

Linus D. Wright  
Formerly, Supt. Dallas ISD  
Formerly Undersecretary of Education

GOAL OF EDUCATION: The goal of education is to produce a functionally literate society—Texas has fallen far short of achieving that goal for thousands of its citizens. Education is the only tool for bridging the gap between the “haves” and “have nots.” To remain competitive in our national and global economies, Texas must restructure its education system. Our 100-yr. old agrarian system has been obsolete far too long. Texas has the second highest rate of poverty in the U. S. and also has the nation’s second-widest gap in income between the rich and the poor.

### LEGISLATURE’S RESPONSIBILITY

The Texas Legislature has the responsibility for providing revenue to support state services such as education, health care, welfare, and transportation. State agencies are clamoring for additional revenue to support their responsibilities. It would appear wise that before new revenue is appropriated that each state agency be required to conduct a self-analysis of its expenditures to determine efficiency of operation.

Texas has gone through several major reforms in the past seventy years, beginning with the Gilmer-Akin Bill of 1949, the famous Ross Perot House Bill 72 in 1984,

and at least three Robin Hood Bills, all appropriating millions of dollars in an effort to improve public education. Yet, according to recent media reports, Texas continues to lag behind other states and far behind the 34 other OECD Nations.

### TEXAS CONSTITUTION REQUIRES EQUITY AND EFFICIENCY

Lawyers and the Courts continue to challenge the Legislature regarding the issue of EQUITY AND EFFICIENCY AND HOW THE TWO STANDARDS ARE and just?” and EFFICIENCY is interpreted to mean are we getting effective output for the total input. To my knowledge the Legislature has never established a MEASURED. EQUITY is interpreted to mean “is it fair definition, a standard for EQUITY AND EFFICIENCY—therefore leaving the door open for further disputes and challenges by the Courts.

### WHY THE NEED FOR RESTRUCTURING OUR SYSTEM OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

First it is to comply with the State Constitution (according to the courts) and second, to identify the root cause of why the Texas education performance continues to lag behind other states as well as the rest of the world. The weak link is our elementary program. Elementary teachers are not adequately trained for STEM education,

and the elementary curriculum is not rigorous enough to prepare for successful performance in the upper grades.

RECOMMEND FOUR STRUCTURAL CHANGES:

1. Mandate full-day early childhood education for 3 and 4 yr. old children—see research support later in this document.

2. Require a more rigid certification program for new elementary teachers and retrain existing elementary teachers for STEM Education.

3. Eliminate the 12<sup>th</sup> Grade—the most expensive and the least productive grade academically. Adding early childhood education for 3 and 4 yr. old children will prepare them for greater academic achievement. Students will be attending public school 13 years instead of 12 under the existing system.

4. Authorize high schools to use adjunct instructors for vocational courses—following the Community College model. The change will not only improve quality but will also reduce cost considerably. An alternative would be to partner with Community Colleges to conduct all vocational courses—at considerable savings to the taxpayer. Joint use of existing high school vocational labs would be another cost effective effort.

SPECIAL NOTICE---remediation for students at risk is very expensive at the K-12 and college levels. It has been

estimated that millions of dollars is being spent each year for remediation. Early childhood education and retraining elementary teachers will over time eliminate the need for expensive remediation.

## THE MOST EFFECTIVE EDUCATION REFORM

Harvard University states that a fully financed mandatory early childhood education program will do more to change the culture and academic outcomes of students than any other area of reform.

Early childhood education is the most effective and the least expensive way to improve culture and academic achievement, particularly for children off poverty and non-English speaking. The only way to beat poverty is through education. It is the most powerful tool for changing the world.

The U. S. is the only OECD member nation (Organization of Economic and Cooperative Development) that does not mandate early childhood education.

If Texas does not attack the root cause of our educational dilemma, the problem will never be solved.

More than thirty years of research indicates that the long-term investment in early childhood education returns 8 to 1 yield. For every dollar spent there is returned eight dollars in future savings for education,

health care, welfare, poverty, law enforcement and overall governmental costs.

There are two other options for ECE that the Legislature could consider that would be just as effective but less expensive. One, schools could partner with local certified day-care centers—schools would provide the teachers and the curriculum for 3 and 4 yr. old children and the day-care centers would provide the facilities and other expenses.

Second, schools could partner with local certified Day Care Centers using teachers with a 2-year child Development Degree. Day Care Centers would provide facilities and other expenses. 20 years of research has shown that this approach is as effective as the regular school model and much less expensive.

One thing to note: working parents much prefer the day-care model over the regular school model in that they receive 8 hrs. of child supervision plus effective early childhood education.

### HOW TO PAY FOR RESTRUCTURING

1. Eliminate the 12<sup>th</sup> grade: use funds for full day 3 & 4 yr. old early childhood education program.
2. Authorize use of adjunct instructors for vocational courses in the high schools, following the successful

Community College model, OR partner with the Community College to provide instructors in the existing high school vocational labs.

3. Remediation of at-risk students in K-12 schools costs the taxpayers millions of dollars every year. With the restructuring, the expensive remediation could be eliminated over time.

4. Authorize public schools to partner with local certified Day Care Centers in using one or both of the recommended approaches. Either approach will reduce the cost and make Early Childhood Education more affordable.

The Texas Education Agency will be in a position to provide better estimates of cost and savings, plus the overall effect the changes will have educationally.

### SUMMARY

The four recommendations offer the greatest hope for future cultural and academic achievement for the five million students in our public schools.

Plus, they will help to restore confidence in our public education system.

Teaching should be treated as a profession and teachers treated as professionals.

