



# To protect the best interests of students, strict limits should remain on virtual schools

Educators recognize that virtual schools were necessary to prioritize the health and safety of Texas students, teachers and communities during the COVID-19 pandemic, but experts agree that there is no substitute for in-person learning.

## **Full-time virtual learning is not in the best interest of students:**

- Full-time virtual schools are much less likely to achieve acceptable state performance ratings. Only about half of the district-operated virtual schools are rated acceptable. Just 40 percent of charter-operated virtual schools and only 29 percent of for-profit virtual schools achieved acceptable performance ratings.
- Across all grades and subjects, students who attend online schools perform worse on state tests. Academic gains for students in full-time virtual schools are equivalent to six months' less learning in math and more than two months less in reading.

## **TSTA supports virtual learning that is temporary or supplemental to in-person learning.**

- We support ensuring access to high quality supplemental courses for students who might otherwise not have access to harder-to-staff subjects, such as advanced sciences, which is sometimes true in small districts.
- We support increasing hybrid flexibilities for districts to implement apprenticeship opportunities for career and technical programs.
- We support universal access to remote learning during emergencies.

## **TSTA will continue to advocate for student protections in virtual school legislation.**

- We will work to restrict virtual instruction to only high-performing school districts and to establish age and academic pre-requisites for full-time virtual students.
- We will work to ensure teachers have input in student eligibility determinations.
- We will work to require geographic boundaries ensuring virtual schools can provide in-person enrichment and special education services.

TSTA supports some of the recommendations of the Texas Commission on Virtual Education, but we oppose expanding full-time virtual instruction beyond the Texas Virtual School Network or the limits set by the Legislature in Senate Bill 15 in 2021.

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