

## Two Failing Virtual Schools Enroll Nearly Ninety Percent of Students

As of 2015–16, virtual schools in Texas continue to underperform for the majority of students enrolled.

Nearly 8,500 students, or 89% of full-time virtual enrollment, are enrolled in the two largest full-time virtual schools that are evaluated under the standard accountability system. Texas Connections Academy and Texas Virtual Academy both failed to meet state standards in 2015-16 and were rated Improvement Required (IR). It is notable that Texas Connections Academy is the largest campus in the state in terms of student enrollment, yet it received an IR rating. Specific standards violations:

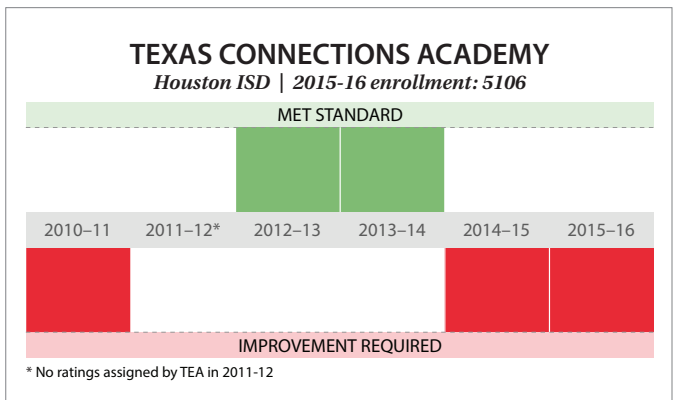
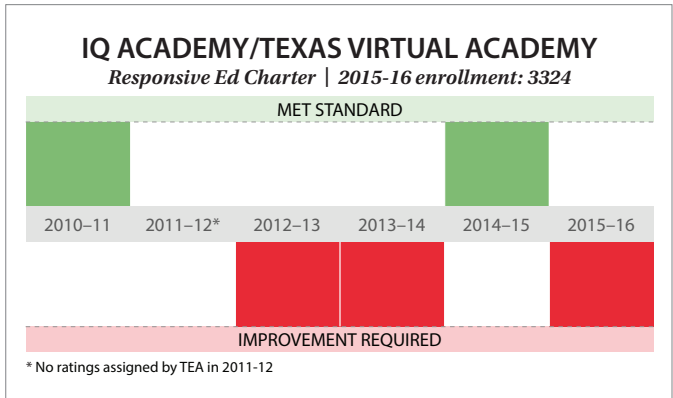
- Houston ISD’s Texas Connections Academy failed to meet state standards on Index 4 – Postsecondary Readiness – for the second year in a row.
- Responsive Education Solutions Charter’s Texas Virtual Academy failed to meet state standards on Index 1 – Student Achievement, Index 2 – Student Progress, and Index 3 – Closing Performance Gaps.

Another development in 2015-16 was the addition of a new full-time virtual high school “campus” by Responsive Ed that is rated under the Alternative Education Accountability (AEA) system. The AEA system is intended only for at-risk students, and for a campus to be eligible to be evaluated by this lower standard, at least 75% of a campus’ students must meet specific at-risk requirements. No other full-time virtual school is rated via AEA. More than 2,000 high school students, most

## Safeguarding Texas Students

Due to the performance record of virtual schools, the state must prioritize transparency and continued accountability for these programs. In order to ensure Texas students and parents have the opportunity to make informed educational choices, the state should:

- Maintain administration and operation of virtual schools under the auspices of the Texas Virtual School Network, operated by the Texas Education Agency.
- Continue current policy that disallows virtual schools from serving students below grade three, where state assessments are not administered.
- Maintain current reporting and accountability



of whom likely were previously enrolled in Responsive Ed’s original full-time virtual school that is evaluated by the more rigorous standard accountability system, are now enrolled in the new campus. The original campus, renamed Responsive Ed Virtual Learning, now only admits students in grades 3-8.

requirements for virtual schools under state statute as required for all other public schools in Texas.

- Prohibit virtual schools from being evaluated under the weaker alternative education accountability.
- Preserve the established funding system, in which all funds flow through the school district or charter and students must successfully complete the online course in order for the provider to receive full funding. Do not permit public funds to be paid directly to private providers.
- Maintain the prohibition against opening new full-time virtual education programs until performance improves.
- Prohibit existing full-time programs from creating additional “campuses” that hide prior low performance.

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

	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16
TEXAS CONNECTIONS ACADEMY (Houston ISD) Opened 2006	Improvement Required	No rating assigned by the TEA	Met Standard	Met Standard	Improvement Required	Improvement Required Enrollment: 5106
TEXAS VIRTUAL ACADEMY (Southwest Charter) Opened 2006	Improvement Required	CLOSED *				
IQ ACADEMY/TEXAS VIRTUAL ACADEMY/ RESPONSIVE ED VIRTUAL LEARNING (Responsive Ed Charter) Opened 2009	Met Standard	No rating assigned by the TEA	Improvement Required	Improvement Required	Met Standard	Improvement Required Enrollment: 3324
TEXARKANA VIRTUAL ACADEMY (Texarkana ISD) Opened 2011		No rating assigned by the TEA	Improvement Required	Met Standard	Met Standard	CLOSED*
			iUNIVERSITY PREP (Grapevine-Colleyville ISD) Opened 2013	Met Standard	Met Standard	Met Standard Enrollment: 379
			TX ONLINE PREP EL (Huntsville ISD) Opened 2013	Met Standard	Met Standard	Met Standard Enrollment: 118
			TX ONLINE PREP MID (Huntsville ISD) Opened 2013	Improvement Required	Met Standard	Met Standard Enrollment: 239
			TX ONLINE PREP HS (Huntsville ISD) Opened 2013	Met Standard	Met Standard	Met Standard Enrollment: 301
			iSCHOLARS MAGNET ACADEMY (Red Oak ISD) Opened 2013	Improvement Required	Met Standard	CLOSED*
					PREMIER HS – TEXAS VIRTUAL ACADEMY (Responsive Ed Charter) Opened 2015	Met Standard** Enrollment: 2729

\* Indicates voluntary closure by provider

\*\* Rated under the Alternative Education Accountability (AEA) System

## Blended Learning is a Better Way

Technology plays an important role in facilitating student learning in the 21st century. Blended learning moves beyond merely providing opportunities for online learning, and, instead, presents a more strategic approach. It combines face-to-face teacher instruction and online technology to achieve student-centered learning. Blended learning takes place when students learn at least in part online, with some element of student control over the time, place, path, and/or pace of their learning, while also enjoying the benefits that come with education at a brick-and-mortar school (*Christensen Institute*).

Blended learning is both personalized, tailored to an individual student's particular needs, and competency-based, enabling students to advance after mastering a given subject. Integrating blended learning into schools allows students to benefit from customized learning experiences through the use of adaptive digital content and increased one-on-one time with teachers.

---

*Blended learning moves beyond merely providing opportunities for online learning, and, instead, presents a more strategic approach.*

---