



SURVEY REPORT : Q3 2018

# TEXAS BUSINESS LEADERS ON EDUCATION REFORM

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► BUSINESSFORWARD



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Business Forward is a national business organization that has worked with more than 10,000 business leaders across Texas.**

We cover a range of issues, including education reform, tax reform, trade, infrastructure, clean energy, and immigration.

We've organized hundreds of briefings across the country on education reform, focusing on career and technical training, promising education technologies, school choice, and charters. These briefings have included the Secretary of Education, the Secretary of Labor, two deputy secretaries, and hundreds of other officials.

**Last month, we asked business leaders in Texas to tell us about the changes they believe schools should make**

to better prepare students for the workforce. We asked them about funding, standards, teacher autonomy, accountability, and technical training.

**As expected, half of the responses focused on skills**, including technical training (from software coding to wood shop) and life skills (like balancing a checkbook).

**Six in 10 responses focused on fixing how schools teach**, from offering more personalized teaching and smaller classes, to focusing on basic skills and critical thinking.

**One in four responses covered social issues**, such as bullying and discipline, work ethic, morality, and “liberal indoctrination.”

**One in five responses covered school management**, including more funding, equitable funding for charters, and giving teachers more control over their classrooms.

**One in six responses criticized the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)** for distracting from more productive learning.

**Respondents are pro-teacher and anti-bureaucrat.** Complaints were more likely to focus on the education system than those working within it. While some were critical of teachers, respondents who mentioned teachers were more likely to support giving them more autonomy.

# TEXAS BUSINESS LEADER SURVEY

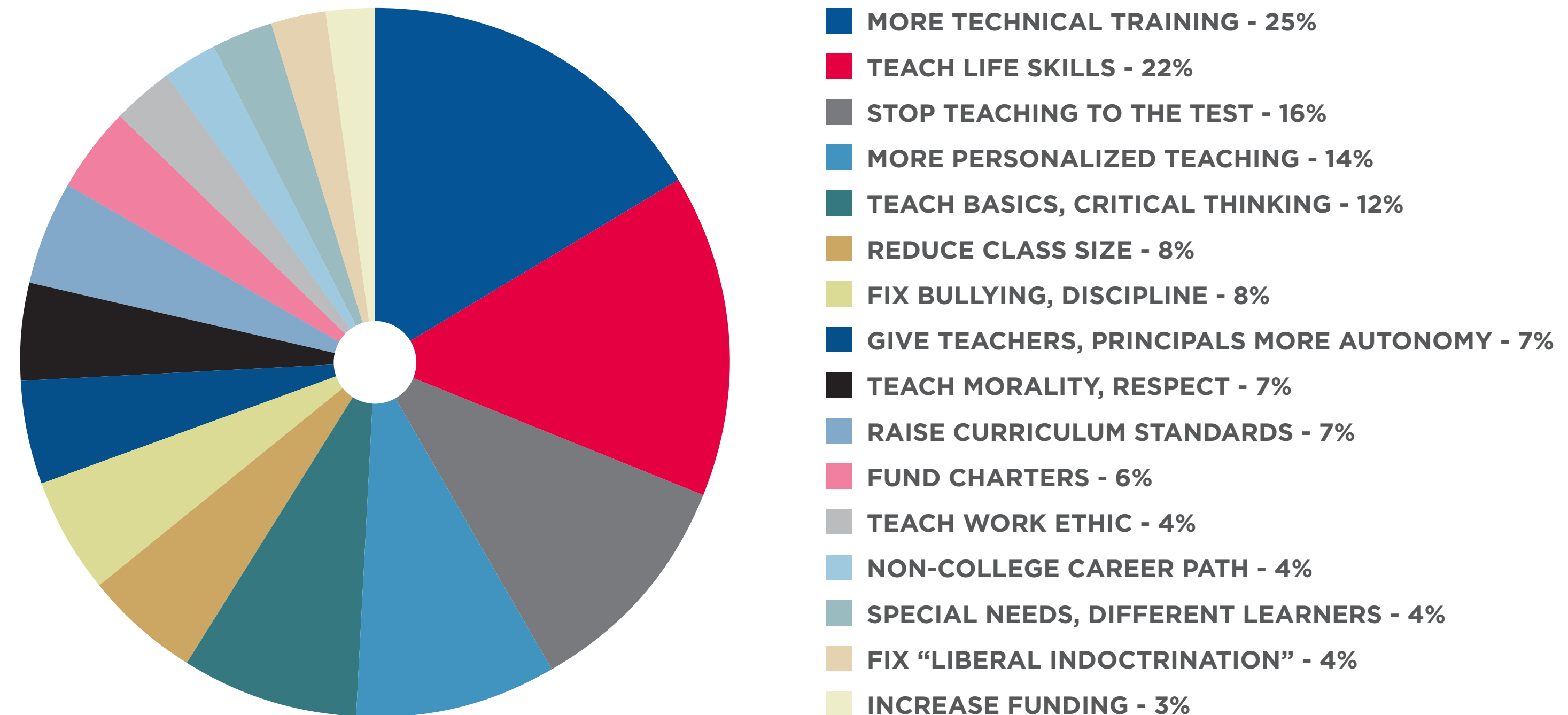
We have worked with more than 10,000 business leaders across Texas, and more than 1,000 of them have participated in programming on how to improve public schools. Last month, we asked Texas business leaders to tell us about the changes they believe schools should make to better prepare students for the workforce. More than 100 of them provided statements.

As expected, **half of the responses focused on skills**. One in four responses recommended that schools provide more technical training, from software coding to wood shop. One in four respondents focused on life skills, like balancing a checkbook or applying for a job. Several responses focused on providing better support for students going directly into the workforce (instead of college).

**One in four responses covered social issues**, such as bullying and discipline, work ethic, morality, and “liberal indoctrination.”

**One in five responses covered school management**, including more funding, equitable funding for charters, and giving teachers more control over their classrooms.

**Six in 10 responses focused on fixing how schools teach**, from offering more personalized teaching and smaller classes, to focusing on basic skills and critical thinking. One in six responses criticized the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) for distracting from more productive learning.



## WORK SKILLS

One in four responses recommended that schools provide more technical training, from software coding to wood shop.

“Regular local schools do not provide enough preparation for students for the workforce or college. Whereas, charter schools offer not only skills and some technical training, but preparation for the workforce or further education.”

- VANESSA GRIFFITHS  
HOUSTON, TX

“No vocational training at all.”

- CATHY CARROLL  
CLYDE, TX

“We need more opportunities to partner with school systems... apprenticeship or internship programs for meaningful on-site learning.”

- JESSICA ATTAS  
VICE PRESIDENT OF PUBLIC POLICY,  
GREATER WACO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
WACO, TX

“I believe Texas is making some positive strides in preparing our students, but there are gaps. There are specific trade schools that prepare students in specific skills if they choose not to go to a traditional school.”

- DANA FINLEY  
SAN ANTONIO, TX

“Only a handful of public schools have fully embraced trades as viable career paths. The focus on college preparedness continues to create a disconnect between school career counselors and local business owners' needs.”

- JENNIFER PEREZ  
MARKETING/COMMUNICATIONS  
EL PASO, TX



# LIFE SKILLS

One in four respondents focused on life skills, like balancing a checkbook or applying for a job.

“ Local and state businesses should be actively involved in [deciding] curriculum and assuring more than adequate funding. ”

- CHERYLANN CAMPBELL  
OWNER AND A CONSULTANT,  
C2 HRSOLUTIONS LLC  
AUSTIN, TX

“ Students need to be immersed in a well-rounded environment, to include home economics, business courses, consideration of others, training, woodshop, etc. ”

- SHERRIE HARVEY  
SAN ANTONIO, TX

“ In high school, they learn nothing beneficial for their lives, learning how to have a banking account...look for a rental house or learn about doing bills. ”

- JENNIFER ESCAMILLA  
PLAINVIEW, TX

“ I think they need to bring back home economics, and electives they don't teach anymore. Kids are coming out of schools not knowing how to perform basic math skills like balancing a check book and such. ”

- CHERYL BECERRA  
WICHITA FALLS, TX

## “NOT COLLEGE”

Several responses focused on providing better support for students going directly into the workforce (instead of college).

“ Too many students are pushed into college that are not college material. Too many students are not groomed and given the opportunity to learn trades. ”

- JULIE MCMURTRY  
SPRING, TX

“ Put shops back in schools for free. Metal shop (welding), wood shop (construction), auto shop and cosmetology. These careers used to be free. ”

- SHARON JOHNSON  
ONALASKA, TX

“ Schools only prepare students for college not for any trade skills. Not all students should go to college. ”

- FRANK GROENTEMAN  
FRISCO, TX

“ Not enough technical coverage... Should be more fields covered. Students need to be taught by real craftsmen. ”

- DALE WINDHAM  
CENTER, TX

“ Local schools are not preparing kids for the workforce at all. [They are] preparing them to get into debt to go to college. Most are setting up B and C students for failure at the [college] level, instead of training them to do something they might be good at or love to get up and got to work. ”

- JHONNA NIVER  
HOUSTON, TX

# SMALLER CLASSROOMS, PERSONALIZED TEACHING

Six in 10 responses focused on fixing how schools teach, from offering more personalized teaching and smaller classes, to focusing on basic skills and critical thinking.

“ Better school lunches.  
More after school care.  
Better understanding  
of the students. ”

- SHARON LYONS  
DALLAS, TX

“ I think children need to  
learn at their own pace  
and be able to receive the  
advanced education that  
would benefit them and  
give them the chance to  
benefit the workforce. ”

- DEBRA KENNEDY  
TEMPLE, TX

“ Provide more  
individualized  
attention to the  
students and a  
smaller class. ”

- ANITA ORTIZ  
SAN ANTONIO, TX

“ I have always opted  
to put my kids in charter  
schools instead of  
[traditional] public schools.  
The classrooms are  
smaller, and kids get  
one-on-one learning  
from the teachers. ”

- MARIA DAVALOS  
DALLAS, TX

“ Our son needed what the  
local charter school specializes in:  
smaller classes lead by passionate  
people who are well compensated  
and who are allowed to take time  
for students like our child. ”

- LAURA LEA BLANKS  
KILGORE, TX

# DISCIPLINE, BULLYING, CULTURE, WORK ETHIC, INTEGRITY

One in four responses covered social issues, such as bullying and discipline, work ethic, morality, and “liberal indoctrination.”

“ In most public schools, there is no help for kids to decide what they want to do with their lives, or how to continue their lives in a responsible manner. ”

- SHERYL LIPSCHITZ  
MESQUITE, TX

“ The public education system and their unions push liberal ideas, open sex, aggressive behavior, ‘if you want it just take it’ instead of working hard for it. ”

- JULIE MCMURTRY  
SPRING, TX

“ My first grader and kindergartner attend ILT charter schools. They are receiving a wonderful, multi-cultural experience learning Spanish and Chinese - and being taught the value of service, integrity, hard work, and honesty. ”

- JULIANA CHAMPLIN  
FORT WORTH, TX

“ So many parents are run out of the public school system because of extreme bullying of their kids... ”

- MARY MCCREERY  
JOSHUA, TX



# CHARTERS, CHOICE AND AUTONOMY

One in five responses covered school management, including more funding, equitable funding for charters, and giving teachers more control over their classrooms.

“ “[My daughter] will start college classes in 9th grade. It is unfortunate that [traditional] public school cannot meet her needs. As parents, we must have choice, whether for high performers, low performers, or kids who do not fit the one-size-fits-all public school model. Competition will improve our school system. ”

- DAVID WILCOX  
LONGVIEW, TX

“ Hire teachers with advanced degrees and let them teach. Stop micromanaging with fixed, testing-focused preparation. Open minds, open horizons, relate to the real the world. ”

- BRIAN BUTLER  
HOUSTON, TX

“ I think that any taxpayer money should follow the student to the school picked by the parents. This should include Christian charter schools. ”

- LARRY BOHANNON  
HOUSTON, TX

“ Only in charter schools are they coming out prepared... A child's individual efforts are rewarded. ”

- WILLIAM GARRISON  
HOUSTON, TX

“ I know that the charter school my daughter attends has the same economic/racial make up as the poorest performing public schools in our area, and [it] succeeds on par with the higher performing schools with different socioeconomic make up, with half the budget. ”

- JOEY FICKLIN  
AUSTIN, TX

“ My parents ran a charter school and the kids had a higher rate of going to college than [traditional] public schools. Better education = successful citizens. ”

- TWILA HENDERSON  
DENTON, TX



# STAAR

One in six responses criticized the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) for distracting from more productive learning.

“  
Schools are too focused on the stupid STAAR test. They only teach them to pass the test, which stresses the poor kids out.”

- APRIL CARDENAS  
SAN ANTONIO, TX

“  
Our schools are teaching a test and not life skills.”

- KAREN KINSEY  
KATY, TX

“  
They are not preparing kids adequately...I see a lack of critical thinking skills, which is what happens when you teach to pass common core testing.”

- NANCY SMITH  
BRYAN, TX

“  
We switched to Innovation Academy because the local school (Longview ISD) is more concerned with the STAAR test than her needs...IA is focused on learning, not tests.”

- DAVID WILCOX  
LONGVIEW, TX

“  
The schools are teaching tests. They are not teaching morals, values, and integrity.”

- JULIE MCMURTRY  
SPRING, TX



# NATIONAL SURVEY

As part of our work on education reform, Business Forward surveyed our national network of business leaders on the state of public schools and how to improve them. The business leaders responding represented a range of industries, businesses sizes, and more than 40 states and territories. Two-thirds either have children currently enrolled in public school or have children who have graduated from public school.

A majority of these business leaders (57 percent) believe our schools are on the wrong track. One in four worries that poor schools will hurt her business's ability to compete. Half believe our schools are underfunded. And 85 percent support one or more market-driven reforms, including greater school autonomy (59 percent), replacing underperforming schools (29 percent), and expanding charter schools (34 percent).

These results are consistent with what we've heard from business leaders at the hundreds of briefings we've organized around the country on career and technical training, promising education technologies, school choice, and charters. These briefings have included the Secretary of Education, the Secretary of Labor, two deputy secretaries, and hundreds of other officials.

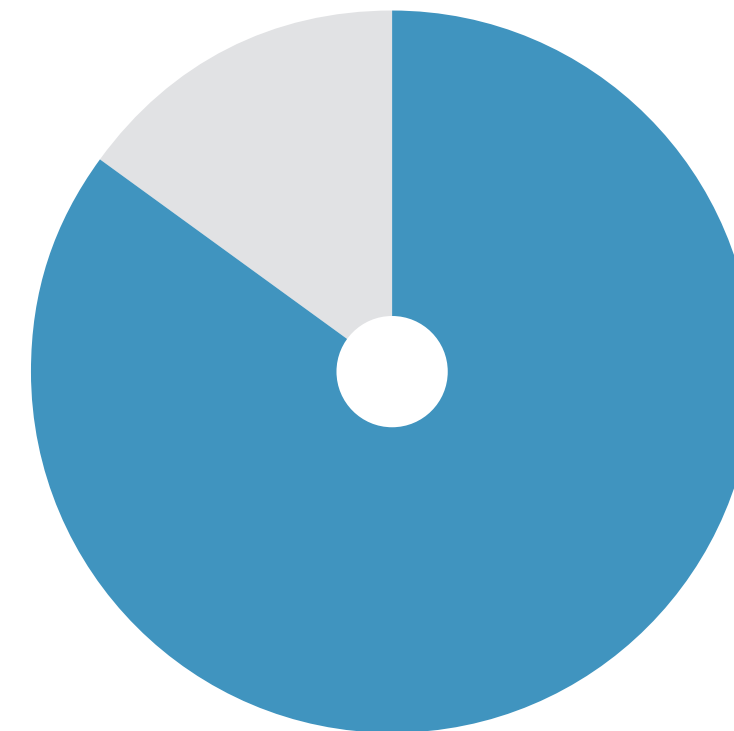
**57% BELIEVE OUR SCHOOLS ARE ON THE WRONG TRACK**



**25% WORRY POOR SCHOOLS HURT BUSINESS'S ABILITY TO COMPETE**



**85% SUPPORT MARKET-DRIVEN REFORMS**



**50% BELIEVE OUR SCHOOLS ARE UNDERFUNDED**



For complete results, click to: <https://www.businessfwd.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Education-Survey-July-2018.pdf>





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