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## Texas public schools are doing better than 92% of the states in the nation in graduation rates, ranking 4th overall! Why is it so important to get students across the finish line?

**TEXAS GRADUATION RATES ARE** 

**WORTH CELEBRATING!** 

Data indicates that students who drop out of high school are more likely to live a life of periodic unemployment, have a higher rate of using government assistance, cycle in and out of the prison system, and have a lower income potential than students who obtain a high

school diploma. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, high school graduates earn nearly \$10,000 more per year than dropouts.

Educators in Texas continue to excel with regard to graduation rates, consistently outperforming the national average. In fact, when you break down the graduation rate by sub-populations, Texas is in the top four in several categories: 2nd among Asian students, 3rd among Hispanic students, 4th among Black students, 3rd among White students, and 4th among Economically

Disadvantaged students.

GRADUATION RATES BY STATE
CLASS OF 2021

Class of 2021

Rank

West Virginia

Alabama

2nd

90.7

Florida

3rd

90.2

Iowa

See the full chart here.

 Massachusetts
 5th

 Virginia
 5th

 Connecticut
 6th

 Wisconsin
 6th

**Texas** 

4th

90.0

89.6

New Jersey 9th 88.5 Arkansas 10th 88.4 10th 88.4 Mississippi 88.2 Indiana 11th Utah 12th 88.1 Kansas 13th Nebraska Maryland FRIENDS Source: eddataexpress.ed.gov

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FOUNDERS MESSAGE

Dear Friends We are going on record. As lifelong Republicans.

Some Republican politicians are destroying our neighborhood public schools in the name of scoring political points.

Simple as that.

These Republicans are robbing local taxpayers to pad the state budget. They demonize educators and elected school board trustees to undermine community confidence in their schools. They aggressively promote voucher schemes so they and their big donors can profit from the billions of taxpayer dollars collected to fund our neighborhood ISDs.

## Public education, more specifically our neighborhood independent school districts, are the bedrock upon which all success in Texas is built. Without a strong system of free public schools serving the

public good and funded collectively by every Texan, whether they have children enrolled in them or not, our state and nation cannot thrive.

Those who support these school vouchers either do not understand them and their significant, destructive consequences, or they do. Vouchers will be the end of our Texas Public Schools.

Voucher schemes are also known as school choice, education freedom, education savings accounts, scholarships, and many more euphemisms.

Many rational Republican legislators are opposed to school vouchers and the politicization of our public schools. To them,

we say thank you for your wisdom, discernment, and honorable public service.

Vouchers won't rescue underprivileged students from failing schools as they claim, of which there are very few. Republicans have done a stellar job at making Texans believe their schools are failing. They are performing quite well, actually. The Texas high school graduation rate for the Class of 2021 reached 90%, the 4th highest in the nation. Read more at <a href="https://www.fotps.org">www.fotps.org</a>.

Vouchers won't be enough to cover private school tuition.

Private schools will only accept vouchers from the highest performing students, rejecting underprivileged students and any with special needs.

Vouchers will be tuition coupons for all those students already in private schools.

Vouchers will reduce funding available for neighborhood ISDs.

Vouchers will segregate students, expanding the gap between haves and have-nots.

Vouchers will be abused by some who would choose to homeschool in order to pocket that money while their children get no education at all.

Opportunists will open private schools seemingly overnight,

accept taxpayer-funded voucher students, and provide a crappy education to maximize profits.

Ironically, vouchers are anything but conservative. They are nostrings-attached gifts of public funds. Gifting of public funds is currently illegal.

Most of all, vouchers are a threat to the religious freedoms Republicans claim to hold so dearly. Vouchers force ALL taxpayers to subsidize religious education and services regardless of their own religious beliefs.

There are many religious schools, including Christian, Jewish and Islamic institutions, that would receive voucher subsidies from taxpayers who do not share the religious beliefs taught in those schools. Religious schools, by definition, teach the tenets of their particular faiths. Taxpayers shouldn't be forced to subsidize

religious teachings that conflict with their own beliefs.

Public schools, mandated by our state constitution, serve the public good. Tax dollars are collected to fund that public good, not the individual's good. Tax dollars should not follow the student, as good as that sounds in a Republican campaign speech.

Let's push back on this voucher nonsense. Let our politicians know how much Texans revere, respect, and value our neighborhood public schools.

Together,
Leslie & Scott Milder

P.S. Although some good people are working in them, Charter schools are the leading form of vouchers. They are for-profit public schools, with many charter school owners profiting handsomely.

P.P.S. ISDs in Texas consistently outperform Charter schools. Charter schools operate with less academic success and less accountability.

P.P.P.S. Although Republicans and Democrats are responsible for the establishment and expansion of charter schools, there is nothing conservative about creating a duplication of public services, especially an inferior one. It's much more cost-effective and conservative to just fix the 5 percent of schools that are struggling.

P.P.P.S. Charter schools are corporate education with controlling boards often located in other states or countries.

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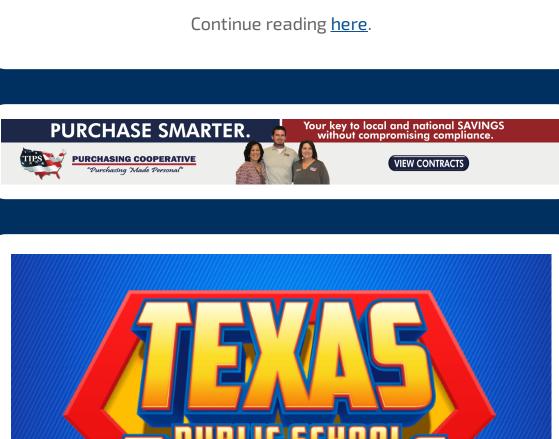


but with a tenuous connection to student learning. In others, administrators own the school facilities and have collected millions from charging rent to the same schools they run.

In Houston, Fernando Donatti, the superintendent and founder of Diversity, Roots and Wings Academy, or DRAW, owns or controls four facilities used by the school, allowing him to bill millions to schools he oversees. DRAW's most recent financial report shows signed lease agreements to pay Donatti and his companies more than \$6.5 million through 2031.

A Houston-based charter school, Accelerated Learning Academy, is still seeking a tax exemption on one of the two condominiums it bought just over a decade ago in upscale neighborhoods in Houston and Dallas. The school claims it has used the condos for storage, despite a nearby 9,600-square-foot facility.

The largest charter network in Texas was a catalyst for the increased public scrutiny of charter school spending. IDEA Public Schools faces state investigation for its spending habits, including purchases of luxury boxes at San Antonio Spurs games, lavish travel expenditures for executives, the acquisition of a boutique hotel in Cameron County for more than \$1 million, plans to buy a \$15 million private jet and other allegations of irresponsible or improper use of funds. The allegations date back to 2015 and led to the departure of top executives — including CEO and founder Tom Torkelson, who received a \$900,000 severance payment.



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**GREAT THINGS HAPPEN** 

TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS!

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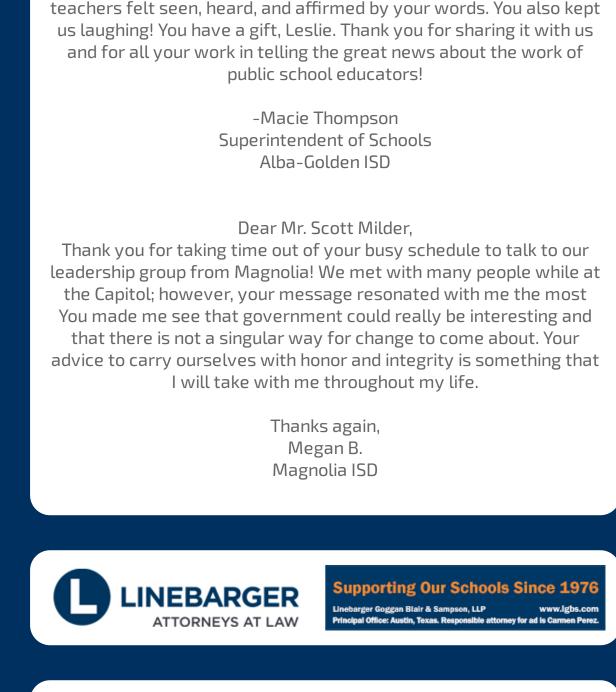
Email us at <u>friends@fotps.org</u> or tag us on your social media!

Leigh Anne Pearson

Director of Operations

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Leslie,
Thank you so much for coming to visit Alba-Golden! I heard so many great things from teachers and staff on the afternoon following your talk. What you shared was motivating and inspiring. Our



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About Friends of Texas Public Schools

We are a bit of a different type of organization...one that doesn't invest energy in education reform, but rather in celebrating what's

**GOLD PARTNERS** 



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