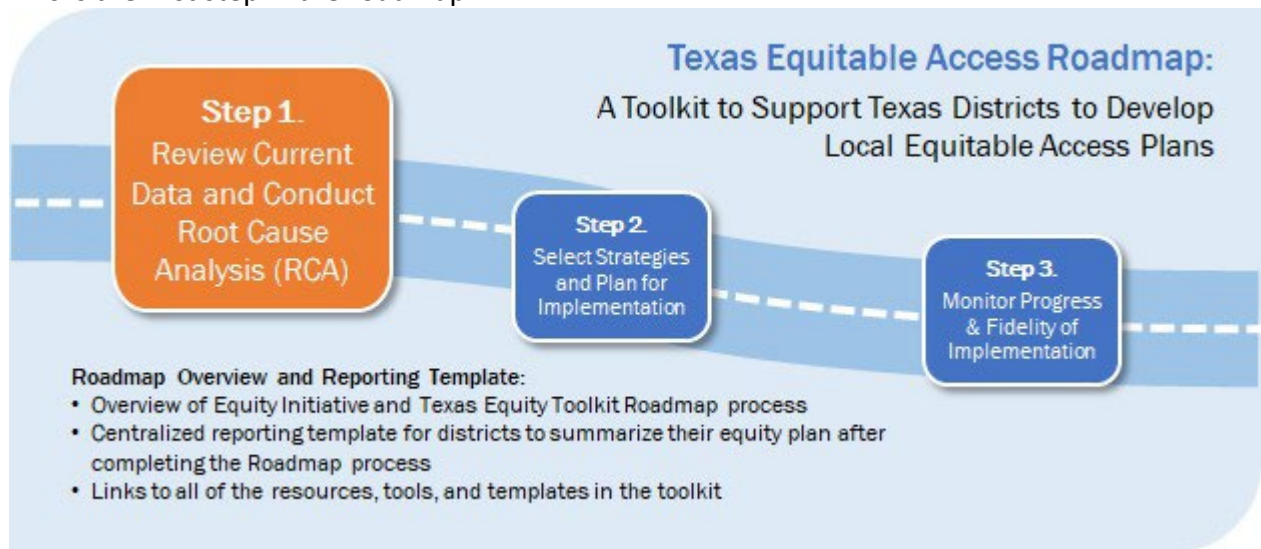


# Step 1. Review Current Data and Conduct a Root Cause Analysis

This is the first step in the roadmap.



## Purpose

This tool is designed to help district leaders strategically plan for the current equity plan by revisiting their existing equity plan to determine its efficacy and reviewing current district data.

District leaders will begin this process by reviewing their previous equity plan; determining the success of specific, existing strategies; and referring to current district data. Types of district data will include all data that pertain to effective instruction including but not limited to student achievement data, student demographics, teacher experience, and certification for out-of-field teachers. Then, district leaders will engage in conducting a root cause analysis (RCA) described here in Step 1.

The RCA process centers on data review to identify possible root causes of the equity gap. The protocol guides teams through a process of identifying the perceived reasons they think they are facing each equitable access challenge and continuing to dive deeper until they believe they have reached the root causes that have resulted in their equitable access gaps. This is a data-driven activity that involves reviewing equity gaps and data and interpreting the data to unearth the root causes of your district's equity gaps. For example, are student populations growing academically at a slower pace than their peers doing so because they are more frequently taught by inexperienced or out-of-field teachers? If so, what changes to hiring, teaching assignments, or master scheduling can the district make to rectify that difference? Another example may be, are students who are growing academically at a slower pace experiencing similar teachers as their peers? If so, why are those teachers able to produce more growth in some student populations and less growth

in others? What coaching and pedagogical support do the campus and district offer to teachers in these instances?

Step 1 is separated into four tasks:

- Task 1: Review the current district equity plan to see which strategies have been successful and have significantly eliminated the identified gaps.
  - Determine which strategies to continue implementing and include in the new plan (*Step 2: Select Strategies and Plan Implementation*) and which strategies to discontinue.
- Task 2: Analyze your data to determine the connection between student growth and teacher effectiveness. Determine if out-of-field or inexperienced teachers are teaching students of color or low-income students at higher rates or if they are largely taught by the same teachers as other student populations.
  - Districts also may choose to examine equitable access at the campus level, by grade level, or by subject area. Determination of access gaps (inexperienced or out-of-field) would require district staff to link individual student data to individual teacher data. This additional effort is worthwhile if districts want to examine equitable access from the student lens and within campuses. Recent research shows that even within a campus, there is inequitable student access to effective teachers.<sup>1</sup> Campus, grade-level, and subject area analyses would allow districts to examine whether gaps are more common in certain grades or subjects versus other grades or subjects.
- Task 3: Conduct a data dive and the Understanding Your Problems of Practice activity.
  - This simple and straightforward activity often unearths useful new insights for informing policy and helps participants learn from others' perspectives. By the end of the process, facilitators will gather the groups' identified root causes and general comments to share with the district team, developing the strategies for the district equitable access plan.<sup>2</sup>
- Task 4: Collect feedback and complete closing.

## Keep in Mind

This tool is intended to be used by facilitators and stakeholders at in-person meetings, and it may require a series of meetings with additional data gathering between engagements. TEA strongly encourages the following:

- District staff spend time going through this process, digging deep and using evidence and data to address why there are equity gaps in the district.
- Districts select staff who are thinking deeply about teacher support and talent management issues across the career continuum (e.g., teachers, principals, parents, principal supervisors, district leaders, students).

---

<sup>1</sup> Goldhaber, D., Lavery, L., & Theobald, R. (2014). *Uneven playing field? Assessing the inequity of teacher characteristics and measured performance across students* (CEDR Working Paper 2014-14). Seattle: University of Washington. Retrieved from [https://www.advocacyinstitute.org/ESSA/Uneven\\_AEFP-1.pdf](https://www.advocacyinstitute.org/ESSA/Uneven_AEFP-1.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> TEA notes that the district equity plan should be developed at the "district level," even if some root causes and strategies are ultimately targeted at specific campuses.

## Stakeholder Engagement

Develop key focus questions for stakeholders to share their perceptions on the degree to which implementation of the prior year equity plan was successful. This feedback could be gathered in a variety of ways, such as a series of focus groups, included on the agenda at PTA meetings as an exit ticket activity, or distributed as a brief inquiry-based survey to inform this review process.

### Task 1: Review the current district equity plan to see which strategies have been successful and have significantly eliminated the identified gaps.

- Reflect on each gap and the aligned strategy implemented to eliminate the gap:
  - Did the aligned strategy to eliminate the gap accomplish the desired equity goal based on the performance measure target?
  - Would you implement a new strategy, or would you enhance elements of the existing strategy?
  - What were the lessons learned, and how will they inform refinements for this year's equity plan?
- Record reflections on Step 1 of the Equity Plan Template.

### Task 2: Analyze your data to determine equitable access to effective instruction.

- Examine the distribution of campuses in terms of
  - a. percentages of students who are low income (i.e., eligible for free or reduced-price lunch);
  - b. percentages of students of color; and, if desired,
  - c. other student subgroups.
- Determine the qualitative differences of instruction:
  - If the student population is taught by the same teacher(s), why is that teacher(s) more effective with certain types of students and not others?
- Review pertinent data to inform the RCA process. Be sure both the data analysis and RCA process reflect the district, campus, and teacher levels.
  - Example types of data: teacher workplace survey, student to teacher demographics, coaching models, compensation structures, hiring practices, teacher feedback on administrator support, teacher experience and certification, etc.

## Effective Teaching

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states and districts to focus on *measurable* criteria and definitions when developing definitions of effective teaching.

In response to stakeholder feedback, TEA used the “% meets or exceeds student progress for all tests” as an indicator for “effective” teaching to identify which districts need to continue to create and submit equity plans. With this shift to focusing on academic growth as the primary indicator of an equity gap, “inexperienced” or “out-of-field” teachers become data for districts to analyze, among other possible root causes, as possible explanations for gaps in academic growth.

### Calculating the Equity Gap

Step 1: The STAAR Progress Measure data of “% at meets or exceeds student progress for all tests”, Academic Growth, and fall enrollment data for African American, White, Hispanic, Economically disadvantaged, and Non-economically disadvantaged for school years for the previous three years was pulled.

Step 2: The percentage gaps for the “% meets or exceeds student progress for all tests” for the following student group comparisons were calculated:

- African American and White
- Hispanic and White
- Economically disadvantaged and Non-economically disadvantaged

Step 3: Districts with gaps greater than 10 percent for the student group comparisons in two of the last three years were flagged and will be required to continue to create and submit an equity plan.

## Task 3. Conduct a data dive and the Understanding Your Problems of Practice activity.

### Overview

The district facilitator shares an overview of the purpose of the equitable access plan and goals for stakeholder involvement in the process. The facilitator shares key messages from the district team in charge of developing the plan and previews the three steps for RCA to be completed during the day.

- **Root Cause Definition:** Root causes are the perceived underlying key reasons or causes of a given problem of practice—in this context, the root causes will be the perceived causes or reasons that a district faces a particular gap in student equitable access.

## Conduct a “Data Dive” With Group Review of the Equity Gaps and Data Metrics

The facilitator presents the data and equity gaps for the district developed through Task 1 and Task 2. Depending on the number of participants, participants stay in one group or form several small groups. The facilitator will guide the group(s) through the following review process:

- Review the data presentation materials (e.g., slide deck, handouts): The facilitator walks the participants through the results of the data analyses and shares definitions, metrics, and calculations of the equity gaps and any other necessary details.
- Provide time for clarification: What questions does the group have about the results of the data analysis?
- Analyze closely: Each participant independently takes a closer look at the equity gaps and data findings and reviews the focus questions listed in Step 1 Resources and the Equity Planning template.
  - Districts could analyze the following types of data in their data dive:
    - Inexperienced teachers: TEA defines inexperienced teachers as teachers in their first two years of teaching
    - Out-of-field teachers: TEA defines out-of-field teachers as those who do not possess certification in the subject they have been assigned to teach
    - Workplace satisfaction surveys
    - Coaching models
    - Compensation structures
    - Hiring practices
    - Assigning Effective Teachers
    - Teacher feedback on administrator support
- Provide root causes that are aligned to the problem statements as they relate to attracting, assigning, supporting, and retaining effective teachers.
- Review the results of Task 1 as the team analyzes the additional data and make connections between the two.

*Process note:* Record the group’s discussion and answers to the focus questions in the Step 1 Resources and in the Equity Planning template. Display the planning template on-screen for the group as you record responses or transcribe these questions on chart paper in front of the room.

- Respond: As a group, answer the focus questions while the facilitator charts the responses. The facilitators will aid in tracking patterns in the answers to support prioritization in the next step.
- Prioritize: What are the primary concerns for the district related to its equity gaps? Ask participants to reflect first and then discuss as a group.

## Identify and Discuss the Root Causes of the Equity Challenges That Our District Faces

After completing the data dive exercise, the group will now focus the conversation on uncovering the root causes of the district's equity gaps. Start by asking participants to identify two to three problem statements that are linked to equity gaps. Frame your problem statements around the challenge of attracting, assigning, supporting, or retaining effective, experienced, and in-field teachers in the highest need campuses. Using the categories of "attracting," "assigning," "supporting," and "retaining" such teachers will allow you to frame your district's challenges and problems of practice through a few different lenses. This should result in uncovering a variety of root causes that the district can then prioritize when selecting strategies to address the district equity gaps.

*Process note: The problem statements may be drafted in advance by the district team and discussed and, potentially, revised during the stakeholder meeting.*

Encourage participants to focus on systems challenges to frame their root causes, not symptoms. For example, the tendency of early career teachers to move from inner-city to suburban campuses after a few years is a symptom, while a lack of strong preparation and leadership in inner-city campuses is a systems challenge. Also, the high percentages of teachers of students with disabilities who leave teaching for work in the private sector is a symptom, while unmanageable workloads for these teachers is a systems challenge.

Next, the group brainstorms explanations for each problem statement, considering factors in four categories—challenges in ATTRACTING effective teachers, ASSIGNING<sup>3</sup> effective teachers, SUPPORTING effective teachers, and RETAINING effective teachers. For each problem statement, facilitators ask, "Why is this the case?" and then describe the data and evidence they have available to support their thinking. Keep in mind, this is a data-driven activity. After having identified an initial set of root causes of the problem, participants continue to probe "Why is that the case?" and "How do I know?" to better ensure that the true root cause(s) have been identified. The group continues through this cycle until all factors have been considered. This is a lengthy process and may require the group(s) to ask "Why?" and "How do I know?" as many as 10 or more times. Data and evidence must be

included when responding to the “How do I know?” parts of the activity. Because using data/evidence is a critical component of the RCA, participants are not only brainstorming ideas, but they are also getting to a deeper and more precise understanding that can uncover the root causes of the problem statements.

By the end of this section of the RCA process, the group will have a long list of possible root causes of the problem statements as they relate to attracting, assigning, supporting, and retaining effective teachers. Using the Conducting a Root Cause Analysis planning template group(s) will list their problem statements and associated root causes in the Equity Plan. You also might consider documenting this process on chart paper as group members work through their thinking.

## Task 4: Collect feedback and complete closing.

### Feedback Form Completion

Review the root causes determined by the group. All participants should complete a feedback form to ensure they can share their perspectives. The facilitator will walk through the feedback form to resolve participant questions. Information on developing a feedback form is provided in the sidebar.

### Closing

The facilitator shares the timeline for use of feedback and next steps for plan development. Stakeholders will be invited to attend future sessions if possible.

### Next Steps for District Equity Planning Group

Now that your team has engaged in reviewing the equity plan for the previous year (Task 1) and reviewed current data to conduct a root cause analysis (Tasks 2–4), you’re ready to move forward to the next part of the Road map, *Step 2. Select Strategies and Plan for Implementation.*