

HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

84TH SESSION LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

FINANCE

Ensure programs designed for student achievement are adequately funded by the Legislature.

As a school district whose student population is over 80 percent economically disadvantaged, HISD supports equitable state funding for vulnerable, at-risk students. In addition, HISD values additional state dollars that strengthen academic preparation from Pre-K-12th grade, as well as improve postsecondary readiness for all students.

HISD supports:

- Increasing the weights for compensatory education and bilingual education populations within the state's funding formula.
- Increasing the Chapter 41 Equalized Wealth Level for Level 1 school districts.
- Recognizing the homestead exemption in the state's funding formula.
- Improving the fairness and accuracy in the appraisal of commercial and residential properties, to ensure that taxpayers in all categories are treated fairly and equally.
- Providing funding for full day pre-kindergarten through the state's funding formula.

LOCAL CONTROL AND GOVERNANCE

Preserve the local control and flexibility of school districts by duly-elected school boards. Local board of trustees are elected by and held accountable to their constituents. As such, the state should afford school boards the flexibility in regards to their programs and operations to innovate and create educational environments that best meet the needs of their students.

The passage of House Bill 5 (83rd Regular Session) provided flexibility in how districts across the state equip students for college and career opportunities. The bill also encouraged collaboration between school districts, higher educational institutions and the business community. To continue this work, expanded dual credit options are critical. Studies show students are more likely to enter and complete college if they have taken college courses in high school; this is especially true for economically disadvantaged students.

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HISD supports:

- Improving flexibility with dual credit programs to allow partnerships with any institution of higher education in the region, including any community college system.
- Allowing districts to work with any community college system to offer unlimited dual credit courses and remove the current three-course limit requirement.

ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Gauge student learning with multiple measures, including assessment. HISD is committed to providing students with the most rigorous path to graduation, but also looks to the state to provide a fair, high standard for every child.

The system we envision should promote a deep and rich learning experience that assesses real world skills and long-term academic achievement.

HISD supports:

- Maintaining and strengthening a rigorous, transparent set of exams that commands high-level instruction for all children.
- Advancing a set of exams that assess not only adequacy, but higher levels of achievement for Texas students.
- Improving flexibility to allow student achievement on nationally accredited college readiness exams (e.g. SAT, ACT, AP, IB) to count for passage on state exams at the high school level.
- Creating a set of multiple measures, including student growth, and metrics that encompass traits of well-rounded future citizens.

We strongly believe this can be done without retreating from a set of standardized measurements similar but not limited to the STAAR system and that we should use these tests in conjunction with other valuable information to recognize healthy, thriving, high-level academic institutions of learning.