

WE STAND FOR THE FUTURE

WE STAND FOR ALL



Equity and innovation will create a world-class public school system for all Texans.

Here is Where We Stand on Full-time Virtual

Texas Students Deserve a High-Quality Virtual Education

After COVID-19 abruptly closed campuses across our state for the 2019-20 school year, Texas districts quickly shifted resources to help address the social-emotional, physical, and academic well-being of their students. This included launching creative online and offline solutions to support remote learning. This emergency response magnified the flaws of full-time virtual schooling, including inequitable access to internet connectivity and quality programming. Though some have pushed for the expansion of full-time virtual vendors, the continued lackluster performance of these programs shows that they are not a good solution for the overwhelming majority of students.

Texas can and should lead efforts to better utilize technology to provide the best educational opportunities for our students. But we should do so thoughtfully, ensuring the delivery of a high-quality educational experience for all students throughout our state, school districts, or any other providers or vendors.

Raise Your Hand Texas® supports programs that enhance the capacity of public schools to use technology to personalize learning for all students.

Effective personalization requires highly trained teachers in the classroom, data-driven instruction, and student ownership over learning. Raise Your Hand's cornerstone program, Raising Blended Learners®, is an important example of the effective use of technology to personalize learning.

Types of Online Instruction



Full-time virtual schools provide programs to students who are enrolled online only and do not attend a brick-and-mortar school.



Course catalog is an online clearinghouse for high school, dual credit, and AP courses to supplement offerings at a school.



Blended learning combines the best of classroom teaching with online learning. Teachers use data and classroom technology to personalize instruction for every student.



Emergency response learning attempts to provide instructional continuity to students through various offline and online platforms during periods when brick-and-mortar schools are not accessible.

A Rush to Full-Time Virtual Could Worsen Achievement Gaps

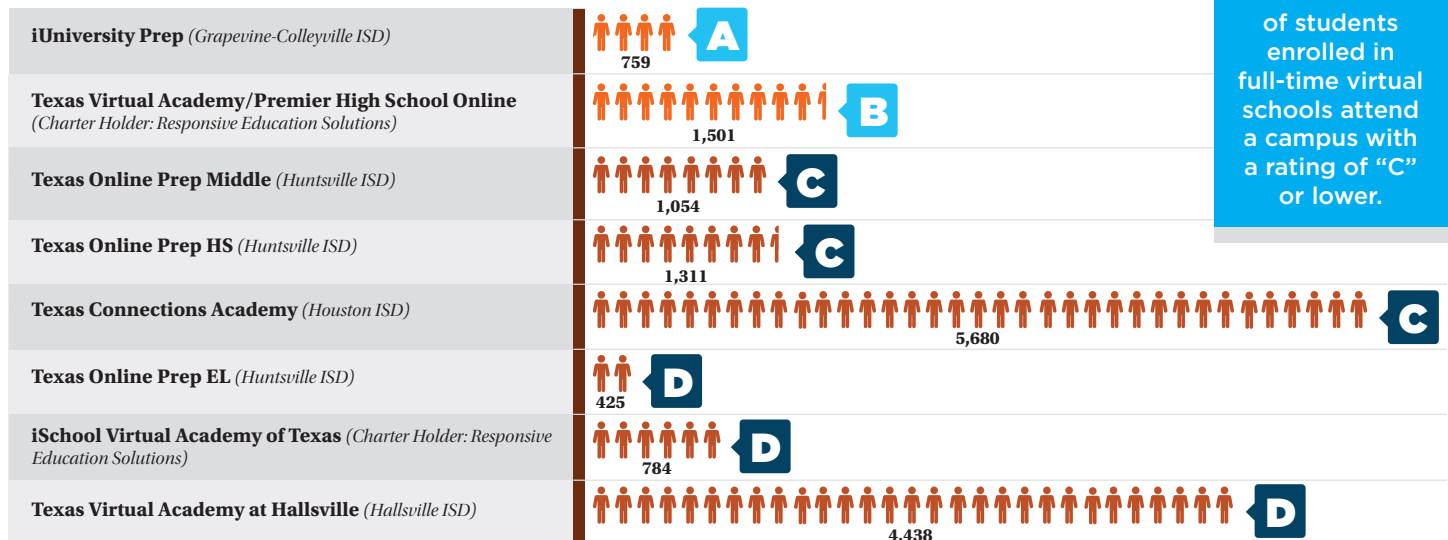
Texas provides online courses to students through its Texas Virtual School Network (TXVSN). The TXVSN provides both individual courses and full-time online schools. In the 2018-19 school year, Texas educated 16,000 students in full-time online virtual school programs, spanning across eight different campuses and six different schools. One campus has an “A” rating under our state’s accountability system that enrolls about 750 students,

but 86% of our students enrolled in the TXVSN attend a campus with a “C” or “D” rating.¹ In addition, 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.² This is not a good track record, and it is surely not a good reason to expand full-time, vendor-based programs to more schools, grade levels, and students.

2018-2019 Performance of Full-Time Virtual Campuses in Texas

Campus

Enrollment and Rating*



86%

of students enrolled in full-time virtual schools attend a campus with a rating of "C" or lower.

* Texas Education Agency Accountability Ratings Data, 2019
<https://tea.texas.gov/texas-schools/accountability/academic-accountability/performance-reporting/2019-accountability-rating-system>

Texas Should Focus on Expanding Technology Access and Online Opportunities to All Students

Schools that excel in providing full-time virtual education profile students for success and acknowledge that the online environment is not an appropriate setting for all students. There is a rigorous application process, extensive professional development for teachers, and prolonged training for families and students. Schools that are successful have far lower percentages of economically disadvantaged students and students who are English learners compared with the state average.

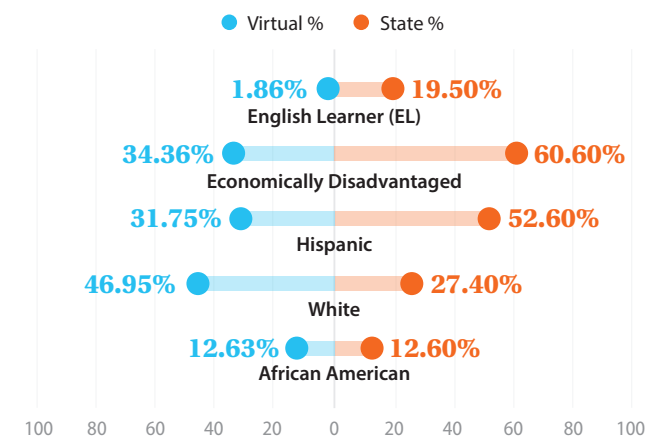
While we recognize the need for high-quality full-time virtual schools for some of our students, our state should consider only looking to expand educational opportunities that benefit all students.

Policy Recommendations

- ▶ Close persistently poor-performing full-time virtual schools and oppose the expansion of vendor-based full-time virtual programs until academic performance improves. Learn more from implementing funding provisions of HB 3 (2019) for successful full-time online programs run by universities.
- ▶ Improve accountability and transparency for current full-time virtual programs.
- ▶ Focus state policies on addressing the long-term solutions to the digital divide and the needed professional development for online teaching, including other types of strategies in both remote and in-person environments (blended learning).

Comparing Who Attends Full-time Virtual Schools

Full-time virtual students are less economically disadvantaged and less likely to be an English language learner than the rest of the state.



* Texas Education Agency Texas Academic Performance Reports, 2018-19
<https://rptsur1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/tapr/2019/index.html>

¹ Online Charter School Study 2015. Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) https://credo.stanford.edu/sites/g/files/sbiybj6481/f/online_charter_study_final.pdf

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

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