

## InvestEdTX Initial Positioning

November 2024

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### **EQUITABLE SCHOOL FUNDING**

**Goal:** Achieve meaningful students-first investments through strategic adjustments to the school finance system that research shows improve student outcomes. For example, expanding the *Early Education and Teacher Incentive Allotments* as well as the *Rural Pathway Excellence Partnership Program (R-PEP)*, easing barriers to entry for the *Additional Days School Year Program* and *Resource Campus* designation, creating a *Residency Program Allotment*, and increasing the weights for the *Compensatory Education Allotment* will all direct additional dollars to school systems, enabling them to scale evidence-based initiatives with proven track records for supporting student success.

#### **Key Messages:**

- [House] - These school finance adjustments had strong bipartisan and bicameral support with the 88th Legislature. Moving into the new legislative session—following the expiration of federal funds and high rates of inflation—the House has the opportunity to propose meaningful investments in the school finance system to support Texas schools, educators, and students. To stretch dollars furthest and ensure the state sees a sustained return on investment, additional funding should build on the student-centered allocations developed in HB 3 (86R) and lessons learned over the past few years.
- [Senate] - Right now just 47% of Texas students are meeting grade level standards. Through these targeted investments, the Legislature can increase student outcomes by targeting funding where it stands to have the greatest impact. With Texas school system leaders currently operating with a scarcity mindset in terms of funding, lawmakers should strategically enhance the school finance system to ensure that school leaders and policymakers continue to take the bold actions necessary to allocate resources to support student success.
  - Further funding adjustments are critical in ensuring that our school finance system can function as intended in HB 3 (86R) and can support the evidence-based initiatives that the Legislature has recently prioritized, including HB 1416 (88R).

#### **Resources:**

- [Commit Comprehensive Summary Dashboard](#)
- [HB 3 Implementation Dashboard](#)

#### **Engagement Opportunities:**

- Add your logo to [this School Finance One-Pager](#) by letting Shannon Hoffman know ([shannon.hoffman@commitpartnership.org](mailto:shannon.hoffman@commitpartnership.org)) or adding your org to the [ITX sign on tracker](#)

**Lead Orgs:** Commit

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## **ASSESSMENTS & ACCOUNTABILITY**

**Goal:** Maintain a transparent, fair, and rigorous accountability and assessment system that supports educational excellence in Texas by: clarifying statutory processes to ensure consistent annual release of A-F accountability ratings; contextualizing the promising progress of the Texas Through-Year Assessment Pilot (TTAP) and need for continued research; and securing legislative understanding that any additions to the A-F calculations must be based on valid, reliable and comparable data that improve student outcomes.

### **Key Messages:**

- [ALL] - Texas has high standards for education to reflect the immense capability of Texas students and schools to achieve great things. A strong assessment and accountability system help Texas ensure that our graduates are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in the workforce and in life.
- [House] - Now is not the time to overhaul the state assessment and accountability system. Texas families, districts, and policymakers rely on academic accountability ratings to understand the public education landscape, ensure school systems are meeting student needs, and make meaningful decisions about public education in our state. Statutory clarity can increase transparency for families and make sure school districts have clear advance notice of the measures and processes for evaluation each school year, but, with our current system having only been fully operational for one year since its introduction, stakeholders need consistent, year-over-year ratings. The Legislature has made great strides to drive innovation in assessments through the Texas Through-Year Assessment Pilot (HB 3906, 86R), which has shown promising initial results to make testing more supportive of student learning throughout the year. More time is needed to ensure the pilot program can meet the needs of all students, especially students with disabilities and emergent bilingual students who require testing accommodations. The legislature should continue to monitor the pilot as it expands in future years as well as understand evolutions in testing to potentially apply more broadly.
- [Senate] - Continue to hold the line on the rigor of assessment & accountability policies.
- Continued delay and disruptions to the A-F Accountability system undermine the state's commitment to student academic progress and reduce transparency for stakeholders of Texas' public education system. Statutory clarity can support the timely release of annual A-F Accountability Ratings. The Texas Through-Year Assessment Pilot (HB 3906, 86R) remains a valuable option to explore and has shown promising initial results for assessment innovation that could be implemented following further study or learned testing evolutions that could be applied more broadly.

### **Resources:**

- [TTAP Participation Dashboard](#)
- [A-F Accountability One Pager \(Fall 2024\)](#)
- [TTAP Year 1 Report](#)

### **Engagement Opportunities:**

- [Sign onto](#) an Assessment One-Pager

- [Sign onto](#) an Accountability One-Pager

**Lead Orgs:** Good Reason Houston, Commit, TX 2036

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## **EFFECTIVE EDUCATORS**

**Goal:** Strengthen Texas' teacher workforce, reduce reliance on uncertified educators, and improve student outcomes by advancing strategic recommendations from the Teacher Vacancy Task Force (TVTF). Focus on the full continuum of the teaching profession, prioritizing policies that support the recruitment, preparation, and retention of high-quality educators. Key priorities include expanding the Teacher Incentive Allotment through additional investment and technical assistance, implementing strategic staffing and compensation models to maximize the impact of effective educators, and creating meaningful career advancement opportunities. Increase the supply of qualified teachers and reduce reliance on uncertified teachers by incentivizing candidates to pursue rigorous preparation pathways, such as residency programs. Improve teacher retention and recruitment by enhancing working conditions, including support structures, mentorship programs, and added benefits like free prekindergarten for teachers' children.

### **Key Messages:**

- Both Chambers
  - The need for high-quality educators is urgent, with only 53% of students at grade level in reading and 41% in math last school year.
  - In the 2023-2024 school year, over half of first-time, newly hired teachers were uncertified, with an even higher dependence on uncertified teachers in rural districts.
  - Students taught by new, uncertified teachers lost about four months of learning in reading and three months in math, except in instances where the teacher had prior public school experience as a paraprofessional or substitute.
  - Uncertified teachers leave the profession at three times the rate of other teachers.
  - Teacher turnover is expensive, costing school districts \$9,000 to \$21,000 to hire and train a replacement for each teacher who leaves.
- [House] - TVTF Recs passed both chambers in a bipartisan manner during the Regular session. Teacher residencies expand student access to high-quality educators in both rural and non-rural districts. Teacher residencies have shown to be successful models in rural districts and across all regions of Texas. Exemplars include Sam Houston State, Tarleton State, Texas Tech and UTEP's partnership with rural school districts.
  - It is important to maintain high standards of quality and rigor for preparation and certification requirements that contribute to stronger student outcomes and teacher retention.
- [Senate] - Passing across the board pay raises without the additional evidence-based TVTF recommendations will not ensure educator finance reforms are sustainable and

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will not enable TX to retain and support our most effective educators in service of their students. In addition to the TIA, we should promote strategic compensation increases and reward those who pursue more rigorous preparation routes.

### Resources:

- [TVTF Final Report and Recommendations](#)
- Educate TX - [Texas's Opportunity to Become a National Leader in Teacher Workforce Practices: Continuing teacher policy work from the 88th Legislative Session \[Deck\]](#)
- Educate TX - [Teacher One-Pager](#)
- [Teacher residency testimonials](#) (candidate and district leaders)

### Engagement Opportunities:

- Updated TIA One-Pager as a [sign-on opportunity](#)
- [Coming soon] Updated teacher one-pager/data briefs as a [sign-on opportunity](#)
- [Coming soon] Tentative late January/early February Capitol event related to TVTF recs
- Opportunity for a teacher certification brief/101 to help unpack the nuance of teacher certification

**Lead Orgs:** Educate TX, Teach Plus, Ed Trust

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## **STRONG ACADEMIC FOUNDATIONS**

**Goal:** Ensure that teachers, students, and families have the tools, supports and systems needed for every child to read and do math on grade level by 3rd grade. Specifically, supporting early literacy and numeracy policies, including bolstering high-quality early education, strengthening progress monitoring to identify foundational academic gaps, providing evidence-based interventions, increasing parental notification, and enhancing aligned professional development and resources for teachers are all critical parts of Texas' path forward to improve student outcomes. Data-backed strategies to accelerate student outcomes (e.g., high-quality instructional materials and extended learning time/ADSY not less instructional time), must continue to be prioritized and incentivized to ensure the development of a strong future workforce.

### Key Messages:

- [House] - Given the historic difficulty of Texas schools in catching up students who fall behind, policymakers must focus state investment and local policies on the early years to better support the entirety of the education continuum. Improving current low proficiency rates – just 46% of Texas 3rd graders are performing on grade level in Reading and just 43% are performing on grade level in Math– is necessary to support more students in a strong academic start, and ultimately prepare more students for success following high school graduation.
  - Policies to bolster early education and early literacy intervention already passed the House last session (expansion of the Early Education Allotment, easing

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barriers to entry for the Additional Days School Year Program, and HB 2162) and those proposals continue to show promise as detailed at the Public Education interim hearings this fall. This session additional proposals must also be considered to strengthen the state's early numeracy policies, such as early identification and enhanced professional development, to better equip educators and schools given persistently poor outcomes and achievement gaps in Math.

- [Senate] -
  - Texas has made great strides to support student outcomes through the passage of data-driven legislation including HB 1416 and SB 2124. However, for these policies to ultimately reach their intended impact and effectuate the best use of teacher time and taxpayer resources, additional supports are necessary in the early grades. With just 46% of 3rd graders reading on grade level and 43% in Math, adults must redouble our focus on foundational development of early literacy and numeracy to ensure Texas' continued economic competitiveness.
  - Specifically, state policy currently hinders our ability to understand foundational academic deficiencies ahead of the 3rd grade milestone to ensure students get the necessary support while learning gaps are small. Passing policies to improve progress monitoring and evidence-based interventions in reading and math, as well as high-quality early math instruction, will better ensure a ROI on the money the state and local districts are spending on existing initiatives. Furthermore, bolstering parent notification and resourcing will enable improved at-home learning to propel student success.

### Resources:

- TX 2036 Senate Education Testimony
- Commit Partnership Senate Education Testimony ([video](#))
- [Early Education Written Testimony](#)
- [TEA Early Education Overview](#)
- [Solving for X in Texas](#)

### Engagement Opportunities:

- [Sign onto](#) an Early Literacy One-Pager
- [Sign onto](#) an Early Numeracy One-Pager

**Lead Orgs:** TX 2036, Commit

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## POSTSECONDARY READINESS & SUCCESS

**Goal:** Texas' PK-12 school systems are critical in the development of a highly educated and skilled workforce. A student's academic experience should be structured to intentionally support them on a meaningful trajectory that results in a successful transition into and completion of high-quality college, career, and life opportunities. Texas's graduation requirements are a floor that signal that students are ready for success after high school. State policy must ensure all

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students are prepared for success after graduation and are on a path to self-sustaining wage attainment. As schools implement innovative policies such as HB 3's CCMR outcomes bonus funds (86R), HB 8's access to free dual credit for eligible students (88R), and HB 2209's rural collaboratives (88R; R-PEP), legislators should focus on scaling participation in existing programs that provide high-quality career preparation. Additionally, taking steps to further alignment and integration across systems, broadening opportunities for students to progress through coherent coursework, credentials, and degrees in high school, and more meaningfully incentivizing data-driven achievements linked to future postsecondary success are all essential in enabling more Texas students to lead productive, successful lives.

### Key Messages:

- [House] -
  - Our PK-12 education systems are a powerful driver of local economies and our state's prosperity. Policymakers have the opportunity to continue to incentivize the provision of high-quality programming and initiatives to high schoolers so that they are prepared to succeed following graduation. As we continue to better understand which high-school experiences translate to higher outcomes for students later on, we should ensure that state systems are responsive and motivate adult behavior to the aligned expansion of access and participation in those programs.
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- [Senate] -
  - 76.3% of students are considered CCMR ready, yet we know that historically only 22% of TX's 8th grade students go on to attain a PS degree, resulting in Texas ranking a troubling 11th out of 12 among its peer states in postsecondary completion. Our school finance and accountability systems have the ability to focus policymakers and school system leaders on what matters most to close this gap.

### Resources:

- [HB 3 Implementation Dashboard](#); see CCMR Tab
- [New TPRS Reports](#) on CCMR outcomes and CCMR OBF Early Counts
- [ESG: Rethinking High School Graduation Requirements](#)

### Engagement Opportunities:

- [Sign onto](#) a High School One-Pager
- [Sign onto](#) an a Accountability One-Pager
- Join Aim Hire Texas Coalition's aligned High School subcommittee meeting 12/19 at 9 am (reach out to Ari Kinney, [ari.kinney@commitpartnership.org](mailto:ari.kinney@commitpartnership.org) to be added to the distribution list)

**Lead Orgs:** Commit, TX 2036