



2017 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

EDUCATION

Texas' ability to create an education system that delivers on postsecondary readiness for all students is crucial to our long-term prosperity.

Texas has been recognized as the leading state for economic development in America. Yet, Texas is losing its workforce competitiveness in terms of education and the implications, given the high correlation between income and education, are dire for our state's ongoing economic vitality.

We must fully transform our state's education system to meet the challenges and opportunities so clearly evident today. The state's goals laid out in the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's report, "60X30TX" must be achieved to build a globally competitive Texas. Reaching these goals is not an easy task but Texas is up to the challenge and those elected to represent Texans in the Capitol must lead the way. Our elected state leadership must ensure that a comprehensive program of improvements, efficiencies, and innovation will be tied to our state's goal of postsecondary success for at least sixty percent of our 25-34 year old workforce.

The Texas Business Leadership Council suggests that the priorities below will allow for the growth in success that is needed for Texas and Texans to prosper for generations to come.

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Texas is positioned to have a competitive advantage in preparing its young people for success through a robust early childhood education program. By supporting healthy development and encouraging productive learning, early childhood education can help to close the educational achievement gap and provide greater kindergarten readiness. Existing research largely supports the connection between higher quality early childhood programs and long-term benefits including improved school-readiness, improved social skills, higher IQ scores, higher test scores, decreased crime and delinquency, and greater learning capacity.

Enhance Pre-K Teacher Training

- A key component to quality early education is a quality teacher. Ensure that early childhood education professionals have access to evidence-based instructional resources and opportunities to expand their knowledge and skills to fully prepare and educate children through professional development.

Improve the Quality of Pre-K Curriculum

- Focus on improving the quality of early learning with an emphasis on research and evidence based standards in guiding educator interactions with children.
- Explore policies for grades K-3 to improve learning outcomes for our youngest learners.

Monitor and Support Additional Funding for State-Funded Pre-K Programs

- Transparency and accountability are essential to ensuring that early childhood education programs are meeting the standards of learning that are necessary for success. Monitor HB 4 implementation & ensure more students have access to high-quality prekindergarten.

Texas has enjoyed income levels that, while below the national average, have outperformed our educational attainment levels. This is due in large part to Texas' abundant natural resources. Having the economic health of our state so closely reliant on the price of world commodities is inherently risky. While fully supporting the growth of our energy sector, we believe it makes sense to invest in sound public policy that will foster an increase in student achievement thereby creating a strong foundation – an educated and skilled workforce that can meet the ever changing demands of a 21st century economy.

In this regard, we encourage legislators to expand educational choice for families in Texas, providing students with the opportunity to attend the school that fits their individual needs. It is essential that our school districts remain autonomous from burdensome regulations that stifle innovation. We must emphasize funding efficiency and accountability to ensure that every dollar being spent on education in Texas is helping to produce positive results. And with this, we propose an accountability system that focuses on diagnostics, transparency, and consequences. We know that together we can ensure that every child in Texas will earn a quality education that they deserve and build the foundation for a lifetime of success.

Expand Educational Choice for Families

- Promote the creation of Education Savings Accounts in Texas. Allow students to receive at least 60 percent of the normal state dollars dedicated to maintenance and operation (M&O), that would follow each individual student for the purposes of private school tuition, individual courses at public schools, tutoring, online learning, textbooks, home schooling curriculum, educational therapies, and other education-related services and products.
- Create a private school scholarship fund by offering a tax savings credit to corporations that contribute to make school choice more widely available.
- Provide scholarships to students with special needs or Section 504 status to attend a public or private school of their choice or for the purposes of tutoring, online learning, textbooks, home schooling curriculum, educational therapies, and other education-related services and products.
- Enhance the creation of charter schools in Texas by removing the cap on the number of charters that can be granted annually by the State.
- Provide facilities funding to charter schools to help meet the demand of Texas families that want a choice within public education.
- Increase the capacity for charter schools' to access to the Permanent School Fund Bond Guarantee program.
- Provide property tax relief to public charter schools who lease their school buildings by exempting them from real property taxes for the duration of the lease.

Increase School District Autonomy

- Move away from the top down, compliance and input driven system in our State public school system today toward one that is output and performance based.
- Remove state interference from operational and management assessments including arbitrary class sizes restrictions and human resources decisions by specifically revising TEC Chapter 21.
- Expand truly alternative routes to the teaching profession and hold teacher preparation programs accountable for the product they deliver.
- Enable and encourage new teaching and learning methods through the use of technology and innovations in scheduling and delivery.
- Focus on student outcomes and less on statutory/regulatory inputs and constraints.

Promote Financial Efficiency and Productivity

- Promote a school finance system that funds student success and productivity.
- Create incentives for districts within state funding for effective spending and sound financial accountability.

Advocate Higher Standards for Academic Accountability

- Actively monitor and serve as a resource for the Next Generation Commission and ESSA implementation.
- Accountability must have three components that are necessary to promote quality education: diagnostics, transparency, and consequences.

Diagnostics: Focus on student performance with an emphasis on postsecondary readiness as the organizing principle of K-12 education.

Transparency: Public reporting of achievement results and encourage value-added assessments, which are vital to track and promote readiness.

Consequences: Consistently underperforming schools should be shut down or transformed through a parent trigger provision.

- Ensure adequate identification and successful turnaround of failing schools.
- Encourage the statewide use of an exit-level high school exam.
- Continue to advocate that postsecondary readiness be the organizing principle of K-12 education, which should be given prominence in the accountability system.
- Add an indicator to the College and Career Readiness domain of the K-12 Accountability system to include work-based learning.

Increase Educator Effectiveness

- Promote and expand the use of a growth measure in determining educator effectiveness.
- Align professional development to the needs identified in teacher evaluations, giving educators a meaningful blueprint for excellence and mastery.
- Advocate for deregulation of teacher contracting and compensation.

POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS

The challenges we face in Texas are not limited to early learning or K-12 education. We must meet the demands of Texas' workforce by increasing students' postsecondary success. By focusing our attention on ways to ensure that our students are either workforce or college ready, we can meet the growing demands of the Texas economy.

Focus on Outcomes Based Funding

- Adopt a framework for funding our four year universities similar to legislation passed in 2013 regarding community colleges and technical schools.
- Establish a funding model that balances enrollment and degree completion that better achieves alignment with future workforce needs.
- Ten percent of state formula funding should be based on student outcomes.

Structured Pathways

- Increase postsecondary student success by implementing policies that create smooth, streamlined pathways into, through and beyond postsecondary education by improving K-12 and postsecondary linkages, education and workforce alignment, portability of credits and credentials, and supporting innovation.
- Support the expansion of high-quality, career-focused high school designs that prepare students for high-demand, high-wage careers and credentials.

Restructure Financial Aid

- Explore policies and strategies to redesign financial aid programs to expand access to a greater number of students who are both in need of assistance and prepared for postsecondary education.
- Provide greater incentives to students who graduate on time and with as few courses as needed.

Additional Postsecondary Education Recommendations

- Capping state financial aid awards to tuition, fees, and books.
- Limiting the length of time students may receive financial aid.
- Increasing the course-load requirements for students to qualify for financial aid.

To summarize, in order for our state to remain economically prosperous and competitive, we must do a better job of educating our students and developing a prepared workforce. By transforming our state's education system to meet the challenges and opportunities that come with providing every child with access to a great education, we're ensuring the future of our success, both as a state and as a nation.



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