

Do we need to trim the fat in education in Texas or is it actually a funding problem?

You decide.

Did you know....

Texas spends an average of \$9,227 per pupil

Plano spends \$8,344 per pupil

Texas spends \$1,359 per student less than the national average

Texas ranks 38th in funding per pupil

10 years ago Texas ranked 25th in spending per pupil

Texas has 2nd highest school population

80,000 new students are expected to enroll in Texas schools next year

From 1997–98 to 2007–08, enrollment in U.S. public schools grew by 6.9 percent. At the same time, Texas public school enrollment grew by 20.1 percent—an increase of more than three-quarters of a million students

Texas school population has grown 20% in 10 years

For the first time the majority of our students are from non English speaking homes.

Texas is 43rd in graduation rate

Texas ranks 50th in adults with high school diploma

Texas ranks 46th in SAT scores

Texas ranks 49th in teacher pay

Tax Expenditures per Capita 47th

Percent of Uninsured Children 1st

Percent of Children Living in Poverty 4th

Per Capita State Spending on Mental Health 50th

Teenage Birth Rate 7th

Rate of Incarceration 9th

It cost about \$9,000 a year to educate a child and \$25,000 to \$50,000 or more to hold them in incarceration.

50 percent of college freshman in Texas are enrolled in remedial or developmental classes, compared with 28 percent across the U.S.

Texas requires families in the bottom 20 percent of the income scale pay more than three and a half times as great a share of their earnings in taxes as the top one percent.

Study after study has proved the necessity of the arts, athletics and other electives to produce a well-rounded individual who will possess the abilities to solve the problems of tomorrow and collaborate with other future leaders.

And saddest of all,

Texas ranks 43rd in voting age population that is registered

And 45th of voting age that actually vote!

You get what you vote (or don't), vote for.

Do we want Texans and Americans to lead the future and take a seat at the head of the table or look up from the floor and hope another country drops a crumb from their bountiful table of success? I say we want to create the menu! The only way to get there is education.

We got here from steps that the legislators took in 2006. They decided to decrease property tax, which pays for education and replace that money with business franchise tax and cigarette tax. As you can see, this has been a miserable failure. Tell them enough is enough. We will continue to go deeper into this black hole every year until there is nothing left unless it is fixed now. No budget cut to education is an acceptable budget cut. This is not a "trim the fat issue" this is a "enough funding issue." Our state already education the hardest to educate, the poorest, the kids who don't speak English, the kids of parents who don't speak English, the kids of teen moms, teen moms, with less money per pupil then 76% of the other states and Texas scores lower then 92% of

other states and we pay our teacher less than 99% of other states. This is a funding problem, not a too much fat problem.

We must say, "No" to the start of STAAR on EOC. We do not have the money in the state or districts to start a new standardized test. These tests have proven repeatedly to be inaccurate and inefficient. This year No Child Left Behind, now known as ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act) is going to be reauthorized. Advocates are pushing for a MAP type test that will measure growth. Many Federal legislators as well as the Dept. of Education agree. Why would we start a new test we can't afford when it could be invalid by Winter Break of 2011?

There has been some agreement to use a little over \$3B of the Rainy Day fund. Great. Yet it will grow over \$1B in one year. Just what is the Rainy Day Fund for, anyway? Well, in the past, it was set up as an Economic Stabilization Fund. What has it been used for in the since then? In 2003 nearly \$300M was used to lure new businesses to Texas. Will they stay with an education system in crisis? Two years later, funds were used from it by the governor to start an emerging technology fund. Some has been used to reimburse the Dept. of Human Services for "previously expended disaster assistance payments. Yet, "The constitutional amendment established an economic stabilization fund in the state treasury to be used to offset unforeseen shortfalls in revenue." It seems that is exactly what we have.

Finally, districts do not have the money to implement 4x4. The state needs to let educators educate and let districts decide which curriculum will count toward 4x4.

Consider all of these facts and decide if this is what you want your state to stand for. If the answer is no, let your voice be heard. Democracy is a precious thing that Americans are supposed to be the best at. People in other countries dream of being able to let their leaders know what they think of the job they are doing while it is our right.

Exercise your right.