

EDUCATION

Higher education was a priority for lawmakers this legislative session and several bills passed that will ensure more Texans have the knowledge and skills to obtain quality, family-sustaining wage jobs and that our state has a strong Texas workforce for years to come. HB 8 creates a new model for funding community colleges based on performance and increases college affordability and capacity. This historic and bipartisan legislation, along with \$683 million more in the state budget for community colleges, will drive transformative changes to better address our state's workforce and postsecondary completion challenges.

Contentious higher education bills, such as SB 17 were also signed into law by the Governor. This legislation bans diversity, equity, and inclusion offices and practices in Texas colleges and universities, including staff-mandated diversity training and statements describing an institution's commitment to diversity. These efforts may impact our state's higher education and workforce goals, as outlined in [Building a Talent Strong Texas](#).

There were some big disappointments in our network's Pre-K-12 priorities, including early learning, per-student funding, bilingual education, teacher support, and student health and wellbeing. Of note, the Legislature rolled back years of work on improving pre-k quality with the passage of HB 2729, legislation that reduces qualifications for pre-k teachers serving in partnerships with private childcare providers. Also, the issue of school vouchers impacted the progress of many important bills and funding priorities. Due to the lack of movement on school vouchers—a priority issue for both Governor Abbott and Lt. Gov Patrick, special sessions on vouchers and school funding are expected later this year.

Passed

Early Education & Out of School Time

HB 1615 by Rep. Button formally establishes pre-k partnerships between childcare providers and local school districts and adds a representative of the childcare workforce to Local Workforce Development Boards.

HB 1905 by Rep. Talarico allows a school district to provide school safety training courses at no cost to employees of accredited private schools located in the district, child-care facilities, or other organizations providing out-of-school-time care.

HB 2729 by Rep. Harris eliminates education and certification requirements for pre-k teachers participating in pre-k partnerships.

Passed

Closing the Achievement Gap & Ensuring Equity

SB 2124 by Sen. Creighton requires school districts and charter schools to automatically enroll fifth graders who score in the top 40% on the state standardized math test in advanced math in sixth grade. Families can opt their children out of the advanced class if they choose.

HB 567 by Rep. Bowers prohibits any student dress or grooming policy adopted by a school district or public institution of higher education from discriminating against a hair texture or protective hairstyle commonly or historically associated with race.

School Climate & Student Health and Wellbeing

SB 133 by Sen. West prohibits peace officers and school security personnel from restraining or using a chemical irritant spray on a student who is ten years old or younger unless the student poses a serious risk of harm to themselves or another person.

SB 629 by Sen. Menendez requires each public school district to adopt a policy regarding the maintenance, administration, and disposal of opioid antagonists for schools serving students in grades 6 through 12.

SB 763 by Sen. Hefner allows school districts to employ or allow volunteer chaplains to perform the duties of school counselors.

HB 3 by Rep. Burrows requires school district employees to complete Mental Health First Aid training and to have armed personnel at all campuses during school hours. This legislation also gives districts additional funding per campus and student for security funding and increases penalties for districts not found in compliance with security requirements.

HB 473 by Rep. Hull requires a school's threat assessment and safe and supportive school team to notify the parent or person in parental relation to the student before conducting a threat assessment of a student.

HB 3991 by Rep. Isaac designates the first Friday in April as the Texas Fruit and Vegetable Day in public schools to promote awareness of the health benefits of fruits and vegetables and to encourage students to consume more fruits and vegetables.

Teacher and Education Professional Support

HB 4363 by Rep. Kuempel establishes the Future Texas Teachers Scholarship Program with the purpose of recruiting, preparing, and retaining a talented and diverse workforce of career teachers to be leaders in their field and providing assistance for tuition, mandatory fees, and other usual and customary costs of attendance at an eligible institution. The bill was not funded in the budget.

Passed

Pathways to College & Career

SB 68 by Sen. Zaffirini permits a school district to excuse a student who is a junior or senior in high school from school for a “career investigation day” that involves visiting a professional at their workplace to determine the student’s interest in pursuing a career in the professional’s field.

SB 459 by Sen. Paxton allows early registration for parenting students at public institutions of higher education.

SB 1887 by Sen. West continues state efforts to strengthen credit transfer.

SB 2032 by Sen. Creighton allows entities to create adult charter schools like the Goodwill Excel Center pilot.

SB 2139 by Sen. Parker establishes the Opportunity High School Diploma Program to provide adults the opportunity to earn a high school diploma through a public community college, while simultaneously pursuing a postsecondary degree or certificate.

SB 2294 by Sen. Creighton expands the types of institutions of higher education eligible to participate in the Texas First Early High School Completion Program and the Texas First Scholarship Program.

SB 2158 by Sen. King establishes an adult education pilot program for certain inmates of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ). The program would be a partnership between the Goodwill Excel Center and the Windham school district.

HB 8 by Rep. Van Deaver establishes a new funding model for community colleges in Texas, creates a new scholarship program, increases access to dual credit courses, and expands access to higher education opportunities across the state.

HB 1361 by Rep. Morales Shaw designates liaison officers to assist students who are parents at public institutions of higher education.

HB 1590 by Rep. Burns establishes the Texas Leadership Scholars Program for high-achieving students with financial needs. The program is to be administered by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB).

Passed

HB 1602 by Rep. Guillen requires the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to establish performance criteria for adult education and literacy programs and prioritize awarding funds to those that meet certain criteria.

HB 1755 by Rep. Button provides grants to educational institutions and nonprofits engaged in administering performance-based workforce training programs.

HB 2209 by Rep. Lozano establishes the Rural Pathway Excellence Partnership (R-PEP) program to incentivize and support rural college and career pathway partnerships with colleges and business sectors to provide more opportunities to rural and underserved students and promote economic development in rural areas.

HB 2920 by Rep. Paul requires Texas Education Agency (TEA) to make certain information available to public and private school students regarding postsecondary education and career opportunities.

Other Education

SB 798 by Sen. Middleton removes the statutory requirement that candidates for certification as a school counselor have experience as a classroom teacher.

HB 1416 by Rep. Bell makes changes to the laws governing accelerated instruction and supplemental instruction for students who do not perform satisfactorily on certain assessments.

HB 3803 by Rep. Cunningham allows parents and guardians to have their children repeat a grade up to grade 8 instead of grade 3.

HB 900 by Rep. Patterson prohibits school libraries from possessing or acquiring any material that is “rated sexually explicit material by the selling library material vendor” or deemed to be “harmful material” as codified in Texas Penal Code.

Key Budget Items for Higher Education/Workforce: \$3 billion for the proposed re-designated Texas University Fund; \$1.5 billion in grants for low-income higher education students; \$650 million for implementation of community college finance reform through HB 8; \$7.5 million for pre-apprenticeship programs; and \$12.5 million in GR for the Skills Development Fund.

Key Budget Items for K-12: \$142 million to extend the Texas Child Health Access Through Telemedicine (TCHAT) telehealth program to all school districts; \$5 million to implement mental health programs in community-based out-of-school time (OST) and invest in statewide intermediary infrastructure to support OST programs and professional; \$500 million for curriculum; and \$300 million for school safety measures.