



# TEXAS SCHOOL CHOICE SOLUTIONS

September 20, 2023

School closures during the COVID-19 pandemic had devastating effects on the educational progress of American schoolchildren, revealed deep inadequacies of the public-school monopoly, and left families feeling powerless about setting the direction of their children's education. Texas families will be pleased to know that educational opportunities for children are increasing due to continued support for school choice. The Texas Senate passed [a bill](#) in 2023 that aims to prohibit infringement on parental rights by creating Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) worth \$8,000 for all Texas K-12 students. The bill, informally known as "S.B. 8," encourages an admissions lottery system that rightfully prioritizes special education students, students in foster care, and children of military personnel. This bill is crucial to ensure that each Texas student has a bright educational future that is tailored to their personal needs and preferences.

National test results for 2022 show that school closures during the Covid-19 pandemic had a harmful effect on American schoolchildren. For the first time in the history of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), scores in reading and math fell by the largest margin in more than 30 years and students in Texas were no exception. See *Chart on page 2*.



## In 2022, according to the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) in Texas:

The **reading level of 4th grade students** who performed at or above the NAEP Proficient in was only **30%**.

**Black 4th grade students** had an average reading score that was **29 points** lower than that for White students.



**Hispanic 4th grade students** had an average reading score that was **16 points** lower than that for White students.

**Low-income 4th grade students** had an average reading score that was **23 points** lower than that for students from middle and high income families.

These test scores can have powerful consequences for a generation of children. Reversing these achievement losses will need aggressive action over the next several years. Parents need the ability to leave their government-mandated schools if necessary to help ensure their children have better academic opportunities. School choice is also shown to improve public schools by increasing accountability, fostering competitiveness, and boosting student outcomes. When parents can choose which option best fits their child's needs, whether that means opting to switch or not, students reap the benefits.

AFPI was crucial to efforts surrounding this bill. The Center for Education Opportunity (CEO) Director, Dr. Laurie Todd-Smith, Ph.D., provided expert testimony to the Texas Senate and House Education Committees regarding the benefits of S.B. 8 in expanding school choice. Additionally, America First Works (AFW) supported Parent Power events highlighting the positive outcomes of school choice in rural areas.

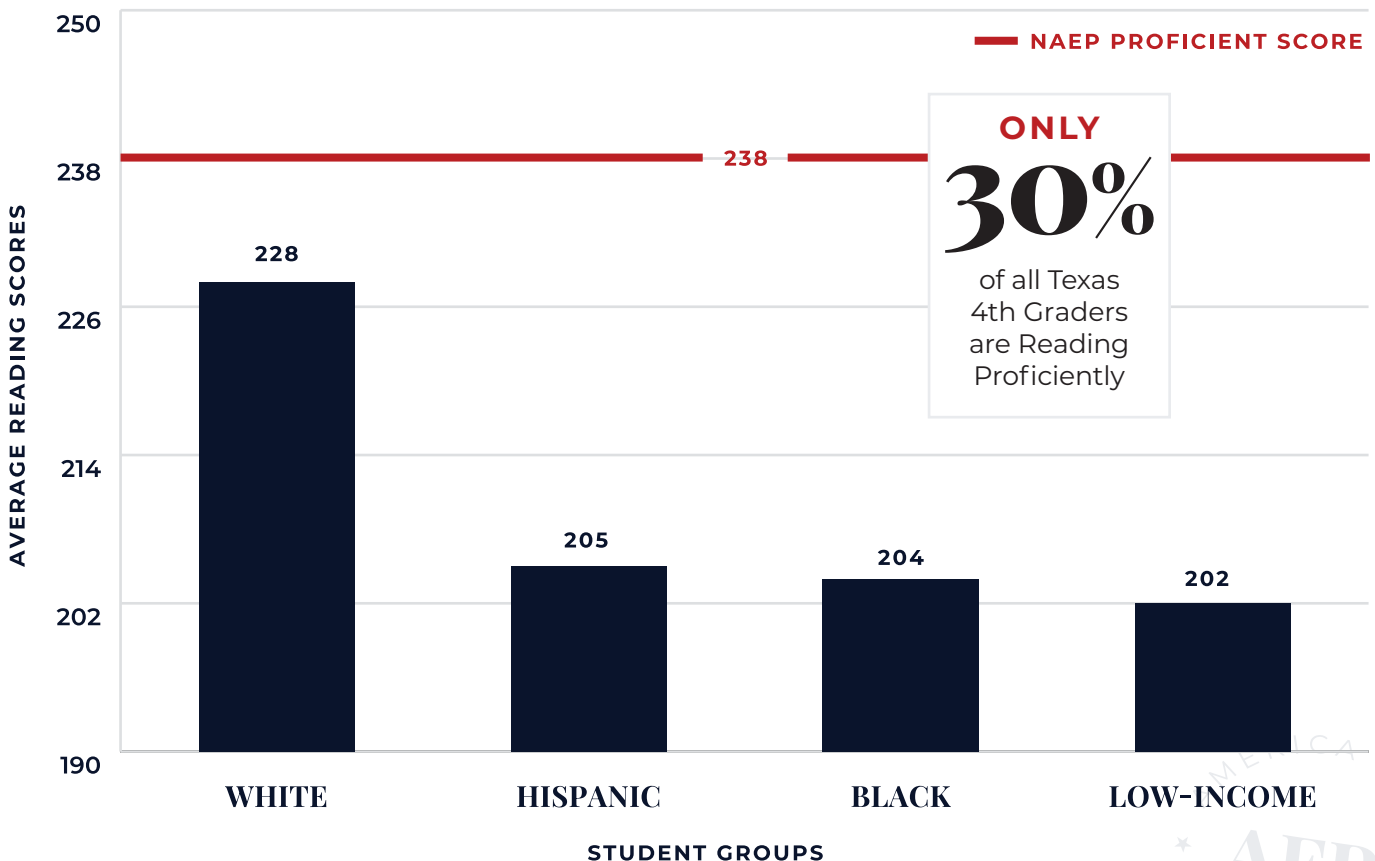
At AFPI, empowering parents to choose the best education for their children is a top priority, and studies show that Texans strongly support school choice. Gov. Greg Abbott’s fervent commitment to this bill played a major role in helping school choice prevail in Texas. And just recently, Texas House Speaker Dade Phelan announced a new select committee on education.

“The bottom line is this: This is really about freedom,” said Gov. Greg Abbott on March 12th, 2023.

“ At AFPI, we believe that the purpose of education is to prepare Americans for the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. ”

School choice is representative of two core American values—freedom and opportunity. At AFPI, we believe that the purpose of education is to prepare Americans for the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. As public support for school choice continues to grow, students across the nation will have access to schooling that meets individualized needs, and educational outcomes will improve. Most importantly, parents will be empowered to have a stronger voice in the conversation about their child’s schooling. While the Biden administration tries to stall progress on school choice policies, the Center for Education Opportunity remains highly committed to the school choice mission

### Texas 4th Grade Reading Scores



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2022 Reading Assessments.

