



Association of Texas  
Professional Educators  
305 E. Huntland Dr., Suite 300  
Austin, TX 78752-3792

Phone: (512) 467-0071  
Fax: (512) 467-2203  
Email: [info@atpe.org](mailto:info@atpe.org)  
Online: [atpe.org](http://atpe.org)

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **ATPE Statement on TEA's Additional Reopening Guidelines for 2020-21 School Year** *Revised guidance is insufficient, fails to reduce risk of spreading COVID-19 in our schools*

**AUSTIN, Texas—The Association of Texas Professional Educators** (ATPE) has read the **additional reopening guidelines for the 2020-21 instructional year** released today by Texas Education Commissioner **Mike Morath** and the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The state's largest educator association shares the following statement in response.

While ATPE appreciates the additional flexibility provided to extend the transition period between virtual and in-school instruction, the revised guidance is **insufficient** to address the safety concerns of educators and parents. ATPE remains alarmed by the subjectivity, arbitrariness, and overall lack of science-based metrics presented by this plan.

The new guidance fails to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 through our schools—especially in areas where cases continue to rise—as it requires schools to offer in-person instruction to students who need and request it **every day** of the school year, even during the transition period.

In addition, much remains unknown about the risk of COVID-19 infection and spread among children. What we do know is that having students on campus requires adult staff to place themselves—and by extension, their families—at risk to attend to those students' needs in an in-person setting.

Over the last few weeks, ATPE has heard numerous concerns from educators, many of whom are immunocompromised or within at-risk demographics, who now find themselves in the precarious position of choosing between their employment and their health in the middle of a global pandemic.

#### **The state must take stronger, more decisive action to protect Texans' lives.**

"If Texas is not willing to provide objective metrics to guide local reopening decisions, **as ATPE has recommended to them**, then school districts and local health authorities must be empowered to make their own reopening decisions without the threat of losing funding," said **Shannon Holmes**, ATPE Executive Director. "Otherwise, we are simply playing politics with the lives of all Texans—our more than 5.4 million students, approximately 750,000 public school employees, and their families at home."

**On July 14, ATPE shared with TEA and state officials several recommendations that would work to ensure a safe back-to-school transition. Read ATPE's full recommendations to the state at [ATPE.org/COVID-Recs](http://ATPE.org/COVID-Recs).**

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#### **About the Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE)**

Founded in 1980, ATPE is the leading educators' association in Texas with approximately 100,000 members statewide. With its strong collaborative philosophy, ATPE speaks for classroom teachers, administrators, and future, retired, and para-educators and works to create better opportunities for Texas' five million public school students. | [atpe.org](http://atpe.org)

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