



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**

July 31, 2020

**ATPE: Statement from Top State Officials on School Reopening Does Not Help Texas Educators, Students, or Parents**

*State's largest educator association responds to Gov. Greg Abbott & others' July 31 joint statement*

**AUSTIN, Texas—** **The Association of Texas Professional Educators** (ATPE)—the largest educator association in Texas—believes today's [statement by Gov. Greg Abbott, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, Speaker Dennis Bonnen, Senate Education Committee Chair Larry Taylor, and House Education Committee Chair Dan Huberty](#) represents yet another attempt to appease both sides of a political debate without addressing the genuine risks and concerns about school reopening—nor does it assure school leaders they will have the help they need.

Today's message attempts to reassure school districts they have the power to make the best decisions for their communities, but it provides no real assurances of support, guidance, additional funding, or resources from the state. This statement does not help school districts in any tangible manner.

The broad statements provided by these leaders do not account for the reality of the situation. School boards do not have the sole authority to "reopen safely" because they cannot decide to go 100% remote absent an order from a governmental authority, and state officials continue to provide opaque communications and conflicting advice on which entities have such authority to keep schools safe.

Some school districts have significant populations of students who lack the technology resources or support to successfully participate in remote learning, and schools are required to open their doors to these students even during the state-authorized transition period of four to eight weeks. These students' needs should obviously be addressed, but this situation illustrates the challenges school districts face right now. They are forced to provide on-campus instruction, which will increase the risk of spreading COVID-19 through their schools. They lack sufficient resources to reduce those risks, and they don't have assurance they won't lose funding if they are forced to close their doors again because of an outbreak.

Today's statement from state leaders repeats earlier guidance noting that schools may continue to receive funding if they encounter COVID-19 on their campuses and must close their doors for no more than five days. Nowhere in the guidance is there an acknowledgement that the millions of students and hundreds of thousands of school employees soon returning to campus present a high risk of multiple infections that could force schools to close *numerous times* during the 2020-21 school year. It has not been made clear that schools will continue to be funded if that happens, and the state's current "hold harmless" measures are woefully inadequate to give school boards the confidence they will have sufficient funds to keep their districts operational. This is especially

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true amid reports that many parents, undoubtedly frustrated and fearful, appear to be opting to withdraw their students from public school this fall.

ATPE appreciates that our state leaders are finally conceding that remote learning beyond the eight-week transition period, as outlined in the Texas Education Agency's earlier guidance, may be warranted, though they point out these requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis. For local school officials who feel they are forced to choose between bringing their students and staff back to campus en masse before it is safe to do so or losing their funding, this promise to "consider" additional flexibility is not enough.

**ATPE reiterates that uniform, science-based metrics guiding reopening or closure decisions based on health and safety are needed right now—not shifting perspectives, platitudes, or power struggles.**

In these stressful times, our local school leaders and dedicated educators deserve more than mere hope that the right decisions will be made.

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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](https://atpe.org)