



GOV. ABBOTT SPEECH AT ANNAPOLIS CHRISTIAN ACADEMY CORPUS CHRISTI • JANUARY 31



A VISION OF EXCELLENCE

The reason I traveled from Austin to Corpus Christi today is to visit with you about the important role that we all have to play and to make sure we all do our part to educate the next generation. It's a fundamental priority in the state of Texas. Now going back to the setting we're in: Headmaster Travis, I read that the story of Annapolis Christian Academy began with a group of parents who got together and had a vision for excellence in education. That same vision exists in parents in every region of the entire state. What we have to do as a state is tap into that vision of all those parents to ensure that every child in Texas gets the education that is right for them.

FULLY FUNDING PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Now let me say this up front: public schools play a vital role. I attended public schools my entire life growing up in the great state of Texas. And as governor, I've provided more funding for public schools than any other governor in the history of our state. I've also provided more funding for more teacher pay raises than any other governor in the

history of our state. And I can tell you now, we're going to add even more money to public schools and to teachers this session. But given all that, we'd be wrong if we said that more money always leads to better results. It just doesn't.

PARENTS DESERVE QUALITY

Let's take the COVID time period for example: during and after COVID, many parents were extraordinarily frustrated about the quality of schools, about the substance of what was being taught, about mandates that stiff-armed parents away from their child's education. Some parents were angry that their child was being forced by a school to wear a mask. Other parents were angry that masks were not required. Parents were angry that some schools were forcing their child to learn virtually because they watched their child fall further and further behind. Parents were angry about some schools being closed and having no place to go other than the government-mandated school.

Then, when they saw the substance—even after COVID—parents are angry today about social agendas being pushed on our kids in our schools

in Texas. That is unacceptable. We see in schools sexual content being taught to kids in school—even in grade school—in Texas. Let’s be clear about something: schools are for education, not indoctrination. Schools should not be pushing social agendas. We won’t let it happen. They got to get back to fundamentals of reading, writing, math, and science. We got to compete in this world. And we need to educate our kids to be the best and the brightest Americans. Our job as leaders in Texas is to provide the best quality education that we can for all of our kids. We must reform curriculum, get kids back to the basics of learning, and we must empower parents to be more involved in the education of their children.

TRANSPARENCY & RESPECT FOR PARENTS

Parents deserve access to curriculum. They deserve access to school libraries. They must know what their children are being taught and parents—when they raise concerns—must be treated with respect. We need to understand this fundamental principle: no one knows what is better for a child’s education than their parents. Parents deserve the freedom to choose the education that is best for their child. Parents must be restored to being the primary decision-makers in their child’s education. Parents matter, period. That is what Texas believes in.

PARENTS DESERVE OPTIONS

I can tell you that many public schools in Texas are superb. In fact, Texas ranks #1 for the most national blue ribbon schools in the entire country. But when a school falls short of excellence, when it strays too far from the fundamentals, or simply cannot meet the unique needs of a particular child, parents should not be helpless. They should be able to choose the education option that is best for their child.

The way to do that is with ESAs: education savings accounts. We’ve seen them work in other States, and we’ve seen them work in the state of Texas also. In 2020, I created limited ESAs for special needs students, and it has been so successful that right now the Texas Legislature is working to increase funding for that program. But that program shouldn’t be limited. That program should be available to everybody in Texas. So now is the time to expand ESAs to every child in the state of Texas.

“ESAs SHOULD BE AVAILABLE TO EVERYBODY IN TEXAS. NOW IS THE TIME TO EXPAND ESAs TO EVERY CHILD IN THE STATE. THAT WILL GIVE ALL PARENTS THE ABILITY TO CHOOSE THE BEST EDUCATION OPTION FOR THEIR CHILD.”

That will give all parents the ability to choose the best education option for their child. When students are given education options, it’s a proven fact that it leads to better education results for all schools across the entire state.

EDUCATION FREEDOM

If you like this approach you’re not alone. The overwhelming majority of Texans support empowering parents to choose the path that’s best for their child. Republicans, Democrats, and independents; Black, White, and Hispanic; urban, rural, and suburban Texans all agree that giving parents the ability to choose the education pathway for their child is the best course. The bottom line is this: this is really about freedom. Think about this idea: there are hundreds of thousands of people who move to Texas every year. They come here because of the freedom and opportunity that Texas provides and because, in Texas, we don’t like government running our lives.

What parents know is that the same freedom and opportunity should apply to their child’s education. No one knows better how a child can flourish than their parent. Without education freedom, parents are hindered in helping their own child. That must change, and it must change this legislative session. And the reason why we’re gathered here is because everybody in this room has a role to play. Everybody in this room has a legislator in Austin. Now is the time that you need to let your legislator know that you stand for parental empowerment. It is time for parental empowerment in Texas. It is time for education freedom in Texas. Together, we will make that happen. Thank you all. God bless you all and God bless the great state of Texas.