



Appendix

Austin ISD Legislative Priorities for the 87th Legislature

Accountability and Assessment

- Support a state accountability system that evaluates school quality and student performance as fairly and accurately as possible, without penalizing schools for factors outside their control. The accountability system should include multiple measures of student performance and growth, rather than an over-reliance on standardized tests, in order to ensure that students are more fully prepared for college, the workforce, or the military upon graduation.
- Support an alternative accountability plan or option to apply to the Texas Education Agency for a label of “Not Rated: Other” prior to the release of preliminary accountability ratings for campuses that enroll only students who receive special education services and who have intensive cognitive and medical needs.
- Support issuing “Report Only” accountability ratings in August of 2021 which will not escalate sanctions and interventions for school year 2021-22, while permitting campuses and districts to appeal to TEA for lighter or no sanctions if significant progress has been made.
- If direct classroom instruction at a campus or district is disrupted due to COVID-19 for more than 1/6th of the 2020-21 school year, assign a label of “Not Rated: Declared State of Disaster” for a second year in spring 2021.
- Support an accountability system in which TEA informs school districts about the accountability standards no later than the beginning of the school year in which the standards are to be applied.
- Support the continuation of Individual Graduation Committees to allow a student to graduate when the student has successfully completed all curriculum requirements for high school graduation and has failed no more than two end-of-course exams.

Charter Schools

- Support increased transparency, notice, input and consideration of the state and local district fiscal impact before a charter can be approved or expanded.
- Support leveling the playing field between school districts and open-enrollment charter schools by determining the average allotment of charters based on the average allotment received by school districts in the counties where the charter is located.
- Support transparency and notice requirements in charter application and amendment requests, including specific locations of proposed new campuses, to provide accurate regional impact on existing traditional public schools and open-enrollment charter schools, as well as sufficient notice and opportunity for analysis and public comment.
- Support legislation that requires charter schools to accept all students who wish to enroll, including students with a documented history of discipline problems.
- Support legislation that would require the Commissioner before granting a charter expansion, to consider, at a minimum, whether the charter holder has achieved the representations and goals included in its initial charter application.

Education Funding

- Support school funding based on enrollment rather than attendance.



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- Support the ability of recapture districts to make payments in August as permitted by HB 3.
- Support local discretion and flexibility with spending, including allotments, to ensure the needs of students, staff and communities are met.
- Support legislation that guarantees a grace period to a school district if the local appraisal roll value is deemed invalid despite a good faith effort by the appraisal district to appraise at market value.
- Support funding to provide appropriate services to students with special needs, including those with dyslexia, autism, speech or language impairments, visual impairments, deafness, and intellectual disabilities.
- Oppose any cuts to school district Foundation School Program (FSP) funding.
- Oppose federal waivers on Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act” or the “CARES Act” funding that allow the state to reduce its maintenance of effort, i.e., that allow the state to supplant its funding with federal funds.
- Support that additional federal funding made available to the state be provided to school districts to offset the additional costs incurred by districts for expenses related to COVID-19, without a reduction in the amount of state aid otherwise due districts.
- Oppose penalties or any adverse actions against school districts that maintain a fund balance.
- Support full funding and expanded opportunities for virtual education to ensure traditional public schools can serve all students, and apply uniform guidelines equally to virtual charter schools and virtual education programs within traditional public schools.

Local Control and Flexibility

- Support local control and flexibility, recognizing that public schools are governed by locally elected school board members who are responsive to the needs of their local taxpayers and students.
- Support local control and flexibility for districts to determine the best course for providing an education and conducting district business during a pandemic, epidemic, or other emergency, recognizing that each community is best qualified to address the unique health needs and safety of its families.
- Support flexibility to expend unspent bond funds to purchase technology, school supplies, safety equipment and other materials in the event of an emergency.
- Oppose legislation or measures that seek to limit school districts’ or administrators’ ability to have representation before the Texas Legislature, state agencies, and the executive branch.
- Oppose the imposition of onerous and lengthy language in bond propositions and the restriction of holding bond elections in November only.
- Oppose legislation that would erode flexibility for Districts of Innovation, including school start and end dates.

Transportation

- Support exemptions for public school buses from paying tolls for use of toll roads operated by the state and regional mobility authorities or their contractors.