



Texas Association of Community Schools

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Legislative Agenda - 85th Texas Legislature

SCHOOL FINANCE

Texas Constitution: "Article 7, Section 1 – Support and Maintenance of a System of Public Free Schools. 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 free public schools."

- TACS **supports** a school finance system that provides adequate funding to ensure a quality education for all students; one that is dynamic regarding students' educational needs, student enrollment, and inflation.
- TACS **supports** full funding for any educational mandate through additional state aid delivered through the appropriate funding formulas.
- TACS **supports** the use of updated and accurate student projections when preparing and adopting the biennial state budget.
- TACS **supports** fully funding the state's Transportation Allotment.
- TACS **supports** the funding of a full-day pre-kindergarten program using formula funding.
- TACS **supports** the full funding of the Instructional Materials Allotment (IMA) as well as funding for a technology and infrastructure allotment to aid schools with the delivery of course material.
- TACS **supports** the funding of the Instructional Facilities Allotment (IFA) with set, published parameters rather than the current method which is based on available funds in addition to the retention of the New Instructional Facilities Allotment (NIFA) funding levels.
- TACS **supports** additional state aid to support the school personnel needed to adequately implement the requirements of HB 5.
- TACS **supports** additional dedicated funding to the state's community colleges to facilitate greater uniformity of tuitions charged for dual credit classes across the state.
- TACS **supports** a study of the state funding formulas to ensure that school districts receive the level of funding the formulas were designed to deliver so that schools will have the resources necessary to provide the state's required instructional program and enrichment activities.
- TACS **does not support** the diversion of public funds to pay for any educational voucher, private school education, private choice program, Education Saving Account, or tax credit for educational scholarship program.
- TACS **will evaluate** all proposals to close the penalty to the Small Schools Allotment for districts that are less than 300 square miles.
- TACS **will evaluate** all options presented during the session for addressing the ASATR "cliff".
- TACS **will evaluate** school finance proposals presented during the session using its "core principles of school finance" document.

ASSESSMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY

From Creating a New Vision for Public Education in Texas: "Accountability systems of themselves do not produce excellence. Excellence can only come from commitment and meaning. The present accountability system has created schools in which the curriculum has been narrowed and only academic abilities are valued. Students become expert test takers but cannot retain or apply what they 'know' in a context other than the test environment..."

- TACS **supports** the removal of all high stakes from the state's assessment program.
- TACS **supports** a system that mandates testing no more than required by federal law.
- TACS **supports** using the "right" assessments for the "right" reasons.
 1. In grades 3-8, the use of diagnostic assessments that give timely and useful feedback to gauge **how** children are learning.

2. In high schools, administering the PSAT/ACT equivalent in 9th or 10th grade or ACT/SAT/TSI in 11th grade to demonstrate **how** children are performing.
- TACS supports only age-appropriate assessments.
 - TACS supports aligning state assessments with the TEKS Readiness Standards only.
 - TACS supports replacing the state writing assessments with a portfolio or an assessment that follows the iterative process of writing.
 - TACS supports the elimination of the sunset provision in SB 149.
 - TACS supports the elimination of A-F district and campus ratings.

LOCAL CONTROL

From SR 34, 83rd LEGISLATURE OF TEXAS: *“Whereas, Texans today have a renewed belief that the government closest to the people is the best government;...”*

- TACS supports the evaluation of, and at the appropriate time, extension of the ability of schools to create Districts of Innovation.
- TACS supports providing local districts “meaningful discretion” to set a tax rate based on their local needs without voter approval.

TRS ISSUES

From 2015 Retirement Survey, EBRI: *“57% of U. S. workers have saved less than \$25,000 for retirement.”*

- TACS supports the continuation of Texas Retirement System as a defined benefit system to help attract and retain quality school district employees.
- TACS supports increased contribution by the state to the TRS ActiveCare insurance program so that out-of-pocket expenses to school district employees do not continue to increase.
- TACS supports the continuation of Texas Insurance Code Chapter 1579, Subchapter D (Participating Entities) that does not allow schools to opt-out of TRS ActiveCare unless originally exempted from the program as enacted by the 77th Texas Legislature (HB 3343, 2001).

EDUCATION SERVICE CENTERS

“Nothing liberates our greatness like the desire to serve.” Marianne Williamson

- TACS supports Education Service Centers because they are critical to the success of our state’s schools and school children, are a cost effective delivery system for services needed by local school districts, and serve as a link to the Texas Education Agency regarding education policy issues.
- TACS supports extending the time before the next sunset review of Education Service Centers.
- TACS does not support any required or expected regulatory oversight of local school districts by Education Service Centers.

THE UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE

From *About the UIL*: *“The UIL exists to provide educational extracurricular academic, athletic, and music contests. The initials UIL have come to represent quality educational competition administered by school people on an equitable basis.”*

- TACS supports the UIL as a voluntary and independent association governed by rules and regulations adopted by the schools that participate in UIL activities.

OTHER ISSUES

- TACS supports additional legislation that will provide local school districts with the flexibility HB 2610 intended.
- TACS supports legislation that will provide for seamless transfer of dual credit college hours between state institutions of higher education.

- TACS *supports* refining HB 2398 to provide better direction to schools and a clearer and cleaner timeline for dealing with truant students.