

# Editorial: Take a look at the Texas of tomorrow

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Time travel isn't the province of science fiction anymore. If you want to visit the future, just take a tour of today's Texas schools.

Walk down the hallways of our schools, and you'll walk into the Texas of tomorrow. Look upon those children, and you'll see the complexion of our state in the next few decades.



Editor Marv Knox Although school is out for summer, you can study our campuses by examining [Snapshot 2014](#), the Texas Education Agency's latest statistical report on our state's public schools.

[An overview](#) published by the *Texas Tribune* provides a paint-by-numbers portrait of our schools today and our state tomorrow—51.8 percent Hispanic, 29.4 percent Anglo, 12.7 percent African-American and 3.7 percent Asian.

Those numbers compare favorably with estimates developed by the state demographer, the *Tribune* notes: "Hispanics will outnumber Anglos by 2020—that's five years from now—and will account for more than half the state's population by 2042."

The racial/ethnic trend already has taken hold in Texas' cities. For example,

Hispanics comprise 69.8 percent of the Dallas school district and 62 percent of the Houston district. They are the majority in 11 of the state's 20 largest districts. Meanwhile, Anglos are a tiny minority in the huge districts, accounting for 1.8 percent of students in San Antonio, 4.7 percent in Dallas and 8.2 percent in Houston.

### **A rural / urban gulf**

The annual school survey also documents the huge gulf between urban and rural Texas. For example, the state has 1,227 school districts, but 29 percent of the students attend just 18 of those districts. More than half the state's public school students are educated in 4 percent of its districts. The Tribune described that variable graphically: "There are 49 superintendents for 2.6 million students and 1,178 for the other 2.5 million."

Of course, not all children attend public schools. So, this survey isn't encompassing. But the private-school numbers are not large enough to offset the larger demographic trends at play in the public schools.

Also, demographics could override the maturation process of our state's schoolchildren and color the complexion of our future. External factors could cause Texas' demographics in a decade or later to shift from the racial and ethnic mix in our schools today.

### **Growing Hispanic influence**

But two of three possible scenarios would cause Texas to be even more Hispanic in 2025 than its schools are today. First, the birth rates of Hispanic families are higher than other Texas families. So, today's schoolchildren could accelerate the growth of our Latin population as they come of age. Second, when the state's economy picks up again, immigration from Mexico and Central and South America will speed up again. Only the third scenario, a more rapid influx of whites from other parts of the country, would dilute the state's upcoming Hispanic

dominance.

So, what are the implications of these trends for Texas Baptists and other Christians across the state? Several stand out:

- We must double down on our church-starting efforts, particularly for Hispanics and especially in the cities and their suburbs.
- Education of Hispanic ministers is vital if we're going to reach Texas with the gospel. Not only must Baptist University of the Americas expand, but our universities and seminaries must enlarge their Hispanic enrollment. This variable particularly impacts recruitment and financial aid.
- Many existing churches must become multicultural as a transition to becoming Hispanic. Anglo churches in rural communities and also in transitional urban neighborhoods either must make the transition to Hispanic, consolidate with other declining Anglo congregations or close their doors.
- The role of county and regional Baptist associations increasingly will focus on helping congregations make these transitions.
- The Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas has been wise to hire an executive director and move him to full-time status. Convencion is vital to the future of our state.