

Denton Independent School District

2019 Legislative Priorities Summary

The MISSION of the Denton Public Schools, in partnership with home and community, is to Empower lifelong learners to be engaged citizens who positively impact their local and global community.

Our MISSION is measured by five GUIDING STATEMENTS of OUTCOMES:

- 1 Our faculty and staff feel recognized and appreciated
- 2 Percentage of our students reading on grade level by the end of the 3rd grade
- 3 Percentage of our 9th grade students mastering Algebra I
- 4 Percentage of our students engaged in extra and co-curricular activities
- 5 Percentage of our graduates meeting the College and Career Readiness

In pursuit of these outcomes we advocate for legislation which:

School Choice:

Adamantly opposes the diversion of public funds for vouchers, tax credits, education savings grants, or any other funding mechanisms diverting funds to private schools. The DISD currently offers many choices for students and parents to consider within the current school choice framework. Students and parents often have the ability to choose among public schools. In addition, Texas should consider public accountability and transparency provisions to charter schools allowing for a more efficient and equitable public charter school system in compliance with the Texas Constitution.

Assessment and Accountability:

Supports an assessment and accountability system that values student growth and achievement over standardized, high-stakes one day testing. A system designed to rank and sort schools is not accountability, nor does it demonstrate growth in student learning. The DISD advocates for the establishment of a comprehensive accountability system that looks beyond high-stakes, multiple-choice exams to meaningful assessments that have value for students, parents, and teachers, as well as measures what each community deems important in promoting college and career readiness. Oppose A-F campus and district ratings

School Finance:

Supports legislation making public education funding a priority. For more than 30 years, the Texas school finance formula has remained substantially unchanged. It is the recommendation of the Denton Independent School District that the state make appropriate budget adjustments to the school finance system by developing a simplified and sustainable plan, which provides resources promoting educational excellence for all Texas students. DISD further advocates for truth in taxation as it relates to the implications of rising property values and the corresponding decline in state funding for public education. In addition, DISD expects that the State shall not engage in any tax cuts until it has fully funded the infrastructures of the state; specifically, funding public education.

Mental Health and School Safety:

Support a state-funded organizational framework designed to create a network of effective support in our public schools and community-based services to address the mental health needs and school safety of our children. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), those at greatest risk of serious emotional disturbances and/or mental illness are children and adolescents who have been involved in a traumatic event at their young age. Students must feel safe and be mentally healthy in order to learn and meet their full potential. Students are experiencing greater anxiety, fear, depression and a lack of coping skills. Additionally, school counselors, social workers and school psychologists across the nation are seeing an increase in suicide ideation. The academic needs of students cannot be separated from the social, emotional and behavioral needs of students and vice-versa.

Funding for High-Quality Pre-K Programs:

Supports full funding for the expansion of high-quality Pre-K programs state-wide. Research indicates the greatest opportunity to impact achievement gaps and improve outcomes for all students over their life-time is to provide students access to a high-quality Pre-K program.

Facilities Funding:

Recognizes the needs of rapidly growing districts and districts in areas of the state with low property values and supports the legislature in designing a school finance system to provide adequate and equitable resources. Specifically, the population of students enrolled in public education has increased by more than two million over the last 20 years. The Denton Independent School District is categorized as a destination, Fast Growth School District. Eighty percent of students new to Texas enroll in approximately 80 school districts across Texas. The construction cost index, and state and local building codes have increased significantly during this time; however, the funding formula weights in the Existing Debt Allotment and Instructional Facilities Allotment formulas have remained frozen. Districts have large amounts of deferred maintenance due to the cumulative impact of the inadequate school finance and debt funding formulas.

Local Control/Governance and Taxation:

Supports governance allowing for local control of the school district. Local control allows decision making to occur in collaboration with local communities and constituents. Given the transition to the Every Student Succeeds Act, DISD advocates for increased opportunities for school districts to implement local initiatives, such as Districts of Innovation, and prevention of measures that reduce or remove governance of districts from locally elected school boards. DISD advocates for innovations in school district taxing authority allowing local school trustees more flexibility to raise and lower taxes within a voter-approved limit.

Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS)

Advocates for the continuation of the current defined benefit pension program for TRS members. The Denton Independent School District advocates for increased state funding to assist with increased health care costs associated with TRS-ActiveCare and TRS-Care.

Visit us at www.dentonisd.org/Page/84504 to learn more about our legislative priorities