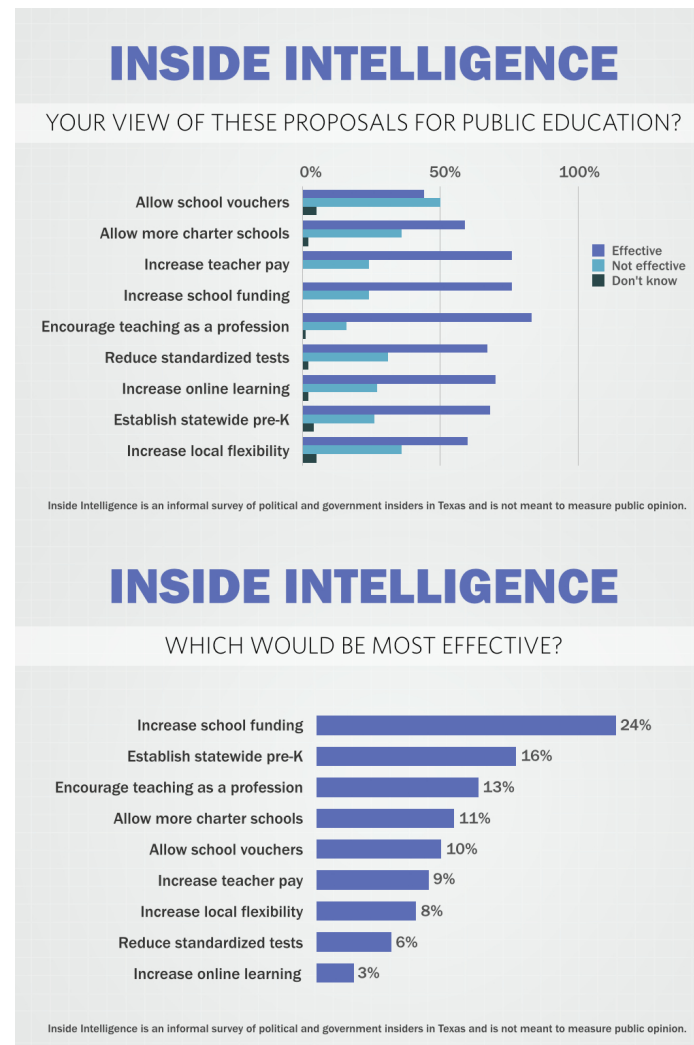


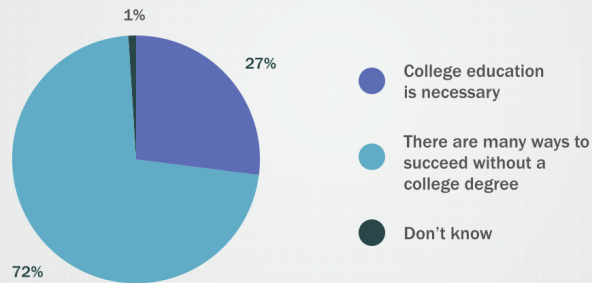
INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

*The Texas Weekly/Texas Tribune insider poll
for the week of 20 June 2014*



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IN ORDER TO SUCCEED...



Inside Intelligence is an informal survey of political and government insiders in Texas and is not meant to measure public opinion.

Below is a list of proposals for improving the K-12 education system in Texas. For each proposal, please tell us whether you think it would be extremely effective, somewhat effective, not very effective, or not at all effective in improving the quality of K-12 education in Texas.

- "As with most things, the devil is in the details. With regard to incentives, are we talking about encouraging more education majors (ineffective), or encouraging mid-career and retired professionals to enter the classroom which would bring in real-world experience (much more effective)?"

- "Can we define 'effective' and for whom will these changes might be effective--the State, the local community(ies), the school district, higher ed schools?"

- "Teachers should TEACH! It is imperative that students learn reading, math, language arts and have science. It is RIDICULOUS that everything - each lesson, each unit is dedicated to passing a TEST! Companies such as Pearson have made the legislature believe (through the hiring of so many former legislators and TEA personnel) that ONLY testing will help us determine the success our students. Go back to the Iowa Test of Basic Skills or the California Achievement test (yes I

realize Texas wants its OWN test, but STAR, TAKS etc. are NOT working). Community colleges in Texas are offering more REMEDIAL classes now than EVER before and why? Because students did NOT learn the basic skills they needed - fundamentals of English, math and science. Further - we don't teach students how to write in CURSIVE? We have generations of students who will not be able to SIGN their names unless their parents teach them? Go back to writing paper and teach students the BASIC skills! Every student is NOT going to college - please allow students to determine College Prep, Basic and Fundamentals/VOtech for their high school degree program! (Wow - sorry for all this)"

- "Texas' public education system should be like any other business. It should be well funded to hire the best people and get the best equipment. And like other businesses, it should also be able to fire employees at will if they're ineffective. Perhaps it needs a citizens IPO to get the funding."

- "Reducing the number of standardized tests students take is volatile. The system is set up to punish districts for the lowest performing school group. However, it doesn't take into account the impact of poverty and other factors that impact a student's ability to learn. As a result districts spend way too much time out of fear prepping for these exams. It will probably only get worse once a teacher's evaluation is tied to student test performance. On the other hand, the state and school districts need data on whether students are mastering the TEKS. Texas must also meet federal testing requirements. Erasing too many tests could put us in conflict

with federal law. Good luck suing the government if that happens. Texas will lose billions."

- "Are those all the options? 'Cause that is a depressing list."

- "It will take all of these items to make the public schools better."

- "We need to improve the skill of those we put in front of our children first and foremost. That does not mean across the board salary increases for all teachers but differentiated salaries dependent upon area of certification and, to some degree, performance. We are kidding ourselves when we say we can do this without investing more; sounds good, but reasonable minds know it is only rhetoric."

- "There is no better indicator for educational success than early childhood education."

- "Teacher unions have long insisted that the 'pay for performance' programs are insulting to teachers as it implies teachers are holding back skill or passion in their jobs as a result of money. As I take them at face value, increased pay for public school teachers won't make a better education system, just a better paid teacher. There might be merit in that, but it won't be seen in student educational attainment."

- "Money to public schools, nothing for charters or vouchers. Either we are educating all of the public, or we are short changing the public by giving taxes to religious and/or political groups despite the federal constitution."

- "Educational success is more a function of family and neighborhood structure and income than of governmental efforts. You can't push a rope. Correction: you CAN push a rope, and really hard. It just won't move anything."

- "Decreasing the number of administrators = very effective ... increasing the number of classroom teachers = very effective"

- "Definitions are important - what do you mean by 'vouchers'? Limited to just public schools, including secular private schools, all private and public schools? And what sorts of requirements would be attached? All of those things will determine whether or not any particular program is effective."

- "You didn't ask about 1. Principal autonomy, 1. Adopting merit based instead of tenure-based hiring and termination policies for teachers, 3. Cutting down on Administration staff and costs in Districts, 4. Longer school

days, 5. Longer school year, 7. Vigorous curriculums and high expectations for all students, 6. Overcoming teachers unions. Until these things are done, most of the proposals mentioned in your questionnaire will not work."

- "Note that we simply do not know about the effectiveness of Pre-K. We know the initial impact is positive, but we don't know if it holds into 3rd grade. Pre-K is the flavor of the month, but we don't have the data we would need to divert much needed resources from K-12 in favor of Pre-K."

- "If you want to see 1000 local school boards as loaded with nut jobs as the SBOE, then 'allow more localized control over curriculum and standards.'"

- "It's not just about pre-k, it's about quality pre-k. Greg Abbott's pre-k plan will be diluted by big pre-k class sizes. Quality starts with manageable classes."

Which of the following do you think would be MOST effective in improving the K-12 education system in Texas?

- "People choose to raise their families in communities that are aligned with their values. They should have that same choice when it comes to educating their children."

- "Throwing money at the problem won't automatically make it better (whether for brick and mortar projects or for teacher pay). What will make it better is parental involvement--period. The suburban schools are doing fine. Rurals are generally ok.

Urban and border schools are a mixed bag and need the most help--let's focus on helping them and not Highland Park ISD."

- "Increased funding allows for other options like increasing incentives, statewide pre-k, etc."

- "There are several including Pre-K and better pay for teachers. However adequately funding the system will start Texas toward all those goals"

- "Create bonus opportunities for teachers"

- "None of the above."

- "Bring back critical thinking - bring it back!!!!"

- "Research, not withstanding ridiculous assertions to the contrary, is pretty conclusive. Early intervention as brain synapses develop result in future cost avoidance. Should be a strong conservative position."

- "Competition is nice"

- "You can always do more with money than you can without money."

- "Getting poor kids out of deplorable conditions at home, such as with pre-K, for more hours a day might give them a better start."

- "Superintendents always tell us if they get more money, our kids will jump to the top of every ranking. If we give them more money, what will they choose to whine about instead?"

- "Uncap the limits on charter schools. Meanwhile, allow any school that is currently private but is willing to fall

under the 'charter school' rules and regulations to become a charter."

- "Money does make a difference, but increased funding should be targeted to where the greatest needs are. For example, in the current system lower-funded districts actually have the highest tax rates. Why should parents and other taxpayers be required to pay at higher rates to get less for their children?"

- "There is no one thing that would be 'most effective' in improving K-12 education. What is needed is a change from the culture of failure and low expectations to a culture of success and high expectations. To reach that goal, we know there are some things that won't work -- more funding for public education -- which really means continued funding of failing schools and increasing teacher pay, if it means, as it usually does, increasing pay for teachers whether they are successful or not. If we have to pick from your list, it is probably charters would be most effective because they are virtually the only place in Texas education where there is innovation and transparency --"

- "If it is a quality program and we can get children to go regularly"

Do you think that a college education is necessary for a person to be successful in today's work world, or do you think that there are many ways to succeed in today's work world without a college education?

- "There are many ways to succeed but the college education has become the starting point for most jobs that pay above minimum wage. Technical certification certainly helps."

- "If anything, we overemphasize a 4-year degree when we should be emphasizing workforce readiness when kids finish school, at whatever level that happens to be."

- "The world needs ditch diggers, too" Judge Smails. Not everyone "needs" to go to college. There are plenty of good-paying jobs out there that do not require a 4-year degree. A two-year degree or trade school certificate works just as well. The problem is the stigma attached to those jobs by most Texas parents--raise your hand if you want your own child to work in a chemical plant or as a truck driver?"

- "We need true vocational education again - auto mechanics, drafting, computer tech; construction trades. Every student is NOT going to college (especially when so many cannot read very simple books or complete simple math problems!)."

- "Probably would have said other ways to succeed without a college degree not 'many' ways"

- "Ask the college grad living with their parents with 50K in loans with their degree in English, or the kid that chose that makes 100K a year as a tradesman."

- "If the measure of success is how much one is paid, then the average starting salary of a public school teacher, about \$35,000, doesn't seem like much of a reward for obtaining a college education as far as I am concerned."

- "Advice to HS students: yes, it is possible to succeed without it, but don't pass up a college degree if it is an option for you."

- "I may be one of the few who does not believe that the whole world should go to college, but I don't. I have clients that need good mechanics - mechanics that may make in the 6

figures. It doesn't require a college degree but specialized training. Same is true for air conditioning, plumbing and much more. If everyone goes to college, who will make the repairs. Demographics indicate that only 25% of the population has a college degree. Clearly, not everyone is getting one."

- "There are public and private trade schools that can provide certificates of completion that lead to great jobs in various industries."

- "It's all about learning how to think."

- "Just ask Gates, Zuckerberg, Ellison, Dell, Lebron James (tee hee), etc..."

- "I know people who make much more than me with my fancy-shmancy degrees."

- "There are many ways to succeed without a college degree. However, chances for a good career (not a job) are immeasurably better with a college degree. Plus. You're less likely of ever having to utter the question: 'Would you like fries with that?' And again I ask: why did the 'not everyone needs to go to college' push start when our student population became mostly Hispanic?"

- "As the knowledge economy becomes international, and disparities in manufacturing costs decrease from one country to another, the old blue collar job can make a comeback here."

- "As unfortunate as it is!!!"

- "Having a college degree can be illustrative of (1) an individual's level of education, and/or (2) an individual's ability to finish what

he/she starts. That said, I don't think a degree is indicative of a person's ability to succeed."

- "Your question is very poorly worded. By not defining 'college,' you have actually made the question meaningless. Indeed you either are unmindful of the distinctions, or you're trying to drive a certain answer. Either way, bad on you! If, by 'college' you mean - do most students need a diploma from a 4 year institution, the answer is no. But, if you mean - do most students need some postsecondary education, including a credential from a community or technical or 4-year college to get a good job, the answer is indisputably, yes! I don't want personally to attack the person who wrote the language for the question, but, be honest, is he or she Tom Pauken?"

- "Lots of college-degree'd Starbucks servers this morning..."

- "I guess it depends on your definition of success. But, there is no doubt; it is the clearest path to success."

- "There are many ways to succeed without a college degree, as you say, but there are far many more ways to fail without a degree. Would you run the risk with your child? I would not with mine."

- "Oil & gas jobs have taught us that specialized career education can lead to high paying jobs."

- "Some college is essential for most young people"

- "Too much emphasis on higher ed degrees has led to the infamous 'dumbing down' to provide opportunities for all."

Our thanks to this week's participants: Gene Acuna, Cathie Adams, Brandon Aghamalian, Jenny Aghamalian, Brandon Alderete, Clyde Alexander, George Allen, Jay Arnold, Charles Bailey, Allen Blakemore, Tom Blanton, George Bristol, Chris Britton, Blaine Bull, David Cabrales, Thure Cannon, Snapper Carr, William Chapman, Elna Christopher, Kevin Cooper, Randy Cubriel, Curtis Culwell, Denise Davis, Hector De Leon, June Deadrick, Glenn Deshields, Holly DeShields, Tom Duffy, David Dunn, Richard Dyer, Jeff Eller, Jack Erskine, Wil Galloway, Norman Garza, Dominic Giarratani, Bruce Gibson, Stephanie Gibson, Kinnan Golemon, Daniel Gonzalez, Jim Grace, John Greytok, Clint Hackney, Wayne Hamilton, Ken Hodges, Deborah Ingersoll, Bill Jones, Mark Jones, Robert Kepple, Richard Khouri, Tom Kleinworth, Sandy Kress, Nick Lampson, Pete Laney, Dick Lavine, James LeBas, Luke Legate, Leslie Lemon, Ruben Longoria, Matt Mackowiak, Jason McElvaney, Steve Minick, Mike Moses, Keir Murray, Nelson Nease, Keats Norfleet, Pat Nugent, Nef Partida, Gardner Pate, Jerod Patterson, Robert Peeler, Tom Phillips, Wayne Pierce, Richard Pineda, Kraege Polan, Jay Pritchard, Ted Melina Raab, Tyler Ruud, Jason Sabo, Luis Saenz, Andy Sansom, Jim Sartwelle, Barbara Schlieff, Stan Schlueter, Bruce Scott, Robert Scott, Ben Sebree, Bradford Shields, Christopher Shields, Julie Shields, Nancy Sims, Ed Small, Martha Smiley, Dennis Speight, Bob Strauser, Colin Strother, Michael

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