

FACTS About Public School Finance

How was Public School funding cut during this biennium by **\$5.4 Billion**?

- Foundation School Program (FSP) was cut by **\$4 billion**.
- Eliminated funding for property value and ADA decline.
- Other program cuts of **\$1.4 billion** included reducing funding for Pre-K, Student Success Initiatives, DATE, ESC's, Instructional Materials, AP Incentives, and Communities in Schools Programs.
- Technology Allotment Eliminated
- Science Lab Funding Eliminated

Other Facts about Public School Finance

- In 2009, the State supplanted \$3 Billion in one-time federal stimulus money into the funding for Public Education, instead of supplementing the Public Education budget. The State never replaced that \$3 Billion in the budget for Public Education. Instead, they added that money to the "Rainy Day" fund.
- With reduced funding, Texas will educate an additional 170,000 students during this biennium. Many of them with special needs or language barriers to overcome.
- Accountability standards have increased. (STAAR, EOC, AYP)
- Transportation Allotments have not been adjusted since 1985.
- The majority of school districts will only be funded at 97% of their WADA. However, we are expected to educate 100% of our WADA.
- Funding continues to be below 2010 funding levels and the structural deficit has not been addressed.
- Pre-K is not fully funded. Most districts lose money by offering Pre-K.

How To Contact Elected Officials

Texas Legislature Online- *Look up contact information, see voting records, and watch live committee hearings:*

www.capitol.state.tx.us

Other Useful Websites

Texas Parent PAC

- www.txparentpac.com

TASA/TASB Grassroots Campaign

- www.tasanet.org/issuesadvocacy/2013-grassroots-campaign

Equity Center- *Advocates for Equity in Public Schools across Texas.*

- www.equitycenter.org

Texans Advocating for Meaningful Student Assessment- www.tamsatx.com

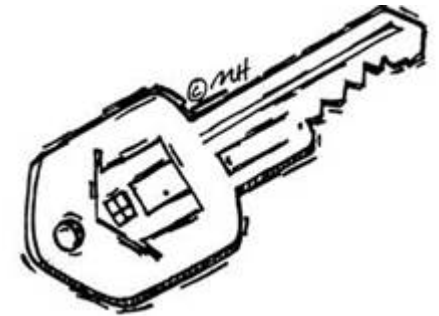
Key Statements to Make

1. Restore the funding cuts from the 82nd legislature and create an adequate and equitable formula based funding system.
2. Replace the high stakes testing accountability system with a system that engages student learning, cultivates individual talents, and restores local control over student achievement.
3. Keep TRS a defined benefit structure. If it isn't broke, why fix it?
4. Restore funding cuts to Education Service Centers so they can continue to offer cost effective service to public schools.
5. Fully fund Pre-K and district growth.
6. REDUCE the amount of testing!
7. Reject a voucher program that doesn't protect fiduciary responsibility for public funds.

Texas Legislature 83rd Session

KEY POINTS

"Education is the Key to a Prosperous Future"



This pamphlet is prepared as a **factual reference to use when talking with elected officials, parents, community members, civic organizations, and state leaders concerning topics that have an impact on Public Education such as Public School Finance, Voucher Programs, and High Stakes Testing. We hope you find it helpful.**

FACTS About High Stakes Testing and Accountability

- The STAAR/EOC replaced the TAKS accountability system
- STAAR tests are more rigorous and complex, have more questions per test, and have a 4 hour time limit
- Promotion requirements for fifth and eighth grade students taking the STAAR reading and mathematics tests will resume in 2012–13
- High School students graduating recommended or distinguished must pass 15 end of course (EOC) exams to graduate, as opposed to the 4 exit level exams under the TAKS system.
- EOC exams count as 15% of the student's final grade in a course.
- Unless the 15% requirement is repealed by the 2013 Texas Legislature, local authority over course grades, class rank, and GPA will be diminished by the state-imposed requirement
- Standards for STAAR will not be released until December of 2012, although we have been under the system for a full year.
- The various levels of scoring, and requirements for graduation purposes, relative to the EOC's is complex and difficult to understand and explain.
- School districts are penalized for having too many special needs students take the modified version of the STAAR, regardless of whether or not that is what their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) stipulates.
- Students must graduate recommended or higher to be eligible for enrollment in a 4 year university in Texas.
- Students take multiple tests, every year, beginning in the 3rd grade. REDUCE the amount of testing!

FACTS About A Voucher Program

- It is a taxpayer-funded private school program, including Home School.
- Texas public schools have already realized unprecedented and massive cuts to public education. A voucher program will strip more money from public education.
- As previously introduced, voucher programs have included nothing about improving student achievement or accountability for how taxpayer money is being spent.
- There is no plan for how those using vouchers will embrace accountability, transparency, college readiness and measuring student performance.
- Private schools can accept or reject any student while public schools must accept all students.
- Many private schools oppose vouchers for fear of government involvement that will come with tax payer funded programs.
- The proposed voucher amount will not cover most private schools tuition.
- There are 600,000 students already in private school or home school. How much will it cost taxpayers to give each one of these students a tax payer funded voucher?
- The Texas Constitution has no provision for using taxpayer funds for private schools.

Questions to Consider about Vouchers

- Will private schools be required to accept all students?
- Will private schools be held to the same accountability standards as public schools?
- Will vouchers limit religious instruction in private schools?
- Will the state assume responsibility for how home schools use voucher funds?
- Will private schools continue to offer free and reduced meals to those students who qualify under the federal program?
- Will students currently enrolled in private school or home school be eligible for a voucher?

FACTS About Education Service Centers

- ESC's around the state received cuts based on a formula and ranged from 40% to 70%. These cuts drastically affect the savings that are passed to local school districts.
- All 20 ESC's portion of the \$80 billion state budget is \$25 million.
- ESC's help districts implement mandates passed by the Legislature.
- ESC's keep districts informed and aware of deadlines and regulations regarding testing, accountability, finance, curriculum, transportation, and other services.
- ESC's provide cost effective professional development and training for all school employees in areas such as curriculum, technology, food service, business and finance, school health, nutrition, distance learning, and others.
- ESC's provide experts in areas such as construction, facility upgrades, school law, state funding, federal funding, federal mandates, and State and Federal accountability.
- ESC's provide an avenue for cooperative purchasing among school districts which saves taxpayer dollars on goods and services.

FACTS About Teacher Retirement System (TRS)

- The TRS fund is one of the **healthiest and stable** funds in the **world**. Without any changes, it could make payments through the year 2075.
- 1 out of 20 Texans is a member of TRS
- In 2011, TRS paid \$7.2 billion in retirement benefits. 95% of that went directly to retirees who live in Texas.
- Defined benefit plans (TRS) help recruit and retain high quality Teachers as compared with defined contribution plans.
- In 2008, the annual TRS administrative cost was \$24 per member, which was well below the peer average of \$63 for the same year.
- TRS benefits provided for 98,900 jobs across Texas in 2011.