



# 5 MILLION REASONS VIRTUAL SCHOOLS DON'T WORK

## Texas public schools educate 5 million students.

While full-time virtual school providers educate only a small fraction of them, their enrollment has grown rapidly despite poor academic results and little transparency.

### Rapid Expansion, Poor Performance

Enrollment in full-time virtual schools has *more than quadrupled* in the last four years alone – but full-time virtual schools have provided consistently poor results under the state accountability system.

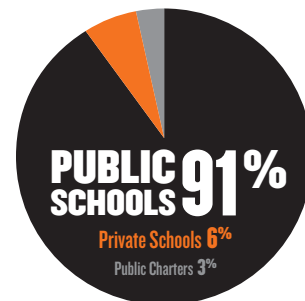
- Only one full-time virtual school has maintained even an Academically Acceptable rating for two consecutive years (and it was later rated Academically Unacceptable).
- No full-time virtual school has ever achieved a rating of Exemplary or Recognized.

### No Taxpayer Accountability or Transparency

Full-time virtual schools have been touted as producing cost savings for the state, yet there is little or no public data available to substantiate this claim despite the use of taxpayer dollars.

For more information, see our policy paper, "Virtual Schools in Texas: Good for Kids or Merely Good for Profit?" at: <http://www.raiseyourhandtexas.org/images/virtual-schools.pdf>

## WHO EDUCATES 5 MILLION TEXAS STUDENTS?



PUBLIC SCHOOLS **4,823,842** | PRIVATE SCHOOLS **313,360** | PUBLIC CHARTERS **154,278**

### Full-Time Virtual School Accountability Ratings by School Year

	Texas Connections	Texas Virtual Academy	IQ Academy	Texarkana Virtual Academy
2006 - 07	Not Rated*	Acceptable	N/A**	N/A
2007 - 08	Not Rated	Acceptable	N/A	N/A
2008 - 09	Not Rated	Unacceptable	N/A	N/A
2009 - 10	Not Rated	Acceptable	N/A	N/A
2010 - 11	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Acceptable	N/A
2011 - 12	TBD	Closed	TBD	TBD

\* "Not Rated" indicates that the school was in existence at this time, but was not rated by the Texas Accountability System (reason unknown).

\*\* "N/A" indicates the school was not in existence at this time.

## TAKE ACTION Here's what the Texas legislature can do to keep public schools strong:

- **Close the loophole that allows poor performing virtual schools to evade consequences by switching host districts.**
- **Do not allow virtual schools to act as stealth vouchers.**
  - Maintain current eligibility requirements that a student must have attended a Texas public school in the prior school year.
  - Do not permit public funds to be paid directly to private virtual school providers.
- **Maintain accountability for virtual schools.**
  - Maintain operational and fiscal oversight by TEA under the Texas Virtual Schools Network (TxVSN).
- Maintain the same accountability and reporting requirements as public schools.
- Maintain the requirement that virtual schools not serve students below 3rd grade, where assessments are not administered.
- Maintain the existing requirement that a provider receives full payment on successful completion of online courses.
- **Require a trusted third-party to administer state assessments for virtual school students.**
- **Increase transparency for virtual schools.**
  - Require that contracts between virtual school providers and host district/charter be public information and posted online.
- Require TEA to provide timely information on TxVSN Online Schools, including cost and performance outcomes.
- Require financial audits to determine actual costs and whether per-pupil payments using taxpayer funds are reasonable.
- **Limit expansion of virtual schools to high performing virtual school providers, as is currently done with charters.**
- **Limit further expansion of full-time virtual schools pending independent third party evaluation of academic performance and cost-effectiveness.**