



VOL. 1 ISSUE 3

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Q. As a former member of the Texas House of Representatives and chairman of the Texas House Committee on Public Education, you earned the reputation as a champion for public schools. Today, through various engagements, you continue your advocacy for public education. Why is it so important to you?

A. *I know the value of public education. I am a first-generation college graduate. By comparison, I know how hard life was for the generations before me. Without an education, I know many of their dreams were never fulfilled. The foundation of education allowed me to realize my dream of becoming a veterinarian. Because of education, I have been given many other opportunities in life. Among the most that I honor is the chance to advocate for all children. I want their future to hold opportunities for success. Today, in my family, our children have advanced degrees and our grandchildren are well on their way to discover a life with unimaginable opportunities. Education is a gift that every child should have and cherish.*

Q. The system of public education continues to evolve. In terms of bragging rights – the positive – what would you say the citizens of Texas should be most proud of?

A. *The citizens of Texas should be proud of the fact that across the state of Texas, all 5.4 million school children have an opportunity to a free public education. I know that for some, it can be hard – a challenge. The system can always be improved. With that said, the chance to an equal education must be protected. In the last ten years, our Texas school enrollment has grown by about 80,000 new students each year. As citizens, we are responsible to make sure all children receive a quality education today, so they can have an opportunity to succeed tomorrow.*

Q. With the legislative session scheduled to convene in January of 2019, what are the top two education concerns the public should be mindful of?

A. *The greatest concern is the negative narrative about public education. When left unchallenged, an untrue perception can become a reality. If you say something negative enough times – before you know it, people believe it. When it comes to legislation, public opinion will influence and eventually be reflected in public policy. Schools must be proactive in cultivating a favorable public image. Schools can do this by engaging communities and sharing the responsibility of educating our children. Public education is ours to defend against the nay-sayers and to improve for our children's future.*

Another concern is the state's dependency on local property taxes to pay for public education. Over the years, the state continues to reduce their share of funding our schools by shifting the burden to local property taxpayers. The longer taxpayers shoulder the cost of education, the more we run the risk of eroding public support.

Q. Make Education a Priority (MEaP) is a campaign under Friends of Texas Public Schools. An event called School Priority Month-October 2018 encourages engagement. The idea is to invite elected officials from every level of civic government to visit a school campus. How will this event promote the value of public education?

A. *Locally elected officials – community leaders, are at the center of public opinion. Inviting these individuals into our schools is a great way to provide them with a positive experience about public education. It is possible that many of them have not seen the inside of a school building in years. I want to also say that this is a great way to encourage engagement. This is a great opportunity to build relationships that can grow into partnerships. The more familiar elected officials are with their local schools, the more we can count on their support to positively influence policymakers in Austin.*

Q. History provides us with inspiring quotes about public education. What is your legacy quote that we might find inspiring future generations?

A. *"Education changes lives – now and for generations to come." - Jimmie Don Aycock*