

# PARENT ACTION GUIDE

## FORT WORTH AREA

children  
at Risk

Speaking Out + Driving Change for Children



TEXAS  
SCHOOL  
GUIDE

PUBLISHED 2018

*Empowering Families to Succeed in  
Public Education*

TEXASSCHOOLGUIDE.ORG

To provide feedback on this project, please visit [TexasSchoolGuide.org](https://www.texaschoolguide.org) or contact CHILDREN AT RISK directly at one of our offices below.

## **CHILDREN AT RISK**

### **FORT WORTH**

3000 E. Belknap St.  
Fort Worth, TX 76111  
817-944-4242

### **DALLAS**

2900 Live Oak St.  
Dallas, TX 75204  
214-599-0072

### **HOUSTON**

2900 Wesleyan Suite 400  
Houston, TX 77027  
713-869-7740

CHILDREN AT RISK serves as a catalyst for change to improve the quality of life for children through strategic research, public policy analysis, education, collaboration and advocacy. To learn more about CHILDREN AT RISK and our work, visit [childrenatrisk.org](https://www.childrenatrisk.org)

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## FORT WORTH AREA

*A 2018 Texas School Guide Publication*

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**children  
atRisk**  
*Speaking Out + Driving Change for Children*

**RAINWATER**  
*Charitable Foundation*

***Research and Production Team:***

Robert Sanborn, Ed.D.  
Mandi Kimball, MSW  
Jenny Eyer, MPH  
Edith Rahimian, M.A. NPM  
Julie Morris, MPA  
Kellie O'Quinn, MSW  
Gretchen Himsl, M.P.Aff.

***Editorial Assistance Provided by:***

Dr. Katie McConnell and Yael Ross.

***Translation by:***  
Jessica Posselt

***Graphic Design by:***  
Julie Morris, MPA

*With special thanks to interns Jasmine Amos, Olivia Berkeley, Jazmin Camacho, Maryam Nabhani, and Sarah Nazar.*

# DISCLAIMER

CHILDREN AT RISK is a nonprofit organization that drives change for children through research, education, and influencing public policy. This publication has been developed independently, and is not endorsed by any Texas School Districts. The school and district level information that appears in this guide has been gathered from the Texas Education Agency, district websites, or contact with individual schools. The information in this guide is subject to change at any time and it is important that parents, community members, educators, and all others contact their schools directly to obtain the most current and accurate information. Visit [TexasSchoolGuide.org](http://TexasSchoolGuide.org) for a more detailed description of our methodology.

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# PARENTS AS PARTNERS

Parents are a child's first teacher. They have a powerful influence on their child's success and attitude towards school. Parent engagement helps parents to become partners in their child's education.

## What Does Parent Engagement Look Like?

Every family is different, and there are many ways parents can get involved and support their child's education, even with limited time and money. More than just volunteering at school or joining the PTA, parent engagement includes all the support parents provide at home and in the classroom. Making sure your child is prepared to go to school every day, attending parent meetings and school events, and even communicating the value of education to your child, is considered parent engagement. When parents are involved, they are more informed, make better decisions and are a stronger voice for their children.

### Some ways parents can get involved include:

- *Make sure children attend school each day and on time*
- *Read together at home*
- *Set aside a time and place for homework*
- *Enforce a bedtime, so children are rested and ready to learn*
- *Ensure children eat breakfast and lunch (all schools offer free meal programs)*
- *Attend school events or programs*
- *Regularly ask about classes and talk with teachers*
- *Enroll students in after-school programs or activities*
- *Join parent groups or advocacy networks*
- *Check school websites, calendars, and newsletters*
- *Monitor grades and school performance on standardized tests*

## WHY SHOULD PARENTS ENGAGE?

When parents take the time to be involved in their child's education, it shows their student they care and that education is a family value. Getting involved also gives parents the opportunity to make sure their child is receiving the quality education he or she deserves.

### STUDENTS WITH INVOLVED PARENTS/GUARDIANS ARE MORE LIKELY TO:



Attend school regularly



Have a positive attitude towards school



Earn good grades



Have good behavior



Have stronger relationships

Parent engagement doesn't just increase the likelihood of student success but can lead to stronger relationships at school. Relationships matter. Whether between parents and teachers, teachers and students, or students and parents, positive relationships open lines of communication.



**Students** who know they have caring adults in their lives looking out for them and encouraging them are more likely to thrive in school.



**Parents** can better monitor their child's progress and support learning at home when they keep in touch with teachers and school personnel.



**Teachers** can provide a more personalized learning experience when they know more about their students' home lives, challenges, and interests.

An excellent way for parents to get to know their child's teachers is through parent-teacher evenings or events. Most schools host "open house" events at the beginning of the school year or new semester. Monitor school calendars, newsletters, and social media for opportunities and dates. Parents that can't attend meet-and-greet events are welcome to set up individual conferences with teachers. Most teachers can be available before or after school hours when they have early warning. If time or transportation is an issue, schedule a "get to know you" phone call or send an email introduction. Just making contact early, or before problems arise, can have a massive impact on how teachers view student potential and partner with parents to best support their child's education.

### **Making The Most Of "Out Of School" Time**

Learning doesn't stop when students leave the classroom; how children spend their time outside of school is equally important. Quality after-school programs and activities can help improve a student's academic performance. After school or summer programs are great chances for students to explore their interests, receive tutoring, and meet new friends.

There are many free or low-cost programs available to students of all ages and interests. Programs with expensive fees may offer scholarships to help cover costs or may adjust their rates based on household income. While some programs are open to all who are interested, keep in mind some popular programs may have wait-lists or enrollment requirements.

#### **TYPES OF PROGRAMS**



**School Programs:** Many schools offer tutoring, club activities, sports, and other programs after school and during summer. Parents can contact their child's teacher or school to find out which programs are offered, when they are available, and how to register.



**Community Programs:** There are a variety of community and faith-based organizations that offer after-school programs, summer activities, and even overnight camps. Some examples of community organizations that offer high-quality programs include The Boys and Girls Club, the YMCA, and Big Brothers Big Sisters of America.



**Summer Programs:** During the summer months, students can lose knowledge they gained during the school year. Help growing minds stay active by participating in summer programs and activities. In addition to programs offered by schools and community organizations, some local colleges and universities offer programs for advanced students or those with special interests.



**Volunteering:** Volunteering is a great way for students to gain hands-on experience and foster a sense of community. Not only do volunteer experiences help students develop important career skills, they also look great on college applications.



**Online Programs:** For those with internet access, here are a few of the most popular free learning websites.

- [Khanacademy.org](https://www.khanacademy.org) – activities, videos, and subjects for all grade levels
- [Brainpop.com](https://www.brainpop.com) – videos and lessons with fun games and quizzes for all ages
- [E-learningforkids.org](https://www.e-learningforkids.org) - high-quality online lessons for children ages 5-12

Family time can be learning time, and learning doesn't have to be formal. There are many ways parents can encourage learning at home. Read with children (even if just for 20 minutes a day), go for walks, play catch, and cook together. By asking questions, having conversations, and spending time together parents help children learn.

### **Parents As Advocates: How To Be A Voice For Your Child**

As parents get involved, they become aware of the school, district, and state policies that affect their child. School policies can affect a student's learning and overall well-being. Parents are partners in their child's education and should be included in the policy process. Unfortunately, this doesn't always happen, and parents may need to fight for changes in the law to ensure their child receives a quality education. Being an advocate is not always easy, but parents who push for change can positively impact their child's education and that of many others.

#### **TIPS FOR PARENT ADVOCATES:**

##### **1. Be Aware And Know Your Rights**

Parents have a right to know what is going on in their child's classroom and school. School administrators and teachers are expected to provide parents with information on how their child is doing, school policies/safety procedures, and information on available programs and resources. Parents have the right to request their child's records on file, progress reports, and any curriculum used in the classroom. Teachers and administrators are often very busy, it may be difficult to get



a hold of them, or they may be slow to respond to requests. Parents will have more success connecting with teachers and staff when they are respectful but also persistent. When possible, plan meetings and records requests in advance and early in the school year or semester.

For parents that prefer to speak in a language other than English, schools are required to provide translation support and written materials in your preferred language. Again, request meetings well in advance to ensure a translator can be present.

##### **2. Follow The "Chain Of Command"**

When children face challenges in school, it can sometimes be confusing for parents to know who they need to talk to or who has the authority to make changes. A general rule of thumb is to follow the "chain of command." Traditionally, the best place for parents to start if their child is having issues is with the classroom teacher, followed by school



administration, school district staff or board members, the state department of education, and state legislatures.

Following the chain has two advantages. Parents not happy with a teacher's response can push the issue further up the chain to a school administrator. School administrators may take issues seriously if they know the parent has already discussed the issue with the teacher. On the other side, teachers may not have the power to make changes and may also want an issue addressed. Parents and teachers will have greater success if they work together. In either case, persistence is key!

## EDUCATION POLICY

### "Chain of Command"

#### TEACHERS

Teachers can address classroom specific policies and issues such as late assignments, extra credit, and rules for classroom behavior.



#### TEXAS LEGISLATURE

State legislators are responsible for passing the laws that govern public education. Parents can influence legislators by voting, contacting their representatives, participating in rallies or demonstrations, and even running for public office.



#### SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Principals, Assistant Principals, etc., handle school-wide issues, including academic performance, hiring/firing of teachers and staff, resources, programs, safety, and discipline.



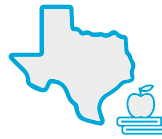
#### SCHOOL DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

School districts are led by a Superintendent, hired by a Board of Trustees that make up the School Board. District Superintendents and their staff handle day-to-day district operations.



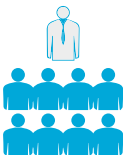
#### TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY (TEA)

Based in Austin, TEA is responsible for managing our public education system. A Commissioner of Education leads TEA and is appointed by the Governor. TEA guides all K-12 schools and programs. They also manage all standardized tests, including STAAR exams.



#### SCHOOL BOARD

Board members are elected by their communities and are responsible for setting district-wide policies, budgets, and some programs. Board meetings are open to the public, and anyone may register to speak.



### 3. Use Your Network

Consider joining a parent advocacy group or coalition. By working together, parent groups can often bring changes to schools or districts that individual families could not. Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), for example, can be great networks for making changes at a school-wide level. These organizations promote closer relationships between parents and teachers, discuss school needs, fundraise, and influence school administrators. To find your school's PTA or for resources on how to start a PTA visit [www.txpta.org](http://www.txpta.org).

At the district level, School Health Advisory Councils (SHACs) must include district parents. SHACs advise districts on health education issues and have special access to the school board. Texas law requires a SHAC for every school district, and the majority of members must be parents who are not employed by the district. To learn more about your district's SHAC and how to get involved visit your school district's website and type "SHAC" in the search bar.



Can't find a parent group or network already working to address a specific issue? Start your own! There is strength in numbers, and it only takes a handful of family, friends, and neighbors to start a movement.

### 4. Data Is Your Friend

Parents see firsthand the impact policies have on children, and their stories are powerful. But for policies that impact a large number of individuals, policymakers may not be persuaded by parent voices alone. Scientific research, facts, and data can help convince policymakers. Organizations like CHILDREN AT RISK are happy to share research and explain recent data trends with parent advocacy groups. [TexasSchoolGuide.org](http://TexasSchoolGuide.org), for example, is an excellent tool for parents looking for data demonstrating school quality. Before connecting with policymakers, parents should do their own research and try and come with solutions in mind. Look to see if other cities or states have come up with innovative ideas to address that particular issue.



# UNDERSTANDING SCHOOLS

Most often, students attend the school they are assigned to based off their home address. While many of these District Zoned Schools serve students well, they are not the only option. There are other types of schools children can attend through a transfer or application process.

## TYPES OF SCHOOLS



A **District Zoned School** is the neighborhood school that a child is assigned to based on where he/she lives. District Zoned schools:

- Are made up of students from a specific neighborhood or zip code
- Are free to attend for all students in their district zone
- Are where a child will attend if they do not apply elsewhere or are unable to transfer



A **Magnet Program or School** is a public school option that offers unique programs or a curriculum focused on a specific subject (ex. Engineering, Performing Arts, Early College Program). Magnet schools:

- Are free to attend, but may charge fees for special programs
- May or may not provide transportation
- Require an application during a specific time frame and may have auditions or selective interviews
- May have a wait list due to many students wanting to attend but limited seats available



A **Charter School** is a public school that is not managed by a local school district. Charter schools:

- Are free to attend but may charge fees for special programs
- Are open to any student that wishes to apply, with preference usually given to students living in the priority areas
- Have more freedom to make their own policies and experiment with new initiatives
- May have a wait list due to many students wanting to attend but limited seats available



**Religious or Private Schools** are non-public schools and do not receive government funds. Private schools:

- May offer programming, lesson materials, and standardized tests that differ from public schools
- Require tuition and fees, although scholarships may be available
- Have an application process that may include forms, tests, interviews, and financial aid requests
- May have a religious affiliation

## STEPS TO CHOOSING A HIGH-QUALITY SCHOOL

**1** Identify your district zoned school and compare it to other possible school options (magnet, charter, etc.).



**4** Understand the transfer/application processes and pay attention to deadlines.



**2** Visit [TexasSchoolGuide.org](https://www.texaschoolguide.org) to research the quality of your child's school options.



**5** Make the decision that is best for your family/needs and act.



**3** Visit the school(s) in consideration to get a first-hand look at the school environment.



### Understanding School Quality

All children deserve a high-quality education, but not all schools are able to offer one. Parents play an important role in monitoring their child's education and making sure their school is serving their child well. It is sometimes difficult and time-consuming to research and understand the quality of a school, so below are some tips on what to look for.

#### ACADEMICS

Since the main purpose of schools is to help students learn, it is no surprise academic performance is a measure of school quality. More than just a child's individual grades, parents should also consider the whole picture. Look to school-wide performance on common exams—in Texas this would be school performance on STAAR exams—to see how schools compare to others. No test is perfect, nor can a test capture all of the quality efforts schools put into the year. They do, however, provide a way for parents, educators, and community members to examine how students are learning and where improvement is required.

Information on a school's performance is available to parents, but that doesn't mean it is easy to find or simple to understand. To help parents compare the quality of schools in their area, CHILDREN AT RISK created the Texas School Guide. Every year when new school performance data is released, CHILDREN AT RISK organizes and shares that information with the public. Visit [TexasSchoolGuide.org](https://www.texaschoolguide.org) today to learn more about the schools in your area. In addition to School STAAR exam results, below is a sample of the information parents can find.



**School Grade** – Based on their academic performance, CHILDREN AT RISK assigns schools letter grades A-F. A grade of A, B, and even some C schools, are all good options for student success! Schools that receive a D or an F are generally not performing as well, academically.



**School Ranking** – Schools across the state are ranked based on student performance and CHILDREN AT RISK grade received. The higher the rank, the better the school’s academic performance in the previous year.



**Gold Ribbon** – Schools that have high levels of poverty (75% or more) and high student achievement are designated as Gold Ribbon schools. This means that these schools are doing well and meeting their students’ needs.



**PEG** – A Public Education Grant (PEG) school is a campus that has been identified by the Texas Education Agency as needing improvement in 2 of the past 3 years. If your school is a PEG school you should be notified by the school and you are allowed to transfer your child to a better school if space is available. Keep reading for additional information about PEG schools and how to transfer.

## ENVIRONMENT

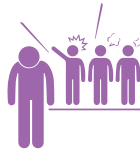
A second, and equally important, factor to look at for school quality is a school’s environment. School environment, also known as school climate or culture, refers to the look and feel of a school. How students feel at school can influence how successful they are. A school’s environment is often affected by its values, rules, safety, and discipline policies. The school environment is important because it sets the tone for student learning. A positive, supportive environment can help students feel safe and make better grades. Elements of the environment include:



School safety and levels of security



School staff and front office attitude



Bullying on campus



Relationships between students and teachers



General look and feel of the school

The best way to learn about the environment is by visiting the campus. Parents have the right to visit their child’s school, meet with teachers and administrators, and ask questions about the school environment. Parents should call schools to set up visits or in-person tours for the school their child attends or might attend. While a formal visit is best, not all parents are able during the school day. Even if parents can’t make an extended visit, they can learn a lot about the quality of school’s environment from observations at pick-up or drop-off, by talking to neighbors and friends with children enrolled, and even by speaking directly to their child.

*Due to security concerns, many schools will not allow unscheduled visits. Contact schools and ask about their visitation policies before showing up unannounced.*

**ASK:** DOES MY CHILD’S SCHOOL FEEL SAFE? WELCOMING? CLEAN? RESPECTFUL? COLLABORATIVE?

Besides what can be gained from visits and conversations with other parents, student codes of conduct or policy handbooks are helpful in understanding a school's environment. A "code of conduct" is a document that explains a school's disciplinary rules and sometimes other policies. Schools are required to make this document available to the public, and they can usually be found online or at the front desk if not sent home with students early in the year. By reading and becoming familiar with these documents, parents are more prepared to advocate for their child and may better understand a school's learning environment.

#### Things to Look For In a Code of Conduct:

- Rules for removing a student from the classroom
- Why and how a student could be suspended or expelled
- How the school factors self-defense, intent, and disability into disciplinary decisions
- Rules for transferring a student to a disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP)
- The school's process for notifying a parent or guardian if their student violates the code of conduct
- How the school responds to bullying and harassment

Every student must follow the rules in the school's code of conduct. If a student breaks any of the rules, he or she may face the consequences, such as a suspension or even expulsion. Note, students in Pre-K through 2nd grade cannot receive out-of-school suspensions under Texas law.

School districts must have bullying and dating violence prevention policies. These policies should protect students from bullying in any form – written, verbal, or physical. Policies should also protect students who speak up about bullying incidents. Parents of bullying victims can request transfer of their student or of the bully to another classroom or campus if there is a demonstrated negative impact on the student's learning. Visit [pacer.org/bullying](http://pacer.org/bullying) or [imbullyfree.org](http://imbullyfree.org) for resources for parents and students.

#### PROGRAMS & AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Besides academics and environment, parents may want to look at the types of special programs and activities available during the school day. This may be particularly important for students with specific talents or interests. For example, a child interested in art or performing may want to attend a school with a good arts program or apply to a Magnet school focused on the arts. For many parents, getting children to extra programs or classes can be extremely difficult. Finding a school that offers those opportunities during the school day or at least on campus is a big advantage.

Beyond programs that match student interests, parents may want to think about Advanced Placement programs (AP) or programs that help meet student academic needs. For example, parents of high school students may prefer their children to have access to an early college program or a range of AP classes which can result in students earning college credit. Likewise, parents of elementary age children may prefer a school with a dual language program or quality pre-k offerings for their younger siblings. Parents of students with special needs or English language learners will want to check and make sure their child's school can provide the best accommodations and teachers with special certifications.





Finances and time constraints may be another consideration for parents. Parents with limited finances may not be interested in private schools with hefty tuition costs. Similarly, if transportation is not provided, it may be difficult and expensive for parents to drive their child long distances to attend a school outside of their zone. Many charter schools and private schools may provide transportation, but they are not required to do so. Contact the individual school to discuss possible options.

### Applications and Transfers

If parents decide they would like their child to attend a school different from their district zoned school, they will need to research the school application process and their transfer options. Many schools and districts have their own rules and deadlines to get admitted.

### Magnet and Charter School Applications

Most charter schools, as well as district magnet schools and programs, require an application. Some are lottery based and not based on grades or talents. They may also have additional requirements such as an essay, audition, or portfolio. Few schools admit students in the middle of the school year or on a rolling basis, so parents should pay close attention to application deadlines. Some applications start as early as September, but every school is different. It is best for parents to consider their options in early fall, so they are ready to complete applications in early winter.

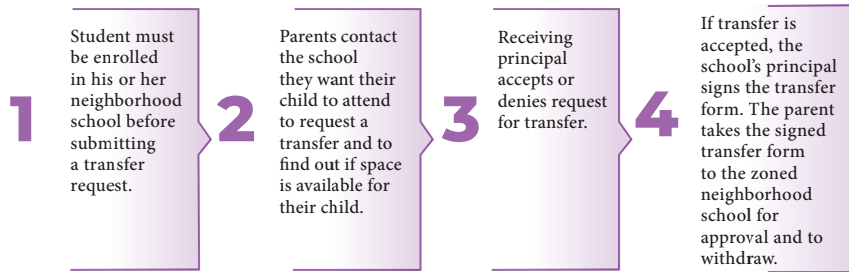
| TYPICAL APPLICATION TIMELINE  |  |
|---|--|
|  <p><b>FALL / EARLY WINTER</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applications become available online or in person.</li> <li>• Districts and individual schools may host school choice fairs or open houses for potential students and their families.</li> </ul>   |  <p><b>WINTER</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Magnet and Charter school applications are due.</li> </ul>                     |
|  <p><b>SPRING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are invited to audition, interview, or complete an additional test if required.</li> <li>• Lotteries are held, if necessary, to admit students fairly.</li> <li>• Students and families are notified of their acceptance or wait list status.</li> </ul> |  <p><b>SUMMER</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families on the wait list are notified as slots become available.</li> </ul> |

Many schools have simple or common applications that take less than an hour to fill out. Double check if there are limits to the number of schools a student may apply to within a single district or charter network. If there aren't limits, consider applying to multiple schools or programs. Even if demand for a particular school is high and parents are concerned their child is unlikely to get admitted or has low odds in a lottery system, it doesn't hurt to take a chance and apply. The application process can provide students with good practice for college.

### Transfer Options

Students may be able to enroll in traditional public schools outside of their district zoned school, depending on district policies and space in desirable schools. Most districts have a

transfer process similar to the one below.



In Texas, there are two types of transfers, an open transfer or a PEG Transfer.

An **Open Transfer** is any transfer requested based on the student's and family's needs. Anyone can request an open transfer but may have trouble getting approval if space is limited. If a student needs a transfer for medical reasons, they will require an official letter from the doctor.

A **Public Education Grant (PEG) School Transfer** may be requested if a child's district zoned school has a history of failing to meet state academic standards. PEG schools are low-performing schools where 50% or fewer students passed the STAAR exam in any two of the most recent three years or if they were rated by the state as "Improvement Required." Each year the state provides districts with a list of PEG schools. Districts are then required to inform parents of students enrolled in PEG schools every February. Parents can request a PEG transfer to a different school within their school district and in some cases outside of the district. In most cases, PEG transfer applications follow the same process as open transfers, but children enrolled in PEG schools receive priority as space becomes available.

### When Changing Schools Isn't An Option

Sometimes students are enrolled at low-performing schools or schools with rough learning environments, but parents are unable to or do not wish to leave their school communities. There are many ways parents can get involved and work to improve the quality of their child's education.



**Monitor Progress.** Even if a school is poorly rated, students can still have a quality experience. By paying extra attention to their student's grades, staying in close contact with teachers, and enrolling their child in after-school activities, parents can make sure their child makes good progress.



**Take advantage of community programs and online tools.** If a school doesn't offer high-quality after-school programming or tutoring, there are a variety of community programs available to parents and their children. Some even provide transportation from school to their site.



**Advocate.** Parents can use their voices to improve school policies and practices. Join the PTA, volunteer, persuade school administration and community organizations to bring quality programs to the school. Attend School Board meetings, vote in local and state elections, and follow "the chain of command" to push policy changes.



# CRADLE TO CAREER

The learning process starts before students enter kindergarten, and it continues well after high school. While parental support throughout a child's K-12 education is important, how a child is set up for school, and how they spend their time after graduation requires equal attention.

## *The Importance of Early Learning*

The first 5 years of a child's life are the most important in regards to brain development. During this time, the brain grows to 80-85% of its full adult size. Children learn at a much faster rate during these first few years than at any other time in their lives. Stressful experiences during the first few years of life can slow a child's brain growth and development. Sometimes these stressful situations are outside a parent's control, but that doesn't mean they can't still provide a safe, supportive environment that promotes learning.

One way to promote a positive early learning environment is through meaningful interactions. Parents help their child's brain development when they speak to their child and engage them in conversation even before children are walking and talking. Meaningful interactions between parents, children, and other individuals in a child's life not only help their brains to develop but helps them feel supported by a network of caring adults.

Another way for parents to provide a supportive early learning environment is to enroll their child in a high-quality early education program. There are many different programs available for child ages 0 to 5. Research has shown that participation in high-quality early education programs help children:



Be ready for learning at school



Be successful readers in 3rd grade and beyond



Graduate from high school



Have higher paying jobs as adults



Have fewer behavior problems



Have less chance of drug use, or depression

## TYPES OF EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

There are many early education options for parents depending on the age of their child, their income, and the overall needs of the family.

### *Child Care*

Child care programs enroll children from birth through Kindergarten, and up to age 12 for after-school programs. Availability for each age group at a location will be different based on their size and wait-lists. Child care can be offered at a center or in a home. All centers and homes must follow minimum expectations set by the state, but these do not indicate whether the program is quality.

Child care can be paid for by the parent or can be subsidized, meaning the government pays for care. With subsidized child care, parents receive financial aid to help pay for

childcare if they work or attend an education or vocational training program for at least 25 hours per week, and if they meet certain income guidelines.

To learn more about subsidized child care or to apply, call Workforce Solutions at 214-630-5949 or visit: [childcareassociates.org/what-we-do/child-care-subsidy-assistance/](http://childcareassociates.org/what-we-do/child-care-subsidy-assistance/).

Private pay child care is offered through licensed child care centers, local community centers like the YMCA, and faith-based locations such as a church. The fees and program rules vary by location. Families can search for licensed child care centers in their area by visiting the Texas Health and Human Services website [dfps.state.tx.us](http://dfps.state.tx.us) and using their "Find Child Care" search.

### Early Head Start & Head Start

Early Head Start (for children 0-3) and Head Start (for 4-year-old children) are free programs that offer a variety of services for pregnant women and children from birth to age 5, such as education, health, nutrition, and social services. Early Head Start and Head Start programs are regulated by the U.S government and are required to meet certain national standards. Families can qualify through income levels, homelessness, having children in foster care, or if they are receiving funds from Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

To find an Early Head Start or Head Start location, call 1-866-763-6481 or visit [eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/center-locator](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/center-locator). To qualify parents must meet income requirements. Visit [benefits.gov/benefits/benefit-details/1941](http://benefits.gov/benefits/benefit-details/1941) to learn more about Head Start.

### Texas Home Visiting Programs

Texas provides free home visiting services for many expectant parents and parents with children six years old and younger. Home visiting programs match parents with someone who can answer their questions, recommend services, and give advice. Depending on a parent's needs this "home visitor" may be a nurse, an experienced parent, or another trained professional. Among other resources, home visitors provide parents with tools to keep their children happy, healthy, and ready for school. There are different home visiting programs available to Texas parents, and each has their own eligibility requirements.

| TEXAS HOME VISITING PROGRAMS                                 |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP                                     | <i>For first-time mothers</i>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enrolled parents receive visits from a specially trained nurse during pregnancy and until their child turns 2 years old</li> <li>Parents learn how to have a healthy pregnancy and how to support child development</li> </ul> |
| PARENTS AS TEACHERS (PAT)                                    | <i>For families expecting a child or with children age six and under</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaches parents about child development and gives parenting support</li> <li>Includes one-on-one home visits, monthly group meetings, developmental testing, and resource network for families</li> </ul>                      |
| HOME INSTRUCTION FOR PARENTS OF PRESCHOOL YOUNGSTERS (HIPPY) | <i>For families with children ages 3, 4, or 5</i>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each week a home instructor works with parents on specific activities</li> <li>Activities are focused on reading, counting, learning colors, and other ways to get children ready for kindergarten</li> </ul>                  |

For more information about home visiting visit [texashomevisiting.org](http://texashomevisiting.org). For help finding home visiting programs and other family support services, visit [northtexasfamilies.org](http://northtexasfamilies.org).

### Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K)

Public Pre-K is offered by school districts for children who turn 4 years old on or before September 1st of the upcoming school year. While Pre-K participation is not required by the state, there are many academic and social benefits. While most Pre-K programs prioritize four-year-olds, many districts offer services for 3-year-olds as well, depending on available space and resources. Half-day and full-day programs are available.

*Public Pre-K is provided for free for children who meet at least one of the following:*

- Qualify for free or reduced-priced lunch (see income eligibility table)
- Are homeless
- Have limited English proficiency
- Are in foster care
- Have a parent in the military
- Have had a parent die in the line of duty (police officer, firefighter, etc).

For children who do not meet one of the five criteria above, districts may offer a limited number of Pre-K spots for a fee. Private Pre-K is also available. These programs usually require students to pay tuition and complete an application process that may include tests, interviews, and financial aid forms.

### Public Kindergarten

Full-day kindergarten is available for free to all children who turn 5 by September 1st of that school year and is offered on the campus of local elementary schools.

## CHOOSING QUALITY EARLY EDUCATION

Attending a high-quality early education program makes a big difference for young children, but not every early education program can be considered “high-quality.” Just as with K-12 schools, parents should consider the environment and culture when selecting an early education program.

Characteristics such as the number of children per teacher in a classroom, staff friendliness, cleanliness, and safety can vary at each program, even if they are certified by the state. While cost, availability, and location may still drive which programs parents choose for their child, program quality should factor into their decisions whenever possible.

Parents can learn more about the quality of their local early education programs by visiting in person, speaking with other parents and friends, and looking at a provider’s quality rating or accreditation. Texas Rising Star (TRS) for example, rates subsidized child care providers based on their quality. To find TRS providers in your area visit [tarrantcountycms.org/home/quality-providers-list/](http://tarrantcountycms.org/home/quality-providers-list/)

TRS certified child care centers and homes go beyond Texas’ minimum standards and can receive up to 4 stars.



Stars are distributed based on:



Staff  
Qualifications &  
Training



Caregiver-Child  
Interactions



Curriculum



Nutrition &  
Activities



Parent  
Involvement &  
Education

## Developmental Screening

With so much learning and development happening before children even enter school, parents may worry their child might not be developing fast enough or be on track for kindergarten. Children are more likely to be successful in school when they enter kindergarten with a strong foundation of knowledge and skills. Kindergarten readiness is typically measured across 5 areas of development including:

1. Physical skills
2. Literacy
3. Mathematics



4. Language & Communication
5. Health & Wellness

If a parent is concerned, free developmental screening tools are available online to parents, to help them identify how their child is progressing and flag issues early on. Visit [earlyisbestnorthtexas.org/screening/](http://earlyisbestnorthtexas.org/screening/) to learn how to access the free screening tool.

## Setting a College & Career Ready Mindset

It is never too early for students and their parents to start thinking about life after high school. Setting expectations high and from an early age can positively impact student performance, attitudes, and aspirations for life after graduation. On average, students who continue their education after high school are less likely to suffer from unemployment and can earn more money over the course of their lifetime. While college may not be the best choice for everyone, every student has the potential to go to college and should have the option.

Starting as early as middle school, students begin the coursework necessary for college. The classes and performance required to graduate high school and to be eligible for college acceptance are not the same. Parents should be aware of these differences and help guide their student through the process. Before their child enters 8th grade, parents should review their child's choices and available endorsements under Texas' Foundation High School Program.

| FOUNDATION HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS  | DISTINGUISHED LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT          |  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>ENGLISH</b> (4 credits): English I, English II, English III, an advanced English course   |   | Earning the Distinguished Level of Achievement...  |
| <b>MATHEMATICS</b> (3 credits): Algebra I, Geometry, An advanced math course   | * (4 credits): in math including Algebra II | Allows students to compete for Top 10% automatic admissions eligibility at any Texas public university     |
| <b>SCIENCE</b> (3 credits): Biology, Integrated Physics & Chemistry, or an advanced science course   | * (4 credits): in science                   |  |
| <b>SOCIAL STUDIES</b> (3 credits): World History or World Geography, U.S. History, U.S. Government (1/2 credit), Economics (1/2 credit)          |   | Positions students among those first in line for a TEXAS Grant to help pay for university tuition and fees |
| <b>LANGUAGES OR COMPUTER SCIENCE</b> (2 credits): 2 credits in the same foreign language <b>or</b> 2 credits from Computer Science I, II, or III |   |  |
| <b>PHYSICAL EDUCATION</b> (1 credit)   |   |  |
| <b>FINE ARTS</b> (1 credit)  |   | Ensure's students are competitive applicants at the most selective colleges and universities               |
| <b>ELECTIVES</b> (5 credits)   |   |  |
| <b>SPEECH:</b> Demonstrated proficiency  |   |  |
| <b>ENDORSEMENTS:</b> Parent must sign a form allowing their student to not complete an endorsement.  | * at least 1 endorsement                    |  |
| <b>TOTAL CREDITS:</b> 22   | *26 with endorsement                        |  |

## POSSIBLE ENDORSEMENTS



STEM



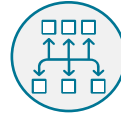
Business & Industry



Public Services



Arts & Humanities



Multi-Disciplinary Studies

Visit [texasoncourse.org](http://texasoncourse.org) for more information on college requirements and resources to help families plan for life after high school.

## COLLEGE-ELIGIBLE VS. COLLEGE READY

Just because a student is accepted to college, doesn't mean they will be successful. Parents can push their child to go above the minimum eligibility requirements and help them develop the skills needed to complete their college degrees successfully.



**College-Eligible** students will have completed the required coursework, taken the SAT or ACT exam, have at least a 2.0 GPA or higher, and be on track to earn their high school diploma. These students are likely to be accepted to some programs, but may require remedial coursework or may have difficulty adapting to the work and expectations.

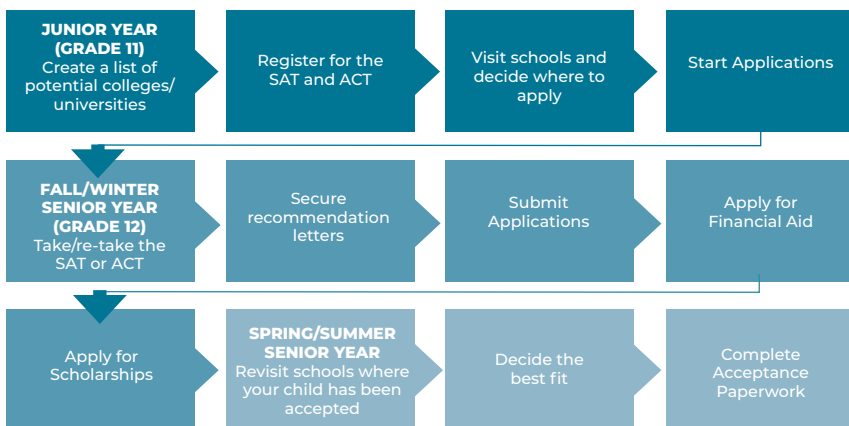


**College-Ready** students will have completed advanced coursework (Honors, AP, IB, etc.), will have a 3.0 GPA or higher, will score at least 1110 on the SAT or 24 ACT, and will have a history of participation in school clubs, activities, leadership, volunteer work, jobs, or internships. These students will also be accepted into a program, but are more likely to succeed in the program and graduate on time.

**COLLEGE-READY STUDENTS ARE:** RESPONSIBLE, ORGANIZED, DETERMINED, FLEXIBLE/RESILIENT, CRITICAL THINKERS, & PROBLEM SOLVERS.

### College-Ready Timeline

Start preparing students for college and career as early as possible. Together, parents can help students make their college-going dreams become a reality!



## Higher Education Opportunities

Students have many options for continuing their education after high school. These options may include a four-year college or university, a two-year college (often known as a community college or junior college), a trade school, or the US military, among others. Every post-high school opportunity has its own long-term benefits, potential challenges and admission requirements.

| FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY   | TWO-YEAR COLLEGE  |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Average Time:</b> 4-6 years</p> <p><b>Degree:</b> Bachelor's</p> <p><b>Potential Careers:</b> Engineer, teacher, journalist, accountant, business, computer science, etc.</p> <p><b>Pros:</b> Offers the most opportunities, including extra-curricular activities, allows for a higher paying job than other degree options, more access to financial aid, sense of community</p> <p><b>Cons:</b> Requires the most time and is often the most expensive option, depending on the school</p> | <p><b>Average Time:</b> 1-3 years</p> <p><b>Degree:</b> Associate's /Professional Certificate</p> <p><b>Potential Careers:</b> Nurse, cosmetologist, paralegal, pharmacy technician, etc.</p> <p><b>Pros:</b> Often the cheapest of all the options; can transfer to a four-year university after meeting specific requirements</p> <p><b>Cons:</b> Not as many degree options offered as at a four-year college, a sense of community and additional activities may be limited</p> |
| TRADE SCHOOL  | MILITARY SERVICE  |
| <p><b>Average Time:</b> 5 months–2 years</p> <p><b>Degree:</b> Technical Certificate/Professional License</p> <p><b>Potential Careers:</b> Electrician, dental hygienist, chef, computer technician, welder, medical assistant, etc.</p> <p><b>Pros:</b> Provides hands-on job training to secure a good job quickly</p> <p><b>Cons:</b> No extracurricular activities, limited sense of community</p>  | <p><b>Average Time:</b> 4 years or more</p> <p><b>Degree:</b> Enlisted Career/ Opportunity for additional degree</p> <p><b>Potential Careers:</b> Military officer, combat operations, cybersecurity, business administration, engineering, etc.</p> <p><b>Pros:</b> Get to see the world, strengthen skills, financial and educational assistance after service</p> <p><b>Cons:</b> Extended time away from home during active service, personal risk/sacrifice</p>                |

## CHOOSING A HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

When choosing a college, university or different higher education path, there are many factors for students and families to consider. Affordability, location, available programs or majors, school reputation, quality of career services, etc.; a great deal goes into finding the right fit. Consider the following steps when it comes time to choose the best program:

### 1. Create a list of potential schools:

Before a student's junior year of high school, develop a list together of potential colleges and universities they would like to learn more about and possibly apply to in the fall of their senior year. Be sure to include safety schools, match schools, and reach schools.



**Safety Schools** – Student's school grades and test scores are above the school's average for incoming freshman, and there is a high likelihood he or she will be accepted.



**Match Schools** – Student's school grades and test scores are within the range of the school's average incoming freshman.



**Reach Schools** – Student's school grades and test scores may be below the school's average incoming freshman, and your child may or may not be accepted, but there is still potential.

### 2. Visit schools:

Before spending money on applications, try to visit schools when possible. Visiting the campus can be extremely helpful and can provide a better understanding of the school's environment and culture. For families unable to visit schools in person, a few online resources can help:

- Video tours of colleges: [youiversitytv.com/category/college](http://youiversitytv.com/category/college)
- College Scorecard: [collegescorecard.ed.gov](http://collegescorecard.ed.gov)

### 3. Apply to schools:

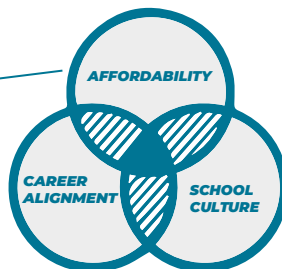
Submissions of online applications, standardized test scores, high school grades, essays, and information about activities outside of school are common, and some schools charge application fees. Most applications are due in the fall of a child's senior year. Check college websites early and add application deadlines to family calendars to make sure everything gets in on time. Students apply for admission to any Texas public university, as well as some community and private colleges, at [applytexas.org](http://applytexas.org). To apply for schools in other states, check out [commonapp.org](http://commonapp.org) or visit the school's specific website.

### 4. Consider options and make a decision:

Once letters of acceptance and financial aid packages come in, there are a few important factors for students to consider.

*The cost of attending a school after reviewing the financial aid package, scholarship awards, and future burden of any student loans.*

*Whether the program matches a student's career and future goals.*



*The feeling and environment of a school, including class sizes, sports, activities, location, sense of belonging, etc.*

## Understanding Financial Aid Resources

The cost of attending a college or university may seem overwhelming. Expenses such as tuition, dorm fees, food, books, supplies, or other costs can add up. However, many financial aid options can make higher education more affordable. Financial Aid is available through state and federal governments, nonprofits, and private organizations.



**Federal Student Aid:** Federal Student Aid is made available through the Federal Student Aid Free Application for Federal Student Aid or FAFSA. FAFSA is a form completed each year to determine what a family can reasonably contribute to their child's college expenses and what federal financial aid a student is eligible for. FAFSA applications are accepted starting in October. It is best to apply as soon as possible. Students must be permanent residents or citizens of the US to apply. Visit [fafsa.ed.gov](https://fafsa.ed.gov) for more information and check with school counseling offices for assistance with completing the forms.



**Texas Financial Aid:** The Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA) is very similar to the FAFSA, but is only for students who have established Texas residency. This is a good option for students who may be undocumented. Any financial aid provided through the TASFA can be used at Texas colleges and universities. For more information regarding this form, visit [finaid.txstate.edu/more-info/TASFA](https://finaid.txstate.edu/more-info/TASFA).



**Scholarships:** In addition to applying for financial aid packages, students can apply for scholarships to help with the costs of college. Scholarships are financial gifts and do not have to be repaid. While some are based on academics and high test scores, there are also many scholarships based on non-academic qualities such as interests, volunteering, skills, etc. Visit [bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search](https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search) to find scholarships and get application tips.

After applying for financial aid, students will receive financial aid packages. Each school may offer different types and combinations of financial aid including grants, loans, scholarships, or a work-study option.

| GRANTS  | LOANS  | WORK STUDY  |
|---|--|---|
| Grants are money that does not have to be paid back. Grants are based on family financial circumstances and need. | Loans are borrowed money from the government or a bank and must be paid back in full, plus interest. Federal student loans are not based on credit history and have low fixed interest rates. Visit <a href="https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/loans">studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/loans</a> to learn more. | Work-study is a paid part-time job that allows students to earn income to help them cover school expenses. If awarded work-study, students should ask their financial aid office which jobs are eligible. |

Understanding financial aid packages can be confusing. College and university financial aid offices are great resources for parents and students.



# SPECIAL POPULATIONS:

Not every child learns in the same way. Schools have different programs to meet the needs of different students.

## *Children With Special Needs*

According to the law, Texas public schools are required to offer free, special services to students ages 3-21 with designated disabilities. Special services are usually divided into two different types of learning environments, depending on the individual student's needs. The first learning environment includes the student in general education classrooms with available special services. The second places the child in "self-contained" classrooms, which are separate rooms reserved only for the education of students with special needs. Some students remain in self-contained classrooms full-time, while others split their time between both types of classes.

### HOW DO CHILDREN RECEIVE SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES?

1

#### REQUEST AN EVALUATION

Parents ask for an evaluation by submitting a written request to their child's school. Once the school receives the written request, the evaluation must take place within 45 school days.

2

#### ADMISSION, REVIEW, AND DISMISSAL (ARD) MEETINGS

Parents are invited to ARD Meetings if the evaluation reveals their child has at least one of the following disabilities: physical disability, intellectual disability, emotional disturbance, learning disability, autism, speech disability, or traumatic brain injury.

3

#### INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS (IEP)

The goal of an ARD meeting is to understand a child's disability level and create an Individualized Education Plan or IEP. Parents, educators, and special education experts work together to create this plan. IEPs will include academic and non-academic recommendations including teaching methods, social time, and classroom time.

4

#### BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION PLANS (BIP)

Some children will also have a Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP). BIP's can be helpful when a child's behavior may cause disruptions in the classroom.

### THE RIGHTS OF PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Parents have several rights concerning their child's special needs education. Going through the evaluation and ARD process can be difficult, and parents are an important voice for their child's needs.

School districts must follow specific time requirements throughout the ARD process. Once a written request for an evaluation is submitted, the school district must respond within 15 school days with its intent to conduct an evaluation or a written notice of their refusal. Within 45 school days from the initial request, the evaluation

must be completed. After an ARD meeting date is determined, the district is required to notify parents at least 5 school days in advance so they can make any needed arrangements to attend the meeting.

Parents have the right to disagree with the IEP created during their child's ARD meeting. If parents disagree, they have up to 10 school days to consider the plan and meet with the ARD committee for the second time. During the 10 school days, the ARD committee must consider alternatives to the current IEP.

Specific people must be involved in ARD meetings and the development of an IEP. The meeting should include: A parent or guardian, at least one of the child's teachers, a representative from the school district, someone familiar with the way the child learns best based on his/her evaluation results, a career or technical education representative, other people with special knowledge of the child, and the child, if appropriate.

If English is not a parent's primary language, the school district is required to provide a translated written or video copy of the IEP proceedings. Parents can also request an interpreter be present at the ARD meeting.



### **Children Who Are English Language Learners**

Many students in Texas public schools do not speak English as their first language, and English only classrooms are often not helpful for students who are still learning. Texas schools are required to provide an opportunity for every child to learn English, known as special language programs. If a child is having difficulty completing his or her classwork due to their English proficiency, there are options available to help ensure their needs are being met.

#### **HOW CAN MY CHILD ENROLL IN A SPECIAL LANGUAGE PROGRAM?**

School districts are required to send out home language surveys at the start of each school year to new students or to students who have not been surveyed. The home language survey helps the school understand a student's level of English comprehension. The information provided on this survey will help the school determine the support programs a child should participate in.

After completing the home language survey, parents can expect the following if it shows a child would benefit from additional language support:

- A notice about joining a special language program
- Information about the types of programs available and how they can help
- Information on how the child will be assessed to determine which program is best



## TYPES OF PROGRAMS AND KEY TERMS

After language testing, children are separated into different English comprehension levels. Each classification will offer different services and language programs.

**ELL** **English Language Learner** = a student unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English.

**LEP** **Limited English Proficiency** = a student whose English language skills are limited and may make performing classwork in English difficult.

Schools offer a variety of programs to help students at all different levels. The types of programs offered in a particular district depend on available resources, such as funding and qualified teachers.

### English as a Second Language (ESL)

In an ESL classroom, students may have different language backgrounds, with lessons taught entirely in English. ESL teachers are not required to understand their students' native language. ESL instruction may happen through 'pull-outs' which takes students out of their normal class schedule for special sessions. This type of program is usually used in schools that have limited teachers and classrooms.

### Bilingual Education

All the students in a bilingual class speak the same native language. Students are initially taught in both languages, but as time passes, their teacher will slowly phase out the foreign language and teach only in English.

### Dual-Language Or Two-Way Bilingual Program

In a dual language classroom, half of the students are native English speakers, and the other half are students who speak the same foreign language. Teachers conduct lessons in both languages. These programs are beneficial to both student groups, as they all get to learn a new language.

No matter their classification or program, students should receive language support in all of their classes. This may include the use of a Spanish-English dictionary or extended time on tests/assignments.

### Children From Immigrant Communities

Texas students come from all backgrounds and cultures. All children, regardless of their immigration status, have the right to public education.

## RIGHTS OF IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

Schools are not allowed to ask about the immigration status of their students or their families. Schools are also not allowed to require or collect information that would expose anyone's undocumented status, such as a social security number.

### TO HELP ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS EXCEL IN SCHOOL PARENTS CAN:

- *Provide time for children to practice English at home or teach new words they learn to other family members*
- *Read together at home in either language*
- *Ask teachers to help make new information visual; pictures can help students better understand new vocabulary*

Schools are considered “Sensitive Locations” by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). This means U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials are discouraged from monitoring these spaces and must get special permission to make arrests or inquiries in these locations. Other Sensitive Locations include:



Other places of education (daycare, college, school bus stop, etc.)



Hospitals and other healthcare facilities



Churches/places of worship



Weddings & funerals



Public demonstrations (marches, rallies, parades)

The DHS Sensitive Location Policy exists so families can access essential programs and services without fear or hesitation. Parents and community members can report violations of the policy at (888) 351-4024 or online at [www.ice.gov/webform/ero-contact-form](http://www.ice.gov/webform/ero-contact-form). Note, these policies can change quickly and may not offer complete protection for undocumented individuals.

### HELPING KIDS COPE

Children thrive on stability and structure. Transitioning from one country to another or worrying about the immigration status of their loved ones would be difficult for any child. These added stressors in a child’s development may impact their performance or behavior in school. Whether children are overcoming trauma endured in their home country, experiencing culture shock, or are worried they will be separated from family or friends, it’s important for parents to recognize their stress and provide comfort when possible.

Some students may even struggle to feel safe in their school environment. This can lead students to distrust their teachers and authority figures, be overly alert to danger, act out negatively, or even think negatively of themselves. None of these feelings are great for student learning. Parents may help their children feel safer by talking through student fears of deportation, creating and sharing emergency plans, or seeking counseling or therapy services.

#### SYMPTOMS OF STRESS & TRAUMA

*Difficulty concentrating*



*Irritability/Aggression*



*Withdrawal*



*Difficulty sleeping/eating*



### RESOURCES FOR IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

|                                      |  |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>RAICES</b>                        | Provides free and low-cost legal services to underserved immigrant children, families, and refugees in Texas                             | <a href="http://raicetexas.org">raicetexas.org</a>           |
| <b>Catholic Charities Fort Worth</b> | Provides legal assistance including personal consultation, application preparation and filing, and administrative, legal representation. | <a href="http://ccfwimmigration.com">ccfwimmigration.com</a> |
| <b>United We Dream</b>               | Leads immigrant youth-led campaigns at the local, state, and federal level to fight for justice and dignity for immigrants.              | <a href="http://unitedwedream.org">unitedwedream.org</a>     |



### Children Who Are Gifted And Talented

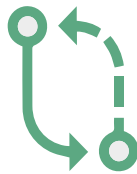
If children display special leadership skills or academic talents compared to their peers, he or she may be eligible for a school's Gifted and Talented (G/T) Education Program. The purpose of a G/T program is to provide intelligent, curious students with an education that meets his/her needs and challenges their growth. There are a wide range of students who classify as G/T, and a child can be G/T even if he/she does not make good grades.

#### HOW DOES A CHILD QUALIFY FOR G/T?

In Texas, schools start evaluating for G/T abilities in Kindergarten and continue through 12th Grade. Each district has different schedules and procedures for this evaluation, but it will take place at least once a year. Tests should be conducted in the easiest language for them to speak. To be evaluated, a student must typically be nominated by a teacher, parent, community member, or school staff. Parents can call their school campus or school district to learn about the process and timeframe for nomination and testing.

##### AN ENGAGED STUDENT

- Knows the answers
- Is interested
- Answers the questions
- Enjoys peers of the same age
- Is self-satisfied



##### A G/T STUDENT

- Questions the answers
- Is curious
- Asks hard questions
- Prefers adults/older kids
- Is usually self-critical

Depending on the programs offered in a child's school district, the G/T curriculum will vary. Some programs are individualized, meaning a child's teacher will approach each student with a unique way to pursue his/her learning according to the level that he or she is at academically. Additionally, some school districts offer special clusters of curriculum that your child can be part of. If a district offers this, the curriculum will be specialized based on if he/she tests into a certain G/T category. For example, a child may have above average intellectual ability or may be more creative. Ideally, his/her learning will be tailored to which type of G/T cluster he/she falls into.

#### HOW TO SUPPORT GIFTED AND TALENTED CHILDREN

Sometimes, G/T students feel that their schoolwork is too easy. When this happens, students can become bored, begin to put in less effort, and "zone out" or misbehave during school. To ensure children continue to grow and develop, here are a few things parents can do:



*Talk to children about the importance of learning*



*Help children explore their individual, academic, and creative interests*



*Provide structure and help children keep organized*



*Involve children in programs that explore new academic challenges*



*Celebrate accomplishments*

Parents should contact their district or school and research their evaluation policies if they think their child might be eligible for Gifted and Talented programs.

### Children Who Identify As LGBTIQ

LGBTIQ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Questioning. LGBTIQ children are more likely to experience exclusion, harassment, and physical violence than their non-LGBTIQ peers. This experience can make it difficult for a child to learn in school and feel a sense of belonging with their peers. To support a child's social,

emotional, and educational well-being, parents and allies should consider:

| PARENTS  | ALLIES   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Listen to your child, provide words of encouragement, and check in often.</li><li>• Educate yourself on LGBTIQ terms and issues. Visit <a href="http://myki-disgay.com">myki-disgay.com</a> or <a href="http://lgbt.ucla.edu/LGBT101">lgbt.ucla.edu/LGBT101</a> for great parent resources.</li><li>• Provide access to a safe and supportive environment with other students. This safe space could be your home or a community organization.</li><li>• Respect the privacy and confidentiality of your child. They may not want you to share information with friends, family, or teachers.</li><li>• If your child is being bullied at school, you can contact the school principal, guidance counselor, or a supportive teacher to determine how the school can intervene.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Respect all students and use their preferred pronouns.</li><li>• Research local and school policies</li><li>• In some cases, it may be necessary to advocate for inclusive policies at a school. Visit <a href="http://www.glsen.org">www.glsen.org</a> for ways to promote inclusivity.</li></ul> |

### Children Experiencing Homelessness

Many families struggle to find affordable housing, and as a result experience homelessness or housing insecurity. Under federal law, students experiencing homelessness can stay at their origin school (the school of their last address), or immediately enroll in the school closest to where they currently reside. Changing schools often or abruptly can negatively impact a student's academic performance. A familiar and stable school environment can often provide comfort to children experiencing uncertainty at home.

Families struggling with housing should connect with their school's homeless education liaison. Talk to school counselors, principals, or district officials to find your school's liaison or visit the Texas Homeless Education Office website [www.theotx.org](http://www.theotx.org). Homeless education liaisons can provide guidance and assist with a child's enrollment. The homeless education liaison can also connect families with organizations or programs that provide free or reduced meals, immunizations, health and dental care, educational assistance, and access to school supplies or other immediate needs.

### Children in Foster Care or Kinship Care

The lack of stability many children face in the foster care system puts them at greater risk of getting behind in school and dropping out. To keep children connected with teachers, friends, and familiar spaces, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) works with the local education agencies to help students remain in their current school. Foster parents can also help students stay on track by providing a stable and supportive learning environment.

#### Foster Parents Or Guardians May Want To:

- Meet with teachers to make them aware of issues at home and determine if tutoring or any extra academic or emotional support is necessary.
- Encourage their foster child to make friends and join after-school activities. A sense of belonging is important to their well-being and can help them enjoy school.
- Provide regular access to a trusted adult (teacher, school counselor, case manager), so foster children have someone else to go to with their problems or concerns.
- Help foster children think towards the future and explore potential internships or scholarship opportunities together. Financial aid specifically for children transitioning out of the foster care system is available, including free tuition in many cases.

For more resources visit [tea.texas.gov/FosterCareStudentSuccess](http://tea.texas.gov/FosterCareStudentSuccess).

# FORT WORTH AREA SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The information presented in the following District profiles from the 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years. District contact information, application dates, and parent resources are sourced from individual district websites. 2017-18 student enrollment data and STAAR performance data comes from TEA's 2018 state accountability ratings released on August 16th, 2018. The Student Mobility rate and CHILDREN AT RISK letter grade are based on TEA data from the 2016-17 school year. For a full explanation of how schools are graded visit [TexasSchoolGuide.org](http://TexasSchoolGuide.org).

## Student Mobility

Mobility is defined by TEA as the percent of students who are enrolled at a school for less than 83% of the school year. School districts with more economically disadvantaged students tend to have higher mobility rates. Schools with mobility rates below 9% are also significantly more likely to receive an "A" grade from C@R than those with higher mobility rates. Rates listed come from 2016-2017.

## FORT WORTH ISD

100 N University Dr, Fort Worth, TX 76107  
(817) 814-2000  
[www.fwisd.org](http://www.fwisd.org)

Superintendent: Dr. Kent Scribner

Number of Campuses: 11

Student Mobility: 16.95%

Parent Information Line: (817) 814-2070

Parent Portal/Access Student Grades:

[www.fwisd.org/schoolsoftware.com/focus/](http://www.fwisd.org/schoolsoftware.com/focus/)



Magnet Program:

Global Programs & Schools of Choice

Application Period:

November 3 - December 1

## 2017-18 STUDENT ENROLLMENT

86,039 Students Enrolled

77.7% Economically Disadvantaged

30.8% English Learners

8.3% Students Receiving Special Education

## 2017-18 STAAR PERFORMANCE

36% of students meet Grade Level

Standards or Above on all STAAR tests

67% of students made 1 year's worth of

Academic Growth in Reading and Math.

Among CHILDREN AT RISK Graded

Schools 16% received an A or B rating.

## Student Enrollment Data

2017-2018 District Student Enrollment data comes directly from TEA's 2018 state accountability ratings released August 15th, 2018.

- **Economically Disadvantaged:** students eligible for free or reduced-priced lunches at school.
- **English Language Learners:** students whose primary language is one other than English and who are in the process of learning English.
- **Students Receiving Special Education:** refers to the population of students who receives special education services. These students would have received an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Students from the following populations tend to face greater challenges in their education than their peers.

## Parent Portals and Information Lines

Some districts have special phone lines to help connect parents with information or direct them to the right department. Many districts also allow parents to access their child's grade and attendance information online through parent portals or virtual gradebooks.

## CHILDREN AT RISK School Grade

C@R grades are calculated using student performance on STAAR Reading and Math tests, a school's overall campus performance when compared to other campuses statewide with similar levels of poverty, student-level growth on standardized test scores and college readiness (high schools only). Note: current grades are based on 2016-17 data.

## STAAR Performance

Students in grades 3-11 take one or more STAAR exams. These tests determine how well students know grade level knowledge and skills taught in the classroom every day.

- **Students who Meet Grade Level** generally demonstrate the ability to think critically and apply grade level knowledge and skills in familiar contexts.
- **Academic Growth** measures how many students gained a year in reading and math skills over the course of the school year. Often students come into school below grade level, growth rewards schools for making improvement even if students still test behind.

## FORT WORTH ISD

100 N University Dr, Fort Worth, TX 76107  
(817) 814-2000  
[www.fwisd.org](http://www.fwisd.org)

**Superintendent:** Dr. Kent Scribner  
**Number of Campuses:** 141  
**Student Mobility:** 16.95%  
**Parent Information Line:** (817)814-2070  
**Parent Portal/Access Student Grades:**  
[www.fwisd.focusschoolsoftware.com/focus/](http://www.fwisd.focusschoolsoftware.com/focus/)



### Magnet Program:

Gold Seal Programs & Schools of Choice

### Application Period:

November 9 – December 7



Visit [www.fwisd.org/choice](http://www.fwisd.org/choice) to learn more.

### 2017-18 STUDENT ENROLLMENT

**86,039** Students Enrolled  
**77.7%** Economically Disadvantaged  
**30.8%** English Learners  
**8.3%** Students Receiving Special Education

### 2017-18 STAAR PERFORMANCE

**36%** of students meet Grade Level Standards or Above on all STAAR tests  
**67%** of students made 1 year's worth of Academic Growth in Reading and Math.

Among CHILDREN AT RISK Graded Schools **16%** received an **A** or **B** rating.

## ARLINGTON ISD

1203 W Pioneer Pkwy Arlington, TX 76013  
(682) 867-4611  
[www.aisd.net](http://www.aisd.net)

**Superintendent:** Dr. Marcelo Cavazos  
**Number of Campuses:** 77  
**Student Mobility:** 16.09%  
**Arlington ISD Parent and Community Engagement Department:**  
(682) 867-7715

**Parent Portal/Access Student Grades:**  
[www.aisd.net/families/parent-self-serve/](http://www.aisd.net/families/parent-self-serve/)

### 2017-18 STUDENT ENROLLMENT

**61,020** Students Enrolled  
**26.4%** Economically Disadvantaged  
**30.8%** English Learners  
**7.8%** Students Receiving Special Education

### 2017-18 STAAR PERFORMANCE

**44%** of students meet Grade Level Standard or Above on all STAAR tests  
**70%** of students made 1 year's worth of Academic Growth in Reading and Math.

Among CHILDREN AT RISK graded schools **31%** received an **A** or **B** rating.

## BIRDVILLE ISD

6125 E Belknap St Haltom City, TX 76117  
(817) 547-5700  
[www.birdvilleschools.net](http://www.birdvilleschools.net)

**Superintendent:** Dr. Darrell G Brown  
**Number of Campuses:** 33  
**Student Mobility:** 13.32%  
**Parent Information Line:** N/A  
**Parent Portal/Access Student Grades:**

Visit [www.birdvilleschools.net](http://www.birdvilleschools.net) >> scroll down to "Popular Links" >> select "Grades"

### 2017-18 STUDENT ENROLLMENT

**23,607** Students Enrolled  
**58.1%** Economically Disadvantaged  
**20.1%** English Learners  
**9.3%** Students Receiving Special Education

### 2017-18 STAAR PERFORMANCE

**53%** of students meets Grade Level Standard or Above on all STAAR tests  
**72%** of students made 1 year's worth of Academic Growth in Reading and Math.

Among CHILDREN AT RISK graded schools **55%** received an **A** or **B** rating.





## CASTLEBERRY ISD

5228 Ohio Garden Rd, Fort Worth, TX 76114  
(817) 252-2000  
[www.castleberryisd.net](http://www.castleberryisd.net)

**Superintendent:** Mr John Ramos

**Number of Campuses:** 7

**Student Mobility:** 16.7%

**Parent Portal/Access Student Grades:**

Access student grades through the Skyward Family Access system. Visit [www.castleberryisd.net/family/family-access](http://www.castleberryisd.net/family/family-access) to learn how to sign up.

### 2017-18 STUDENT ENROLLMENT

**3,904** Students Enrolled  
**85.2%** Economically Disadvantaged  
**35.6%** English Learners  
**8.9%** Students Receiving Special Education

### 2017-18 STAAR PERFORMANCE

**36%** of students meet Grade Level Standards or Above on all STAAR tests  
**69%** of students made 1 year's worth of Academic Growth in Reading and Math.

Among CHILDREN AT RISK Graded Schools **0%** received an **A** or **B** rating.

## CROWLEY ISD

Po Box 688, Crowley, TX 76036  
(817) 297-5800  
[www.crowleyisdtx.org](http://www.crowleyisdtx.org)

**Superintendent:** Dr. Michael Mcfarland

**Number of Campuses:** 20

**Student Mobility:** 17.57%

**Parent Portal/Access Student Grades:**

Visit [www.crowleyisdtx.org](http://www.crowleyisdtx.org) << select "Skyward" located in the top right corner.



**Magnet Program:** MyChoice Programs

**Application Period:**

Late January -Mid February



### 2017-18 STUDENT ENROLLMENT

**15,203** Students Enrolled  
**61%** Economically Disadvantaged  
**15.4%** English Learners  
**9.5%** Students Receiving Special Education

### 2017-18 STAAR PERFORMANCE

**36%** of students meet Grade Level Standards or Above on all STAAR tests  
**64%** of students made 1 year's worth of Academic Growth in Reading and Math.

Among CHILDREN AT RISK Graded Schools **5.3%** received an **A** or **B** rating.

## EAGLE MOUNTAIN SAGINAW ISD

1200 Old Decatur Rd, Fort Worth, TX 76179  
(817) 232-0880  
[www.emsisd.com](http://www.emsisd.com)

**Superintendent:** Dr. Jim Chadwell

**Number of Campuses:** 27

**Student Mobility:** 13.57%

**Parent Portal/Access Student Grades:**

Access student grades and attendance through the Skyward Family Access system. Visit [emsisd.com/Domain/78](http://emsisd.com/Domain/78) to learn how to sign up.

### 2017-18 STUDENT ENROLLMENT

**19,251** Students Enrolled  
**42.5%** Economically Disadvantaged  
**9.5%** English Learners  
**8.8%** Students Receiving Special Education

### 2017-18 STAAR PERFORMANCE

**52%** of students meet Grade Level Standards or Above on all STAAR tests  
**70%** of students made 1 year's worth of Academic Growth in Reading and Math.

Among CHILDREN AT RISK Graded Schools **34.7%** received an **A** or **B** rating.

## EVERMAN ISD

608 Townley Dr, Everman, TX 76140  
(817) 568-3500  
[www.eisd.org](http://www.eisd.org)

**Superintendent:** Dr. Curtis Amos

**Number of Campuses:** 10

**Student Mobility:** 17.97%

**Parent Portal/Access Student Grades:**

Access student grades through the Skyward Family Access system. Visit [www.eisd.org](http://www.eisd.org) >> scroll down to the icons >> select the first one labeled "Skyward Family Access."

### 2017-18 STUDENT ENROLLMENT

**5,822** Students Enrolled  
**82.9%** Economically Disadvantaged  
**29.1%** English Learners  
**7.9%** Students Receiving Special Education

### 2017-18 STAAR PERFORMANCE

**39%** of students meet Grade Level Standards or Above on all STAAR tests  
**67%** of students made 1 year's worth of Academic Growth in Reading and Math.

Among CHILDREN AT RISK Graded Schools **11.1%** received an **A** or **B** rating.

## HURST-EULESS-BEDFORD ISD

1849A Central Dr, Bedford, TX 76022  
(817) 283-4461  
[www.hebisd.edu](http://www.hebisd.edu)



**Superintendent:** Mr. Steve Chapman

**Number of Campuses:** 30

**Student Mobility:** 15.66%

**Parent Portal/Access Student Grades:**

Visit [www.hebisd.edu](http://www.hebisd.edu) >> select "Parents & Students" in the main menu >> select "Home Access Center."

 **Magnet Program:** Schools of Choice  
**Application Period:**   
January - February

### 2017-18 STUDENT ENROLLMENT

**23,364** Students Enrolled  
**52.6%** Economically Disadvantaged  
**15.2%** English Learners  
**8.9%** Students Receiving Special Education

### 2017-18 STAAR PERFORMANCE

**62%** of students meet Grade Level Standards or Above on all STAAR tests  
**75%** of students made 1 year's worth of Academic Growth in Reading and Math.

Among CHILDREN AT RISK Graded Schools **72.7%** received an **A** or **B** rating.

## KENNEDALE ISD

P O Box 467 Kennedale, TX 76060  
(817) 563-8000  
[www.kennedaleisd.net](http://www.kennedaleisd.net)

**Superintendent:** Mr. Gary W. Dugger

**Number of Campuses:** 5

**Student Mobility:** 13.79%

**Parent Information Line:**

**Parent Portal/Access Student Grades:**

Visit [www.kennedaleisd.net](http://www.kennedaleisd.net) >> scroll down to the icons >> select "Parent Portal."

### 2017-18 STUDENT ENROLLMENT

**3,118** Students Enrolled  
**42.7%** Economically Disadvantaged  
**7.6%** English Learners  
**8.9%** Students Receiving Special Education

### 2017-18 STAAR PERFORMANCE

**49%** of students meet Grade Level Standards or Above on all STAAR tests  
**65%** of students made 1 year's worth of Academic Growth in Reading and Math.

Among CHILDREN AT RISK Graded Schools **60%** received an **A** or **B** rating.

## LAKE WORTH ISD

6805 Telephone Rd, Lake Worth, TX 76135  
(817) 306-4205  
[www.lwisd.org](http://www.lwisd.org)

**Superintendent:** Mr Jimmie Malone

**Number of Campuses:** 6

**Student Mobility:** 20.58%

**Parent Portal/Access Student Grades:**

Access student grades and attendance through the Skyward Family Access system. Visit [www.lwisd.org/domain/39](http://www.lwisd.org/domain/39) to learn how to sign up.

*\* Ask about their Parent Advisory Committee (PAC)*

### 2017-18 STUDENT ENROLLMENT

**3,347** Students Enrolled  
**82.8%** Economically Disadvantaged  
**19.6%** English Learners  
**9.1%** Students Receiving Special Education

### 2017-18 STAAR PERFORMANCE

**28%** of students meet Grade Level Standards or Above on all STAAR tests  
**63%** of students made 1 year's worth of Academic Growth in Reading and Math.

Among CHILDREN AT RISK Graded Schools **0%** received an **A** or **B** rating.

## WHITE SETTLEMENT ISD

401 S Cherry Ln, White Settlement, TX 76108  
(817) 367-1300  
[www.wsisd.com](http://www.wsisd.com)

**Superintendent:** Mr. Frank Molinar

**Number of Campuses:** 8

**Student Mobility:** 15.29%

**Parent Portal/Access Student Grades:**

Visit [www.wsisd.com](http://www.wsisd.com) >> select "About" from the main menu >> select "Family Access/Gradebook."

### 2017-18 STUDENT ENROLLMENT

**6,842** Students Enrolled  
**55.1%** Economically Disadvantaged  
**12.2%** English Learners  
**9.6%** Students Receiving Special Education

### 2017-18 STAAR PERFORMANCE

**47%** of students meet Grade Level Standards or Above on all STAAR tests  
**68%** of students made 1 year's worth of Academic Growth in Reading and Math.

Among CHILDREN AT RISK Graded Schools **50%** received an **A** or **B** rating.

# FORTH WORTH AREA ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCES

Parents don't have to go it alone! There are many quality programs and organizations in the Fort Worth area working to support local parents and families.

| ORGANIZATION                             | WEBSITE  | PHONE        | LOCATION       | PROGRAMS/ FOCUS AREA                                 |
|--|--|--------------|----------------|--|
| AB Christian Learning Center             | <a href="http://abchrist.org">abchrist.org</a>   | 817-457-3911 | Fort Worth, TX | Education, Family Support                            |
| ACH Child and Family Services            | <a href="http://achservices.org">achservices.org</a>   | 817-335-4673 | Fort Worth, TX | Family Services                                      |
| Big Brothers Big Sisters                 | <a href="http://bbbstx.org">bbbstx.org</a>   | 888-887-2447 | Irving, TX     | Mentoring, Youth Programs                            |
| Boys and Girls Club                      | <a href="http://fortworthkids.org">fortworthkids.org</a>   | 817-834-4711 | Fort Worth, TX | Youth Programs                                       |
| Camp Fire First Texas                    | <a href="http://campfirefw.org">campfirefw.org</a>   | 817-831-2111 | Fort Worth, TX | After-School Programs, Child Care Services, Training |
| Catholic Charities                       | <a href="http://catholiccharitiesfortworth.org">catholiccharitiesfortworth.org</a>                       | 817-534-0814 | Fort Worth, TX | Family Support                                       |
| CCD Counseling                           | <a href="http://ccdounseling.com">ccdounseling.com</a>   | 800-897-7068 | Denton, TX     | Counseling Services                                  |
| Center Street Counseling Services        | <a href="http://centerstreetcounseling.com">centerstreetcounseling.com</a>                               | 817-539-0499 | Mansfield, TX  | Counseling Services                                  |
| Child Care Associates                    | <a href="http://childcareassociates.org">childcareassociates.org</a>                                     | 817-838-0055 | Fort Worth, TX | Child Care   |
| Child Study Center                       | <a href="http://cscfw.org">cscfw.org</a>   | 817-336-8611 | Fort Worth, TX | Special Needs Services                               |
| Clayton YES! (Youth Enrichment Services) | <a href="http://claytonyes.org">claytonyes.org</a>   | 817-923-9888 | Fort Worth, TX | After-School Programs                                |
| Communities in Schools                   | <a href="http://cistarrant.org">cistarrant.org</a>   | 817-446-5454 | Fort Worth, TX | Education  |
| Cornerstone Assitance Network            | <a href="http://canetwork.org">canetwork.org</a>   | 817-632-6000 | Fort Worth, TX | Family Support                                       |
| Early Childhood Matters                  | <a href="http://fortworthtexas.gov/library/earlychildhood">fortworthtexas.gov/library/earlychildhood</a> | 817-392-7531 | Fort Worth, TX | Education, Family Support                            |
| Early Learning Alliance                  | <a href="http://earlylearningntx.org">earlylearningntx.org</a>   | 817-413-4456 | Tarrant County | Education Coalition                                  |
| Easter Seals North Texas                 | <a href="http://easterseals.com/northtexas">easterseals.com/northtexas</a>                               | 888-617-7171 | Fort Worth, TX | Special Needs Services                               |
| Eastside Alliance Community Partnership  | <a href="http://fwisd.org/Page/7001">fwisd.org/Page/7001</a>   | 817-815-4173 | Fort Worth, TX | Educational Programs                                 |

|   |                             |                |                |   |
|---|-----------------------------|----------------|----------------|---|
| FIT Worth                                       | fitworth.org                | 817-735-2947   | Fort Worth, TX | Health  |
| Fort Worth Public Library                       | fortworthtexas.gov/Library  | 817-392-7323   | Fort Worth, TX | Library, Family Support   |
| Fort Worth SPARC                                | fortworthsparc.org          | 817-296-7721   | Fort Worth, TX | After-School Programs   |
| Fortress Youth Development Center               | fortressydc.org             | 817-335-1007   | Fort Worth, TX | Family Support, Youth Programs  |
| Girls Inc. of Tarrant County                    | girlsinctarrant.org         | 817-259-1050   | Fort Worth, TX | Female Empowerment Programs   |
| Historic Stop Six Initiative                    | fwisd.org/Page/7131         | 817-815-3470   | Fort Worth, TX | Educational Initiative  |
| Lena Pope Early Learning Center                 | lenapope.org                | 817-255-2500   | Fort Worth, TX | Education, Family Support, Child Care                                   |
| My Health My Resources (MHMR) of Tarrant County | mhmrtarrant.org             | 817-569-4300   | Fort Worth, TX | Mental Health, Substance Abuse, Child Development, Homelessness, & More |
| New Day Services                                | newdayservices.org          | 817-926-9499   | Fort Worth, TX | Parenting Support   |
| Read Fort Worth                                 | readfortworth.org           | 817-258-8130   | Fort Worth, TX | Education Coalition   |
| Santa Fe Youth Services                         | santafeyouth.org            | 817-492-4673   | Fort Worth, TX | Family Support  |
| Tarrant Cares                                   | tarrantcares.org            | -              | Tarrant County | Information on Local Services   |
| Tarrant Area Food Bank                          | tafb.org                    | 817-857-7100   | Tarrant County | Food & Nutrition  |
| The Parenting Center                            | theparentingcenter.org      | 817-332-6348   | Fort Worth, TX | Parenting, Family Support   |
| UCC Bethlehem Center                            | unitedcommunity-centers.org | 817-927-5556   | Fort Worth, TX | Faith-based Community Support   |
| Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County          | workforcesolutions.net      | (817) 413-4000 | Tarrant County | Child Care, Employment Services, Career Training                        |
| YMCA  | ymcafw.org                  | 817-335-9622   | Fort Worth, TX | Community Center  |

**2-1-1 TEXAS**

2-1-1 Texas is a Texas Health and Human Services Commission program that connects Texans with state and local services. From finding food or housing to crisis or substance abuse counseling, parents can call the free, anonymous hotline 24 hours a day, every day by dialing 2-1-1 or (877) 541-7905 to learn about resources in their community. Parents can also search for services online and by zip code at [www.211texas.org](http://www.211texas.org).

## LOOKING FOR MORE?

Navigating the public education system can be challenging for any parent. By learning what to look for in a quality education and how to support their child along the way, parents are better equipped to handle these challenges. Thank you for taking the time to read this Parent Action Guide. Parents interested in more educational resources should visit [TexasSchoolGuide.org](http://TexasSchoolGuide.org) for the latest information on school performance and trends. Parents can also visit [SmartParents.org](http://SmartParents.org) for everyday parenting tips for all ages.



## LOCAL RESOURCES



# PARENT ACTION GUIDE

This page marks the end of the English version.  
The Spanish version begins from the guide's  
opposite cover.



Esta página marca el final de la versión en  
español. La versión en inglés comienza de la guía  
cubierta opuesta.

# GUÍA DE ACCIÓN PARA PADRES