



Strengthening Texas Education

Today, Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison Unveiled Her Priorities For The Future Of Texas Education. Her plan will help develop the 21st century classroom, with new e-Learning devices and an electronically accessible curriculum. It will help steer our best and brightest to the teaching profession. It will stem the tide of school dropouts and prepare students for the 21st century workforce by encouraging all students to graduate from high school and go on to university or, at a minimum, earn community college or career college credit towards a marketable skill or trade during their high school years. It will encourage all schools to implement the practices of the most efficient Texas schools, to protect Texas taxpayers while spurring necessary reforms. It will restore local control to schools and school districts so that they can do what is best for our children with the least interference from state regulation. Senator Hutchison is deeply committed to making sure our students enter the Texas workforce with the skills necessary for another century of economic achievement. Education is the most valuable economic investment of all.

Create 21st Century Classrooms: Texas has long been at the forefront of innovation. Senator Hutchison will lead Texas to develop the classroom of the 21st century.

- **New Learning Devices.** We should use the Texas edge in high-technology to devise new technologies and new formats for the 21st century classroom. Senator Hutchison will leverage the private market to develop a hybrid e-Learning device especially tailored for students. Somewhere between a laptop computer and e-readers like the Amazon Kindle and the Barnes & Noble Nook, the ideal device will be something that every student can use for school and which will be cheap enough to mass produce and distribute, small enough to carry around in a backpack, and versatile enough to teach our students, track their performance, and enhance their creativity. Texas helped to invent our high-tech future. Now it's time for Texas high-tech to help invent the future of education.
- **E-Learning Curriculum.** Senator Hutchison will develop an e-Learning curriculum and use e-Learning to individualize instruction and track students better. With revolutionary computer technology at our disposal, we can greatly advance classroom instruction delivery. All schools would then have access to the latest e-Learning curricula, and they would have access to a statewide technology repository where approved curricula are evaluated, tested, and offered for purchase and distribution at statewide negotiated prices. Schools and school districts will be able to calibrate approved instructional materials to the needs of the students they know best, in accordance with TEKS, the State Board of Education, and the Commissioner of Education. Children all across the state should have the latest technology regardless of local resources – and access to a richer, broader, and deeper wealth of curriculum.

Elevate The Teaching Profession: Prominent studies show that virtually nothing makes as much of a difference in the academic success of children as the quality of their teachers. Senator Hutchison's plan will attract our most talented graduates to the teaching profession.

- **Teach Our Teachers Well.** Building on the flexible certification pathways of programs such as Teach for Texas and Teach for America, we will attract the best-performing college graduates to the teaching profession. The need for high quality teachers is particularly urgent in the STEM subjects, which according to the National Academies are critical to our economic future. Today nearly half of all high school students are taught science by a teacher who did not major in the subject. That has to change. We must find ways to convince the most talented graduates of the most rigorous academic programs to play the role of outstanding teacher in our children's lives.

- We need every college and university in Texas to offer some version of the “UTeach” program to those students who major in the STEM subjects. And students need the opportunity to get their teaching certificate through elective classes, so that they will be eligible and ready to teach upon graduation.
- **Enhanced Benefits.** Teachers who opt out of TRS Active Care should be able to use the foregone benefit in a cafeteria plan for childcare, 529 plans, or retirement benefits.
- **Reduce Restrictive Rules.** School districts should have the flexibility to attract and retain the best teachers. School districts need funding with fewer strings attached that limit their ability to create the best classrooms with the resources available. We will return decision-making and the capacity for leadership in education to the local level. Principals and teachers understand the needs of the students they see day-in and day-out far better than any bureaucrat setting state and federal mandates hundreds of miles away.

Stress Skills For The 21st Century Workforce And Reduce Dropouts: According to a report by the Dallas Federal Reserve Bank, if current trends continue, more than 30 percent of Texas adults will have less than a high school education by 2040, up from 19 percent less than ten years ago. We cannot allow that to happen. If we let the education level of our workforce fall, its skill level will fall, family income will fall, the tax base will shrink, and Texas will lose its ability to compete in the world economy. We will meet the challenge of the dropout crisis and make sure that we are shaping our education system around the needs of tomorrow's workforce. The Texas economy is currently the major passive stakeholder in our education system. It must become a major *active* stakeholder in it, taking an active role in informing our choices in shaping curriculum. We know that the 21st century economy will require a workforce that is more highly-skilled and well-educated. That's why Senator Hutchison's plan will aim to increase both the number of students graduating from high school *and* the number going on to complete one or two years of postsecondary education. New programs that give high school students the chance to start earning college credit and developing advanced technical skills while still in high school have proven their promise. Such programs reduce dropouts and create powerful incentives to stay in school and acquire the skills that will give them good jobs to support their families. As governor Hutchison will support and expand them.

- **Early Detection And Intervention.** The latest technology permits much more effective longitudinal tracking of individual students, making it much easier to identify those most at risk of eventually dropping out of school. Research has shown that most future dropouts can be identified years beforehand on the basis of statistical factors such as low attendance and poor grades in English and math. We will explore different predictive tools and design intervention strategies to ensure that we start to help at-risk students as soon as they start to fall behind—or even before.
- **Accelerated Middle Schools.** National data suggest that the problem of high school dropouts begins as early as middle school. Students who fail to start and complete 9th grade with their peers are particularly at risk of eventually dropping out. Senator Hutchison's administration will propose an Accelerated Middle Schools initiative to help middle school students who are behind grade level “catch up” by covering core academic curriculum at an accelerated pace. By focusing on core subjects necessary for graduation, students one or two years behind grade level will be able to catch up to their peers and stay on track. Individualized e-Learning tools can be particularly helpful. Because such tools can calibrate instruction to each student's attainment in each subject, students can build on what they have already learned, rather than having to repeat a year's worth of material in areas they may already have mastered. Using weekend and summer hours, these innovative programs have shown enormous promise. For example, Cypress-Fairbanks ISD has an innovative accelerated middle school program in which 60 of 65 students who had been held back in 7th grade one or more times were able to start 9th grade on time, thus dramatically increasing their probability of eventually graduating.
- **Dropout Recovery.** Many children who drop out want to continue their education, but may feel overwhelmed by family and other responsibilities. When kids do drop out of school, we must do everything possible to bring them back in. Senator Hutchison will support the development and expansion of effective dropout recovery programs in all school districts. Early models have already made a difference in many lives. Since opening less than two years ago, the

Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD's College Career, and Technology Academy has helped hundreds of drop-outs under the age of 25 earn a high school degree. The key is to provide a flexible schedule that allows students to mix job and family responsibilities with school, and an atmosphere that fosters academic achievement.

- **Flexible School-Jobs Balance.** Today's at-risk youth face family and job pressures to an unprecedented degree. Many at-risk high school students want to continue their education, but feel the need to attend to what they believe are more immediate responsibilities. Senator Hutchison's plan would help school districts offer greater flexibility in scheduling instruction, including for instruction through individualized e-Learning. School districts have started to offer online learning environments where students can pursue both a high school degree and college credit, at times beyond the traditional classroom hours. Such programs have the potential for changing thousands of lives and making the future of Texas brighter for all of us. The Hutchison administration will support their continued development and expansion.
- **Innovative School Design.** Across the country, innovative school concepts have proven that improvement is always possible. Across the country and across Texas, dual-enrollment, dual-degree, and other early college high school programs have shown the promise of creating partnerships between high schools, community colleges, and the private sector.
 - **Open Enrollment Charter Schools:** Texas currently has just over 200 hundred charter schools serving more than 113,000 students. Among the most outstanding examples are: the KIPP Academies, which started in Houston and have spread throughout the country; Uplift Education in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, including the nationally acclaimed North Hills Preparatory School in Irving and YES College Preparatory Schools in Houston. These schools show that when you bring together motivated teachers and motivated students in a nurturing environment, any disadvantage can be overcome. The Hutchison administration will both support the continued development of these schools and the adoption of their best practices by all Texas public schools.
 - **Early College High Schools:** From the handful of early college high schools that opened in 2002, the movement has grown by leaps and bounds, and there are now some 200 early college high schools across the country. In Texas there are now more than 40 such high schools, but many more are needed for a state with 1.2 million high school students, and one of the highest dropout rates in the nation. These schools are developed by public-private partnerships, often with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and can be located either on community college campuses or within high schools. Senator Hutchison will vigorously support their expansion.
- **Addressing Workforce Needs Through Public-Private Partnerships.** Those high school students thinking about entering the workforce sooner rather than later should have much more support than they have today. The Hutchison administration will encourage school districts and high schools to develop partnerships with community and technical colleges, shared-time technology centers, and employers. One promising example is a proposal by State Representative Jim Keffer for a pilot grant program to support public-private partnerships in providing greater access to career and technical education, and commercially valuable certifications, in rural areas. We should create opportunities for students to take specialized, occupation-specific courses in high school and begin to earn recognized employer credentials and enrollment in postsecondary programs in the very years at which they are most at risk for dropping out. Senator Hutchison's administration will make the Texas economy a major *active* stakeholder by engaging local businesses and leveraging their resources and input. Hutchison will foment the development of web-based clearinghouses for local job postings and try to standardize the most common skills requirements so decisions on how to design technical training curriculum can be more rationally driven by actual market demand.

Use "Pathfinder Districts" As Models Of Student Success And Financial Efficiency: It is important to reward success. But too often in our schools, poor performance and inefficient use of resources go hand in hand. The Hutchison administration will designate the best-performing school districts as "Pathfinder Districts." They will serve as models for how to achieve greater academic success while creating economic efficiencies.

- **Comprehensive Reforms.** Recent studies look at the school districts with the best student performance at the lowest cost and contrast their efforts against school that are struggling to achieve, despite comparable student populations and resource levels. The research suggests that encouraging the low-performing school to adopt the staffing models and other best practices of the more efficient districts could result in massive savings – often in the millions of dollars – as well as improve student performance. Study of such best practices has led school districts to save substantial sums. Implementing these reforms across the state’s largest districts could lead to millions in savings for Texas taxpayers. We will support comprehensive reforms across the spectrum of best practices, from management and teacher recruitment/retention to the use of instructional materials and classroom aids.
- **Repurposing Funds.** By adopting Pathfinder programs and methods that have achieved savings or increased student achievements we can save millions, savings which can be repurposed within the educational system. This will permit greater investment in the reordered priorities of Kay Bailey Hutchison’s program for transforming Texas education.

P.O. Box 130 • Austin, TX 78767 • www.TexansForKay.com
Political ad paid for by Texans for Kay Bailey Hutchison, Allan Shivers, Jr., Treasurer