



March 14, 2023

To: House Public Education Committee

Re: **House Bill 1416**

Position: For

Chairman Buckley and honorable members of the House Public Education Committee,

The Commit Partnership and the 15 organizations undersigned thank you for the opportunity to provide written **testimony in support of House Bill 1416 in light of the effects of COVID-19 on PK-12 learning loss and best practices that exist to accelerate students' learning.**

I. THE UNPRECEDENTED NEED FOR LEARNING RECOVERY AND ACCELERATION

Since HB 4545's passage in the 87th Legislative Session, we learned the extent to which **our state's education system now requires maintained commitments to comprehensive, research-backed strategies to accelerate student instruction** after more than two years of pandemic-induced disrupted learning.

Statewide results from the 2022 administration of STAAR (see Appendix A) show that after facing a historic decades' worth loss of academic gains, students were largely able to recover and improve in Reading (in 2022 52% of students scored at Met Grade level or Above on STAAR grades 3-8 and English I & II, with only 47% and 43% reaching that threshold in 2019 and 2021 respectively). With Math, however, student performance recovered some in 2022 but still falls far short of pre-pandemic levels (this year 40% of students scored Met Grade Level or above in Grades 3-8 Math and Algebra 1, a 5% increase from 2021 but still a 10% percentage point gap below 2019 levels), and across all subjects, achievements gaps persist.¹

In light of these results and anemic pre-pandemic student performance, Texas still has far to go in achieving our student outcome goals. Given that **students who are behind tend to stay behind** (historically, only around 5% of students who are below grade level catch up within two years),² it is paramount that we intentionally support a strong, evidenced-based response that ensures Texas students get back on track.

Furthermore, without mitigating the COVID-induced learning loss there will be substantial economic impacts on Texas: research estimates significant declines in students' future earnings due to the lasting effect of lost academic skills for the COVID cohort.³ If left unaddressed, declines in student proficiency could result in 4.9% lower lifetime earnings accumulating in a 1.6% economic loss to Texas' GDP, or \$938.7 billion in present value.

**"History indicates that the economic losses will be permanent unless the schools get better. Just returning schools to their pre-pandemic performance levels will not erase the lost learning. Recovering from the pandemic requires swift and decisive improvements to the schools."
-Erik A. Hanushek (Hoover Institution)**

¹ 2022 STAAR Results Summary, July 2022, <https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/2022-staar-results-summary.pdf>.

² 2021 STAAR Results Summary, July 2021, <https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/covid/Overview-of-2021-STAAR-Results.pdf>.

³ Hoover Institution, January 2023, "The Economic Cost Of The Pandemic: Texas," https://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/research/docs/Texas_HESI_PaperSeries_template_Final.pdf.



II. TEXAS LEADS THE NATION WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF STATEWIDE TUTORING INTERVENTION

High-impact tutoring (HIT), or tutoring using quality materials in regular small groups, can positively impact the trajectory of students' learning with the potential to mitigate these statewide trends. This practice has been widely recognized by education and policymakers nationally as one of the primary strategies to recover and accelerate student learning. In particular, research consistently shows that high-impact tutoring is:

- More effective than other academic interventions with “increased achievement by roughly 3-15 months of learning across grade levels;”⁴
- One of the most effective interventions for economically disadvantaged students (one of the demographic groups impacted most by the pandemic);⁵
- Impactful even when scaled to large populations of students;⁶ and
- Cost-effective with about a “16:1 benefit-to-cost ratio for each dollar spent on small-group tutoring.”⁷

Supported by this strong evidence-base, we applaud the House Public Education Committee and the broader Legislature’s recognition that the severity of students’ disrupted learning and the generational risk of lost educational attainment must be matched with equally responsive academic interventions. Although schools across the country are using tutoring to support COVID recovery, in passing HB 4545 Texas was one of the first 10 states to enact statewide tutoring legislation and set the standard for student-centered recovery.⁸

Since HB 4545’s enactment, there have been early indicators that high-impact tutoring (in conjunction with other evidence-based strategies) remains a promising path for accelerating Texas students’ learning. Data from the Texas Education Agency (TEA), reveals that the number of 3rd-8th Grade students who caught up to “approaching” grade-level performance in Reading and Math between 2021 to 2022 was higher—by 13% and 3% respectively—than those who caught up to that level between 2018 to 2019.⁹

In 2022, there were around 2.2 million failed STAAR exams (all grades/all subjects), which required students to receive supplemental accelerated instruction due to HB 4545 in the current 2022-23 school year. Of those, approximately 1.5 million were in Reading and Math in grades 3-9.¹⁰

III. THE PATH FORWARD: STAYING THE COURSE WITH PRINCIPLES OF HIGH-IMPACT TUTORING TO IMPROVE STUDENT OUTCOMES

Lessons learned from HB 4545's initial implementation underscore the need to **leverage data-driven acceleration strategies and also improve policy to better reflect current school system constraints**, as this

⁴ “The transformative potential of tutoring for PreK-12 learning outcomes: Lessons from randomized evaluations,” Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab, https://www.povertyactionlab.org/sites/default/files/publication/Evidence-Review_The-Transformative-Potential-of-Tutoring.pdf

⁵ Dietrichson, Jens & Bøg, Martin & Filges, Trine & Jørgensen, Anne-Marie. (2017). Academic Interventions for Elementary and Middle School Students With Low Socioeconomic Status: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 87(2), 243–282. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654316687036>

⁶ Ibid.; Nickow, Andre Joshua, Philip Oreopoulos, and Vincent Quan. (2020). The Impressive Effects of Tutoring on PreK-12 Learning: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of the Experimental Evidence. (EdWorkingPaper: 20-267). <https://edworkingpapers.com/sites/default/files/ai20-267.pdf>

⁷ Washington State Institute for Public Policy. (2019). <https://www.wsipp.wa.gov/BenefitCost/Program/352>

⁸ “Low Down on High Impact Tutoring,” Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and EdSolutions. https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1aWJAWmBrng8LeLvmATAaauTIJ47MkPWD/edit#slide=id.g120a431c3a4_0_20

⁹ TEA, February 2023, “State of Education and the 88th Legislature.”

¹⁰ TEA, 2022, STAAR Aggregate Reports.

Committee discussed during interim hearings.¹¹ Now as the Committee evaluates how to adjust the policy this Session, **we are supportive of HB 1416’s intent to stay the course with what we know works for improving student outcomes, while recognizing school system flexibility in other aspects:**

- HB 1416’s maintenance of small group tutoring ratios of no more than four students per tutor is critical to catching students up and sustaining academic gains. This is because not all tutoring is *high-impact tutoring* and the research is clear that **the specific ratio of students to tutors matters**. TEA’s High Impact Tutoring Toolkit mirrors national research and states that tutors are most effective when instructing three or four students simultaneously.¹² Small group instruction that exceeds these ratios, especially for younger students, is far less valuable since its capacity for personalized instruction is diminished, and its need for higher tutor expertise is increased. The facts on the ground from implementation the past few years are also clear: school systems do not currently have the capacity for their teacher workforce alone to tutor at scale. Instead, they must deploy a hybrid approach by leveraging a diverse, non-teacher tutor pool. This further underscores the need for a low student-to-tutor ratio to ensure that tutoring experiences with volunteers are as effective and supportive as possible for accelerating students’ learning. Ultimately, **increasing the ratio from 3:1 as enacted in HB 4545 (87R) to 4:1 in HB 1416 (while allowing for parent waivers as is currently permitted) will allow school systems to more readily meet the requirement while maintaining a strong return on our investment.**
- HB 1416 also proposes meaningful changes to better support district implementation by **narrowing the scope to Reading and Math in Grades 3-9** (these are foundational years and subjects on which others are built and should be prioritized in academic support strategies), **providing flexibility in required tutoring hours based on academic readiness** (requiring no less than 15 hours of accelerated instruction per failed test and more for those students who performed far below grade-level), and **lessening some administrative burden.**

As the Committee discusses HB 1416 and modifications to HB 4545, we respectfully ask for the following considerations to be taken into account in strengthening Texas’ path forward with high-impact tutoring:

- **Better parent communication and engagement in getting students on grade level**—currently the majority of parents are unaware of their students’ academic performance in relation to grade-level standards (43% of parents in the U.S. think their child did not have any learning loss during the pandemic¹³ and 9 out of 10 parents believe that their child is at/above grade level).¹⁴ Rather than removing Accelerated Learning Committees altogether with no replacement, parental engagement should be encouraged by sharing Accelerated Education Plans via multiple modalities (e.g., in print, digitally, verbally, etc.) with families after the first year of a students’ unsatisfactory performance and requiring parent-teacher conferences after failures in key grades (3rd & 8th Grades).

¹¹ House Committee on Public Education, December 2022, “Interim Report to the 88th Texas Legislature,” <https://house.texas.gov/media/pdf/committees/reports/87interim/Public-Education-Committee-Interim-Report-2022.pdf>

¹² “High Impact Tutoring Toolkit,” TEA, https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/high_impact_tutoring_toolkit.pdf; “Accelerating Student Learning with High-Dosage Tutoring,” Ed Research for Recovery, https://annenberg.brown.edu/sites/default/files/EdResearch_for_Recovery_Design_Principles_1.pdf

¹³ Education Next, 2022, “Program on Education Policy and Governance –Survey 2022

Parent Responses,” <http://www.educationnext.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2022ednextpollparentsurvey.pdf>

¹⁴ Learning Heroes, June 2022, “Hidden in Plain Sight,” <https://bealearninghero.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Parents22-Research-Deck-1.pdf>.

- **Continued investment in this intervention and effective data collection to evaluate progress**—HB 4545’s funding for mandated accelerated instruction will expire once federal COVID relief funds expire over the next few years.¹⁵ The Committee should determine which resources are needed and which funding mechanism will be utilized to continue providing this transformative intervention to all academically behind students. With increased investment, however, it is essential that **robust data collection** is required so that the best practices can be identified and scaled, and lessen the risk of the state funding poor and ineffective implementation of high-impact tutoring.

By continuing to invest in high-impact tutoring with evidenced-backed ratios while simultaneously providing increased opportunities for flexibility, more Texas school systems can implement tutoring with fidelity.

Gratefully,
Kate Greer
Policy & State Coalition, Managing Director
The Commit Partnership

Additional Supporters:



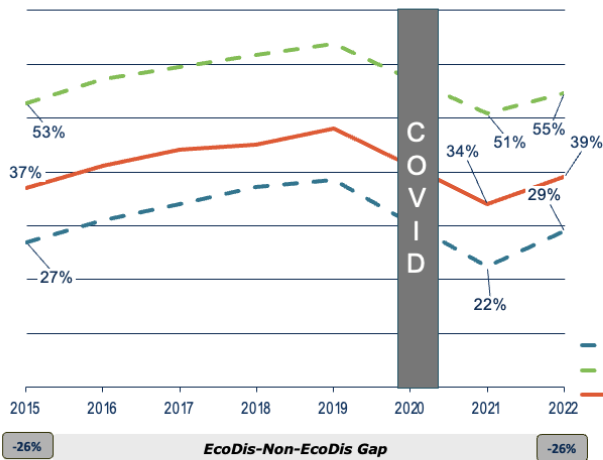
¹⁵ This Edunomics dashboard reflects LEA data on ESSER funding reported to TEA as of 12/6/22:
https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/edunomicslab/viz/TXTotalESSERSummary/Texas_Summary.

APPENDIX A

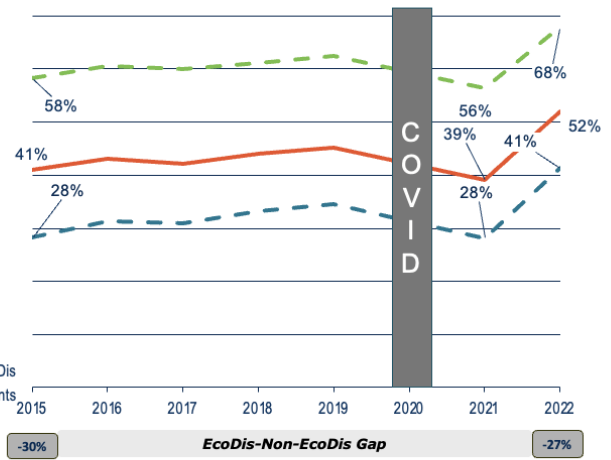
Key Academic Performance Remains Significantly Low with Persistent Achievement Gaps

STAAR % Meets, 2015-2022

STAAR 3rd – 8th Grade Math



STAAR 3rd – 8th Grade Reading



Source: TEA, STAAR Aggregate Reports, Years 2015-2022