



Testimony

House Bill 1605

Testimony Before the Texas House Committee on Public Education

Chairman Buckley, Vice Chair Allen, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Erin Davis Valdez, and I'm an education policy director at Texas Public Policy Foundation. I'm here to support HB 1605 both from the perspective of its value as good education policy and also from my perspective as a former educator and administrator.

From a policy perspective, HB 1605 supports teachers by allowing them to focus on delivering instruction and providing timely feedback for students. It rightfully places the burden on the state to create and provide high quality materials for the professionals that it charges with the responsibility of ensuring students meet the standards that the state has set. Giving teachers the right tools is the starting point not only for better instruction, but for better working conditions for teachers.

As a former teacher and administrator, I can attest to the need for high quality instructional materials as a key to increasing job satisfaction. When you don't have to scramble to create your own materials or lesson plans, you have time to work on delivery of instruction and feedback to student work.

School days are busy, and teachers' planning periods are just not long enough for them to both create new materials and grade student work, or work with individual students who may need extra support. As a writer that I respect a great deal, Robert Pondiscio, [has put it](#), we need to make teaching a job that can be done by mortals.

Delivering great instruction is an art form. It takes time and attention to master. It takes multiple iterations of similar lessons, and over time, growing subject matter expertise. Providing students with feedback takes time, and especially if that feedback is on student writing or other activities that can't be graded via multiple choice.

What does it mean to a teacher to have high quality instructional materials? It means that when you are teaching World War II, for example, that you have the following resources at your fingertips:

- reviews of the antecedents to the events and people that students will encounter;
- narratives that are appropriate and interesting to students at their grade level;
- activities that are closely aligned with the lesson to reinforce the key information;
- and formative assessments that cover what students need to know to move on to more complex topics.

In short, it means that you do not have to create all of those resources from what you can find on Google or Teachers Pay Teachers.

Parents who want to know more about what is being taught in the classroom can be stymied simply by the fact that classroom materials are often assembled only a few days in advance and from a variety of sources. Because this bill gives teachers high quality materials to work with, and moves districts away from requiring them to create their own, it puts the onus on districts to provide these materials to parents.

In short, as a former teacher and administrator, I think this bill gets it exactly right – teachers are overburdened, and they deserve to have the materials they need to do their jobs well. They should not have to scramble to figure out how to “cover” the TEKS from day to day, week to week. This bill takes that concern off the table, and allows them to focus on what most teachers came in to the profession to do: focus on students and make learning come alive.

Thank you, and I’m happy to answer any questions.

Erin Davis Valdez is the policy director for Next Generation Texas, an initiative of the Foundation. She has been passionate about the transformational power of education all her life, having been given the gift of being homeschooled. She taught for over a decade in Austin-area schools and served as an assistant principal at a charter school in Lewisville. These experiences have given her the opportunity to see first-hand how students can thrive when they have excellent options.

Since joining the Foundation, Valdez has conducted research on career and technical education at the secondary and post-secondary levels, civics education, and welfare to work programs in Texas.

Valdez earned an M.A. in classics from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and a B.A. in classical studies from Hillsdale College.

About Texas Public Policy Foundation

The Texas Public Policy Foundation is a 501(c)3 non-profit, non-partisan research institute. The Foundation promotes and defends liberty, personal responsibility, and free enterprise in Texas and the nation by educating and affecting policymakers and the Texas public policy debate with academically sound research and outreach.

Funded by thousands of individuals, foundations, and corporations, the Foundation does not accept government funds or contributions to influence the outcomes of its research.

The public is demanding a different direction for their government, and the Texas Public Policy Foundation is providing the ideas that enable policymakers to chart that new course.

