



## Just Fund It TX House Party and Meeting Talk Kit

Are you ready to spread the word about school funding reform in Texas? This guide takes you through the steps of organizing a house party or speaking at a meeting and gives you all of the resources that you will need to help people get informed and take action! Thanks for stepping up. We promise to make it easy!

You will find the resources mentioned in this guide on the Just Fund It TX Resource page at <http://justfundittx.org/resources/>

### What is a house party?

A house party is a gathering of people, hosted by an individual or a group, intended to garner support and action for a cause or campaign.

Just Fund it Texas House parties will serve to:

- **Inform** guests about how Texas funds public education and why our state's schools and students need more funding.
- **Take action** at the event by offering guests some quick and easy ways to do something right away.
- **Engage** students and parents who want to get more involved by providing the tools and direction they need.

We encourage every house party or meeting to include the opportunity for people to write **Love Letters** about their favorite public school. You can find files in the resource guide or make your own. After your party or meeting, you will send these to us, and we will deliver them to legislators.

Anyone can host a house party or speak at a meeting -- you don't need any special skills. All it takes is a little planning and organization, and commitment to support fair funding for Texas children. There's no need for a complicated party or a long talk. The best ones are often the simplest! Just find some people who care, share information about the issues and show them how to take action.

## Why host a party or talk with a group?

If you're reading this document, you're probably already aware that Texas school funding is inadequate, unfair, and convoluted. There are many ways to measure per student funding, and in all of them, Texas ranks far below average. That's not right for our state's students. It's not right for our schools and teachers. And it's not right for our state's future.

*Education Week's Quality Counts 2018* ranked Texas 43<sup>rd</sup> in the nation in school finance.<sup>1</sup> We spend \$8,485 per student, which is far below the national average of \$12,526.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the current state funding system shifts more and more of the responsibility for education funding to school districts: in 2008, the state paid 48.5% of the cost of public education, but by 2019, it will support approximately 38% under the current funding system.<sup>3</sup> That shifts the costs of education to districts, and their taxpayers.

Texas can do better. And with your help, change could start this year. A long list of legislative officials from both parties and from across the state have indicated that school finance reform is part of their agenda for the 2019 legislative session. Just Fund It TX wants to hold them accountable for these campaign promises and make sure that we arrive at a school funding system that is adequate and fair to students and taxpayers alike.

A house party is a powerful tool for helping people understand the issues and learn what they can do to make a difference in the Texas Legislature.

House parties raise awareness of the problems and the possibilities with funding Texas K-12 education. And they help attendees lobby their legislators for fair and adequate funding for all Texas students. People are more likely to speak up when friends, family members, and neighbors explain the issues.

## I want to host a house party. Where do I start?

- **Choose a date** that will encourage participation. Be mindful of holidays, local events, and traditions like the Big Game, so you don't create a conflict for your attendees and you get better turnout.
- **Choose your venue and the number of guests.** House parties can be big or small, short or long, and they can be held anywhere: in your home, at a neighborhood meeting, during a campus CAC or PTA meeting, at a student government meeting, at your place of worship after services, at a meeting of a local civic or business group...
- **Decide how much time you have.** You can make an impact in as little as 15 minutes or as long as an hour or more. The key is to **inform, take action** immediately and **engage** people so they stay involved.

You can **use the resource guide to find everything you need**: a PowerPoint, printable Love Letter graphics and FAQs, links to videos, help making invitations and more.

**The address is <http://justfundittx.org/resources/>** It's all there, because we want to make it easy for you to help people speak up for Texas public schools.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.edweek.org/ew/collections/quality-counts-2018-state-finance/state-grades-on-school-finance-map-and.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.edweek.org/ew/collections/quality-counts-2018-state-finance/map-per-pupil-spending-state-by-state.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://public.tableau.com/profile/state.of.texas.lbb#!/vizhome/FoundationSchoolProgramFundingbyMethodofFinanceFiscalYears2004to2017/HistoricalFunding>

## How do I get the word out about my house party?

Your guest list will determine the best way to publicize your Just Fund It TX House Party. The resource Guide offers sample language and simple instructions for creating a Facebook event, using an emailed e-vite, or making printed invitations that can be mailed to guests. Remember to include information like where guests should park and how long the event will last.

Invite your family, friends, work colleagues, people you know through civic or community groups, members of your religious community, and your neighbors. Cast a wide net to ensure you include anyone who might be a supporter. You can also reach out to groups that have regular meetings to ask if you can offer a short house party during one of their gatherings.

Remember to reach out to people who might not be involved with public education. Our schools matter for everyone. Your invitation can help them see why. If you're speaking to a business organization, remind them that today's students are tomorrow's employees. If you're talking with local realtors, remind them that strong schools create community and drive demand for housing. Schools are important, even for people who aren't directly involved with education as parents, students or teachers.

If you and your friends are tech savvy, encourage everyone to bring a laptop, tablet, or phone so that they can follow Just Fund It TX on social media, look up their legislators' contact information and send emails to their state representative and senator.

Ask your guests to RSVP so you can get a firm headcount, then follow up with a reminder a few days before the event.

## Before the Party

Just Fund It TX wants to make this easy for you, so all of the materials you will need are provided in the resource guide at <http://justfundittx.org/resources/>

- **Get two Just Fund It TX Love Letter copies for each guest** – one for a senator and one for a house member. You can use the templates in the **Love Letter FAQ** document to print at home or you can order [ready-to-go postcards from Zazzle](#) or from another source if you plan ahead. You can also use index cards and write **Just Fund It TX** and this tag line on the back: **We expect more. What's the plan?** After your party, you will mail these to Just Fund It TX. We will deliver these to the lawmakers listed on each card.
- **Print out your sign-in-sheets**, which are also provided in the resources section.
- **Watch the PowerPoint on our website to familiarize yourself with the issues.** It has great information that will help you lead your event with confidence and key facts.
- **Print out any resources that you plan to hand out.** These can include Next Steps, Talking Points, Who is my Representative?, How to Contact my Representative. You decide which are most useful for your group.
- **Check your internet connection.** You may want to play a video, take sign-ups via an online form, have folks follow Just Fund It TX on Facebook, sign up for alerts about the Texas PTA Rally Day, or make time for people to email their Texas legislators.

## During the Party

Here are samples of two different parties: a short talk during another group's meeting and a longer stand-alone house party. Adapt these to match your needs. An event does not have to be long to make an impact. The key is to **inform, take action** and help people **engage** – by sending a Love Letter during the party or meeting and staying involved after the event is over.

## The Quick Talk (15 minutes)

This is a great option if another group has given you time during a meeting. You can get the key points across in about 15 minutes, if you need to: 10 for the highlights of the PowerPoint and 5 for writing the Love Letters. It's better to do a short presentation than no presentation at all.

- **Introduce yourself and Just Fund It TX.** Circulate a sign-in sheet if people did not sign in as they arrived. Share handouts from the resources guide to offer information you don't have time to cover in a short talk.
- **Share the PowerPoint to help people understand the issues and how they can help.** The PowerPoint is in the resource guide, and can be downloaded from our website. It offers a clear and valuable look at public school funding in Texas, explained in a way that's valuable to people who are new to the conversation as well as people who are familiar with many of the issues. It includes data, some great short videos and more. Run through this, and you will cover all of the most important bases. For a short meeting, you can skip some of the slides and focus on the highlights.
  - **State the problem.** Texas ranks far below the national average in per student funding for public schools. Increasingly, that funding comes from your local property taxes. Show a short video that explains the issues. Explain to the group you are speaking to how this issue impacts them.
  - **Explain the opportunity.** This year, the Texas legislature has promised to make public school funding reform a top priority. People across the state are working together to make sure they keep that promise.
  - **Share a call to action.** The PowerPoint ends with a clear call to action: writing a Love Letter about a favorite public school. **Make sure to leave a few minutes for people to write a Love Letter on the spot, so you can collect them and send them to Just Fund It TX for delivery to the Capitol.**
- **Invite people to stay engaged.** After the PowerPoint is over, encourage people to take what they have learned and do more with it, by sharing this message with people they know, signing the Just Fund It TX petition, following Just Fund It TX on social media or committing to host their own house party or talk. **Use one of your minutes to encourage everyone to share their plans with the people sitting next to them.**
- **Hand out printed resources.** This is a great way to share information that does not fit into a quick presentation.
- **Say thanks** to everyone for being there, for caring about public education in Texas and for working to make a difference.

## The Deep Dive (an hour or more)

A stand-alone house party lets your guests take more real-time action, have more conversations or hear from a speaker.

- **Start by giving people time to talk with each other** and sign in.
- **Introduce yourself** and Just Fund It TX.
- **Share the PowerPoint to help people understand the issues and how they can help.** The PowerPoint is in the resource guide, and can be downloaded from our website. It offers a clear and valuable look at public school funding in Texas, explained in a way that's valuable to people who are new to the conversation as well as people who are familiar with many of the issues. It includes data, some great short videos and more. Run through this, and you will cover all of the most important bases. A long meeting lets you talk about each section in greater depth.

- **State the problem.** Texas ranks far below the national average in per student funding for public schools. Increasingly, that funding comes from your local property taxes. Show a short video that explains the issues. Explain to the group you are speaking to how this issue impacts them.
- **Explain the opportunity.** This year, the Texas legislature has promised to make public school funding reform a top priority. People across the state are working together to make sure they keep that promise.
- **Share a call to action.** The PowerPoint ends with a clear call to action: writing a Love Letter about a favorite public school. **Set aside 5-10 minutes for people to write their letters, so you can collect them and send them to Just Fund It TX for delivery to the Capitol.**
- **You can also invite an expert to speak.** Many people have knowledge of public school funding issues and passion for making a change. Consider a city council representative, teachers union leader, local PTA president, nonprofit leader, local business leader, school district official or other expert to help explain the issues and the reason reform matters so much to your community and our state.
- **Invite people to stay engaged.** After the PowerPoint, encourage people to take what they have learned and do more with it, by sharing this message with people they know and by staying engaged through Just Fund It TX.
- **Take time for people to share their plans for engagement.** This is a powerful and fun element of a house party. The goal is to encourage people to share their plans with each other, by creating an activity. You can set a timer for five minutes, and have everyone move around the room to share their plans with three people. Or you can have everyone gather in a circle to share one action they will take after the meeting. **That turns a plan into a commitment.**
- **Offer your support.** Hosting a talk or a house party is an especially powerful way to spread this message. Let anyone who's interested in doing this know that you will offer information and guidance.
- **Hand out printed resources.** Make sure you have given your guests copies of the next steps and instructions on contacting their representatives and letter writing.
- **Take a photo of your group and post it on social media with #JustFundItTX,** and share the photo with everyone who came to your event.
- **Say thanks** to everyone for being there, for caring about public education in Texas and for working to make a difference.
- **Give people time to talk.** After the meeting, people will probably be excited to talk about what they have learned and what they plan to do. That can lead to new connections and collaborations among people who heard you speak.

## About Love Letters

**Love Letters about your favorite public school are an important element of every Just Fund It TX house party or presentation.** It's a memorable, high-impact way to show legislators that people care, are holding them accountable and expect more.

In the resource guide at <http://justfundittx.org/resources/>, you will find a Love Letter FAQ and pdfs that let you print Love Letters at home for your guests to use. You can also order them as pre-printed postcards if you plan ahead, using our pdfs or by [ordering from Zazzle](#).

If there's no time or money for printing, you can use index cards instead. On the front, people should write I ❤️ **My Texas Public School**. On the back, write **Just Fund It TX** and the tag line **We expect more. What's the plan?**

- **Each guest should write two Love Letters:** One to his or her Texas State House member and one to his or her Texas State Senator. If your guests don't know who represents them, they can find that information at <https://fyi.capitol.texas.gov>.
- **Make sure each letter includes the name of the legislator it's addressed to.** Just Fund It TX will gather the letters and deliver them to lawmakers at the Texas Capitol.
- **Personal stories are especially powerful.** Ask guests to include two things: what they appreciate about their public school and how they feel about being 43<sup>rd</sup> in the country in per student spending for public schools. The note can be simple – their child's name and a sentence about a favorite teacher, class, activity or moment at school. If there's time, people can also personalize their letters by adding their own drawings and doodles on the front to show things they love about their schools. Guests should also include their name & ZIP.
- **Encourage guests to photograph and post their Love Letters on social media with #JustFundItTX.** This is another great way to spread the message.
- **We are keeping a tally of Love Letters, so please collect your guests' Love Letters and send them to Just Fund It TX.** Please include your name and who your state senator and representative are.

Here's the address:       **Just Fund It TX**  
                                       **1005 Congress Avenue**  
                                       **Suite 100**  
                                       **Austin, Texas 78701**

- **Let us know your letters are on the way!** Please email us at [info@justfundittx.org](mailto:info@justfundittx.org) using Love Letters in the subject line so we know to expect your package. Please include the following information: your name, the city or school district where you spoke, how many people attended, how many letters you collected, the name of your state rep and senator. (You can find that at <https://fyi.capitol.texas.gov>.)
- **Our goal is BIG – 5.4 million Love Letters. That's one for each public school student in Texas!**

## **After the Party**

It's not over, and that's a great thing! People are often fired up and ready to take action after attending a house party. Harness this energy and keep it going. You can send out thank-you cards or emails to everyone that attended and send them information electronically to continue their motivation to contact their representative. Invite your guests to be part of a group email or Facebook page so you can contact them with opportunities to advocate for fair and adequate education funding, and they can post their efforts to the group. Just Fund It TX will also keep people updated through our mailing list and on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

As a host or meeting leader, please remember that we would also love your help with a few quick things:

- Put your guests' Love Letters into an envelope and mail them to Just Fund It TX at the address above.
- Email us to let us know that they are coming, and to tell us the essentials about your meeting or party: how many people were there, where it was held, how many letters were collected, who you are and who your local legislators are.
- Share your sign-in sheets with us via email or by sending them with your Love Letters.

**Just Fund it TX ❤️ YOU for joining us, and for your work to make a difference – for Texas students, Texas schools and Texas' future!**