



Educate Texas Policy Priorities Legislative Update

June 9, 2015

Public Education Issues in the 84th Legislature

The issues that dominated the public education discussion during the session included changes to the accountability system for public schools including the change to an A through F rating system, the reduction of the percentage of a school's rating based on student assessments, and the creation of the Texas Commission on Next Generation Assessments and Accountability to develop and make recommendations for new systems of student assessment and public school accountability; funding and reform for Pre-K programs for disadvantaged students with greater accountability for districts receiving funding; school choice and voucher options for students attending underperforming public schools; and attempts at reforming the state's school finance system.

- **Accountability** - With the passage of HB 2804, public schools will have new accountability requirements. Starting in 2016, schools will be assigned an A through F grade as part of the state accountability system. The rating system is a part of larger changes to the state's accountability system which aimed to reduce the role student assessments play in rating schools. The school rating system will rely less on student assessments (55%). HB 2804 also created the Texas Commission on Next Generation Assessments and Accountability to develop and make recommendations for new systems of student assessment and public school accountability by September 2016.
- **Pre-K** – As one of the Governor's emergency items, Pre-K reform received bi-partisan support through HB 4, which appropriated \$118 million over two years for districts to improve Pre-K programs for the most disadvantaged students. The bill requires that districts meet teacher quality and curriculum standards to qualify for funding.
- **School choice and vouchers** – As one of the priorities of Lt. Governor Dan Patrick, several bills were filed that would have provided funding for parents to send children to private schools, though none ultimately passed. Efforts also failed to create an achievement school district aimed at creating a statewide entity to manage underperforming campuses and to strengthen the current parent trigger bill so that parents of students at underperforming public schools could make changes locally.
- **School Finance** – While Texas' school finance system is still awaiting Texas Supreme Court guidance, Chairman Aycock filed a school finance bill aimed at reforming the current finance formulas and adding more funding for public schools. The bill was withdrawn by the chairman.

Educate Texas K-12 Policy Priorities

The K-12 priorities were based on our current portfolio work focused on college-ready standards and effective teaching strategies. Educate Texas has supported Early College High Schools and T-STEM academies since its inception and continue to advocate for key instructional strategies such as dual credit to increase success of Texas students. The [Texas Teaching Commission](#), led by former Commissioners of Education, Chairman Mike Moses and



Vice Chairman Jim Nelson, the Texas Teaching Commission convened stakeholders from education, policy, business and philanthropy sectors to take a holistic look at the teacher continuum in Texas. The commission created a variety of recommendations to support and inform the teacher continuum in order to better align state policies and local programs that guide our effective teaching priorities.

Dual Credit

- HB 1135 by Rep. Munoz, which allows transportation of students for dual credit courses to be included in the transportation allotment, was voted out **of House Public Education and placed on General Calendar for May 13, but the House didn't get to it before the deadline to pass all House bills**
 - EdTX coordinated witnesses and testified "on"
- HB 505 by Rep. Rodriguez reduces limitations by the coordinating board on number and hours of dual credit courses a student may enroll and the grades that they can take dual credit courses, **passed both chambers and was signed by the Governor**
 - EdTX served as a thought partner and resource to Rep. Rodriguez offices
 - EdTX supported witness that testified "for" the bill with changes
- HB 462 by Rep. Goldman: Allows a grade above a C to exempt a student from the equivalent end of course exam, was **heard in House Public Education and left pending**
 - EdTX coordinated witnesses and testified "on"

Effective Teaching

- SB 892 by Sen. Seliger/HB 3494 by Rep. Huberty makes improvements to educator preparation programs so that they are admitting greater quality candidates, **SB 892 passed the Senate and was placed on Calendars for May 24 but the House didn't get to it before the deadline to pass all House bills/HB 3494 was heard in House Public Education and left pending in committee**
 - EdTX served as a thought partner and resource to Sen. Seliger and Rep. Huberty's offices
 - EdTX coordinated witnesses and testified "on"
 - EdTX had Sandi Jacobs from National Council on Teacher Quality meet with both Sen. Seliger and Rep. Huberty's offices
- HB 2566 by Rep. Van Deaver increases GPA requirements for entry to educator preparation programs and the review and improvements powers of the state agency over programs was voted out **of House Public Education and placed on General Calendar for May 13, but the House didn't get to it before the deadline to pass all House bills**
 - EdTX served as a thought partner and resource to Rep. VanDeaver's offices
 - EdTX coordinated witnesses and testified "on"
 - EdTX had Sandi Jacobs from National Council on Teacher Quality meet with Rep. VanDeaver and staff
- SB 893 by Sen. Seliger/HB 2543 by Rep. Farney creates a Teacher Development framework that aligns evaluation, professional development, and compensation, **passed the Senate and was referred to House Public Education/HB 2543 was heard in House Public Education and left pending**
 - EdTX served as a thought partner and resource to Sen. Seliger and Rep. Farney's offices
 - EdTX coordinated witnesses and testified "on"



- HB 1497 by Rep. Schaefer increases flexibility of career and technical education certification was voted out of **House Public Education and placed on General Calendar for May 13, but the House didn't get to it before the deadline to pass all House bills**
 - EdTX served as a thought partner and resource to Rep. Schaefer's office and suggested changes to strengthen the bill

Blended Learning

- HB 1599 by Rep. King creates a grant program for school districts and campuses providing blended and individualized learning staff development activities, was heard in **House Public Education and left pending**
 - EdTX served as a resource to Rep. King's offices
 - EdTX coordinated witnesses and testified "on"
- HB 1600 by Rep. King creates a grant program to assist school districts in developing or implementing innovative blended learning initiatives was heard in **House Public Education and left pending**
 - EdTX served as a resource to Rep. King's offices
 - EdTX coordinated witnesses and testified "on"

Higher Education Issues in the 84th Legislature

The issues that dominated the higher education discussion during the session including "campus carry," or the ability for concealed handgun license (CHL) holders to carry their weapons on college campuses; tuition revenue bonds to finance capital construction projects; efforts to repeal in-state tuition for undocumented students; college affordability; and efforts to revise the Hazelwood Act that provides tuition exemptions for veterans and their dependents.

- **Campus carry** – With the passage of SB 11, CHL holders will now be allowed to carry their weapons onto college campuses. The bill, however, did not go as far as proponents would have liked in that private colleges are allowed to opt out, and public colleges and universities will be able to create "gun-free" zones, so long as they don't encompass the entire campus.
- **Tuition Revenue Bonds** – Texas had not passed tuition revenue bonds, which are the mechanism by which university capital construction projects are largely funded, since 2006. This created much pent up demand, and the Legislature responded by approving roughly \$3 billion to fund such requests for more than 60 projects.
- **In-State Tuition for Undocumented Students** – Though the repeal of this law, passed with bipartisan support in 2001, was a priority for many conservatives, including Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, it ultimately failed to gain momentum and pass.
- **College Affordability** – Both Democrats and Republicans in both the House and Senate filed legislation seeking to reign in university tuition, which has been deregulated since 2003 and has risen in recent years. Though many bills were filed, including one that would have tied tuition flexibility to meeting performance benchmarks, none ultimately passed.
- **Hazelwood Act** – Since expanding a decades-long tuition exemption for veterans, known commonly as "Hazelwood," to their dependents in 2009, the cost has spiraled. Last year, this



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program cost universities \$169 million and estimates have it growing to \$369 million by 2019. Universities sought relief by requesting that the state either pick up that cost or limit enrollment. Though it initially looked likely to pass, negotiations between the House and Senate were unable to reach a compromise, and the program remains intact.

Educate Texas Postsecondary Policy Priorities

[The Texas Student Success Council](#) is a crucial part of an ongoing effort to increase postsecondary completion rates, particularly in community colleges around the state. The Council is comprised of state and field stakeholders representing education (K-16), business, non-profits and philanthropic groups and is fortunate to have the Chairs of the House and Senate Higher Education Committees, the Commissioner of Higher Education and the Chairman of the Texas Workforce Commission serving as Ex Officio members. Convened by Educate Texas and chaired by Dr. Richard Rhodes (President of Austin Community College), the Council serves to cultivate a receptive environment for reform and create momentum for scale.

Transfer

Research conducted by the Community College Research Center indicates that 78% of Texas bachelor's degree graduates have previously enrolled in a community college. As a result, Texas relies more heavily on two-year institutions to deliver undergraduate education than any other state. Additionally, though 81% of Texas community college students examined are enrolled in transfer programs, only an estimated 20% of them actually transfer, most of them without first earning an associate degree, despite the benefits of doing so.

- HB 298 by Rep. Wu, addressing transfer compacts, **passed the House but was not voted out of Senate Higher Education**
 - EdTX served as a thought partner and resource to Rep. Wu's office
 - EdTX coordinated witnesses and testified "on"
- HB 61 by Rep. McClendon, addressing common course numbering, was **on the House Calendar for May 13, but the House didn't get to it before the deadline to pass all House bills**
 - EdTX coordinated witnesses and testified "on"
 - EdTX drafted and coordinated letters of support
- HB 2628 by Rep. Clardy, addressing fields and programs of study, **passed both chambers and has been sent to the Governor**
 - EdTX coordinated witnesses and testified "on"
- SB 1189 by Sen. Seliger, creating a transfer associate degree, has **passed both chambers and has been sent to the Governor**
 - EdTX served as a thought partner and resource to Sen. Seliger's office
 - EdTX coordinated witnesses and testified "on"

Workforce - HB 5 Workgroup

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board estimates that by 2020, 55% of Texas jobs will require some form of postsecondary education. To ensure Texas' continued economic competitiveness, state policy conditions must support students' ability to both enroll in and complete a postsecondary credential, be it a workforce certificate, associate or bachelor's degree.



- HB 3062 by Rep. Clardy, opening the JET Program to partnerships between ISDs and IHEs, **passed both chambers and has been sent to the Governor**
 - EdTX served as a thought partner and resource to Rep. Clardy's office
 - EdTX coordinated witnesses and testified "on"
- SB 13 by Sen. Perry, which is aligned with a few of the HB 5 Workgroup recommendations, was **largely amended on to HB 18 by Rep. Aycock, which passed and has been sent to the Governor**
 - EdTX served as a thought partner and resource to Sen. Perry's office
 - EdTX testified "on"
- HB 18 by Rep. Aycock, which addresses counseling issues related to HB 5 including funding to UT Austin for the creation of counseling academies and an online tool, **passed both chambers and has been sent to the Governor**
 - EdTX served as a thought partner and resource to Rep. Aycock's office
 - EdTX testified "on"
 - The University of Texas at Austin will receive **\$20 million (\$10 million each year)** to implement provisions of HB 18
- HB 3508 by Rep. Rodriguez, which broadens the college prep course partnerships to include other college readiness partnership opportunities, was **amended on to HB 18 by Rep. Aycock, but was removed by the Conference Committee**
 - EdTX served as a thought partner and resource to Rep. Rodriguez's office
 - EdTX drafted and coordinated letters of support
 - EdTX coordinated witnesses and testified "on"
- SB 271 by Sen. Ellis/HB 1384 by Rep. Sarah Davis/HB 935 by Rep. Guillen, which allow for expansion of baccalaureate degrees offered by community colleges, HB 1384 was **on the House Calendar for May 14, but the House didn't get to it before the deadline to pass all House bills**
 - EdTX testified "on"

Outcomes Based Funding

While it is critical that broad access to postsecondary education is maintained, far too few students ultimately complete a credential of value. For Texas to increase its attainment rate to a level that will enable continued economic success, state funding should incent institutions to prioritize both access and success.

- Student success points remained funded, but at a lower level than was in the Senate version of the budget
 - EdTX drafted and coordinated letters of support
 - The percent of funding that this amounted to varied by college. (ex. Alamo would have received \$6.49 million under the House budget, \$7.12 million under the Senate budget and ultimately got \$6.65 million, or 10.3% of overall funding. Amarillo College, however, would've received \$1.19 million under the House budget, \$1.31 million under the Senate budget and ultimately received \$1.25 million, or 9.1% of overall funding)
- SB 778 by Sen. Seliger, which ties tuition flexibility for universities to meeting performance benchmarks including graduation rates for transfer students, **passed the Senate and was voted out of House Higher Education, but was not scheduled for debate on the House floor**
 - EdTX served as a thought partner and resource to Sen. Seliger's office



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- EdTX drafted and coordinated letters of support
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Other Barriers – New Mathways Project

The work and recommendations of this Council are designed to be supportive of and aligned with the work of the eight Texas Completes colleges to redesign student pathways. The Council also supports the work of the Texas Success Center to align, accelerate and advocate for practices related to college readiness, transfer and articulation and measuring and funding student success.

- Funded at \$2.4 million (\$1.2 million each year) in **the final budget**

Tri-Agency Recommendations

For Texas to compete, public and higher education must work more closely with business and industry to strengthen the education-to-workforce pipeline. In the months leading up to the 84th Legislative Session, the Texas Education Agency, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and Texas Workforce Commission held a series of regional meetings to hear from industry and education leaders about partnerships in their communities and strategies they are employing in educating students about career opportunities.

As a result of these meetings, the three agencies came together to propose a series of recommendations to enhance Texas’ ability to provide our employers with the skilled workforce needed to maintain our state’s position as the nation’s leader in job creation, and support education leaders in further transforming opportunities for students attain postsecondary success and become equipped with marketable skills to compete in the Texas and global economy.

Of the numerous recommendations and funding requests, the following was funded by the Legislature:

- \$4 million for Advise TX, a near-peer college advising program serving students in high need high schools across the state
- \$3 million to increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities to give students a better understanding of the relevance of their academic work and insights into the opportunities available to them across different industries in Texas
- \$10 million for the Skills Development Fund and JET Programs to fund high-quality CTE facilities and equipment at community colleges and partnerships between school districts and colleges
- \$6 million for Early College High School and \$3 million for T-STEM programs