Community Conversation Summary

The State Board of Education (SBOE), under Texas law, is required to adopt a Long-Range Plan for Public Education. The 18-member steering committee, which is made up of state board members, various stakeholder group representatives and representatives from three state agencies, is leading the process. The steering committee will recommend long-term goals for Texas schools and will identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges of the system.

To help the board gather public input that will shape the new plan and set long-term goals through the year 2030, the steering committee held a series of community conversations across Texas. The steering committee hosted ten in-person and two remote events, with a total of 680 participants.

In each community conversation, participants identified the purpose or desired outcome of public education and gave feedback on challenges, strengths, and opportunities in four topics: educator preparation, recruitment, and retention; equity and access; family engagement and empowerment; and student engagement and empowerment.

This document provides an overview of the most common participant responses from all of the events. To learn more about the development of the Texas State Board of Education's work on the Long-Range Plan, visit https://tea.texas.gov/SBOE/long-range_plan/.

Definitions of Prioritized LRP Topics

Student Engagement and Empowerment

Teaching and encouraging students to be advocates for themselves and take ownership in their learning. Student engagement also focuses on multiple ways to engage students in learning during and beyond the school day including projects, programs, organizations, internships, mentorships, etc. This includes:

- **Future readiness (including early learning/literacy):** Preparing students for an international economy and global competitiveness, ensuring students are prepared for either postsecondary or career opportunities, considering projected economic demand (e.g., STEM field).

- **Effective systems of support for all students:** Ensuring quality, effective, and differentiated supports to serve all students including but not limited to students living in poverty and special populations (i.e., ELL students; students with dyslexia; homeless students; students in foster care; and students in gifted and talented programs, migrant education, and special education).

Educator Preparation, Recruitment, and Retention

Ensuring there are qualified teachers entering the field and effective teachers being retained so that every student has a qualified teacher.

Equity and Access

Ensuring equitable access to and support for advanced courses, funding, and technology for all students, schools, and districts.

Family Engagement and Empowerment

Engaging and integrating families and parents in the education of students. Supporting parent education to support their kids. Looking at how the system works or does not work to help parents and community members serve as advocates and partners in the success of the education system.

Student Engagement and Empowerment
Challenges	• Students need more real-world experiences, courses, and exposure in order for them to know what opportunities are available • Excessive testing (e.g., TEKS, STARR) and "teaching to the test" leaves less room for creativity, student-led learning, and critical thinking • Students are a number in the system, instead of a whole person of value, which emphasizes academics rather than social skills and social-emotional learning • Teacher training in skill sets, new practices, and technology is needed to support and reach all students • Diversity of teaching force does not fully reflect the diversity of the school population to meet all student needs (e.g., culture, language) • Poverty and hunger lead to students' physical needs not being met (shelter, food, healthcare)
Strengths	• Expose students to college and career readiness through dual credit through local universities, AP courses, internships, experimental learning programs, T-STEM, CTE, magnet schools, vocational certifications, industry-level certification, career academies, pathways, endorsements, project-based learning, cross-curricular instruction, and development of specialized schools (e.g., City Lab, Dallas ISD, IDEA Campus) • Districts empower students through choices for personalized learning, individualize education and graduation paths, and provide exposure to a variety of opportunities and fields for all students • Schools implement technology that enhances engagement and education (e.g., virtual labs, Google Classroom, access to information, assistive technology, real-world equipment) • Schools provide extracurricular activities that engage students in their schools, create leadership roles, and foster a sense of community (e.g. football, volleyball, band, cheerleading, ROTC, technology, robotics, First LEGO League, student council) • Public-private partnerships where companies engage students by donating items or other support, providing alumni and other guest speakers, being involved with schools and students
Opportunities	• Incentivize schools to connect more students to community members, employers, public-private partnerships, mentorships, internships, career tours, college tours, virtual career days, virtual job shadowing, business-sponsored PD, and advocacy • Provide cross-curricular courses and opportunities, hands-on learning; prepare students with real-world engagement, innovative courses, and flexible curriculum • Engage and empower students in the community to take ownership, hold leadership opportunities, and volunteer in the community, even at an earlier age • Involve students in goal setting and give students a voice to decide which fields they want to learn about and explore further • Teach technology skills through projects (e.g., developing apps) to engage students

Educator Preparation, Recruitment, and Retention	
Challenges	• Teachers need higher salaries for their work (and to pay bills and student loans) and opportunity for salary increases over time. • Teachers need greater appreciation, respect, time, resources, support, and honor, and a better public reputation • Colleges and teacher preparation programs are not aligned with actual teaching; do not prepare teachers for the realities of classroom teaching (e.g., parents, student discipline problems, planning instruction) • Teachers are not sufficiently prepared to teach diverse populations of children (disabilities, special education, social-emotional needs, bilingual, families in poverty) • Alternative certification programs that don't have the depth of training needed for success in the classroom; programs don't consistently provide high-quality teacher training
Strengths	• Districts and school using a variety of alternative certification programs to recruit teachers with outside/technical experience to the classroom • Instructional coaches and mentoring programs (e.g., Bell mentor program, TX BESS) help new teachers succeed • Teacher passion for the kids; majority of those entering the profession still have a passion and desire to make a positive impact on children—there for the "aha" moment • Educator prep programs have high, up-to-date standards • Salary levels are higher to recruit teachers at beginning level; entry-level salaries are more competitive; salaries aren't as low as in other places
Opportunities	• Professional development as appropriate mentorship support for new teachers, PLCs, instructional coaching from leadership, feedback from student surveys • Find ways to give teachers a higher salary, pay raises based on quality, and better benefits; for retention, provide bigger incentives for advanced education, higher incremental salary schedule, on-campus stipends for teacher-coaches to grow; "next door" home buying • Get professionals to promote the profession of teaching (build empathy between teachers and community; set reasonable expectations) • Include student teaching before employment to prepare new teachers; co-teaching, and more and longer internships; give potential teachers more exposure to teaching • Loan forgiveness, tuition waiver, grants for teacher prep college education (e.g., for lower-income students, teacher aides to become teachers, "grow your own" program)

Equity and Access	
Challenges	- Overall, the funding system is outdated, broken, and set up to be inequitable; equity needs to be a priority to offer equal opportunities no matter where students live (e.g., zip codes, rural) in Texas - Technology upgrades and internet access in schools and homes is limited and unequal - Funding across the state varies between districts with smaller vs. larger tax bases, preventing equitable services for all students (e.g., some can pass bonds, some can't) - Not all communities (e.g., rural, poor) offer Advanced Placement (AP) classes. Support for AP classes across various student populations is often overlooked; not everyone has equal access. Students need more access to dual credit and AP courses in all schools. - Students have unequal access to healthcare, nutritious/quality food, and school counselors, glasses, and other supports
Strengths	- Awareness of equity and access issues, diversity and inclusion (e.g., using data to understand equity, Ed justice site, Mexican-American textbook) - Options for learning pathways for all students—earned certificates (endorsement), dual enrollment, AP courses, basic, etc. - A push for technology access has increased device access (e.g., iPads), access to advanced courses - Dual credit programs provide higher education for little to no cost for students (e.g., community colleges, OnRamps from UT) - Relationships with community colleges and businesses provide students with learning opportunities (advanced classes, CTE, certifications)
Opportunities	- Engage businesses, community colleges, nonprofits in the community (rural and urban) to develop partnerships and provide resources and courses (e.g., dual enrollment, internships, space rentals) - Fix tax structures related to school funding/property tax; state funding needs to be restructured - More grants are needed for technology (access and training) and special programming - Access to quality programs—CTE, advanced coursework, foreign language—across the state. Use technology to increase access. - Ensure teachers are in classrooms that match content, training, and certification (highly qualified teachers in classrooms)

Family Engagement and Empowerment	
Challenges	• Parents unfamiliar with school system; do not know their rights, how to navigate the system, or what they can do to help their child; not technology savvy • Language and cultural barriers exist that aren't being addressed • There is an absence of parental support (e.g., homework not a priority; parents are busy working; PTA enrollment has declined) • Lack of effective and consistent communication between schools and families • Atmosphere is not welcoming to families, including nontraditional families (from the receptionist, to the administration, to the teacher)
Strengths	• Technology such as social media can be used correctly and positively for communication to parents; potential for parent communication through all avenues (e.g., social media, email, photo apps, newsletters, parent portal, Google, newsletters); for example, sending parents pictures of what is going on at school • Family engagement nights and other events can introduce parents to curriculum and "how to's" for their children (e.g., academic parent-teacher teams, family engagement nights in ESSA, technology, communication, showcases of student accomplishments) • PTA/PTOs/parents volunteering at schools have an impact • Community organizations exist that can serve as a bridge between schools and families when schools lack the resources to address issues at home; examples are community partners (such as public library for family literacy), nonprofits, community gardens • Teachers are communicating and reaching out to parents, supporting families
Opportunities	• Use all forms of communication to keep parents informed (e.g., social media, collaborative websites, webinars, Google Classroom, online translators) • Funding and classes to support parents (English classes); classes for parents on weekends while students are in tutoring; instruction for parents on how they can tutor at home • Reach out to parents by first building relationships with them and connecting early and often • Work to reduce language and cultural barriers to focus on specific needs (e.g., multilingual office staff, fellow parents translate at school meetings) • Partnerships with businesses and universities to hold events that help build ties to students and families; database of speakers

Top Ten Results from Community Conversations $

PURPOSE OR DESIRED OUTCOME OF PUBLIC EDUCATION *	El Paso	Kilgore	Ft. Worth	Dallas	San Antonio	Salado	Edinburg	Corpus Christi	Houston	Austin	Amarillo	Number of communities where topic was discussed
Number attended = 680	60	35	60	38	146	60	95	33	85	30	38	
Prepares all students to be adults who contribute to their community through civic engagement, community service, and social awareness and action	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	11
Prepares students to be good adult citizens (successful, productive, patriotic, responsible, valuable; contribute to society, lead the country, improve government, and improve lives)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	11
Prepares students to be responsible; independent; and college, career, or military ready (e.g., employable skills, vocational training, ready for the real world, set goals, make a living, real-life experiences, exposure to career possibilities, long-range planning)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	11
Creates and provides equal access to free, quality education for **all** students, including fair treatment across all demographics and levels of ability (gifted students, challenged students) and support to thrive, succeed, and reach highest potential	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	11

PURPOSE OR DESIRED OUTCOME OF PUBLIC EDUCATION *	El Paso	Kilgore	Ft. Worth	Dallas	San Antonio	Salado	Edinburg	Corpus Christi	Houston	Austin	Amarillo	Number of communities where topic was discussed
Develops life skills, such as critical thinking skills, leadership skills, decision making, problem solving, accountability, responsibility, time management, grit, resilience	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	11
Helps students find their talents and interests; prepares students with skills and knowledge so they will reach their fullest potential	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9
Teaches academics for a well-rounded future; includes math and science, ELA (reading, literacy, writing), social studies, history, arts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		8
Equips students to be technologically savvy (ready for a future and career with more automation, robots, machines, and increasingly sophisticated technology)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	8
Develops well-rounded citizens who are educated on a common body of knowledge and have a global perspective and awareness	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓				7
Teaches diversity and inclusivity by teaching students to interact and constructively function with people who have ideas and mindsets different from their own.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓	✓	7