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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ATPE Statement on TEA's Final Public Health Guidance

State's largest educator association frustrated by TEA plan: "Too many questions are left unanswered by TEA's guidelines."

AUSTIN, Texas— ATPE has reviewed the Texas Education Agency's "SY 20-21 Public Health Planning Guidance" document posted on the agency's website this afternoon.

Part of TEA's "Strong Start" plan, the nine-page document lists minimal requirements and recommendations for school districts to consider as they prepare to start the new school year. While the final guidance contains a few more requirements than a draft leaked in mid-June, the responsibility for ensuring student and educator safety has been placed squarely on school administrators. Included in the new document are references to Gov. Greg Abbott's recent executive order calling for masks to be worn in public, which will also apply to schools for as long as the statewide order remains in effect.

ATPE is frustrated that TEA has not heeded our call to provide more explicit guidance, nor is TEA requiring the involvement of educators and parents in developing COVID-19 protocols.

On July 2, ATPE **released its own set of recommendations** for state policies and district-level guidelines related to COVID-19. We urge school district leaders to follow ATPE's recommendations as they work to fill in the gaps. Our recommendations would require each district to develop a COVID-19 advisory committee including non-administrative-level staff, parents, and community medical experts.

"Too many questions are left unanswered in TEA's guidelines," said **Shannon Holmes**, ATPE Executive Director. "We urge school district leaders to step in and fill this leadership vacuum to keep Texas children and educators safe, particularly as pockets of our state face rising COVID-19 outbreaks. All Texas students, parents, and educators deserve to be safe and have a firm understanding of the steps being taken to provide a safe learning environment."

[Read ATPE's Recommendations for District-Level Guidelines.](#)

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

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