



## Description

More than 2,000 Abilene residents shared their hopes, ideas, and aspirations for Abilene during the Community Visioning process. They clearly voiced that education is a significant priority. Education provides the basis for individual growth and personal development, a mechanism by which to break the cycle of poverty, “raw ingredients” and a skilled workforce to meet well-paying workforce needs, an employment opportunity for insightful educators, and a gateway to connect community members and education systems.

Children growing up in poverty are highly likely to fall into a cycle of poverty themselves. In addition, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are much more common among people facing economic challenges. Therefore, enhancing the education of children, especially those who may be socioeconomically disadvantaged, and other community members not only has positive economic advantages, but it impacts the likelihood that the children will go on to have a better quality of life. A quality, highly accessible education system allows all people to receive an education that helps them pursue their aspirational career and provides a better life for their families and community.

Abilene has a breadth of strong educational opportunities – early childhood learning centers, a strong public school system, post-secondary schools (colleges and universities), continuing education resources, and others. There are opportunities to enhance educational resources, and Abilene residents consistently indicate that they are fully supportive of efforts to work together to achieve common goals – providing better opportunities for today and a brighter future.



# Education

## Vision Statement Options

- Abilene: Excellence and opportunity for all students in comprehensive education from Pre-k through Ph.D.
- To provide every person with the education and training they need to succeed in their chosen field.

## Strategies

- Break the cycle of poverty by strengthening primary education and children's exposure to cultural activities and career choices.
- Enhance the workforce to improve people's career options and supply needed workers to local employers.
- Provide education and career training to individuals facing personal challenges based on language barriers, disabilities (e.g., physical, learning, unseen, or other), cultural issues, financial status, or others.
- Engage life-long learners as a way to enhance academic interests and contribute to a higher quality of life for Abilene residents of all ages.





## Key Indicators

- Continued improvement in “Reading by Third Grade” rates for elementary school students
- Continued improvement to the High School graduation rates
- Number of college students participating in career/apprenticeship programs
- Number of students enrolled in vocational programs and graduation rates
- Number of students in Head Start/Pre-School programs

## Supporting Indicators

- AISD and WISD school ratings
- Job/college placement rates
- Math literacy rates in elementary school students
- Measure of employability of high school students
- Number of apprenticeship programs for children
- Number of certificate programs offered in school
- Number of dual credit/AP credit
- Number of families or individuals that are trained to mentor kids
- Number of High School or college students in Abilene
- Number of library books checked out annually
- Number of people unemployed
- Number of research publications across universities
- Number of students in elementary school with mentors
- Number of university students enrolled in higher education programs
- School attendance and behavior of children in grades K-12



## Potential Partners

- Abilene Chambers of Commerce (including Black)
- Abilene Education Foundation
- Abilene Hope Haven
- Abilene Independent School District (AISD) and Wylie Independent School District (WISD)
- Alliance for Women and Children
- Arrow Ford
- ATCPHD
- Big Brother Big Sisters
- Big Country Area Health Education (AHEC)
- Boys/Girls Club
- Big Country CASA
- Childcare Providers and Educators
- Christian Women's Job Corps
- Churches and Faith-based Community
- City of Abilene Government
- Colleges, Universities & Technical Schools
- Community Foundation / ThriveABI
- Development Corporation of Abilene
- Disability in Action
- Dyess Air Force Base
- Early Childhood/Head Start/Daycares
- Faithworks
- Goodwill West Texas (job training)
- Homeschool Community
- International Rescue Committee
- Junior Achievement
- Kenley School
- Local Citizens and Parents
- Love & Care Ministries
- Partner Resource Network (PEN)
- Private Educational Institutions
- Rotary Club
- Texas Workforce Commission
- VISTAs/AmeriCorps
- Workforce Solutions
- Wylie Education Foundation





# Appendix A: Community Ideas and Concepts

Through the Community Visioning process, Abilene residents shared their insights, passions, strategies, ideas, and hopes for Abilene's future. The breadth of their comments from the Open Forums and interviews is shown below.

## Cause Area #1: Education

- Provide (re)education opportunities for older citizens
- Add more social workers in the schools
- Allocate resources to areas of greatest need (i.e., teachers, technology, equipment)
- Offer high-quality childcare programs to help ensure kindergarten readiness
- Provide better pay for teachers
- Create community engagement initiatives with public school campuses
- Connect workforce and education
- Coordinate educational options to suit everyone's needs, STEM, technology, synergy among all institutions.
- Create a homeschooling network support system
- Create resources / navigators to help students and families address stigma and other barriers
- Decrease dropout rate by focusing on early education reading rates
- Provide more dual credit for high school students to integrate with local higher ed programs
- Educate small businesses about being more inclusive
- Enrich educational experiences for students with special needs
- Provide more ESL education
- Provide free educational opportunities (or at least less expensive)
- Help kids get more involved with extracurricular activities
- Increasing masters and Ph.D. programs at the local colleges and universities
- Increase the number of counselors for post-graduation opportunities
- Increase access to early education
- Increase tech school programs
- Offer more internships and mentorships
- Invest in buildings is important because many students thrive in a transformative environment
- Invite the business community into the classroom to encourage tech programs
- Offer more accredited programs
- Offer transition skills for all students (i.e., budgeting, homemaking, etc.)
- Provide parental education classes to new parents
- Create one high school with two campuses: 1) grades 9-10 and 2) grades 11-12
- Provide programs for under-educated adults to increase appreciation of education - college is attainable and realistic increasing comfort, community outreach
- Offer re-entry (jail/prison) education - life skills, job, etc.