



# 2015 Legislative Priorities

The Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA) will support or initiate legislation during the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session that aligns with the association's priorities. TASA will work with other associations and groups in advocating for the following priorities.

## Education & School Funding

### *Foundation School Program (FSP):*

**Advocate** for adequate and equitable funding and oppose any cuts to the FSP. Support an updated and adequately funded formula-based school finance system, which takes student and district characteristics into account when determining appropriate levels of funding to meet state and local standards.

### *Education Programs Outside the FSP:*

**Advocate** for the restoration of cuts to programs outside the FSP that occurred during the 2011 session. Of the \$1.4 billion in cuts, only \$292 million was restored in 2013. Advocate for increased funding for programs such as the Student Success Initiative, Pre-K grant programs, and Communities in Schools.

### *Student Success Initiative (SSI):*

**Advocate** for additional funding for the SSI in grades 3–8 for all grades and subjects that require remediation. Allocate additional SSI funding for end-of-course exam (EOC) remediation. Advocate for local flexibility in how districts can utilize SSI funds and oppose any carve outs for special programs.

### *Education Service Centers (ESCs):*

**Advocate** for the restoration of cuts to ESCs from the 2011 legislative session. Funding was reduced from \$40.7 million to \$25 million for the biennium.

### *Instructional Materials Allotment (IMA):*

**Advocate** for increased funding for the IMA to ensure districts are able to provide adequate instructional materials and technology to meet increased standards for students.

### *Facilities Funding:*

**Advocate** for additional funding for the Instructional Facilities Allotment (IFA), and Existing Debt Allotment (EDA). Restore funding appropriations for the New Instructional Facilities Allotment (NIFA). Advocate against additional funding for charter school facilities unless adequate facilities funding is provided to traditional public schools.

### *Charter Schools:*

**Advocate** against the further expansion of charter schools unless they are subject to the same accountability and transparency rules as traditional public schools, including but not limited to: public notices, transportation, bilingual programs, policy notices, employment contract policies, special education requirements, lunch programs, and nepotism statutes.

### *Vouchers, Taxpayer Savings Grants, Virtual Vouchers:*

**Advocate** against any state voucher plan, tax credits, tuition reimbursements, or any program that diverts public tax dollars to private entities with little or no academic or financial accountability to the state, taxpayers, or local communities.

### *Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS):*

**Advocate** for the continuation of the current defined benefit pension program for TRS members.

**Advocate** for increased state funding to assist with increased health care costs associated with TRS–ActiveCare and TRS–Care. Advocate for state funding to continue to pay transition aid to school districts for retirement contributions to TRS.

### *Pre-K Funding:*

**Advocate** for full funding of Pre-K for all students meeting state eligibility requirements.

## Graduation Requirements

### *Foundation High School Program & Endorsements:*

**Advocate** for maintaining the current Foundation High School Program statutory requirements. Support maintaining the current statutory requirements for the endorsements and oppose any measure that adds Algebra II for an endorsement other than STEM. Advocate for allowing school districts sufficient time to implement changes associated with HB 5.

## Assessment & Accountability

**Support** reducing the length of tests and further limiting field test items.

**Advocate** against measures to increase the number of EOC exams required for graduation purposes.

**Advocate** for limiting the grades 3–8 student assessment program to include only those assessments necessary to meet NCLB requirements.

- Reading in grades 3–8
- Math in grades 3–8
- Science in grades 5 and 8

**Advocate** for restructuring of the grades 3–8 and EOC exams to assess only high priority learning standards (readiness standards could be used on an interim basis).

**Advocate** for the development of high priority learning standards by the State Board of Education.

**Advocate** for eliminating the requirement that students enrolled in dual credit courses must take and pass comparable EOCs.

**Advocate** for excluding ELL scores for students who first enroll as unschooled asylees and refugees from the state accountability system unless those students are enrolled for at least 120 consecutive days during a school year (current law is 60 consecutive days).

**Advocate** for removing grade advancement requirements in grades 5 and 8 in reading and math and the corresponding retests.

**Advocate** for creating an alternative method that would allow students to graduate when they are unable to pass one or more EOCs after multiple attempts.

**Advocate** for an accountability system that ensures ratings are reflective of overall student performance at campus and district levels and not limited to the lowest performing students.

**Advocate** that the transfer policy traditional public schools must follow (TEC 25.036) also apply to charters who are seeking to remove/expel a student.

**Advocate** for the establishment of a new comprehensive accountability system that looks beyond high stakes multiple-choice exams to meaningful assessments that have value for students, parents, and teachers and measures what each community holds important in promoting college and career readiness.

## Local Control/Governance

### *Teacher and Principal Evaluations:*

**Advocate** against state required teacher and principal evaluations being tied to high stakes testing. Any decision to require evaluations based on state assessments should be a local decision.

### *Achievement School Districts:*

**Oppose** the creation of Achievement School Districts. Such interventions should not be considered until the state has an assessment system that is valid and can correctly identify a “failing school,” and an accountability system that is based on those valid assessments.

### *Parent Trigger:*

**Oppose** any parent trigger or other similar legislation that removes authority from locally elected school board members who are directly accountable to *all* students, parents, local taxpayers, and local businesses.

### *Local Debt (ballot language):*

**Oppose** any legislation that expands ballot language, which does not provide accurate information or seeks to confuse voters and is inconsistent with ballot language required of other local subdivisions and the state. School districts communicate, seek input, and educate local communities on bond information extensively prior to elections.

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