

Statewide Officeholder Details

Governor Greg Abbott

First elected in 2014 for a term that began January 2015

Party: Republican

Occupation: Attorney

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State Facebook: [TexasGovernor](https://www.facebook.com/TexasGovernor)

Campaign Twitter: [@AbbottCampaign](https://twitter.com/AbbottCampaign)

State Twitter: [@GovAbbott](https://twitter.com/GovAbbott)

Voting Record

•Not applicable

2014 Candidate Survey Responses

1. If elected, what will your top priorities for public education be?

Greg Abbott's wife, her mother and her father were all educators, and he cares deeply about promoting and supporting professional educators in Texas. As Governor, Greg Abbott wants next year's Pre-K class to graduate from high school in the top-ranked school system in the country. Greg Abbott wants to cultivate a culture of aspiration and achievement in all of our public schools. That means setting high expectations, and expecting and trusting students, parents, educators, and principals to achieve them. Greg Abbott's education policy includes an intense focus on practices that strengthen the emphasis placed on the pivotal prekindergarten-through-third-grade stage of a child's development, in order to optimize academic learning. All three of Greg Abbott's "Educating Texans" plans for pre-k through Grade 12 include high-quality, professional development, including reading and numeracy academies, and providing grants to fund technology improvements.

For a complete reports on Greg Abbott's "Educating Texans" plans, please go to:
<http://townhall254.gregabbott.com/forum/educating-texans/>

2. Is there a need to increase state funding to meet the needs of our student population? What is your opinion of the state's current school finance system?

Due to Greg Abbott's role as Attorney General in the ongoing school finance case, his ability to answer this question is limited. However, Greg Abbott is committed to fully funding our schools and education system. He understands that additional funding must be smart and effective. As one example, his "Educating Texans" plans provide additional targeted funding of \$370 million for "gold standard" pre-k, professional development for educators, and technology grants that need additional assistance, among other initiatives.

2014 Candidate Survey Responses (continued)

3. Do you believe the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) should be maintained as a traditional defined benefit pension plan for all future, current and retired educators, or do you support converting TRS to a defined contribution plan that is more like a 401(k), in which future benefits are not guaranteed?

Greg Abbott believes that the current structure of TRS should be maintained.

4. Is there a need to increase state funding for health care benefits provided to active and retired educators through TRS?

The cost of health care benefits is a shared responsibility among the state, active and retired teachers, and school districts. When dealing with health care costs, the solutions are multifaceted and generally involve more funding from multiple sources. Educators should not have to shoulder these costs alone.

The state must do its part to review a funding policy that is almost two decades old, and is based on costs and structures from the 1990's. If elected Governor, Greg Abbott will work with all parties so that, together, they may find better ways to fund these long-term healthcare costs. That includes working through the budget process to allocate more money toward education employees' health care.

5. The Texas Education Agency has proposed a new teacher evaluation system in which 20 percent or more of a teacher's appraisal will be based on student growth. For approximately one quarter of the state's teachers, the growth measure will be based on students' state standardized test scores. School districts will have to adopt other measures of student growth, which might include additional district-adopted tests, for their remaining teachers. Do you support the state's proposal?

While Greg Abbott appreciates the work of the Texas Education Agency, he believes that the federal government should not have any say in whether the state creates or implements a teacher evaluation system. If Texas must have a federally mandated teacher evaluation system, Greg Abbott knows that standardized test scores do not fully capture student progress and achievement.

6. Would you support legislation that requires all school districts to use the state's new teacher evaluation model (or at least one that is substantially similar to it), or should school districts have the right to determine their own local criteria for teacher evaluation?

Local districts, with advice and input from professional educators, should adopt their own meaningful teacher evaluation systems that take into account many factors. For example, Dallas ISD has developed its own system. More districts should do the same. Ultimately, however, the best evaluators of teaching performance are parents and campus administrators.

7. Do you support spending public tax dollars on a voucher, tax credit or scholarship that allows students to attend non-public schools in grades K-12?

Greg Abbott's education platform does not include vouchers or any other financing for a private school education.

8. Do you support placing public schools that fail to meet state accountability standards for two or more consecutive years into an "achievement" or "recovery" school district that operates in a similar manner as charter schools? If so, who should manage such a district?

Greg Abbott has called for creating a Texas Achievement School District (ASD), an innovative reform aimed at addressing the problem of poorly performing schools in Texas.

9. Do you believe charter schools in Texas have been largely successful? What, if any, state policy changes would you recommend pertaining to charter schools?

High-performing charter schools like KIPP and IDEA have done an exceptional job. Greg Abbott believes that high-performing charter schools can help Texas' public education system reach the status of best in the nation. Greg Abbott supports expanding the number of high-performing charter schools in Texas, while fully supporting state law that allows low-performing charter schools to be closed expeditiously .

2014 Candidate Survey Responses (continued)

10. Do you support increasing state funding for expansion of pre-kindergarten programs? How should pre-K programs that receive state funding be held accountable for educating children and managing their resources?

Prekindergarten (pre-k) and elementary grades K-3 play a critical role in a child's educational development. Education policy and practices must strengthen the emphasis placed on this pivotal stage of a child's development in a way that recognizes needs in order to optimize academic learning.

Greg Abbott supports providing an additional \$1,500 per student to districts that opt to implement a gold standard, high quality program with the goal of demonstrating long-term prekindergarten success. Qualified schools that opt in to the gold standard program are free to spend the money they receive in a variety of ways, so long as spending is designed to improve the overall quality of the district's prekindergarten program and the district continues to meet the program's eligibility requirements. For example, a district or school might use the money to fund the expansion of pre-k to a full day, to purchase better instructional materials, to hire more teachers, or to invest in professional development.

Additional Information from ATPE

Abbott's priorities as Governor have included fiscal "reforms to control the growth of government including a tighter spending cap tied to inflation and population growth, expanded line-item veto authority so the Governor can act to rein in spending and protection of our Rainy Day Fund." With respect to public education, Abbott has prioritized early childhood education and pre-kindergarten initiatives, which he declared an emergency issue for the 84th legislature. According to his website, he also supports "setting expectations of excellence for our children, our teachers, our principals and our parents, and then giving educators the flexibility to achieve them."

Abbott previously served as Texas Attorney General. He was first elected to that post in 2002. Abbott previously served as a Texas Supreme Court Justice and as a State District Judge in Harris County.

In his role as Attorney General, Abbott was responsible for defending the state against an ongoing lawsuit in which numerous school districts challenged the constitutionality of the state's school finance system. A district judge ruled the system to be unconstitutional on the basis of inadequate and inequitable funding and its taxing structure. The state appealed the ruling.

In the 2014 general election, Abbott was endorsed by [Texans for Fiscal Responsibility \(Empower Texans\)](#), a group that has supported budget cuts and limiting state spending on public education, as well as private school vouchers; also endorsed by the [Texas Home School Coalition PAC](#), which supports using public funds for private and home-schools, giving private and home-schooled students greater access to public education services and limiting state oversight of private and home schools; and endorsed by the *Dallas Morning News*. He defeated Democrat Wendy Davis in November 2014.

Abbott spoke at the 2014 ATPE Summit. View video footage of his speech here: [Part I](#) [Part II](#)

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