



The Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership recognizes that the long-term economic future of the region is dependent upon the quality of public education (K-12). The Bay Area is blessed in its partnership with five highly successful public school districts. Though different in programming and students they serve, all five districts have achieved state recognition for student success. The districts include **Clear Creek ISD, Dickinson ISD, Friendswood ISD, La Porte ISD and Pasadena ISD**. Together, they serve approximately 114,000 students amid a resident population that exceeds 440,000 people.

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STUDENT ENROLLMENT GROWTH

Student growth presents challenges to school districts that must provide staffing, academic programming and facilities to meet the needs of the students and the 21st century workforce required by business and industry with the Bay Area. The cost of public education continues to climb in order to address the increasing enrollment at a time when the state is reducing its level of funding for public education. The Bay Area and its school districts have grown 22% over the past decade.

	Residents	2001-02	2011-12	% Growth
Clear Creek	150,000	30,994	38,250	23%
Dickinson	14,000	6,134	9,026	47%
Friendswood	12,146	5,248	5,946	13%
La Porte	51,359	7,745	7,769	0%
Pasadena	212,000	43,476	53,000	22%
BAY AREA Total	439,505	93,597	113,991	22%

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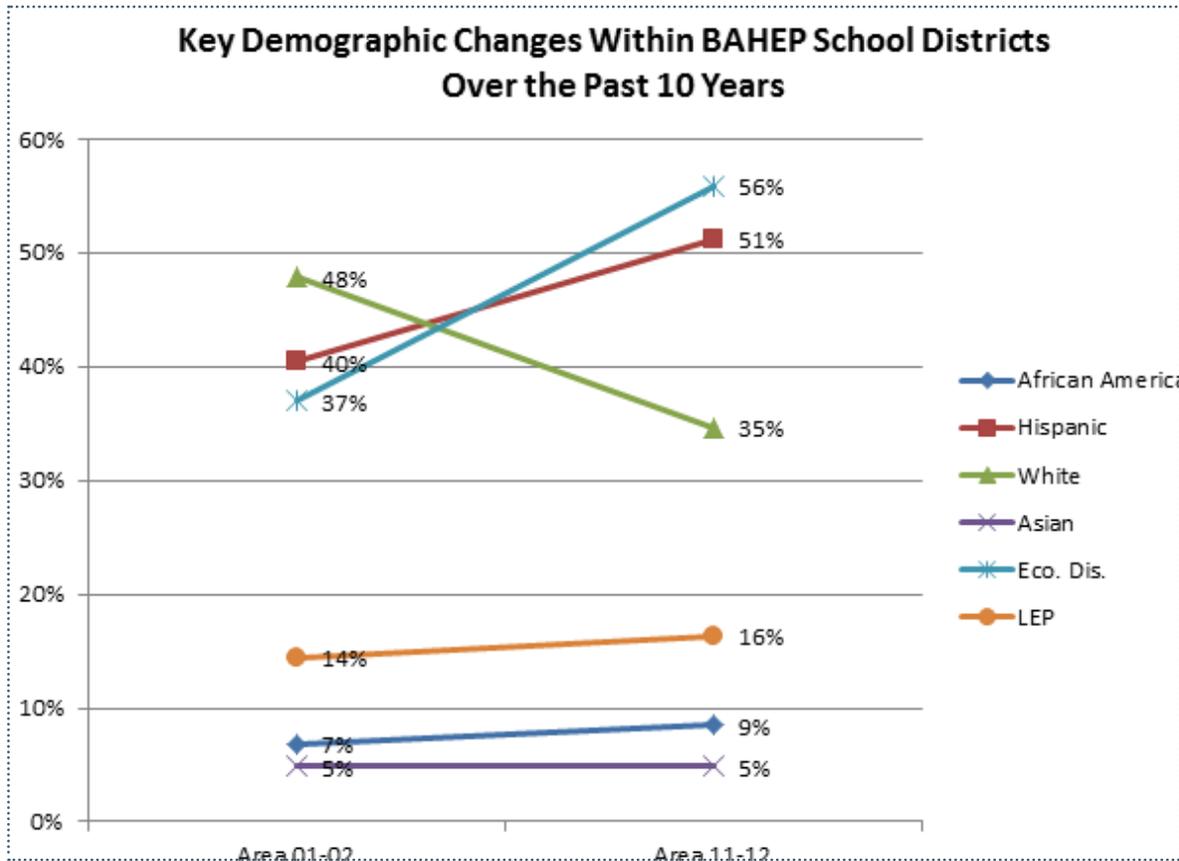
The student population has not only increased by 22 percent during the past 10 years, **the demographic composition of that population has shifted dramatically.** The changes in population reflect changes that are occurring at the state level. The

area's Hispanic population has become the majority with a growth of 11% over the past decade and now represents the majority of the area's public school students at 51%. The Anglo population has decreased by 13% over the same time period, representing about one-third of the student population. **The far more meaningful statistic for the area centers on the increase in the percentage of economically disadvantaged students.**

Research shows that a student's economic background has the highest correlation to student success or failure. As poverty increases, student achievement typically decreases unless strong academic intervention is made. The required intervention drives up the cost of education. The higher the percentage of poverty within the district, the higher the cost of educating the students to the level required for future success.

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GREATER DIVERSITY



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Educators, business leaders and politicians agree that establishing a culture of high expectation for all students benefits Texas communities. Measuring the achievement of those high expectations ensures that every student is being challenged and served. No one argues that the Texas accountability system has focused our public schools on the success of every child, regardless of economic or ethnic background.

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HIGHER EXPECTATIONS

Over the years Texas has developed a series of assessments to determine how well the schools are addressing the multiple needs of our students in the core subject areas of language arts, math, science and social studies. The disadvantage of the assessment

process is that it measures student achievement on the day of assessment and not on the full body of work in which the student is engaged throughout the year. **STAAR, the latest iteration of the state test introduced in 2010-11, ups the intensity of the assessment by requiring 38 days of instruction each year to be set aside for assessment, not counting the diagnostic tests the schools conduct during each grading period to ensure that students are making progress toward the state's goals. That equates to more than 20 percent of the school year devoted to state testing.** When every high school end-of-course exam determines whether or not a student will graduate, the pressure on students and teachers rises to an extreme level.

In its planning document, *"Creating a New Vision for Public Education in Texas,"* the Texas Association of School Administrators called for changing the focus high-stakes standardized testing to multiple measures of student success. The report states, **"For assessment to be of any value, it must move from the present 'autopsy' model to one that more resembles a 'daily check-up,'** which continuously identifies student strengths, interests, motivations, accomplishments, and other information necessary so that teachers can design the learning experiences that will best meet each student's needs."

Not only would the shift provide a more accurate measure of student success, teachers would have more time to teach, students more time to learn and local school districts could shift some of their limited resources toward classroom instruction.

No one argues against an accountability system that ensures that every student in Texas will graduate high school prepared to enter the work force or to continue toward post-secondary education and training. The implementation of that system must provide meaningful data to educators, student and their parents without minimizing the opportunities for creative teaching and learning.

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Few people debate that public education is one of the fundamental responsibilities of the state. In Texas, funding an appropriate public education system is a Constitutional requirement. As the state worked through its budget during the last legislative session, tough decisions had to be made. In the end,

the funding for public education was significantly reduced. The trickle down effect of those cuts on BAHEP districts was also significant. **Bay Area Houston school districts lost \$55 million during the current biennium.** As a result, hundreds of teachers, administrators and support staff lost their jobs. The direct impact on students and instruction was enormous. Class sizes increased. Academic programs were limited or cut and new instructional initiatives were delayed.

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DECREASING DOLLARS AND INCREASING COSTS

Compounding the problems created by these systemic losses are critical needs of our **rising population of economically disadvantage children.** Students who come to school with limited prior knowledge and experiences or limited English language skills find themselves behind the learning curve and requiring greater assistance from teachers and staff.

Public education is a labor intensive endeavor. On average, 85% of a district's total budget is tied up in salary and benefits. While most districts seek to put as much money as possible in direct instruction through teacher salaries and instructional resources, **the cost of operations continue to climb. Utility costs, property insurance, fuel costs and technology are also major cost drivers.** Yet, without adequate heating and cooling, without scheduled transportation and without insurance protection, and without technology, the classroom environment that supports instruction would quickly suffer.

Gulf coast school districts, like those in the BAHEP area have experienced property insurance increases triple or more in cost since Hurricane Katrina in 2005. These are costs not incurred at inland districts, yet there is no equalized funding from the state to account for these differences, placing BAHEP districts at a disadvantage in teacher salaries and instructional support.

The state requires that local districts provide transportation to any school district living more than two miles from school. Yet the transportation allotment provided by the state which was meant to offset, in part, the cost of gasoline, diesel, tires and parts has not been increased since the 1980s.

The uncertainty of school funding keeps local school districts in limbo as they try to plan and prepare for the future.

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The Texas Association of School Boards and the Texas Association of School Administrators published a booklet in 2010 called "The Report on School District Mandates: Cost Drivers in Public Education." The document states:

"State mandates on school districts are only one factor leading to the rising cost of education. The impact of inflation, especially on staff salaries, is one of the single largest cost factors in school districts. Other cost drivers include the growing student population, which is estimated at more than 80,000 additional students annually; the growing population of economically disadvantaged students, which currently make up 56 percent of Texas public school students; and the increased costs of utilities, fuel, and insurance. Increased state expectations with the implementation of college readiness standards, end-of-course exams, and the required fourth year of mathematics and science under the recommended High School Program also serve as major cost drivers."

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UNFUNDED MANDATES

The report listed **78 unfunded state mandates in Texas schools that impact the cost of public education in Texas.** Clearly, many of the mandates have created a better learning environment for students and staff. Others serve only to draw critical funding from the instructional

program. Depending on the size and diversity of the districts in the BAHEP area, there may be slight variations in the differences in the impact of the mandates on each district's instructional programming. However, each to a varying degree must find funds to address each of the state requirements that impact salaries, staffing, facilities, supplies materials, utilities...in short, just about every aspect of school operations.

Here is a sampling of some of the unfunded mandates:

- Accelerated reading instruction, K-2
- Accelerated instruction for high school students
- Dyslexia services
- Personal graduation plan
- Dropout prevention plan
- Gifted and talented program
- Coordinated school health program
- Student physical fitness and assessment
- Test administration and security
- End-of-course exams
- Public discussion of campus ratings
- Cost of salary step increases and benefits
- Continued group health benefits post resignation
- Leaves of absence
- Order of personal or sick leave
- Automated external defibrillators
- Emergency operations plan
- Criminal Street Gang Database
- Identifying preschool students for special education services
- School district elections
- Human sexuality instruction
- School breakfast and lunch program
- Open records requests
- School bus emissions testing
- Integrated Pest Management System
- Natural gas and liquefied petroleum pipe testing
- Financial solvency review
- Compensatory education allotment report
- Budget and tax rate notice and hearing
- Teacher report card
- Student report cards and notice of unsatisfactory performance
- Multiple public notices

The issue of unfunded mandates blurs the lines between state authority and local control. It is the belief of the school districts serving as members of the BAHEP Education Subcommittee that certain mandates are state responsibilities the cost of which should not be shifted to the local school boards.

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