. 7 § 1 of the Texas Constitution which declares that:

A general diffusion of knowledge being essential to the preservation of the liberties and rights of the people, it shall be the duty of the Legislature of the State to establish and make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools.¹⁹⁵

To improve efficiency—as required by the Texas Constitution—while improving reading and math readiness, the state should reduce administrative expenditures and redirect that funding toward teaching students.

Policy Recommendation 30

Remove “Approaches Grade Level” From A-F Accountability

While the approaches grade level category in STAAR may have some benefit in applying targeted intervention to students who are close to performing at grade level, it should not be considered when evaluating school performance. Under the current A-F Accountability system schools and districts are rewarded for failing students. For example, the “Academic Growth” component of the “School Progress” domain rewards a school or district the same number of points for a student who did not meet grade level in the prior year but approaches grade level in the current year as a student who mastered grade level in both years.¹⁹⁶

The reward of points for students in the approaches category not only inflates school and district ratings but also lowers the bar of acceptable performance from the grade level expectations to “approaching” grade level expectations. While this is in place there is little incentive for public schools to truly improve reading and math readiness.

Policy Recommendation 31

Adopt TTAP as the Standard for STAAR Assessments

The Texas Through-Year Assessment Pilot model has a variety of benefits for improving both education quality and accountability. As previously stated, a statewide through-year assessment program would allow teachers and parents to adjust the curriculum to fit the needs of students. Having an unbiased assessment removed from the local curriculum allows teachers to see if their curriculum is meeting standards before the school year ends. This allows teachers to change curriculum, focus on subjects that students are struggling with, or provide targeted intervention while they still are teaching those struggling students. Similarly, parents could discover that their child’s school is not adequately teaching them or that their child is struggling in a certain subject area. In this case, a parent could use TTAP results to provide their child



with supplementary education like tutoring for those specific subject areas. Enhancing the benefit of a program like TTAP can be achieved by pairing it with a school choice program. This would enable parents to remove their children from a failing school and place them in a more beneficial educational environment.



Appendix

I- 88R Parental Rights in Education Legislation

Bill Number	Author	Caption
Senate Bill 8	Creighton	Relating to public education, including parental rights and public school responsibilities regarding instructional materials and the establishment of an education savings account program
Senate Bill 165	Campbell	Relating to parental rights in public education and to audits of school district curricula by the Texas Education Agency
Senate Bill 393	Hall	Relating to parental rights in public education and prohibiting instruction regarding sexual orientation or gender identity for public school students; authorizing a civil remedy
Senate Bill 394	Hall	Relating to parental rights in public education
Senate Bill 419	Paxton	Relating to parental access to a public school's library catalog and consent for student access to certain public school library materials
Senate Bill 420	Paxton	Relating to a parent's right to access certain records regarding school library materials obtained by the parent's child and the option to receive notice each time the parent's child obtains a school library material
Senate Joint Resolution 29	Paxton	Proposing a constitutional amendment establishing a parent's right to direct a child's education
House Bill 631	Toth	Relating to parental rights in education.
House Bill 900	Patterson	Relating to the regulation of library materials sold to or included in public school libraries.
House Bill 1155	Patterson	Relating to parental rights in public education and prohibiting instruction regarding sexual orientation or gender identity for certain public school students.
House Bill 1541	Toth	Relating to parental rights in public education and prohibiting certain instruction regarding sexual orientation or gender identity; authorizing a civil penalty
House Joint Resolution 38	Vasut	Proposing a constitutional amendment establishing the rights of parents to direct the upbringing of their children
House Joint Resolution 58	Frank	Proposing a constitutional amendment protecting the fundamental right of parents to raise their children
House Joint Resolution 85	Burrows	Proposing a constitutional amendment protecting the fundamental right of parents to raise their children



II - Sample of DEI Presence in K-12 (2020-2024)

School District	2023 District Enrollment ¹⁹⁷	CDO Presence	Other DEI Activities
Abbott ISD	286	-	-
Abernathy ISD	832	-	-
Abilene ISD	15,092	Director of Equity, Leadership & Planning ¹⁹⁸	-
Academy ISD	1,830	-	-
Adrian ISD	120	-	-
Agua Dulce ISD	408	-	Former Superintendent Russ Perry: VP for the Equity Center Executive Committee ¹⁹⁹
Alamo Heights ISD	4,731	District Equity Council ²⁰⁰	Belonging and Equity Strategic Action Recommendations ²⁰¹ Belonging and Equity Goal ²⁰²
Alba-Golden ISD	822	-	-
Albany ISD	498	-	-
Aldine ISD	59,960	-	Superintendent joins Chiefs for Change ²⁰³ Annual Student Educational Equity & Diversity Conference ²⁰⁴
Aledo ISD	7,814	-	-
Alice ISD	4,502	-	District Curricular Philosophy (pg. 4): <i>Equity and access to a rigorous curriculum are every student's right.</i> ²⁰⁵
Alief ISD	40,301	Prevention and Safe Schools Department ²⁰⁶	Equity in Alief ISD ²⁰⁷
Allen ISD	21,711	District Diversity Committee ²⁰⁸	Diversity and Inclusion Action Team – Includes Students ²⁰⁹ Strategic Inclusion & Diversity Action Plan ²¹⁰
Alpine ISD	952	-	-
Alto ISD	536	-	-
Alvarado ISD	3,744	Racial Equity Team ²¹¹	-
Alvin ISD	29,100	-	Board of Trustees Focuses on Fostering Equity ²¹² Guiding Principles of Teaching Mathematics: Equity ²¹³
Alvord ISD	818	-	Superintendent: “Staunch Advocate for Equity and Inclusion” ²¹⁴
Amarillo ISD	30,255	-	2020-2023 Core Value #5: Educational Equity ²¹⁵



III - Student Growth: Earning Points

STAAR		Current Year			
		Did Not Meet Grade Level	Approaches Grade Level	Meets Grade Level	Masters Grade Level
Previous Year	Did Not Meet Grade Level	Met/Exceeded Growth Measure = 1 pt Did not meet = 0 pts	Met/Exceeded Growth Measure = 1 pt Did not meet = .5 pts	1 pt	1 pt
	Approaches Grade Level	Met/Exceeded Growth Measure = 1 pt Did not meet = 0 pts	Met/Exceeded Growth Measure = 1 pt Did not meet = .5 pts	1 pt	1 pt
	Meets Grade Level	0 pts	0 pts	Met/Exceeded Growth Measure = 1 pt Did not meet = .5 pts	1 pt
	Masters Grade Level	0 pts	0 pts	0 pts	1 pt

Sources: Understanding the School Progress Domain, TEA²¹⁷

IV - District Staff & Salaries (2010-11 Compared to 2022-23)

Category	2010-2011			2022-2023			Percent Change		
	FTEs	% of Total FTEs	Avg. Salary	FTEs	% of Total FTEs	Avg. Salary	FTEs	% of Total FTEs	Avg. Salary
Teachers	334,876	49.02%	\$48,638	371,778	48.64%	\$60,705	11.02%	-0.77%	24.81%
Campus Administrators	18,757	2.75%	\$70,819	25,301	3.31%	\$85,166	34.89%	20.37%	20.26%
Central Administrators	6,820	1.00%	\$89,481	9,501	1.24%	\$112,702	39.31%	24.31%	25.95%



TCCRI

*Texas Conservative Coalition
Research Institute*

Professional Support	59,959	8.78%	\$57,045	83,120	10.88%	\$71,996	38.63%	23.86%	26.21%
Paraprofessionals	62,981	9.22%	\$18,754	86,235	11.28%	\$24,135	36.92%	22.37%	28.69%
Auxiliary Staff	179,752	26.31%	\$22,945	188,375	24.65%	\$31,817	4.80%	-6.32%	38.67%
TOTAL:	683,146			764,310					

Source: Texas Education Agency^{218 219}



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