



## **Schools and Families Need to Be Involved and Supported in Plans to Implement Accelerated Learning**

**TLEEC Testimony on SB 1261: Relating to accelerated learning plans for students not meeting STAAR standards, submitted to the Senate Education Committee, Wednesday, April 12, 2023**

Dear Chairman Creighton and honorable members of the Education Committee,

TLEEC is a collaborative of over 30 organizations and individuals with the mission to improve the quality of public education for all children, with a focus on racial equity. We advocate at the local, state and national levels for high-quality teaching, curriculum and instructional practices and bilingual education for emergent bilingual students, as well as fair funding and enhanced college access and success.

SB 1261 continues the requirement for schools to implement accelerated education plans for all students who underperform on state assessments. We encourage the committee to consider the excessive workload demands that these plans place on teachers and recommend giving school staff more flexibility and resources to ensure their students receive academic support that is responsive to their individual needs.

### **Respect Teacher Time**

A key recommendation from the Governor's Teacher Vacancy Task Force is to demonstrate respect for teacher time (TEA, 2023). A 2022 teacher survey conducted by TEA found that personal overload was the number one issue cited by Texas teachers who had recently left the profession, with many identifying the supplemental instruction requirement in particular as a reason for their departure (TEA, 2022; Wiley, 2022).

SB 1261 would continue to add extra burdens to teachers' already unsustainable workloads and communicate disrespect for teachers' professional expertise by prescribing uniform expectations for the provision of remediation. If we want to ensure all children have high-quality teachers staffing their classrooms, we need to stop adding new responsibilities to teachers' workload while doing nothing to increase their capacity to complete them. As Chairman Buckley of the House Public Education Committee once put it, for every additional thing we ask teachers to do, we should be taking two things away.

### **Challenges to Teacher Time**

Research has found that high-dosage, small group tutoring increases learning outcomes for students (Nickow, et al., 2020). Implemented correctly, tutoring works. But SB 1261 does not create the conditions necessary for tutoring to succeed. Instead, it adds yet another responsibility to teachers' plates while doing nothing to increase their capacity. This is a recipe for frustration and burnout.

At many schools, the number of students eligible for supplemental instruction exceeds the capacity of the school's existing instructional staff (Donaldson & Richman, 2022). Districts across the state have reported

shortages of consistent, qualified tutors (Farris, 2022), so the responsibility for tutoring often falls on classroom teachers. These teachers frequently must pull tutoring groups from a larger section of students who they also are tasked with supervising.

Additionally, teachers have to prepare for and compile documentation of tutoring sessions, further straining already limited planning time available for lesson preparation, grading and professional collaboration.

### **A One-Size-Fits-All Approach is Not Individualized Instruction**

SB 1261's charge to create accelerated education plans for all underperforming students does not account for individual differences in student needs. Regardless of the reason a student struggled on a state test, this bill continues to prescribe intensive academic remediation as a one-size-fits-all response (Latham Sikes & Piñón, 2022). For example, it provides no additional resources to address students' mental health needs, despite the fact we are currently in the midst of a national youth mental health crisis (AAP, 2022). Research establishes a significant relationship between students' socio-emotional well-being and academic achievement (Suldo, et al., 2014). A narrow focus on test preparation that neglects attention to students' other needs will only worsen their feelings of frustration and disengagement.

Additionally, though SB 1261 reduces the minimum requirement for supplemental instruction to 15 hours per student for each failed assessment, it continues to require an average of no less than 30 hours per student and maintains the 30-hour requirement for students who fail a state test for two or more consecutive years. As a result, schools will continue to be locked into a uniform and inflexible tutoring structure that limits their ability to adjust tutoring time to match student needs.

Finally, parents and guardians should be involved in the development of their children's accelerated education plans – not just receive a copy of the plan after it is written. Parents should be considered key partners in their children's education. They can provide valuable insights about why their children might have struggled and can share what types of academic and socio-emotional support they need the most.

### **Recommendations**

- Reduce educator workload by providing schools the resources and staff they need to implement supplemental instruction without disproportionately burdening teachers.
- Give schools greater flexibility to determine the type and amount of supplemental instruction each student needs to be successful. A small-group setting might work best for some students, but individual or large group settings might be more effective for others. Schools also should be able to adjust the number of tutoring hours students receive based on their identified needs and progress.
- Involve parents directly in the process of developing accelerated education plans so they can provide input for determining approaches that are best suited to their children's needs.

For questions, please contact TLEEC either through Dr. Chloe Latham Sikes at IDRA ([chloe.sikes@idra.org](mailto:chloe.sikes@idra.org)), or Jaime Puente at Every Texan ([puente@everytexan.org](mailto:puente@everytexan.org)).

*The Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition (TLEEC) is a collaborative of organizations and individuals with the mission to improve the quality of public education for all children, with a focus on racial equity. The coalition convenes organizations and individuals who advocate in the interest of public school students at the local, state and national levels.*

## TLEEC Member Organizations

ARISE Adelante	Mexican American School Boards Association (MASBA)
Austin Justice Coalition	National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS)
Breakthrough Central Texas	– Tejas Foco
Coalition of Texans with Disabilities (CTD)	San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Children at Risk	Texas American Federation of Teachers
Dr. Hector P. García G.I. Forum	Texas Association for Bilingual Education (TABE)
Easterseals Central Texas	Texas Association for Chicanos in Higher Education (TACHE)
Educators in Solidarity	Texas Association of Mexican American Chambers of
Ethnic Studies Network of Texas (ESNTX)	Commerce (TAMACC)
Every Texan	Texas Center for Education Policy, University of Texas – Austin
Houston Community Voices for Public Education	Texas Hispanics Organized for Political Education (HOPE)
IDRA (Intercultural Development Research Association)	Texas League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
Measure	Texas NAACP
McNeil Educational Foundation for Ecumenical Leadership	Texas State Teachers Association (TSTA)
Mexican American Civil Rights Institute (MACRI)	The Arc of Texas
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)	UnidosUS (formerly known as NCLR)

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