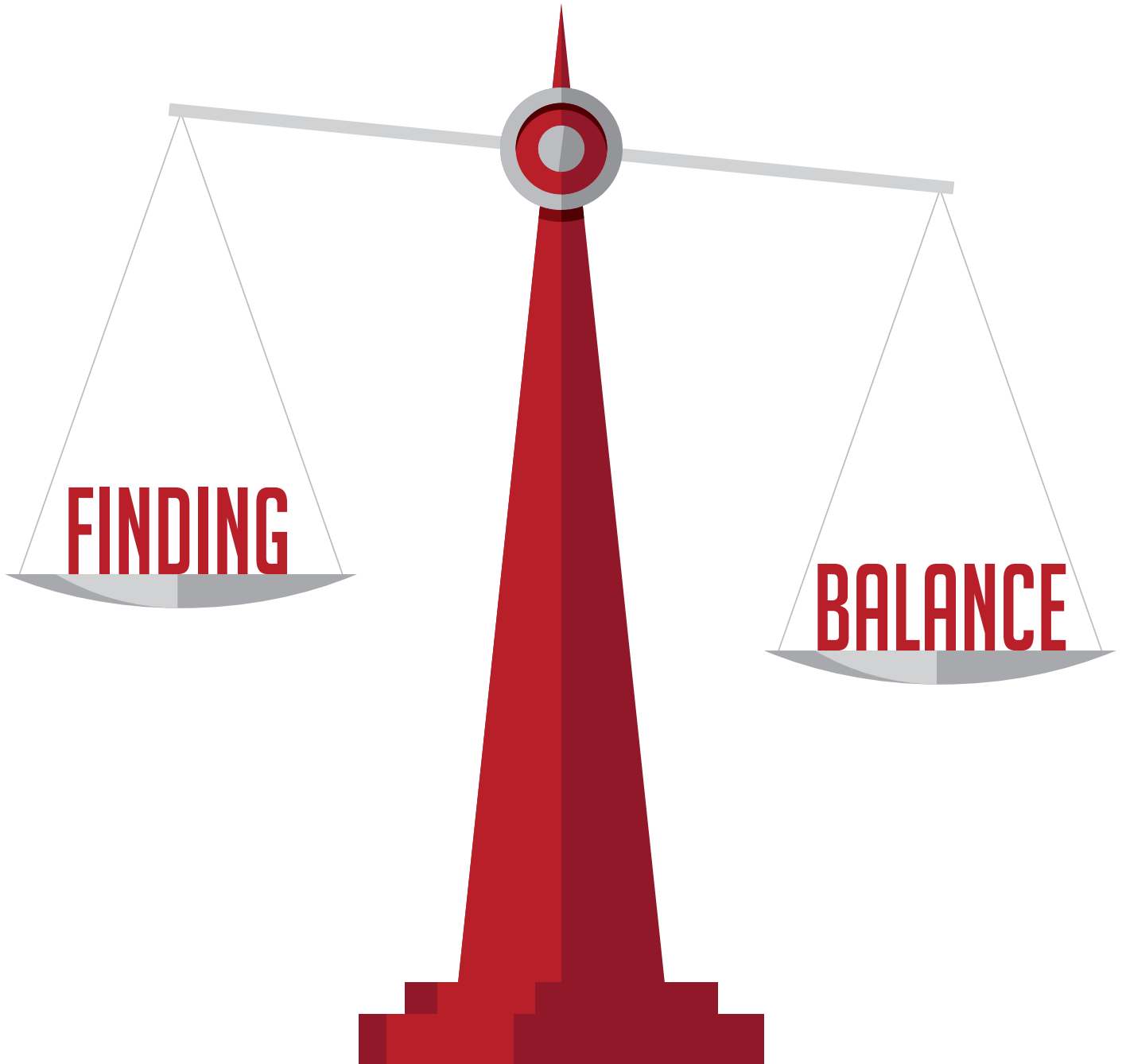




**FASTGROWTH**  
SCHOOL COALITION



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A GUIDE TO

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# ENROLLMENT, DEBT, & STATE FACILITIES SUPPORT

A REPORT BY THE FAST GROWTH SCHOOL COALITION TO THE 85TH TEXAS LEGISLATURE

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The primary goal of the Fast Growth School Coalition is to find legislative solutions that help districts cope with the financial and structural demands of their rapidly expanding populations. The FGSC actively participates in the legislative process to ensure continued support for all Coalition members.

This report focuses on the unique challenges facing fast-growing school districts of Texas, and attempts to characterize the 75 school districts that are defined as “fast-growth” by concentrating on enrollment trends, school district debt, and state facilities funding.

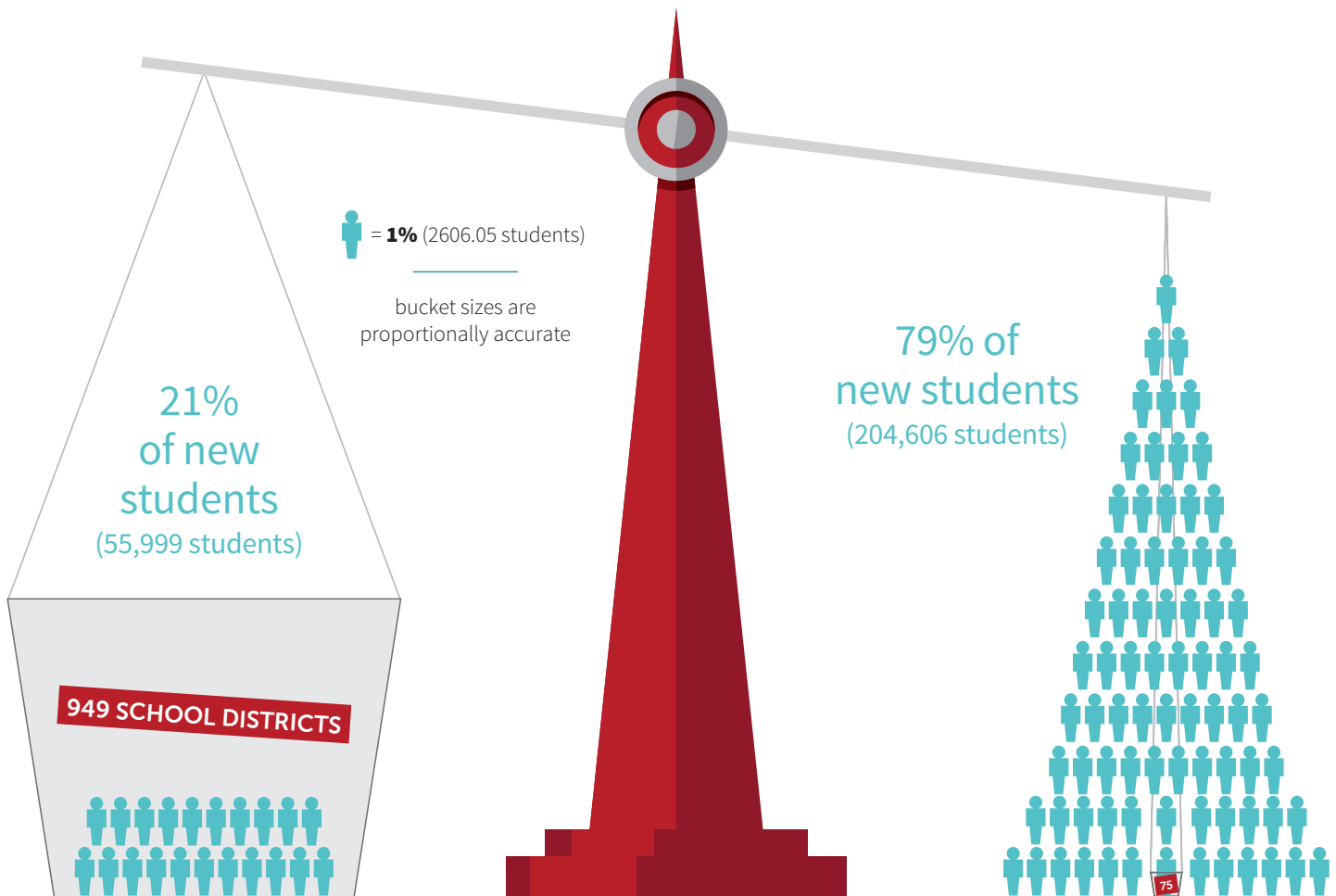
In defining these districts, the hope is to establish a foundation of understanding of why these specific school districts are facing an ever-changing landscape of student needs, community demands, and funding dilemmas.

This report intends to give taxpayers, policymakers, and school officials insight into the distinct problems fast-growth school districts face and what the State of Texas’ options are to help offset not only the cost of this growth but to provide relief for local property taxpayers in these areas.

# 260,605

## Total Enrollment Growth in Texas Schools in the Past 5 Years

2010/11 through 2015/16, Does Not Include Charter Schools



## This is not balanced

These 75 school districts, defined as fast-growth districts, educated 1.69 million of the 5.05 million students enrolled during the 2015-16 school year. With fewer than eight percent of districts educating more than one third of Texas's students, there are distinct facilities, staffing, and funding decisions for each of these school districts' taxpayers, elected school boards, and school administrators.

Fast-growing districts not only face the same high academic standards as the other 949 school districts in the state, but these school communities are constantly navigating a series of demographic studies, bond planning committees, and long-term facility master plans to address the impact of student growth.

The responsibility to continually evaluate tax rate impact, boundary change needs, technology and transportation requirements, as well as renovation to existing facilities, only begins to break the surface of the added funding pressures on fast-growth school districts. Any Foundation School Program funding shift, downturn in the economy, or change in student growth has the potential to impact facilities planning, as well as the district's instructional programming and maintenance and operations budget.

## Destination School Districts

In a United States Census Bureau report entitled *Reasons for Moving* issued in June of 2014, the three major reasons for people moving to a different residence are employment, housing, and family. These three reasons make up almost 98 percent of the motives of why people choose to reside where they do.

Texas has offered both employment and housing opportunities over the last decade that many other states have not been able to provide. Based on a recent Census Bureau finding from the March 26, 2015 County and Metro Area Estimates, the fastest growing counties and metropolitan areas in the state are also the fastest growing regions of the country.

As seen in Table 1, the fastest-growing areas in Texas inevitably have the fastest-growing school districts (32 of the 75 fastest growing school districts). And while the reasons people move vary depending on circumstances, when it comes to the actual decision-making process of parents of school-aged children on what school district their family should reside in, there is typically a thoughtful evaluation process.

Parents choose a specific destination because of numerous standards, including proximity to work, before-and-after-school care, curricular and extracurricular offerings, community involvement, school district facilities, tax burden, and school district accountability ratings.

All 75 fast-growing destination school districts in the state provide educational programs that meet or exceed Texas' accountability standards. These school districts all achieved "Met Standard" under the state's new accountability system for the 2014-15 school year.

The school districts listed in Table 1 comprise 121,344, or 46.5 percent of the 260,605 student enrollment growth over the last five-year period and are the fastest growing counties and metropolitan areas in the state. Three of these districts (New Caney ISD, Lake Travis ISD, and Tomball ISD) reached another threshold along with five other districts. Over a five-year period these eight school districts had student enrollment growth increase by over 30 percent. Frisco ISD alone added 16,021 students since the 2010-11 school year. Prosper ISD increased its student enrollment by 91 percent over the same period (see Table 2).

Not only do these areas of Texas need to keep up with road and other infrastructure demands because of overall population growth, they also face a constant struggle to provide quality facilities and education programs to the students that reside in their local school districts.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> All 75 fast-growth school districts achieved the "met standard" rating under the state's new accountability system for the 2014-15 school year, the highest rating possible. These 75 school districts also meet or exceed the targets for three indexes (student achievement, student progress, and closing performance gaps). A complete list of fast-growth school district accountability ratings is attached as Appendix B.

TABLE 1

### Fastest Growing Counties and Metro Areas in U.S. (2015 Census), Texas Only

COUNTY/METRO AREAS	SCHOOL DISTRICTS
<b>HAYS COUNTY*</b> <i>Fifth fastest growing county in U.S.</i>	Dripping Springs ISD, Hays CISD
<b>FORT BEND COUNTY</b> <i>Sixth fastest growing county in U.S.</i>	Fort Bend ISD, Lamar CISD, Needville ISD
<b>COMAL COUNTY</b> <i>Ninth fastest growing county in U.S.</i>	Comal ISD
<b>AUSTIN-ROUND ROCK</b> Counties: Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, Williamson <i>Third fastest growing metropolitan area in U.S.</i>	Lake Travis ISD, Manor ISD, Hutto ISD, Leander ISD, Liberty Hill ISD
<b>ODESSA METRO AREA*</b> County: Ector <i>Fourth fastest growing metropolitan area in U.S.</i>	Ector County ISD
<b>MIDLAND METRO AREA*</b> County: Midland <i>Ninth fastest growing metropolitan area in U.S.</i>	Midland ISD
<b>HOUSTON-WOODLANDS</b> Counties: Harris, Ft. Bend, Montgomery, Brazoria, Galveston, Liberty, Waller, Chambers, Austin <i>Eleventh fastest growing metropolitan area in U.S.</i>	Alvin ISD, Pearland ISD, Barbers Hill ISD, Fort Bend ISD, Lamar Consolidated ISD, Needville ISD, Dickinson ISD, Aldine ISD, Crosby ISD, Cypress-Fairbanks ISD, Goose Creek CISD, Houston ISD, Humble ISD, Katy ISD, Klein ISD, Pasadena ISD, Sheldon ISD, Tomball ISD, Conroe ISD, Montgomery ISD, New Caney ISD, Willis ISD, Waller ISD

TABLE 2

## Fastest Growing School Districts in the State of Texas, 2010-11 to 2015-16

DISTRICT	COUNTY	2015-16 ENROLLMENT	5-YEAR GROWTH	5-YEAR GROWTH (%)
Anna ISD	Collin	3,072	774	33.68%
Frisco ISD	Collin	53,300	16,021	42.98%
Prosper ISD	Collin	8,296	3,955	91.11%
Northwest ISD	Denton	20,976	5,606	36.47%
Tomball ISD	Harris	14,120	3,451	32.35%
Lubbock-Cooper ISD	Lubbock	5,818	1,779	44.05%
New Caney ISD	Montgomery	13,816	3,710	36.71%
Lake Travis ISD	Travis	9,238	2,260	32.39%

## Fast Growth Districts Defined

In 1997, a small group of superintendents—fewer than ten—met to discuss the impact rapidly increasing student enrollment had on their districts' decision-making and overall finances. These superintendents had the same concerns as today's superintendents of fast-growth schools, primarily significantly higher capital outlay, debt service, and operations costs.<sup>2</sup>

The result of this meeting was the formation of the Fast Growth School Coalition (FGSC). The purpose of the coalition was to educate policymakers on the characteristics and needs of fast-growth districts.

With the help of the FGSC, legislators became aware of the exceptional needs of these school districts over a short period of time. In just two legislative sessions (1997 and 1999), the legislature provided much needed support. The Instructional Facilities Allotment (IFA), Existing Debt Allotment (EDA), and New Instructional Facilities Allotment (NIFA) were all created to provide additional assistance for high need communities. While these programs are in definite need of retooling, fast-growth schools, as well many other school districts, have benefited from these programs and are better off for this program support.

<sup>2</sup> Since 1997, there have been 203 eligible fast-growth school districts.

The definition of fast-growth school districts, established by the founders of the FGSC, has been consistent for almost a twenty-year period. To be identified as a fast-growth school district during a five-year period, the following criteria must be met:

- ✓ Enrollment of at least 2,500 students in the base year; and
- ✓ Enrollment growth over the past five years of at least 10 percent, or a net increase of 3,500 or more students.<sup>3</sup>

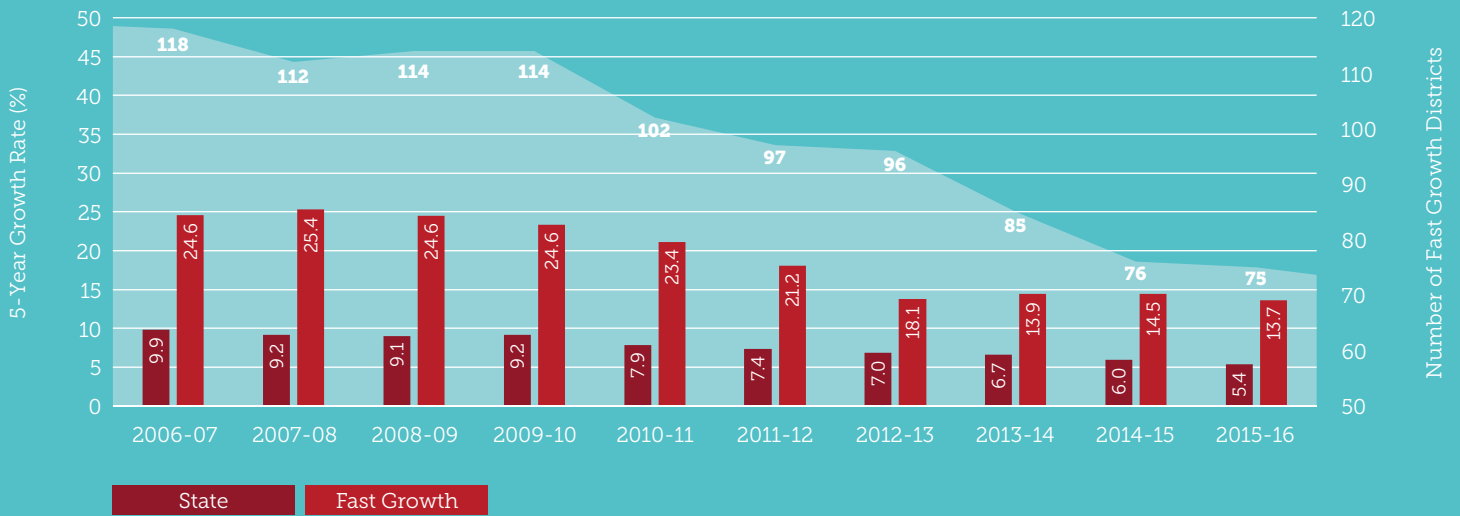
As enrollment trends have varied over this twenty-year period, the number of eligible fast-growth school districts has changed slightly from year-to-year, but typically ranged between 90 and 100 school districts. Since 2006-07, however, the number of school districts eligible using the fast-growth criteria has declined from a peak of 118 school districts to the 75 school districts eligible in the 2015-16 school year, as seen in Figure 2.

In addition, in several of the analyses that follow, fast-growth districts are further classified into four groups: (1) enrollment growth of more than 30 percent over the last five years; (2) enrollment growth between 15-30 percent; (3) enrollment growth between 10-15 percent; and (4) enrollment growth of at least 3,500 students.

<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of the eligible fast-growth district for the 2015-16 school year, enrollment growth is measured over the five-year time period from the 2010-11 school year to 2015-16 school year.

FIGURE 2

### Historical Trend of 5-Year Fast Growth Rate



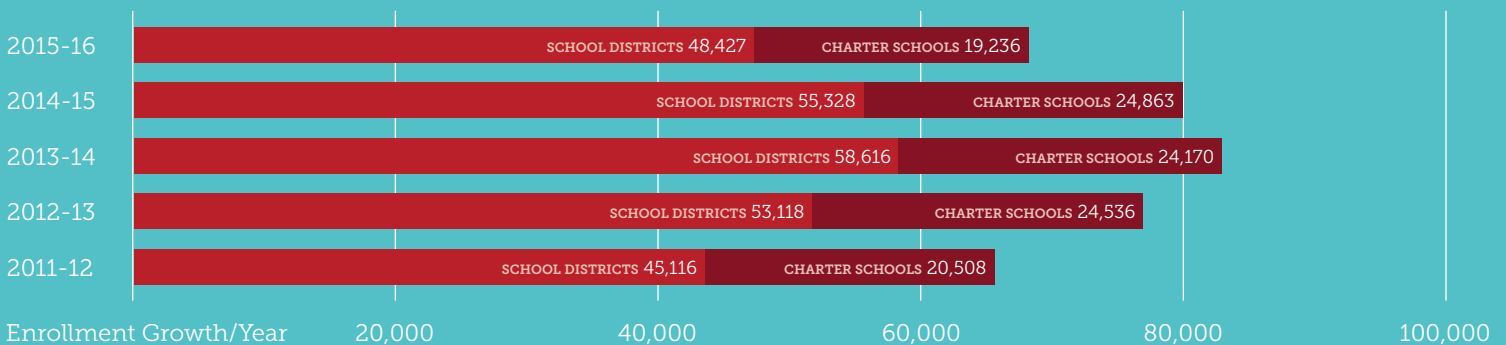
## Statewide Enrollment Trends

Over the last five-year period, the average annual student enrollment increase for Texas public schools, including charters, was 74,784 students per year. School districts averaged an annual increase of 52,121 students over this period, while charter schools averaged an increase of 22,663 students per year, as seen in Figure 3. The average annual increase in total enrollment is roughly the equivalent of adding an Austin ISD or a Katy ISD every single year over a concentrated area of 75 school districts.

Over the last five-year period, these fast-growth school districts have attracted families and students for a variety of reasons. Fast-growth school districts perform as well or better on the state’s accountability system, and the makeup of the student body in fast-growth districts regarding student needs is comparable to the Texas average (at-risk students, bilingual students, and special education students). This information is summarized in Figure 4. The location of the 2015-16 fast-growth districts is illustrated in Figure 5, sorted by category in terms of percent enrollment growth over the last five years.

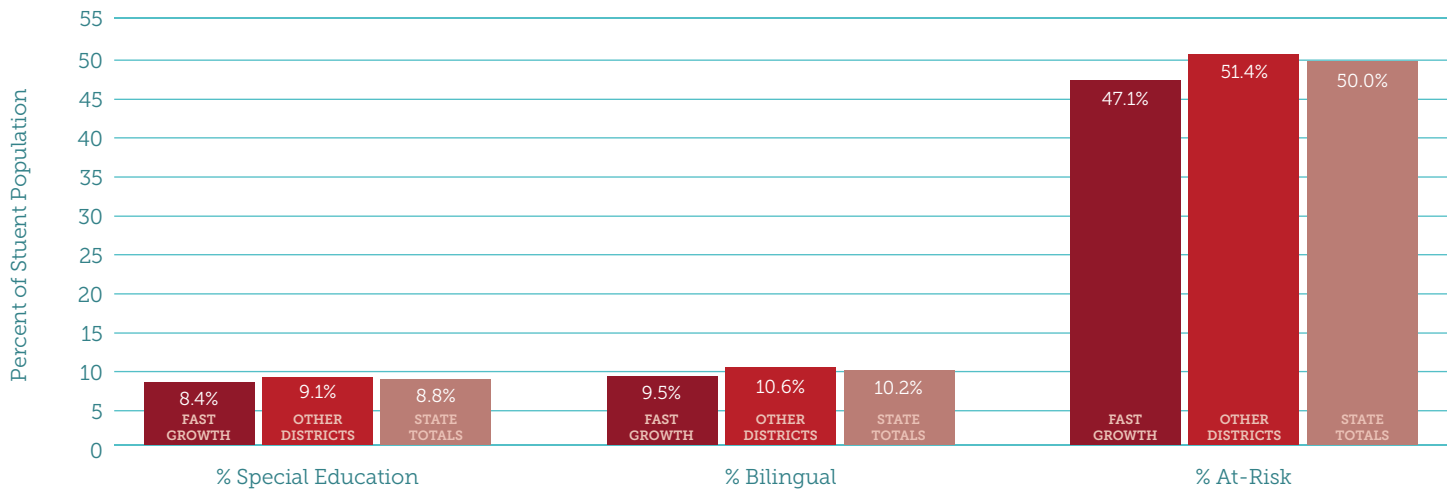
FIGURE 3

### Texas Public School Enrollment Trends, including Charter Schools, 5-Year Period



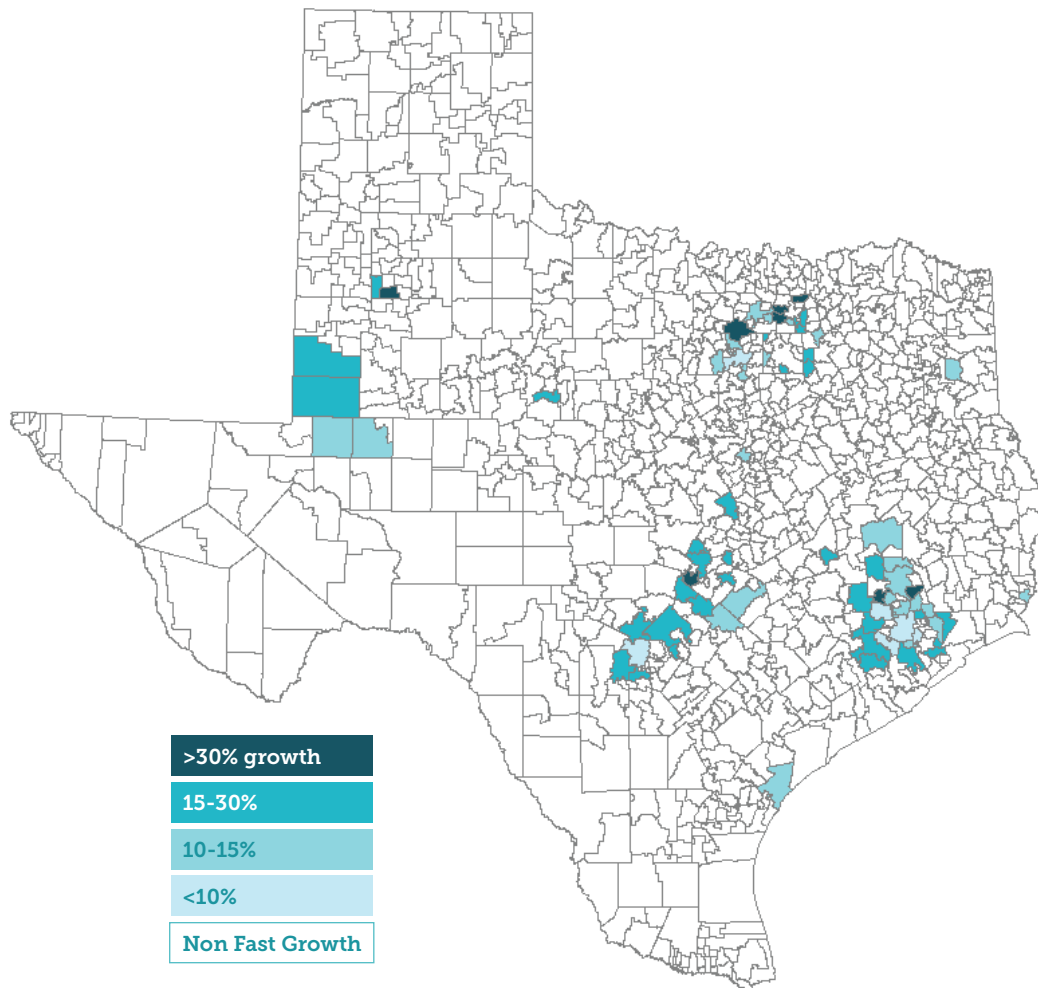
**FIGURE 4**

Student Population by Student Type, 2015-16 School Year



**FIGURE 5**

Map of 2015-16 Fast-Growth School Districts by Category



# The School Debt Debate

With student growth increasing annually in a concentrated number of school districts, there is a constant need for qualified teachers, new school facilities, and renovations and space considerations for existing facilities (including the use of portable buildings). To pay for this, school districts are required to not only consider maintenance and operations costs, but weigh the impact of long-term debt on their communities.

In the most recent Texas Bond Review Board Annual Report (2015) it is noted that “for census years 2012-13, Texas was the nation’s 2nd most populous state and ranked 2nd among the ten most populous states in terms of Local Debt Per Capita, 9th in State Debt Per Capita and 5th in Total State and Local Debt Per Capita.”

Texas, as of August 31, 2015, had \$47.09 billion (principal only) in total state debt and \$212.44 billion (principal only) in total local debt (school districts, cities, water districts, counties, hospital districts, and community and junior colleges). These amounts do not include any new debt approved by the state or local governments after this date, including the \$3.1 billion for tuition revenue bonds for higher education or the \$1.6 billion voter-approved bonds to be used for state transportation projects.

Texas is growing, and growing rapidly. New infrastructure and improvement to existing infrastructure, including roads, bridges, school facilities, and water treatment plants are all critical to

the state’s ability to meet and sustain this growth. The Texas Legislature has worked within its means to meet the growing needs of the state and has allowed the state’s voters to approve bonds for transportation and water needs, as well as provide much needed general revenue funding to help offset certain school district debt through its school facilities programs (Existing Debt Allotment and Instructional Facilities Allotment).

There is no doubt that total state and local debt has increased substantially when analyzing year-by-year comparisons, but so have enrollment growth and facility needs. The public debate over project priorities and voter transparency are needed and well deserved. Taxpayer input and overall community involvement are essential to keeping tax rates manageable and project expectations reasonable. That is why school districts have taxpayer advisory committees, public hearings, and other voter information initiatives to help keep all interested parties informed and involved.

Taxpayer/Citizen advisory committees help school districts begin the bond planning process by discussing reasonable expectations on how to minimize tax impact, as well as by focusing on the most needed projects and facilities. These committees take into consideration future growth, under- or over-utilized schools, renovations or maintenance needs on existing facilities, and other cost-saving efficiencies (site location, energy use, transportation demands).

By the time a bond package is on the ballot for voter approval, school districts have used these planning and advisory committees

FIGURE 6

## Historical Trends of School District Debt, Principal and Interest

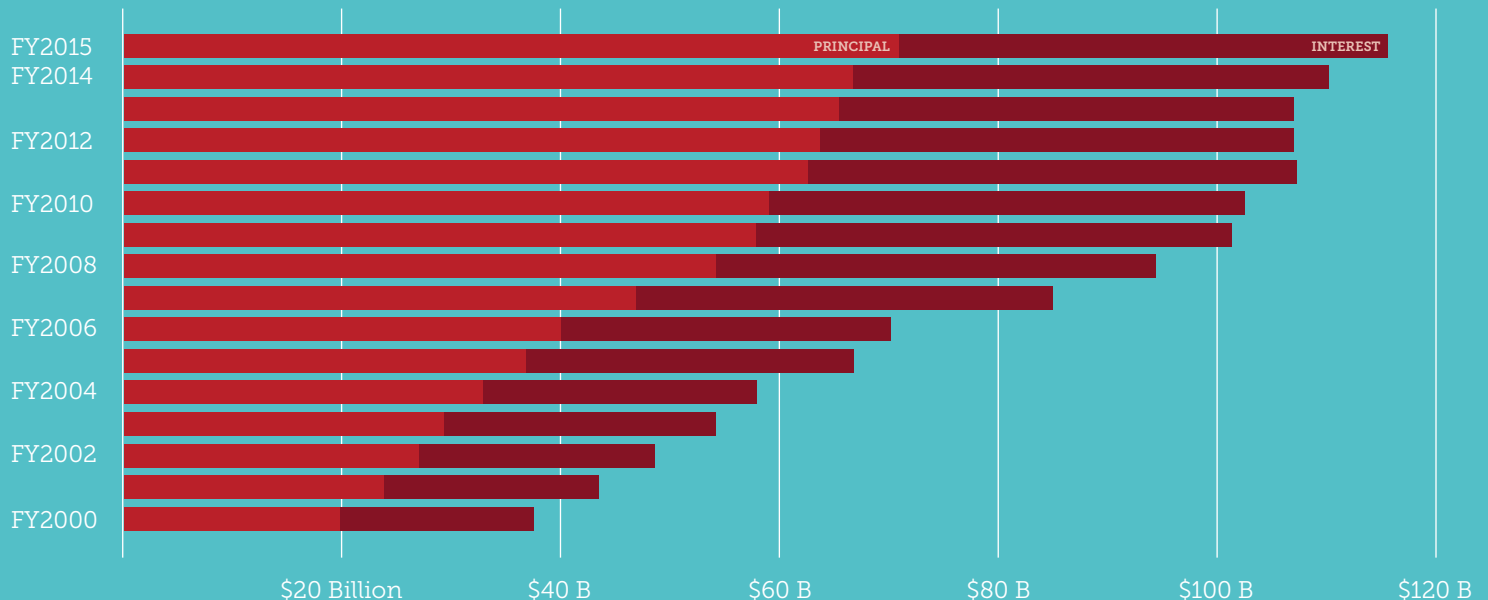
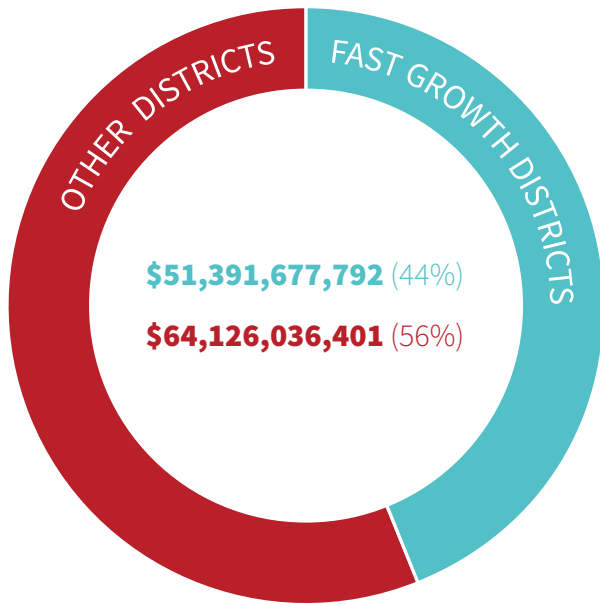




FIGURE 7

## Total Voter Approved Debt

Principal and Interest, as of August 31, 2015



to gauge and balance school needs with community demands and requirements. School districts also hold public meetings related to the setting of the debt service tax rate that is needed to pay for these new bond initiatives. Transparency is essential in making sure taxpayers understand the process and the needs of the school district, but also the direct impact on each taxpayer’s personal finances.

Over the last three tax years (Tax Years 2013, 2014, 2015) there has been a 78.6 percent approval rate of school district voter-approved debt. In 2015, voter approval was 82.3 percent overall. All 15 bond proposals put forward by fast growth districts passed in 2015, and 50 of the 56 fast-growth bond proposals passed over the three-year period, an almost 90 percent success rate.

FIGURE 7A

## Ratio of School Districts’ Long-Term Debt to Taxable Values



This is not because school districts hold bond elections on odd dates or off years. The overwhelming passage of this voter-approved bonded debt, specifically—not limited to fast-growth districts—is because school districts have thoroughly vetted and discussed the community demands and school district needs with the public for months, if not years, prior to any bond election.

As of August 31, 2015, according to the Texas Bond Review Board, total school district voter-approved debt reached \$115.5 billion (\$71 billion in principal and \$44.3 billion in interest). The overall debt for school districts grew by \$5.47 billion, or 4.9 percent, from the previous year and by \$78.9 billion since 2000 (see Figure 6). There is no doubt this is a significant increase, but every successful bond proposal has been approved by the voters based on community needs and desires.

Fast-growth school districts account for 44 percent of the overall school district debt in 2015. (See Figure 7.) That means 44 percent of all school district debt resides in just 75 schools districts. According to the most recent Texas Education Agency data files (2014-15 school year) for principal and interest payments, fast-growth school districts on average had debt payments for the 2014-15 school year of \$1,389 per student (\$589 per student in principal and \$800 in interest). This is \$268 per student higher than those school districts not considered fast-growth.

An analysis prepared by the Texas Association of School Business Officials (TASBO) details thirteen years of debt service (principal only) compared to total taxable values. As seen below in Figure 7A, the average ratio of school district debt (principal only) to total taxable values over this period was 3.6 percent. The ratio has not varied by more than 0.5 percent, remaining relatively constant for almost a decade and a half.

This concentrated debt through voter-approved bonds is needed to provide the necessary facilities and infrastructure in each of these school districts. The burden of continuous growth, however, has placed a strain on the fastest-growing schools. Increasing debt service tax rates has caused many school districts to either come

close to or meet the state's limit of a \$0.50 debt service, or Interest and Sinking Fund (I&S), tax rate. This restriction limits the ability of school districts to properly plan for growth and/or renovations. This has created a constant struggle for school boards and school staff to adequately fund growth needs as the average I&S tax rates for fast-growth school districts have increased.

The continuous need to navigate school bond refunding and refinancing, tax rate swaps, and Capital Appreciation Bonds (CABs) so that there is enough capacity in the I&S tax rate has created strain and confusion for all involved.

## Capital Appreciation Bonds

There is valid concern and criticism when it comes to the overuse of Capital Appreciation Bonds. Local governments issued \$214.1 million in CABs in 2015, according to the Texas Bond Review Board, with school districts issuing 99.2 percent of the total amount. However, CABs are just a small percent of overall school district debt and are just one of the numerous tools used to help manage school district debt and debt service tax rates.

Capital Appreciation Bonds, unlike the more traditional fixed rate bonds, have principal and interest costs that are not due until the end of the bond term with the interest accruing and compounding semi-annually throughout the life of the bond. This allows school districts the ability to manage certain aspects of its debt service tax rate until the payments become due.

CABs, when used sparingly and correctly, can help offset some of the strains placed on school districts with increasing student enrollment and facilities pressures. CABs can help school districts that are near or have reached the state's \$0.50 I&S tax rate cap, especially school districts that no longer benefit from state support through the Existing Debt Allotment (EDA) and Instructional Facilities Allotment (IFA) programs.

Of the 40 fast-growth schools that have issued CABs, 11 are at the \$0.50 I&S tax rate cap, and another nine fast-growth school districts are within \$0.05 of the cap. Of the 40 fast-growth school districts issuing CABs, just over half receive state support through the EDA or IFA state facilities programs.

## The Impact of Student Growth on School Tax Rates and the 50-Cent Test

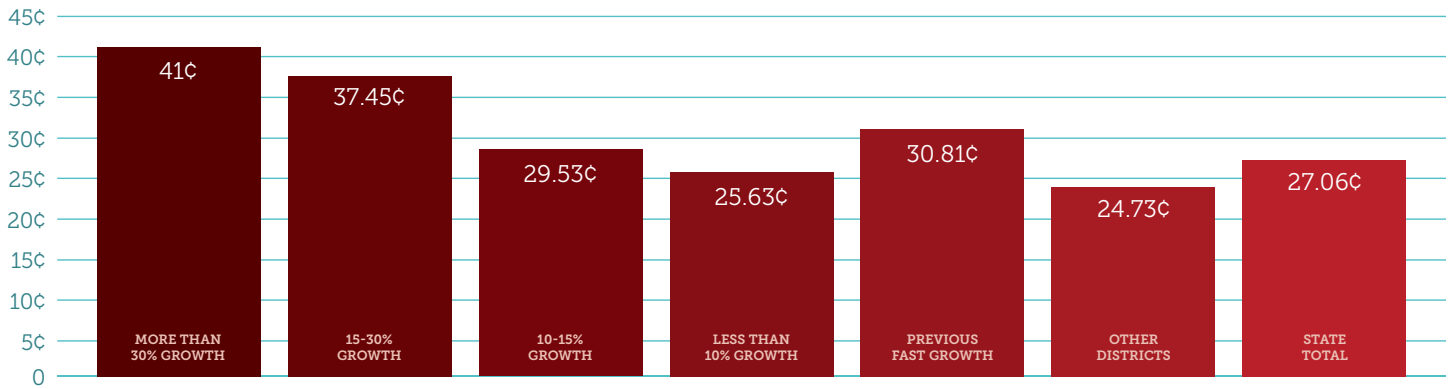
TABLE 3

Districts At or Near 50-Cent Cap for Interest and Sinking Tax Rate

I&S CATEGORY	FAST GROWTH DISTRICTS	OTHER DISTRICTS	STATE TOTALS
50¢ and Above	14 (19% of fast growth districts)	18 (2% of other districts)	32
40¢ to < 50¢	19 (25%)	63 (7%)	82
30¢ to < 40¢	22 (29%)	136 (14%)	158
20¢ to < 30¢	10 (13%)	203 (21%)	213
10¢ to < 20¢	8 (11%)	214 (23%)	222
Up to 10¢	1 (1.5%)	138 (15%)	139
No Debt	1 (1.5%)	177 (18%)	178

**FIGURE 8**

### School District I&S Tax Rates by Growth Category, 2015-16 School Year



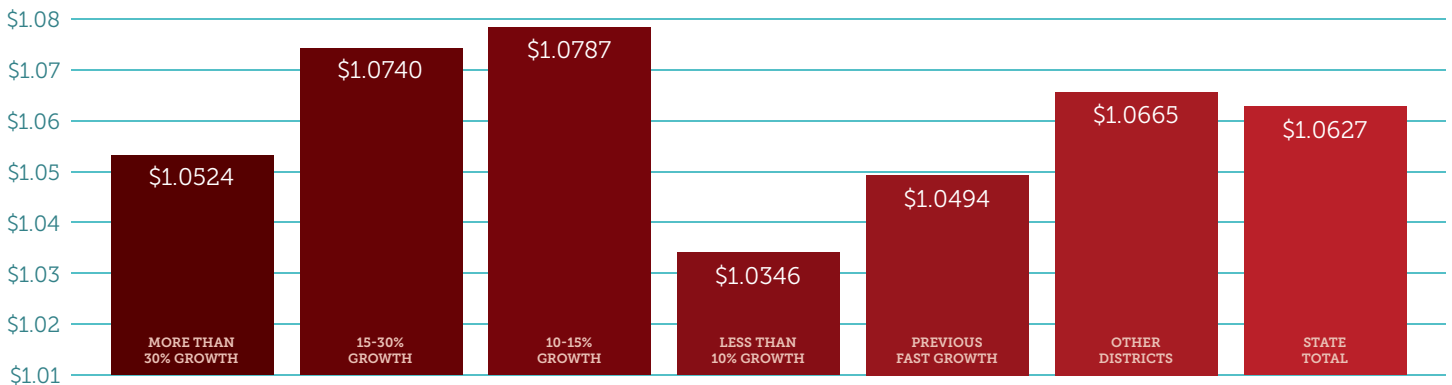
Texas school districts operate under what is known as the “50-cent test,” which governs school district issuance of voter-approved debt. A school district is required to demonstrate to the Attorney General that the district has the ability to meet its principal and interest payments on proposed and existing debt with a tax rate that does not exceed \$0.50 per \$100 of taxable value; a projection of taxable value may be used to help meet the test, if it is provided by a registered professional appraiser. In addition, anticipated state aid from the IFA and EDA programs and Tier I formula funding may be counted in meeting the 50-cent test. In other words, school districts at or near a \$0.50 debt service tax rate cannot issue any additional voter-approved debt if the new debt results in an I&S tax rate that exceeds this cap. A district could exceed the I&S rate of \$0.50 to meet its debt service obligation—in the case of taxable value decline—but would be unable to issue any additional voter-approved bonds.

Fast-growing school districts are particularly hard hit by the combination of the 50-cent test, as well as the stagnant \$35 yield in the Existing Debt Allotment program, which will be discussed at length in this report. As detailed in Table 3, of the 32 school districts at or above the 50-cent cap, 43 percent are considered fast-growth.

For the 2015-16 school year, fast-growth school districts have an average I&S tax rate of \$0.3086 per \$100 of taxable value, compared to \$0.2501 for districts that are not fast-growth, an almost six-cent difference. This disparity grows when comparing the fastest-growing schools districts. School districts with an enrollment growth rate of 30 percent or more had an average I&S rate of \$0.41 per \$100 of taxable value, an almost \$0.16 difference compared to non-fast growing school districts (See Figure 8).

**FIGURE 9**

### School District M&O Tax Rates by Growth Category, 2015-16 School Year



**FIGURE 10**

Percent of Total EDA Enrolled in Districts with Property Wealth < \$350,000

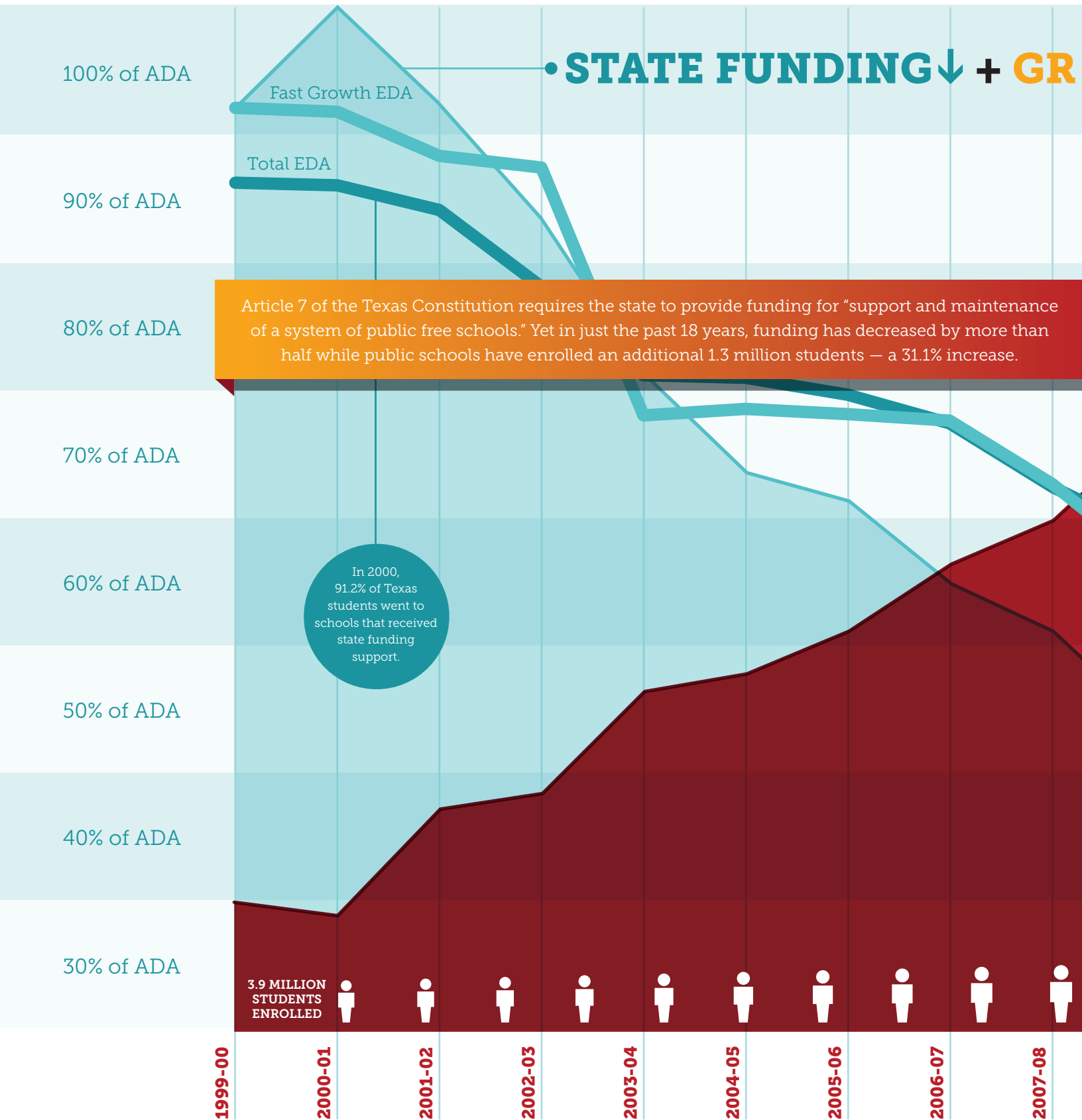
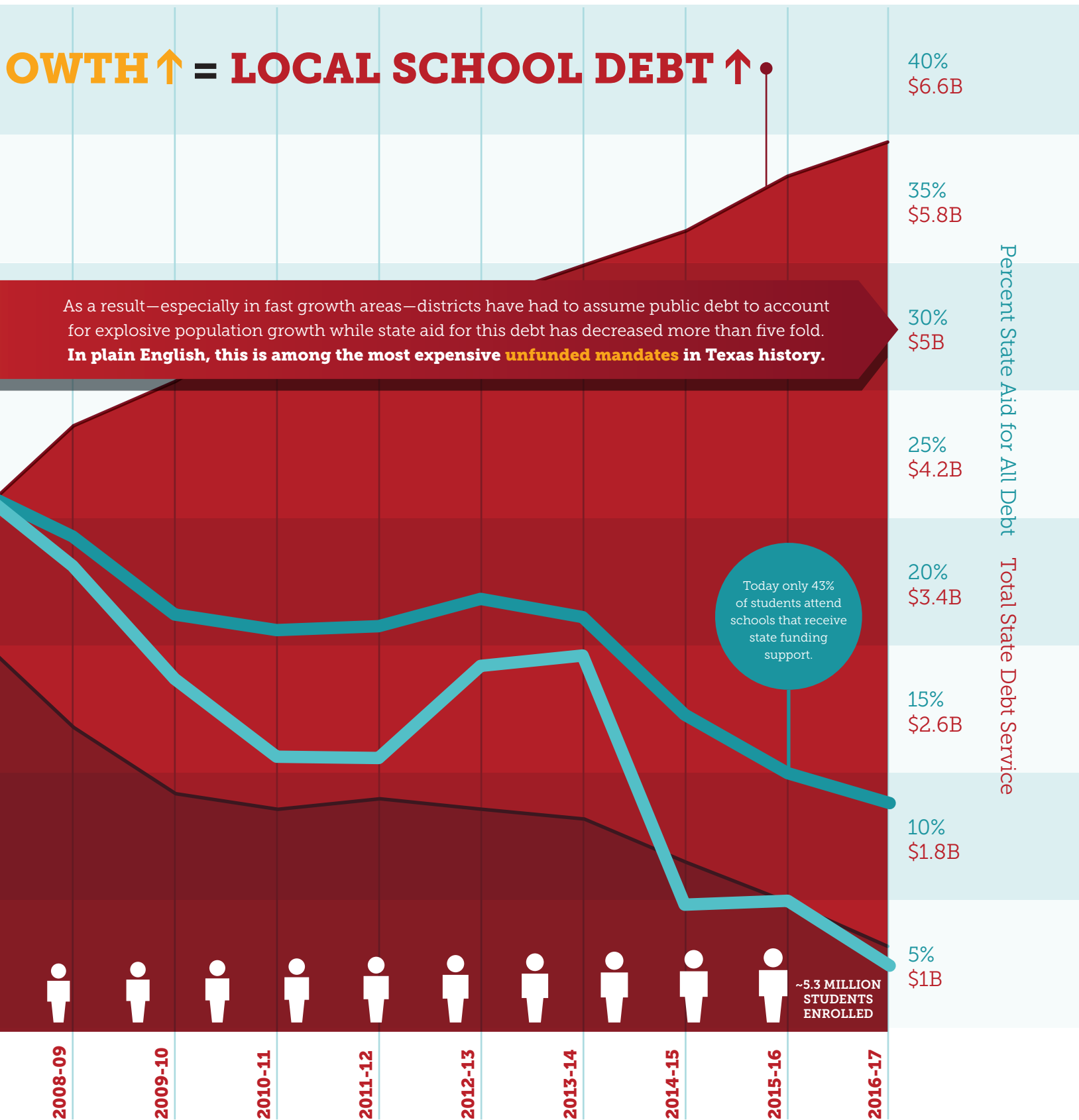


FIGURE 11

State Facilities Support Compared to Total Debt Service



The debt service tax rate is just one portion of the overall school district tax rate. The debt service rate finances the payments on the bonds that will help provide the facilities and other infrastructure needs. Once the schools are open, it is the Maintenance and Operations (M&O) tax that provides the funding for teachers, support staff, bus drivers, electricity, water, and other operations that help keep these schools up and running. As shown in Figure 9, fast-growth school districts and school boards have managed to keep the average M&O tax rate at or below the state average of \$1.0627, depending on category of growth. Unlike the I&S tax rate component, the M&O tax rates for fast-growth districts are more closely clustered to that of non-fast-growing school districts.

## State Facilities Programs and State Funding Support

The Texas Legislature has been a somewhat responsive partner to help offset the demands placed on fast-growth school districts. About two decades ago (1997) the Legislature adopted its first program, the Instructional Facilities Allotment (IFA), to help offset tax rate increases for those school districts needing new instructional facilities. In 1999, the Legislature created two programs: one program to help offset tax rates for those districts with eligible projects and tax rates that already constructed certain facilities—the Existing Debt Allotment (EDA)—and one program to help offset the operations costs of opening these facilities—the New Instructional Facilities Allotment (NIFA) program.

While IFA and EDA have helped fund school facilities throughout the state, these programs have remained virtually unchanged for two decades, drastically reducing their impact in terms of providing debt-tax relief for school districts.

### Instructional Facilities Allotment

The Instructional Facilities Allotment (IFA) was authorized under House Bill 4 during the 1997 Legislature. IFA awards for instructional facilities are based chiefly on the applying district's wealth per student—subject to several other adjustments—and provide a guaranteed yield of \$35 per ADA for each per penny of tax effort. IFA state aid must be used to pay debt service for new instructional facilities, additions, or renovations within a district, which has the effect of substantially lowering debt service tax rates, especially critical in property-poor school districts (See Table 4).

The recent history of the IFA program is that the school district applications for these funds far outstrip the appropriations level, leaving the majority of applicants at moderate property wealth levels and above without funding.

### Existing Debt Allotment

While the IFA program as initially conceived addressed debt service needs for facilities to be constructed in the future, the legislature realized that this program did not address the current debt service burdens of many school districts. During the 1999 legislative session under Senate Bill 4, lawmakers created a program to help school districts pay debt service on existing debt, for bonds on which districts must have made payments before September 1, 1999.

The Existing Debt Allotment (EDA) is a measure designed to help districts with debt not covered by IFA. Unlike IFA, all school districts with eligible debt automatically qualify for EDA support. In 2001, the legislature extended EDA coverage to eligible bonds for which payments were made prior to September 1, 2001. IFA applicants that were not funded by that program but had to issue bonds to meet future facilities needs receive assistance under this program. A major change that initially took effect in the 2000-01 school year by Commissioner Rule and later by statute was extending the coverage of the EDA guarantee from 12 cents of tax effort to 29 cents.

### New Instructional Facility Allotment

Also enacted by Senate Bill 4 in 1999 was the New Instructional Facility Allotment (NIFA). Unlike the IFA and EDA programs, funds awarded under NIFA are targeted for additional operating expenses related to opening new campuses. Under this program, there is an initial \$250 allotment for each student in average daily attendance in the district's new facility which is to be used for Maintenance & Operations expenses. The district is entitled to an allotment of \$250 for each additional student in ADA in the second year of a new campus.

### State Funding Decline

Since there has been little to no change to the state's facilities assistance programs in almost twenty years, fast-growth school districts rarely benefit from the IFA or EDA programs. Fewer fast-growth districts qualify each year and those that do see their funding reduced annually if they experience any growth in their local tax bases. In fact, only 27 fast-growth school districts receive state support through the EDA or IFA programs.

The \$35 yield per student per cent of tax effort has not been increased since 1999. The effect of this stagnation is that based on projections for the 2015-16 school year, only 43.3 percent of all Texas students now attend school in districts that are eligible for EDA or IFA support, which reflects continued erosion regarding eligibility for state support (See Figure 10). This reduction in EDA and IFA coverage has put additional pressure on local I&S tax rates over the last decade.

**TABLE 4**

## Instructional Facilities Allotment Funding, since 1997 (inception of program)

<b>ROUND</b>	<b>APPLICATION DEADLINE</b>	<b>FUNDING FOR FISCAL YEAR</b>	<b>AMOUNT DESIGNATED FOR NEW DEBT</b>
1	September 1997	1998	initial appropriation all new debt
2	December 1997	1999	initial appropriation all new debt
3	June 1999	2000	\$50 million new money (SB 4)
4	June 2000	2001	\$50 million new money (SB 4)
5	June 2001	2002	\$50 million new money (Rider 2)
6	June 2002	2003	\$50 million new money (Rider 2)
		2004	no new money
7	June 2004	2005	\$20 million new money (House Bill 3459)
		2006	no new money
8	June 2007	2007	\$50 million new money (Rider 97b)
		2008	no new money
9	June 2008	2009	\$87.5 million new money
		2010	no new money
10	June 2010	2011	\$75 million new money
		2012	No new money
		2013	No new money
		2014	No new money
		2015	No new money
		2016	No new Money
11	Not Yet Available	2017	\$55.5 million new money

In fact, the EDA and IFA programs only cover 7.4 percent of the total debt service for all public schools. Only 5.8 percent of those districts defined as fast-growth in 2015-16 receive state facilities support. At its high watermark (2000-01), the EDA and IFA program covered 44.6 percent of total debt service. As seen in Figure 11, the dollar amount for the EDA and IFA has decreased by over 35 percent since 1999-00 to a meager 7.4%. This is because when there is local property value growth, the state share for the program is decreased and more of the funding burden is shifted to the school districts and their local taxpayers.

## Conclusion

Public school enrollment growth in Texas continues to be concentrated in a relatively small number of school districts. Seventy-nine percent of the traditional public school enrollment growth over the last five years has occurred in 75 school districts that are currently educating 1.69 million students. It is not surprising that 32 of these 75 districts are located in what the U.S. Census Bureau has identified as the fastest growing counties and metropolitan areas in the United States.

All 75 fast-growth districts meet the state's current accountability standards. These districts are very close to the state average in terms of the percentage of special education and bilingual students served, as well as the percentage of students who are classified as "at risk."

Given their enrollment growth characteristics, the 75 fast-growth districts are responsible for 44 percent of the outstanding school district debt in Texas, which in 2015 totaled \$115.5 billion. Given the population increases in the state and its concentrated nature, school district debt has increased substantially over the past 15 years to address local educational needs. Part of the analysis presented here shows that eight school districts experienced enrollment increases of 30 percent or more over the last five years, with one district growing by 91.1 percent.

While there are state programs and policies in place to assist fast-growing school districts, these efforts have suffered from not being updated in a number of years. In the late 1990s, the legislature decided that providing equalized debt service support would become its major tool for assisting school districts in meeting their facility needs. This approach left project approval to local voters in their consideration of bond elections. In 1999, the Instructional Facilities Allotment (IFA) and Existing Debt Allotment (EDA) programs provided state support for about 91 percent of the students enrolled in Texas public schools. Given that no adjustment has been made to the basic level of support, the coverage of these programs has slipped to the point that only about 43 percent of today's students attend school in districts that are eligible for state facilities support.

In addition, EDA and IFA state support offset only 7.4 percent of total district debt service cost compared with the 44.6 percent level in 2000-01. The erosion of state facilities support has resulted in greater burdens on local taxpayers, especially in fast-growing school districts. Districts that have grown by 30 percent or more in enrollment over the last five years have an average I&S tax rate of 41 cents, which is a 16-cent premium over the average I&S tax rate for non-fast-growth districts. Fourteen of the 32 school districts with I&S tax rates at or above 50 cents are classified as fast-growth school districts, even though that group only accounts for 75 school districts statewide.

One additional factor is that regardless of local needs and local voter preferences, a school district may not issue new bonds for school construction unless the new and existing debt obligations can be met by a 50-cent I&S tax rate. The so-called "50-cent debt test" dates back to 1991 in its initial form and requires school districts experiencing rapid growth to pursue options such as capital appreciation bonds and the use of portable classrooms in order to meet their facility needs, even if their local taxpayers would support a higher tax rate to address local-growth issues.

As part of the 1999 legislation, the New Instructional Facility Allotment (NIFA) provides \$250 per student in support for the opening of new campuses, with new students in the second year also eligible for the \$250 award. Unfortunately, that program was not funded in the 2011 or 2013 legislative sessions, although funding was restored in 2015.

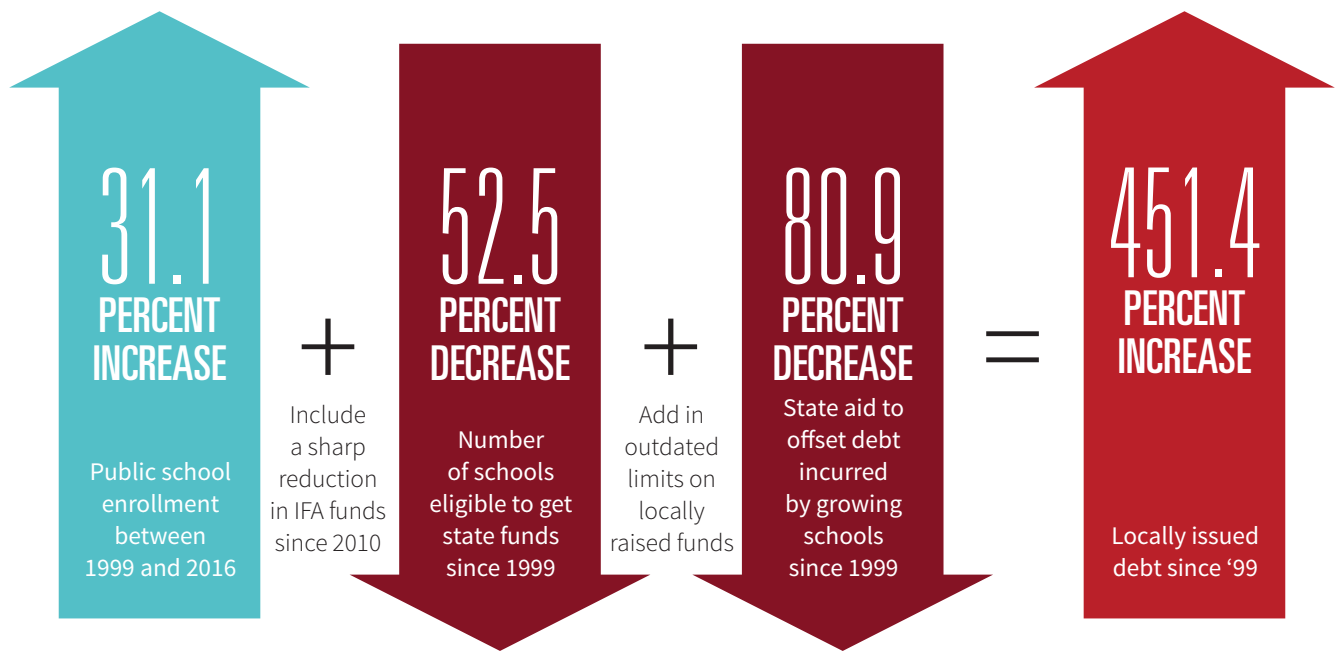
All indicators show that population growth will continue in Texas for the foreseeable future and families with children will continue to migrate to or increase their family size in what have become known as "destination" districts. Local taxpayers in many of these communities already face higher tax burdens than those living in slower-growth areas. Factors that limit the local decisions of local voters like the 50-cent debt test can often result in what many would perceive as unintended consequences, such as more costly methods of financing facilities or the extensive use of portable classrooms, which is not viewed as ideal from the perspective of students, their parents and classroom teachers.

State policies and programs must be realigned to address the growth narrative that has become the reality for many Texas fast-growth school districts. The disparities that have arisen regarding tax burdens in fast-growing communities need to be addressed if these areas are going to be able to educate their growing student populations. The additional operating costs that growth imposes on local school districts will be addressed in a later section of this report.



## State Facilities Support Compared to Total Debt Service, Historical

SCHOOL YEAR	TOTAL STATE DEBT SERVICE	TOTAL STATE AID FOR DEBT	
		(EDA and IFA Programs)	% STATE AID FOR ALL DEBT
1999-00*	\$1,593,093,190	\$618,443,527	38.8%
2000-01*	\$1,574,213,053	\$702,040,387	44.6%
2001-02*	\$2,060,489,686	\$790,795,482	38.4%
2002-03*	\$2,136,434,480	\$740,317,703	34.7%
2003-04	\$2,729,275,694	\$758,202,105	27.8%
2004-05	\$2,927,019,964	\$713,433,061	24.4%
2005-06	\$3,164,066,682	\$747,933,693	23.6%
2006-07	\$3,562,689,711	\$725,215,579	20.4%
2007-08	\$4,031,164,831	\$731,986,987	18.2%
2008-09	\$4,492,685,673	\$657,735,033	14.6%
2009-10	\$4,767,307,090	\$584,814,378	12.3%
2010-11	\$5,018,884,594	\$598,707,181	11.9%
2011-12	\$5,138,800,068	\$647,757,482	12.6%
2012-13	\$5,244,448,685	\$606,166,496	11.6%
2013-14	\$5,469,559,084	\$620,033,878	11.3%
2014-15	\$5,778,696,034	\$558,852,413	9.7%
2015-16	\$6,107,086,318	\$453,706,392	7.4%



## Appendix A Fast-Growth School Districts, 2010-11 to 2015-16

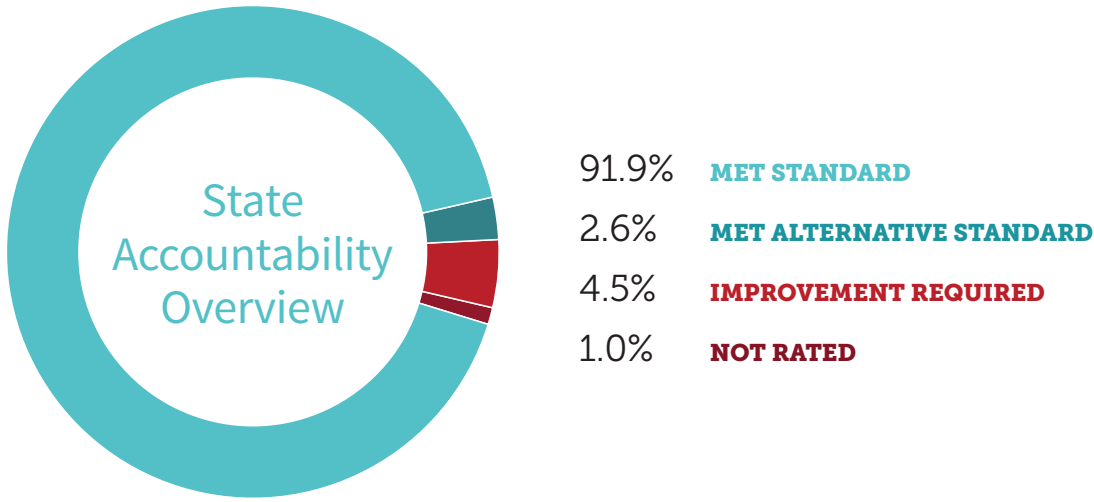
District Name	County Name	2015-16 Enrollment	5-Year Difference	5-Year Difference (%)
Andrews ISD	Andrews County	3,976	726	22.34%
Aransas County ISD	Aransas County	3,405	312	10.09%
Bastrop ISD	Bastrop County	10,278	1,203	13.26%
Belton ISD	Bell County	10,862	1,584	17.07%
Northside ISD	Bexar County	105,110	9,529	9.97%
Southwest ISD	Bexar County	13,692	1,877	15.89%
Alvin ISD	Brazoria County	22,183	4,816	27.73%
Pearland ISD	Brazoria County	21,093	2,324	12.38%
College Station ISD	Brazos County	13,021	2,486	23.60%
Lockhart ISD	Caldwell County	5,397	688	14.61%
South Texas ISD	Cameron County	3,589	416	13.11%
Barbers Hill ISD	Chambers County	5,085	865	20.50%
Allen ISD	Collin County	20,822	1,934	10.24%
Anna ISD	Collin County	3,072	774	33.68%
Frisco ISD	Collin County	53,300	16,021	42.98%
Lovejoy ISD	Collin County	3,946	558	16.47%
Princeton ISD	Collin County	3,876	675	21.09%
Prosper ISD	Collin County	8,296	3,955	91.11%
Wylie ISD	Collin County	14,615	2,089	16.68%
Comal ISD	Comal County	21,163	3,924	22.76%
Coppell ISD	Dallas County	11,881	1,664	16.29%
Grand Prairie ISD	Dallas County	29,339	2,798	10.54%
Lancaster ISD	Dallas County	7,324	1,063	16.98%
Denton ISD	Denton County	27,559	3,565	14.86%
Little Elm ISD	Denton County	7,194	884	14.01%
Northwest ISD	Denton County	20,976	5,606	36.47%
Ector County ISD	Ector County	31,791	3,665	13.03%
Fort Bend ISD	Fort Bend County	73,115	4,167	6.04%
Lamar Consolidated ISD	Fort Bend County	29,692	5,055	20.52%
Needville ISD	Fort Bend County	3,024	428	16.49%
Seminole ISD	Gaines County	2,845	415	17.08%
Dickinson ISD	Galveston County	10,953	1,835	20.13%
Schertz-Cibolo-U City ISD	Guadalupe County	15,118	2,687	21.62%
Aldine ISD	Harris County	70,417	7,263	11.50%
Crosby ISD	Harris County	5,680	561	10.96%
Cypress-Fairbanks ISD	Harris County	113,936	7,839	7.39%
Goose Creek Cisd	Harris County	23,748	2,465	11.58%
Houston ISD	Harris County	215,627	11,382	5.57%
Humble ISD	Harris County	40,549	4,636	12.91%
Katy ISD	Harris County	72,952	12,149	19.98%
Klein ISD	Harris County	50,594	5,284	11.66%
Pasadena ISD	Harris County	56,019	3,801	7.28%
Sheldon ISD	Harris County	8,477	1,626	23.73%
Tomball ISD	Harris County	14,120	3,451	32.35%
Hallsville ISD	Harrison County	4,936	614	14.21%

District Name	County Name	2015-16 Enrollment	5-Year Difference	5-Year Difference (%)
Dripping Springs ISD	Hays County	5,619	1,129	25.14%
Hays Cons ISD	Hays County	18,654	3,329	21.72%
Burleson ISD	Johnson County	11,385	1,354	13.50%
Crandall ISD	Kaufman County	3,453	612	21.54%
Forney ISD	Kaufman County	9,386	1,284	15.85%
Boerne ISD	Kendall County	7,902	1,263	19.02%
Frenship ISD	Lubbock County	9,173	1,643	21.82%
Lubbock-Cooper ISD	Lubbock County	5,818	1,779	44.05%
China Spring ISD	Mclennan County	2,604	265	11.33%
Medina Valley ISD	Medina County	4,473	983	28.17%
Midland ISD	Midland County	24,555	2,819	12.97%
Conroe ISD	Montgomery County	58,239	7,069	13.81%
Montgomery ISD	Montgomery County	8,174	1,274	18.46%
New Caney ISD	Montgomery County	13,816	3,710	36.71%
Willis ISD	Montgomery County	7,113	671	10.42%
Bridge City ISD	Orange County	2,887	286	11.00%
Aledo ISD	Parker County	5,249	595	12.78%
Royse City ISD	Rockwall County	5,220	664	14.57%
Castleberry ISD	Tarrant County	4,046	396	10.85%
Eagle Mt-Saginaw ISD	Tarrant County	19,203	2,494	14.93%
Everman ISD	Tarrant County	5,621	553	10.91%
Fort Worth ISD	Tarrant County	87,080	5,429	6.65%
Wylie ISD	Taylor County	4,080	747	22.41%
Lake Travis ISD	Travis County	9,238	2,260	32.39%
Manor ISD	Travis County	8,873	1,646	22.78%
Huntsville ISD	Walker County	6,962	683	10.88%
Waller ISD	Waller County	6,572	1,121	20.57%
Hutto ISD	Williamson County	6,527	1,110	20.49%
Leander ISD	Williamson County	37,158	5,006	15.57%
Liberty Hill ISD	Williamson County	3,482	773	28.53%
<b>State Totals</b>		<b>5,052,339</b>	<b>260,605</b>	<b>5.44%</b>
<b>Fast Growth Districts</b>	<b>2015-16 — 75 Districts</b>	<b>1,697,209</b>	<b>204,606</b>	<b>12.61%</b>

## Appendix B Fast-Growth School Districts Accountably Ratings, 2015

District Name	County Name	2015 Rating	Index 1 Score	Index 1 Target	Index 2 Score	Index 2 Target	Index 3 Score	Index 3 Target	Index 4 Score	Index 4 Target
Andrews ISD	Andrews County	M	69	60	31	20	33	28	72	57
Aransas County ISD	Aransas County	M	79	60	38	20	42	28	74	57
Bastrop ISD	Bastrop County	M	71	60	36	20	36	28	66	57
Belton ISD	Bell County	M	81	60	39	20	41	28	74	57
Northside ISD	Bexar County	M	82	60	39	20	45	28	79	57
Southwest ISD	Bexar County	M	69	60	30	20	37	28	69	57
Alvin ISD	Brazoria County	M	77	60	35	20	41	28	78	57
Pearland ISD	Brazoria County	M	91	60	43	20	51	28	84	57
College Station ISD	Brazos County	M	85	60	40	20	41	28	75	57
Lockhart ISD	Caldwell County	M	70	60	30	20	38	28	69	57
South Texas ISD	Cameron County	M	92	60	37	20	58	28	94	57
Barbers Hill ISD	Chambers County	M	91	60	39	20	54	28	85	57
Allen ISD	Collin County	M	93	60	44	20	54	28	85	57
Anna ISD	Collin County	M	83	60	34	20	43	28	77	57
Frisco ISD	Collin County	M	93	60	45	20	54	28	85	57
Lovejoy ISD	Collin County	M	98	60	48	20	60	28	92	57
Princeton ISD	Collin County	M	81	60	38	20	43	28	73	57
Prosper ISD	Collin County	M	92	60	40	20	50	28	87	57
Wylie ISD	Collin County	M	92	60	41	20	55	28	78	57
Comal ISD	Comal County	M	87	60	37	20	47	28	79	57
Coppell ISD	Dallas County	M	92	60	42	20	48	28	86	57
Grand Prairie ISD	Dallas County	M	74	60	36	20	41	28	73	57
Lancaster ISD	Dallas County	M	71	60	32	20	40	28	66	57
Denton ISD	Denton County	M	81	60	36	20	40	28	78	57
Little Elm ISD	Denton County	M	77	60	35	20	39	28	72	57
Northwest ISD	Denton County	M	87	60	40	20	46	28	80	57
Ector County ISD	Ector County	M	61	60	31	20	29	28	68	57
Fort Bend ISD	Fort Bend County	M	83	60	40	20	43	28	79	57
Lamar Consolidated ISD	Fort Bend County	M	82	60	38	20	43	28	73	57
Needville ISD	Fort Bend County	M	81	60	32	20	38	28	79	57
Seminole ISD	Gaines County	M	75	60	35	20	37	28	70	57
Dickinson ISD	Galveston County	M	74	60	31	20	39	28	73	57
Schertz-Cibolo-U City ISD	Guadalupe County	M	84	60	34	20	45	28	81	57
Aldine ISD	Harris County	M	67	60	31	20	37	28	69	57
Crosby ISD	Harris County	M	77	60	29	20	40	28	70	57
Cypress-Fairbanks ISD	Harris County	M	84	60	39	20	46	28	78	57
Goose Creek Cisd	Harris County	M	76	60	35	20	42	28	73	57
Houston ISD	Harris County	M	68	60	39	20	37	28	76	57
Humble ISD	Harris County	M	84	60	37	20	43	28	74	57
Katy ISD	Harris County	M	90	60	42	20	50	28	78	57
Klein ISD	Harris County	M	83	60	37	20	43	28	75	57
Pasadena ISD	Harris County	M	75	60	36	20	42	28	75	57
Sheldon ISD	Harris County	M	68	60	32	20	36	28	63	57
Tomball ISD	Harris County	M	91	60	43	20	51	28	83	57

District Name	County Name	2015-16 Enrollment	5-Year Difference			5-Year Difference (%)		
Hallsville ISD	Harrison County	M 85 60	34	20	44	28	78	57
Dripping Springs ISD	Hays County	M 92 60	39	20	53	28	84	57
Hays Cons ISD	Hays County	M 77 60	38	20	41	28	72	57
Burleson ISD	Johnson County	M 83 60	34	20	42	28	70	57
Crandall ISD	Kaufman County	M 85 60	35	20	46	28	73	57
Forney ISD	Kaufman County	M 87 60	38	20	49	28	83	57
Boerne ISD	Kendall County	M 91 60	42	20	52	28	82	57
Frenship ISD	Lubbock County	M 86 60	36	20	43	28	85	57
Lubbock-Cooper ISD	Lubbock County	M 88 60	39	20	47	28	85	57
China Spring ISD	Mclennan County	M 91 60	35	20	47	28	75	57
Medina Valley ISD	Medina County	M 82 60	32	20	43	28	75	57
Midland ISD	Midland County	M 64 60	29	20	29	28	65	57
Conroe ISD	Montgomery County	M 87 60	40	20	46	28	81	57
Montgomery ISD	Montgomery County	M 90 60	36	20	47	28	78	57
New Caney ISD	Montgomery County	M 71 60	32	20	36	28	71	57
Willis ISD	Montgomery County	M 76 60	33	20	38	28	69	57
Bridge City ISD	Orange County	M 87 60	35	20	49	28	77	57
Aledo ISD	Parker County	M 92 60	41	20	48	28	82	57
Royse City ISD	Rockwall County	M 81 60	33	20	42	28	77	57
Castleberry ISD	Tarrant County	M 67 60	33	20	37	28	70	57
Eagle Mt-Saginaw ISD	Tarrant County	M 81 60	35	20	42	28	73	57
Everman ISD	Tarrant County	M 75 60	33	20	42	28	78	57
Fort Worth ISD	Tarrant County	M 68 60	35	20	38	28	69	57
Wylie ISD	Taylor County	M 91 60	40	20	50	28	85	57
Lake Travis ISD	Travis County	M 95 60	45	20	54	28	86	57
Manor ISD	Travis County	M 62 60	32	20	32	28	71	57
Huntsville ISD	Walker County	M 68 60	32	20	33	28	69	57
Waller ISD	Waller County	M 79 60	33	20	41	28	70	57
Hutto ISD	Williamson County	M 82 60	36	20	43	28	73	57
Leander ISD	Williamson County	M 88 60	40	20	45	28	81	57
Liberty Hill ISD	Williamson County	M 89 60	38	20	51	28	76	57



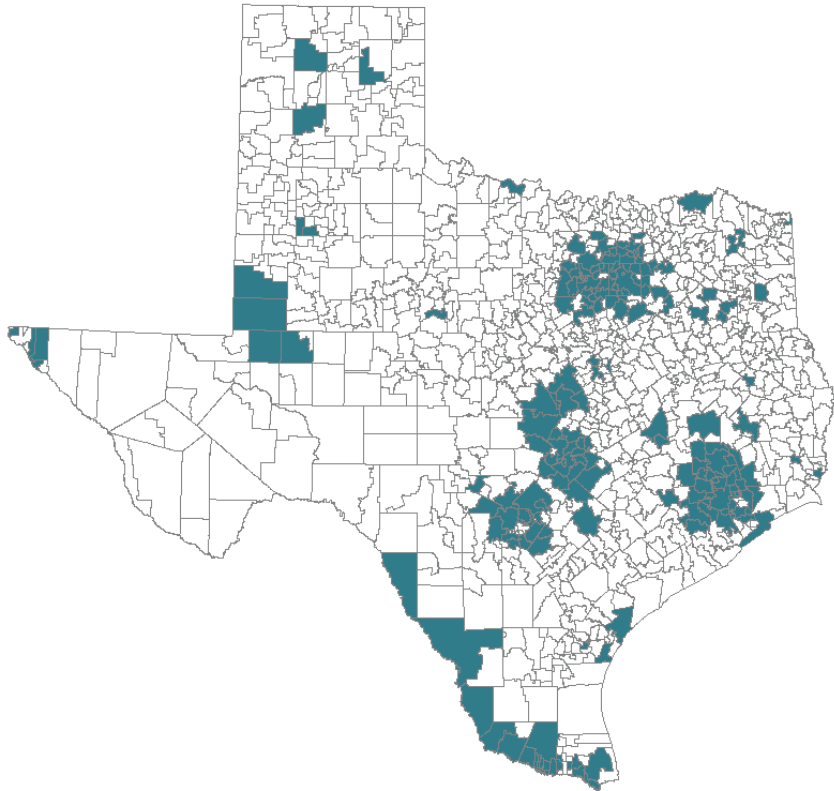
## Appendix C All Eligible Fast-Growth School Districts Since 1997

Andrews ISD	Andrews County	Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD	Dallas County	Channelview ISD	Harris County
Hudson ISD	Angelina County	Cedar Hill ISD	Dallas County	Crosby ISD	Harris County
Aransas County ISD	Aransas County	Dallas ISD	Dallas County	Cypress-Fairbanks ISD	Harris County
Sealy ISD	Austin County	Desoto ISD	Dallas County	Galena Park ISD	Harris County
Bandera ISD	Bandera County	Duncanville ISD	Dallas County	Goose Creek Cisd	Harris County
Bastrop ISD	Bastrop County	Garland ISD	Dallas County	Houston ISD	Harris County
Elgin ISD	Bastrop County	Grand Prairie ISD	Dallas County	Humble ISD	Harris County
Belton ISD	Bell County	Highland Park ISD	Dallas County	Katy ISD	Harris County
Killeen ISD	Bell County	Irving ISD	Dallas County	Klein ISD	Harris County
Alamo Heights ISD	Bexar County	Lancaster ISD	Dallas County	Pasadena ISD	Harris County
Somerset ISD	Bexar County	Mesquite ISD	Dallas County	Spring ISD	Harris County
North East ISD	Bexar County	Richardson ISD	Dallas County	Spring Branch ISD	Harris County
East Central ISD	Bexar County	Coppell ISD	Dallas County	Tomball ISD	Harris County
Southwest ISD	Bexar County	Denton ISD	Denton County	Sheldon ISD	Harris County
Northside ISD	Bexar County	Lewisville ISD	Denton County	Huffman ISD	Harris County
Judson ISD	Bexar County	Sanger ISD	Denton County	Hallsville ISD	Harrison County
Southside ISD	Bexar County	Northwest ISD	Denton County	Dripping Springs ISD	Hays County
Texarkana ISD	Bowie County	Lake Dallas ISD	Denton County	Hays Cons ISD	Hays County
Alvin ISD	Brazoria County	Little Elm ISD	Denton County	Brownsboro ISD	Henderson County
Pearland ISD	Brazoria County	Ector County ISD	Ector County	Donna ISD	Hidalgo County
College Station ISD	Brazos County	Ennis ISD	Ellis County	Edcouch-Elsa ISD	Hidalgo County
Bryan ISD	Brazos County	Midlothian ISD	Ellis County	Edinburg Cisd	Hidalgo County
Burnet Cons ISD	Burnet County	Red Oak ISD	Ellis County	Hidalgo ISD	Hidalgo County
Marble Falls ISD	Burnet County	Waxahachie ISD	Ellis County	Mcallen ISD	Hidalgo County
Lockhart ISD	Caldwell County	Clint ISD	El Paso County	Mission Cons ISD	Hidalgo County
Brownsville ISD	Cameron County	Fabens ISD	El Paso County	Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD	Hidalgo County
Harlingen Cons ISD	Cameron County	San Elizario ISD	El Paso County	Sharyland ISD	Hidalgo County
La Feria ISD	Cameron County	Canutillo ISD	El Paso County	La Joya ISD	Hidalgo County
Los Fresnos Cons ISD	Cameron County	Socorro ISD	El Paso County	Weslaco ISD	Hidalgo County
San Benito Cons ISD	Cameron County	Lamar Cons ISD	Fort Bend County	Valley View ISD	Hidalgo County
South Texas ISD	Cameron County	Needville ISD	Fort Bend County	Granbury ISD	Hood County
Barbers Hill ISD	Chambers County	Fort Bend ISD	Fort Bend County	Quinlan ISD	Hunt County
Allen ISD	Collin County	Stafford Municipal School District	Fort Bend County	Alvarado ISD	Johnson County
Anna ISD	Collin County	Seminole ISD	Gaines County	Burleson ISD	Johnson County
Frisco ISD	Collin County	Dickinson ISD	Galveston County	Cleburne ISD	Johnson County
Mckinney ISD	Collin County	Galveston ISD	Galveston County	Joshua ISD	Johnson County
Plano ISD	Collin County	Clear Creek ISD	Galveston County	Crandall ISD	Kaufman County
Princeton ISD	Collin County	Friendswood ISD	Galveston County	Forney ISD	Kaufman County
Prosper ISD	Collin County	Gonzales ISD	Gonzales County	Kaufman ISD	Kaufman County
Wylie ISD	Collin County	Pampa ISD	Gray County	Mabank ISD	Kaufman County
Lovejoy ISD	Collin County	Schertz-Cib-U City ISD	Guadalupe County	Boerne ISD	Kendall County
New Braunfels ISD	Comal County	Lumberton ISD	Hardin County	Kerrville ISD	Kerr County
Comal ISD	Comal County	Aldine ISD	Harris County	North Lamar ISD	Lamar County
Gatesville ISD	Coryell County	Alief ISD	Harris County	Lampasas ISD	Lampasas County
Copperas Cove ISD	Coryell County			Cleveland ISD	Liberty County

Dayton ISD	Liberty County
Lubbock-Cooper ISD	Lubbock County
Frenship ISD	Lubbock County
Eagle Pass ISD	Maverick County
Midway ISD	Mclennan County
La Vega ISD	Mclennan County
China Spring ISD	Mclennan County
Medina Valley ISD	Medina County
Midland ISD	Midland County
Conroe ISD	Montgomery County
Montgomery ISD	Montgomery County
Willis ISD	Montgomery County
Magnolia ISD	Montgomery County
Splendora ISD	Montgomery County
New Caney ISD	Montgomery County
Dumas ISD	Moore County
Tuloso-Midway ISD	Nueces County
Flour Bluff ISD	Nueces County
Bridge City ISD	Orange County
Springtown ISD	Parker County
Weatherford ISD	Parker County
Aledo ISD	Parker County
Livingston ISD	Polk County
Canyon ISD	Randall County

Rockwall ISD	Rockwall County
Royse City ISD	Rockwall County
Lindale ISD	Smith County
Whitehouse ISD	Smith County
Chapel Hill ISD	Smith County
Rio Grande City Cisd	Starr County
Roma ISD	Starr County
Arlington ISD	Tarrant County
Birdville ISD	Tarrant County
Everman ISD	Tarrant County
Fort Worth ISD	Tarrant County
Grapevine-Colleyville ISD	Tarrant County
Keller ISD	Tarrant County
Mansfield ISD	Tarrant County
Lake Worth ISD	Tarrant County
Crowley ISD	Tarrant County
Kennedale ISD	Tarrant County
Azle ISD	Tarrant County
Castleberry ISD	Tarrant County
Eagle Mt-Saginaw ISD	Tarrant County
Carroll ISD	Tarrant County
White Settlement ISD	Tarrant County

Wylie ISD	Taylor County
Mount Pleasant ISD	Titus County
Austin ISD	Travis County
Pflugerville ISD	Travis County
Manor ISD	Travis County
Eanes ISD	Travis County
Del Valle ISD	Travis County
Lake Travis ISD	Travis County
Huntsville ISD	Walker County
Waller ISD	Waller County
Laredo ISD	Webb County
United ISD	Webb County
Burkburnett ISD	Wichita County
Georgetown ISD	Williamson County
Hutto ISD	Williamson County
Liberty Hill ISD	Williamson County
Round Rock ISD	Williamson County
Taylor ISD	Williamson County
Leander ISD	Williamson County
Floresville ISD	Wilson County
La Vernia ISD	Wilson County
Decatur ISD	Wise County
Zapata County ISD	Zapata County





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