

Senate Committee on Education Reform and Public School Finance: Reform items represent a point of discussion for the members and the public. These items do not represent endorsements by the committee chair or members.

Reform Options -- *taken from testimony at the January 24 and February 6 hearings of the Committee*

IMPROVE GRADUATION RATES/HIGH SCHOOLS

- Develop a funding mechanism to encourage districts to increase attendance, improve graduation rates, and strengthen the pipeline between elementary, middle and high school.
- Include middle school in intervention efforts to ensure students successfully graduate from high school.
- Ensure funds utilized for high school reform may be used on effective programs currently producing positive results with students.
- Encourage alternatives to traditional high school.
- Encourage campus arrangements that develop four year authentic relationships among students and adults for greater connection and accountability.
- Focus grant resources on those schools and districts taking the initiative on reform.

COLLEGE SUCCESS

- Align high school curriculum with college success measures by requiring four years of English, Math, Science and Social Studies and increasing their rigor.
- Require continuous enrollment in math coursework for all high school students, even if credits necessary for graduation have been earned.
- Create vertical teams between public and higher education faculty to increase communication regarding college workload and expectations.
- Expand the college going mentality by incorporating college attendance activities into the curriculum such as elementary student essays on college majors. Increase communication between schools and parents regarding college admissions and affordability such as sending financial aid forms home to all eighth grade parents.
- Increase the rigor of senior year by allowing colleges to revoke acceptance if a student fails to maintain comparable grade point averages or quality of coursework.

Reform Options from testimony at the January 24 and February 6 hearings of Committee

- Expand work-study programs to allow college students to work in school districts as tutors and peer counselors and create work-study opportunities for high school students. ➤ Develop end-of-course exams and align these exams with college success measures.
- **Align high school exit and college entry exams**
- Report college attendance information for graduates of each school district. ➤ Review Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards and align them for college and work force readiness.
- Utilize college readiness diagnostics early to determine problem areas and offer to all students.
- Review the rigor of the TAKS to determine whether it creates a disconnect between classroom instruction and curriculum expectations.
- Provide incentives for taking higher level and dual-credit courses. ➤ Ensure state support of alternative arrangements that promote college readiness and success.
- Establish minimum guidelines that exceed TEKS for college credit programs, ensure proper teacher preparation for these courses and adequate data collection for accountability.
- Encourage teachers and counselors to visit college campuses and workplaces to ensure they understand what the demands of the students in the future will be.

- Allow state textbook funding to pay for college level textbooks for high school students enrolled in college courses.

EFFICIENCY

- Revise School FIRST to ensure greater focus on classroom expenditure, and increase accountability by ensuring greater clarity for district spending. ➤ Include measures such as shared services in School FIRST so that efficient measures are encouraged rather than penalized.
- Ensure data can be efficiently shared amongst school districts and between school districts and higher education.
- Public discussion of the following items will be reserved until a scheduled meeting on meaningful discretion.
- Expand the state data collection system to include a teacher identifier that matches educators with students.
- Provide transparency for taxpayers by improving the quality of campus level school data available to the public.

Reform Options taken from testimony at the January 24 and February 6 hearings of the Senate Select Committee on Education Reform and Public School Finance.

- Disseminate best practices to other similarly situated school districts to drive improvement.
- Strengthen the Texas Education Agency's ability to collect, review, and disseminate data in a timely fashion.
- Increase the consequences for poor academic performance through intervention on low performing campuses.
- Establish templates and best practices for assessments, service level agreements, and projected costs and savings for shared service arrangements. ➤ Provide incentives or inducements for study and start-up of shared service agreements.
- Remove any legal or policy barriers that exist for districts to enter into shared service arrangements.

TEACHERS

- Establish incentive pay/rewards for exceptional teachers, particularly focused in schools with high numbers of disadvantaged students.
- **Improve teacher preparation by holding preparation programs accountable for results.**
- Provide increased stipends for teachers who teach and are certified in shortage area fields.
- **Improve the quality of teachers through recruiting national experts to 'train the trainer'.**
- **Monitor teacher effectiveness and best practices by growth and value-added measures of student performance.**

MEANINGFUL DISCRETION

(Public discussion of the following items will be reserved until a scheduled meeting on meaningful discretion.)

- Propose authorization of a statewide property tax through a constitutional amendment.
- Adopt a tax regime that eliminates and replaces local property taxes.
- Raise the \$1.50 maintenance and operations tax cap.
- Reduce requirements on school districts.
- Replace a portion of local property taxes with state revenue thereby reducing the level of the tax floor.