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UPDATED: Pre-K bill vetoed

By [Kate Alexander](#) | **Friday, June 19, 2009, 07:52 PM**

Gov. Rick Perry has vetoed a bipartisan bill aimed at improving the quality of pre-kindergarten classes in Texas, bill author Rep. Diane Patrick, R-Arlington, said Friday afternoon.

"It's a bad day for public education and for Texas' youngest and neediest children," Patrick said.

House Bill 130 would have put in place new quality standards for pre-kindergarten classes, including teacher training and class size limits. The classes serve children who are homeless or in foster care, have a parent in the military, have limited English-speaking skills or whose families are low-income.

The original bill would have expanded pre-kindergarten classes from half-day to full-day for the children who now qualify for the program. But the initial \$623 million price tag proved too much for the Legislature to swallow in a tight budget.

The final bill that cleared the Legislature, while keeping the quality standards, provided \$25 million in grant money for districts that already have full-day pre-kindergarten but were slated to lose state funding.

UPDATE: Perry wrote in his veto statement that the money would be better used to expand the number of children served in the existing program.

"Under the funding formula for the existing grant program, \$25 million would serve more than 27,000 students over the next biennium, which is 21,000 students more than the estimated 6,800 students that would have been served under the bill's proposed program - or a 305 percent increase," Perry wrote.

But Patrick noted that the \$25 million does not provide the districts the full amount needed to offer full-day classes, so the districts will still bear significant costs.

Even with the veto, those districts will get the money but the quality standards will not take effect.

One-hundred House members had signed on to the bill, which had the strong backing of House Appropriations Chairman Jim Pitts.

"More Republicans supported the bill than not," Patrick said. "Clearly, many Republicans as well as Democrats understand that pre-k education is an investment for which there is a great return."

Advocates on both sides of the issue minced no words in responding to the veto.

"Gov. Perry was correct to veto HB 130, which created an additional and unnecessary government full-day pre-k program," said Brooke Terry of the Texas Public Policy Foundation. "This legislation wrongly focused on inputs rather than results, and did not include the private sector as a full partner in providing early childhood education."

But Jason Sabo of the United Ways of Texas said the veto was a "a willful neglect of the future."

The research is clear that needy children greatly benefit from high-quality, full-day pre-kindergarten classes, Sabo said. And everyone benefits from those students doing better in school, he added.

"We are making the conscious choice not to abide by what researchers tells us work," Sabo said.

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By tbrotherone

June 22, 2009 8:19 AM | [Link to this](#)

Hmm...Wondering which school districts would have received the lion's share of the funding if the bill had been signed rather than vetoed. It would seem that if the \$25 million is still being spent on early childhood programs but at a lower amount to more school districts, that there must be some districts that stood to get a windfall from the bill.

By Confused

June 22, 2009 7:49 AM | [Link to this](#)

Yes, I should have clarified that under \$2K/year for quality private Pre-K was actually only for Pre-K, not for full-day babysitting. Most Pre-K programs are for approximately 9 hours per week. Longer programs are a combination of learning and daycare to meet the schedules of the parents.

By Take a look

June 21, 2009 2:28 PM | [Link to this](#)

I should clarify that children with disabilities often require all-day Pre-K to acquire those basic skills a typically developing pre-schooler can acquire with much less effort.

That's really what this issue boils down to. the children targeted to benefit under HB 130 are "typically-developing" children. To be pawns of a system that refers to them as our most vulnerable and neediest, and labeled "educationally-disadvantaged" when they have no handicapping conditions, is wrong and should be offnesive to this population.

Let's put the education funds behind the kids that really need the help educationally, and rely on Health and Human Services if these kids need the help of CPS.

By Take a look

June 21, 2009 1:49 PM | [Link to this](#)

I'd love to know where you can get high-quality Pre-K for less than \$65 a week (or \$250 per month) which is what 8 months of preschool at under \$2,000 would come to. Surely that figure must be based on just a few hours a week, which is all children that age need to learn their numbers, shapes and colors in any language and learn to share and take turns. But if the goal is all-day daycare, then that figure won't cut it.

Begs the question - what is our public education system responsible for - daycare, or education?

Yes, \$1,000 a month is really high - much higher than most top-tier all-day private preschools costs that offer Spanish, music, computer class, breakfast, lunch, snacks and many bells and whistles that are missing from the program proposed under HB 130. I agree it sounds like a cash cow scheme with the public education gravy train riders and all its beneficiaries ready to hop on.

It makes you wonder what's next from the "supporters of the system." First it's all-day Pre-K for the non-contributors, next time it will be year round all-day Pre-K, right? While kids with autism can't beg, borrow or steal for half as much while their parents pay for everybody else to ride the train they don't get a seat on.

By Confused

June 21, 2009 8:46 AM | [Link to this](#)

The money is still going to the kids, and it looks like it will help more kids join established programs. What is the big deal? This seems like a better use of the money (I mean, \$8K is like 4 times what anyone I know pays for quality private pre-K) and will serve more children.

I think this is a great compromise. No children are being failed - in fact, more are being served.

Or is this not really about the kids...

By Not a Teacher

June 21, 2009 8:42 AM | [Link to this](#)

I am enjoying reading the comments here.

I am also sort of a teacher, even though I am really not qualified to be a teacher at all.

My children and I were forced into a home schooling situation several years ago when our neighborhood school failed us terribly, leaving us with no other options. One of our children has autism, and I had hopes that we could move her into a better situation using a bill from last session similar to this Pre-K bill.

Unfortunately the bill was fought and eventually killed by the same politicians who filed this HB 130 Pre-K bill. The parents (the stakeholders) who managed to travel to Austin to stress the importance of this bill were dismissed over

the testimony of questionable advocacy groups, unions and private attorneys who profit off our education dollars.

I have been trying to figure out the difference in these bills and understand why these Senators and Representatives are giddy to provide excellent full-day private Pre-K to this specific group of adorable moppets when they did not want to provide squat to children with disabilities.

Children with disabilities who face a lifetime of institutionalization (courtesy of your taxes) if they are denied their right to a free and appropriate public education vs children who are able to speak 2 languages while eating their free lunches... Where are our priorities? What is this really all about?

The answer seems to be that this is all about the money, honey. If the huge amount of funds are run through the district and the choice element is removed, it's okay with these clowns. See, they get a bunch of cute minority poster children to disguise their massive graft scheme. That is why so many representatives were foaming at the mouth to sign on to this bill - big money, ISD control, no oversight.

Pin the money to the HB 130 kids, and let the parents choose which private Pre-K they want to use. Let that massive amount of cash follow the kids to the nearest Montessori or religious Pre-K... those religious schools are no longer a problem, right?

Children with disabilities who have education funds pinned to their collars, following them to FAPE, do not provide enough of a payoff.

This is an outrageous manipulation of our children and families, and it is being done with our tax dollars. All of our children deserve access to the education they need. Manipulation of the word voucher in order to run big money through ISDs that have proven over and over again to be terrible stewards of our education dollars is unacceptable, Texas.

Every parent in the state should be outraged.

By Teacher

June 20, 2009 10:53 PM | [Link to this](#)

Cindy Lou — loved your comment! A+

By Teacher

June 20, 2009 10:50 PM | [Link to this](#)

Lorax - Push the button ONCE honey, not four times.

By The Lorax

June 20, 2009 9:15 PM | [Link to this](#)

Wow. The Black Helicopter crowd is out in full force defending Perry's veto spree — keep in mind these are the same folks who rant about the gold standard and UN plots to place computer chips in our kids. I agree with Disappointed above, but for the implication that we have any leadership now. Perry doesn't lead — the wingnuts rant and Perry dances to their tune.

By The Lorax

June 20, 2009 9:14 PM | [Link to this](#)

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By Cindy Lou

June 20, 2009 7:59 PM | [Link to this](#)

And the bleeding heart treehuggers dismiss the disabled as wingnuts and Black Helicopters, implying right wing radicalism, mental instability and conspiratorial sabotage. Don't you really mean to say that they are politically insignificant and altogether unworthy?

Good job proving their case.

By The Lorax

June 20, 2009 6:51 PM | [Link to this](#)

Wow. The Black Helicopter crowd is out in full force today offering their best defense of Perry's vetoes. These are the same folks who rant about the gold standard and how the UN is secretly trying to implant chips into our children.

I agree with Disappointed above, but for the implication that today we have any leadership at all. The wingnuts rant and Perry dances.

By The Lorax

June 20, 2009 6:50 PM | [Link to this](#)

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I agree with Disappointed above, but for the implication that today we have any leadership at all. The wingnuts rant and Perry dances.

By Cherie

June 20, 2009 6:00 PM | [Link to this](#)

This all sounds to me like those Spring Branch parents want their kids in full-day programs so they don't have to pay for after-school care. Get the taxpayers to do it for them. Why should they get full-day classes when there is no proof that longer days benefit Pre-K kids? The money is and always should be spent on improved facilities, materials, and teacher training.

By It takes a lot of money ...

June 20, 2009 11:09 AM | [Link to this](#)

That's 61 MILLION dollars in 06-07. And climbing.

By It takes a lot of money ...

June 20, 2009 11:07 AM | [Link to this](#)

61 MILLION DOLLARS of education tax dollar were stuffed into the pockets of PRIVATE ATTORNEYS by our Texas public school districts. 61 MILLION DOLLARS that Texans thought were going to educate children were instead paid to PRIVATE ATTORNEYS and this is the worst part: those PRIVATE ATTORNEYS battle the rights and needs of children with special needs. It takes a lot of money to deny the rights of children with disabilities.

By The Shocking Truth

June 20, 2009 10:20 AM | [Link to this](#)

Taken straight from a due process decision posted on the TEA's website regarding a preschool student with a disability:

"Petitioner's parents want an extended school day to total 25 hours per week. While a 25 hour per week program may be the general recommendation, the District's obligation under the IDEA 04 is to create an education program based on Petitioner's individual and unique needs.

Translation: Science-based research shows this child requires a 5 hour school day. Under IDEA's requirement to individualize a program to HELP the child achieve independent living, Texas twists it as a basis to ignore scientific research and provide this child less.

"The District refused Petitioner's request to increase his educational program to a full day and refused to provide 90 minutes of individual ST and 30 minutes of group therapy. While there was expert testimony in support of both positions, I find that Petitioner's IEP and the proposed educational program are individualized on the basis of his assessment and performance."

Translation: While the expert objective testimony said the child needed a full day and the speech therapy, the school district argued against it, and whatever the school employees say trumps all independent expert testimony.

"Petitioner's parents want him to make maximum progress and seem to feel a sense of urgency regarding his needs. However, maximum progress is not the test. The educational benefit must be meaningful and likely to produce progress, rather than regression or trivial educational advancement. Although the educational benefit must be meaningful, schools are not required to maximize a child's potential or provide the best program."

Translation: Those sweet parents feel a sense of urgency to help their child. They erroneously thought their child deserved better than regression. Too bad under IDEA Texas has twisted this law to blatantly marginalize these students and provide them with a substandard education. Nice try, parents. SUCKS TO BE YOU!"

THIS IS THE DEAL, FOLKS. These are our neediest kids. Now what is Rep. Patrick, our House and Senate Education Committees, the United Way, RYHT, and all the organizations pushing all day Pre-K for less educationally-needy students, going to do about this?

By Never enough

June 20, 2009 9:37 AM | [Link to this](#)

I'm not sure why Rep. Patrick is complaining. She got her \$25mm, and many more kids will be able to attend Pre-K programs than with her outrageously high-dollar per head proposal under HB 130.

If kids with disabilities had a \$25 MILLION legal defense fund set aside and had the standards for their education raised so that attorneys would stop prevailing with the argument that these kids are throwaways who are not entitled to the "best" program, nor even to make any progress, but only a "basic floor of opportunity," then they'd have a prayer of succeeding in this state.

Jason Sabo of the United Way of Texas said "the research is clear that needy children greatly benefit from high-quality, full-day pre-kindergarten classes...We are making the conscious choice not to abide by what researchers tells us work."

Mr. Sabo, why is it okay for our schools to individually make the conscious choice to ignore this research for students with disabilities, hire their attorney goons to make the above wildly discriminatory argument, and for our TEA hearing officers and judges accept it?

If a child with autism can't prove his need for a full-day Pre-K program, what hope is there for the future of Texas? Where is the United Way when it comes to righting this wrong faced by the truly NEEDIEST Texas children every day?

IS ANYONE LISTENING OUT THERE? Rep. Patrick? Sen. Zaffirini? The United Way? RYHT? Ms. Alexander? Political News Reporters across the state?

Would ANY ONE OF YOU care to comment on this outrageously unbalanced public education system in Texas and the reality facing parents who are unable to prove their child's need for full-day Pre-K despite all the research and BASIC government guidelines for this special population when required to fund a court battle to attempt it?

By Hear this:

June 20, 2009 8:27 AM | [Link to this](#)

I love that the RAISE YOUR HAND TEXAS (RYHT) cronies (Mike Moses, Bill Ratliff, and more) didn't get their way on this bill — they launched a recent email campaign asking Texans to write Governor Perry in support of HB 130 — even providing the easy online template to do so. Sorry RYHT ... your message was drowned out by the voices

of the many parents who don't agree with you. RYHT - why don't you RAISE YOUR HAND for the many children who are being harmed by public education and in fact, forced out of public schools?

By Willful Neglect - huh??

June 19, 2009 9:06 PM | [Link to this](#)

How is it "willful neglect" for the 21,000 MORE prekindergartners to get high quality prek?? Was that a misquote in the story?

By Victory for Prek

June 19, 2009 8:52 PM | [Link to this](#)

Hurrah for Governor Perry for vetoing HB 130. Thank you for investing in existing and proven pre-k strategies rather than creating a costly new grade level (prek) as advocated by HB 130!! Full day pre-k is NOT supported by research as proclaimed by the United Ways advocates-for-hire that lobbied for HB 130. As a taxpayer, I just don't have \$7,300 sitting around to fund every student that wants prek. Thank you Governor Perry for your leadership.

By Thank you Governor Perry!

June 19, 2009 8:21 PM | [Link to this](#)

Let's talk about "needy" children. How about all of the at-risk K-12 children who are forgotten by the ("rah-rah good things happen every day") Texas public school system. Unfortunately, bad things happen every day as well. At-risk children are hurt and driven from public school districts every single day — this is the dirty little secret you won't hear about from public school administrators and all the private businesses (think TASB and private law firms) that profit from education tax dollars. Hurray for this veto! I am one of many who contacted Governor Perry's office asking him to veto this bill and apparently, he heard us. Now we need solutions for the the many at-risk students for whom public education is a bad choice.

By dennisl59

June 19, 2009 6:29 PM | [Link to this](#)

Cradle to Grave has been tried before-In the former Soviet Union. How'd that work out? "Pre-Kindergarten" indoctrination by the Government?

By jrj

June 19, 2009 6:22 PM | [Link to this](#)

It's always a sign when a politician does something on Friday afternoon.

By Elitist Redneck

June 19, 2009 6:08 PM | [Link to this](#)

I would like the costs associated with this bill explained to me. Why am I able to provide my Pre-K child with an excellent private education for \$1400 per year? Is it because the money goes directly from me (the source) to the classroom with no top heavy administrations involved? Is that it?

Representative Patrick, Why did the same people who fought SB 1000, a similar program which would have provided access to public education for a specific population of children, sign on so readily to this bill? One state rep, Allen Vaught, even said something like "Hey, no fair to everyone else!" of SB 1000, yet he co-authored a similar bill to send a different population of children to private schools on the state's dime? Why are you and your pals so enamored of one population as you attempt to trash another population?

This was very well done, Governor Perry, and I daresay you may have avoided a huge class action discrimination suit with this veto.

By jpt51

June 19, 2009 6:06 PM | [Link to this](#)

The business tax reduction is okay for Slick Rick but helping give kids a step up, (so if nothing else, they can be productive taxpayers)is a no go for this shortsighted friend of crony government. We will remember all of your many poor decisions when it's time to vote in the primary election - March 2010!

By jpt51

June 19, 2009 6:05 PM | [Link to this](#)

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By Parents of forgotten children

June 19, 2009 6:01 PM | [Link to this](#)

Yes, Texas needs new leadership. Leadership that doesn't choose to ignore the outrages children with disabilities endure at the hands of an education system that hides behind attorneys to systematically deny them their federal rights and push them out the door of our public schools. Leaders like Dan Patrick, Tommy Williams, and Florence Shapiro.

Every single co-author of SB 21, the Senate version of this bill, is not only well aware of this practice, but they fought substantively similar bills designed to address the needs of these students, while co-authoring one for the far less needy students who would benefit from SB 21/HB 130.

Children learning English as a second language already have access to year round free programs in Pre-K. Students with speech DISABILITIES who not only speak no Spanish, they struggle to communicate in their own English language, are routinely denied summer services, must prove their need for them, and then are sometimes, if they are very, very lucky, offered a mere one hour per week in these ESL existing summer programs with no special education teacher when a court order requires year round services are considered for them.

Rep. Patrick, please explain how Pre-K children who speak two languages and have liberal access to year round programming already without having to individually prove their need for these services through litigation are the "neediest" students in Texas?

By Disappointed

June 19, 2009 5:41 PM | [Link to this](#)

Texas needs new leadership.

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