

Act Now for Our Future 2019 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

#ActNowForOurFuture



IMPROVE

Ensure Transparency and Accountability for Full-Time Virtual Education

Full-time virtual schools deliver education completely online without quality student-teacher interactions in a school environment. The poor performance of our state's full-time virtual education programs over time demonstrates it is not always an effective approach to digital learning.

How should technology be used in education?

Texas can and should lead efforts to better utilize technology to provide the best educational opportunities for our students. But, we should do so in a way that is thoughtful and ensures the delivery of a high-quality educational experience. Raise Your Hand Texas® supports programs that enhance the capacity of public schools to use technology to personalize learning for every student. Effective personalization requires highly-trained teachers, data-driven instruction, and student ownership over learning. Raise Your Hand's cornerstone program, Raising Blended Learners® is one example of the effective use of technology.

Full-time virtual programs, however, are not providing a high-quality educational experience for students. Additional state evaluation and oversight are needed to ensure the quality and rigor of coursework and instruction our students deserve.

Texas Virtual Schools vs. Public Schools¹

Data on virtual schools in Texas shows that their performance lags far behind that of other public schools.

Why is oversight of full-time virtual programs important?

A national study found students enrolled in full-time virtual schools lost 72 days of learning in reading and 180 days of learning in math during the course of a 180-day school year. According to an article on the study in *The Washington Post*, "When it comes to math, it's as if the students did not attend school at all."²

Despite their dismal track record, some full-time virtual providers have pushed for changes to laws that would allow them to expand and evade state accountability measures.

Raise Your Hand opposes the expansion of current full-time virtual schools to additional grades and new providers, and advocates for better accountability and transparency of these programs.

Students enrolled in virtual schools

in Texas are

5X

as likely to be

held back



Students enrolled in virtual schools

in Texas are

5X

as likely to

dropout

What are the accountability and transparency concerns?

In Texas, nearly every full-time virtual program has received an Improvement Required rating or been rated under an alternative accountability system, which drastically lowers the passing standard.

Recently, low performing virtual school providers have opened new campuses evaluated under the alternative accountability system. Other providers have migrated to new online schools and taken students with them, causing confusion among parents about what school their children are attending.

Full-Time Virtual Schools' History of Low Performance³

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
TEXAS CONNECTIONS ACADEMY (Houston ISD) Opened 2006	Met Standard	Met Standard	Improvement Required	Improvement Required	Improvement Required	Met Standard Enrollment: 5,675
TEXAS VIRTUAL ACADEMY (Southwest Charter) Opened 2006	CLOSED 2011*					
IQ ACADEMY/TEXAS VIRTUAL ACADEMY/ RESPONSIVE ED VIRTUAL LEARNING (Responsive Ed Charter) Opened 2009	Improvement Required	Improvement Required	Met Standard	Improvement Required	Improvement Required	Improvement Required Enrollment: 2,283
TEXARKANA VIRTUAL ACADEMY (Texarkana ISD) Opened 2011	Improvement Required	Met Standard	Met Standard	CLOSED*		
	iUNIVERSITY PREP (Grapevine-Colleyville ISD)	Met Standard	Met Standard	Met Standard	Met Standard	Met Standard Enrollment: 615
	TX ONLINE PREP EL (Huntsville ISD)	Met Standard	Met Standard	Met Standard	Met Standard	Improvement Required Enrollment: 454
	TX ONLINE PREP MID (Huntsville ISD)	Improvement Required	Met Standard	Met Standard	Met Standard	Met Standard Enrollment: 764
	TX ONLINE PREP HS (Huntsville ISD)	Met Standard	Met Standard	Met Standard	Met Standard	Met Standard Enrollment: 853
	iSCHOLARS MAGNET ACADEMY (Red Oak ISD)	Improvement Required	Met Standard	CLOSED*		
	PREMIER HS – TEXAS VIRTUAL ACADEMY (Responsive Ed Charter)			Met Standard**	Met Standard**	Met Standard** Enrollment: 2729
	TEXAS VIRTUAL ACADEMY AT HALLSVILLE (Hallsville ISD and K12 Inc.) Opened 2018 Not Yet Rated					

* Indicates voluntary closure by provider

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

Policy Recommendations

- ▶ Oppose expansion of full-time virtual programs until academic performance improves.
- ▶ Improve accountability and transparency for current full-time virtual programs.



References

- ¹ Data on 2015-16 Grade-level retention and graduation rates for full-time virtual and Texas schools provided by the Texas Education Agency.
- ² Strauss, V. (2015) *Study on online charter schools: "It's literally as if the kid did not go to school for the entire year."* Retrieved from *The Washington Post* 9/30/2018 https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2015/10/31/study-on-online-charter-schools-it-is-literally-as-if-the-kid-did-not-go-to-school-for-an-entire-year/?utm_term=.60f9fc96f1cd
- ³ Texas Education Agency Accountability Ratings Data 2012-18 https://tea.texas.gov/Student_Testing_and_Accountability/

For more information, contact:

Dr. Michelle Smith, Director of Governmental Relations | ☎ (512) 617-2134 ✉ msmith@ryht.org
Bob Popinski, Director of Policy | ☎ (512) 617-2553 ✉ bpopinski@ryht.org