

Policy Summary - Education:

Strengthening Texas Public Schools

July 2026



1. **Texas public schools serve 5.5 million students, but too many fall behind before reaching high school.** In spring 2025, only [52 percent of third graders met grade level in reading and 46 percent met grade level in math](#). Results were even lower for students receiving special education services, students learning English, and students from low-income households. These early gaps can limit students' preparation for advanced classes, college, and career training.
2. **Low funding and an unstable educator workforce make it harder for schools to improve.** Texas spent an estimated [\\$12,815 per student on day-to-day school operations](#) in 2024–25, compared with a national average of \$17,840, **ranking Texas 46th**. Meanwhile, the share of teachers without certification rose from 3.2 percent in 2018–19 to [11.9 percent in 2025–26](#), while districts face rising costs for staffing, transportation, insurance, utilities, and special education.
3. **The 2025 Legislature increased targeted school funding, but core support remains limited as Texas directs new dollars outside the public-school system.** [House Bill 2 added \\$8.5 billion for public education](#), including funding for teacher pay, special education, school safety, and early reading and math. However, **the Basic Allotment increased by only \$55** after remaining unchanged since 2019, and much of the new funding is restricted to specific uses. At the same time, Texas committed [up to \\$1 billion to education savings accounts](#) (Vouchers) that can pay for private-school tuition and other expenses **outside the public-school system**.
4. **Texas legislators must act now to ensure public schools can prepare every student for the future.**
 - **Increase core operating funding and review it regularly against rising costs**, while tying more funding to enrollment rather than daily attendance.
 - **Strengthen teacher preparation and retention** through competitive pay, mentoring, paid residencies, and pathways to standard certification.
 - **Identify reading and math gaps earlier** and provide sustained funding for tutoring, small-group instruction, and timely intervention.
 - **Fully fund services for students with disabilities and other high-need students**, including evaluations, specialized instruction, language services, and transportation.
 - **Apply clear accountability standards to every publicly funded education program**, including annual reporting on education savings account spending, participation, and student outcomes.

More Information

- [Texas Education Agency](#): 2025 Annual Report
- Center for Policy Progress full paper – [Strengthening Texas Public Schools](#)
- [Every Texan: Pinching Pennies](#)—Texas Is Shortchanging Its Students and Teachers

For questions and comments, contact us at info@centerforpolicyprogress.org.