

## **Edinburg Community Conversation Summary**

### **February 7, 2018**

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**Participant Description:** Approximately 95 participants

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, community conversations are being held around the state. In each community conversation, participants identify the purpose or desired outcome of public education and give 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 a snapshot of the data collected during the Edinburg community conversation and highlights the main concepts captured during small-group conversations. Staff members from the Texas Comprehensive Center at the American Institutes for Research facilitated the community conversations and prepared this summary.

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/](https://tea.texas.gov/SBOE/long-range_plan/).

## What is the purpose or desired outcome of public education?

- Create a system to make students responsible. The seniors are not the only important students.
- Be tech savvy.
- Build productive citizens – negotiate the world.
- Build strength, skills, and talent in a student.
- Character education.
- College isn't for everyone. Focus on career ed needs of others.
- College ready, and teach them goal-setting for future.
- Compete in a global society.
- Cultivate an atmosphere which nurtures collective growth and communal growth.
- Develop great leaders.
- Develop humanity, compassion in student.
- Educate well-rounded individuals to contribute to society (higher ed).
- Education is equalizer; offer upward social mobility; critical to offer these opportunities here in our region as we have high rate of co-occurrence between poverty and educational levels.
- Funding – may not always be issue since campuses have to operate with limited funds but still produce positive learning outcomes.
- Give back to the community; build the next generation.
- Global citizen – ability to be culturally responsive.
- Good citizens – be a valuable citizen to the community.
- Help students develop to the fullest extent of their ability for their future.
- Help students find a career they love so they can be productive and happy in the community in which they live.
- How to empower? Student-centered, soft skills, functionality. Ability to read, calculate, analyze.
- Ignite passion to become lifelong learners.
- Innovation and preparation is the future.
- Instill noncognitive skills: grit, resilience.
- Learn what worked and didn't work to continue evolving to the changing needs of student advancement.
- Multilingual, not just bilingual, promotes international learning.
- Offer equitable opportunities.
- Prepare/equip all students with knowledge and skills so they can be more productive, happy members of society.
- Prepare/expose to fine arts to know what they want to become.
- Prepare students for new technology.
- Prepare students for post-school.
- Preparing for future – not just college. Workforce skills. Transfer learning skills to real world.

- Produce students who can compete globally for a career they choose.
- Producing leaders – 20% of our future is learning.
- Provide necessities to become independent learners.
- Provide tools student needs to be successful.
- Public ed for all students regardless of background.
- Public education should provide opportunity for students to learn and continue educational path.
- Purpose as a system, equally funded, if you're truly about all children.
- Purpose of education is not to pass a state assessment.
- Quality education experiences for all students.
- Ready for workforce and college.
- Rigor – not only teaching to the test.
- Schools aren't validating vocational programs.
- Self-advocacy at an early age (self-determination).
- Self-discovery through education.
- Self-sustaining after graduation, certification, etc.
- Service provided to support the lifelong learner. Mind, body, overall well-being, health, basic needs, safety.
- Set a foundation for a student to be given a choice to pursue any career.
- Sex ed, teenage pregnancy prevention.
- Shifting/adjusting to the changes in education.
- Student must be prepared for life, career, family.
- Teach them to be a productive member of their community and be a global citizen.
- Teach them to be successful in the field that they choose.
- Teaching foundational skills as well as soft skills.
- Technology integrated into the curriculum.
- The purpose is to prepare our students for a college- and career-ready future.
- To assist in the basic knowledge of things, will assist in their self-confidence.
- To create lifelong learners for all stakeholders.
- To prepare students for a career that doesn't exist yet (students will change careers 7 times in their lifetimes).
- To prepare students for the future of their choice.
- Training to assist children with disabilities.
- We need creative, innovative educators, including vocational programs, and training for updated certification.
- Well-rounded education, not only academics but fine arts too, and learn to participate in the community.
- Well-rounded education to prepare one for a successful life.



Educator Preparation, Recruitment, and Retention	
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy is lacking for teacher profession.</li> <li>• Alternative certification – lack of background preparation, not enough classroom experience.</li> <li>• Discipline management part needed to be successful in the classroom.</li> <li>• Expect too much of teachers in regard to assignments. We must break away from model of teachers teaching a large group of students; need content-specific teachers, improve working conditions.</li> <li>• Lack of alignment between college content and real-life classroom experience.</li> <li>• Lack of collective leadership; good teachers don't have autonomy; new teachers don't have input in the system.</li> <li>• Lack of preparation for general education teachers to teach children/students of all abilities (modifications, accommodations, etc.).</li> <li>• Mentors needed – not enough support through the transition.</li> <li>• Need technology professional development for teachers.</li> <li>• Not enough job fairs for recruitment.</li> <li>• Teacher recruitment is difficult, especially in some content areas.</li> <li>• Teacher retention is a big challenge (keeping staff).</li> <li>• Teacher salaries should be more equitable, respected to encourage teacher retention.</li> <li>• Teacher shortages – school districts are desperate and will hire anyone.</li> <li>• Teachers must understand importance of parent relationship.</li> <li>• Teachers needs to be prepared for special populations. They need additional skills, techniques, and resources to deal with special population students.</li> <li>• Testing requirements have increased; new teachers are discouraged.</li> <li>• The teaching profession is undervalued.</li> </ul>
<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to identify the root cause of problem – we have data to help raise awareness of retention issues.</li> <li>• Accountability through evaluations.</li> <li>• Community unity, especially within small rural districts.</li> <li>• Dedication of teachers.</li> <li>• Early year strategy to address retention, aside from “don't quit” pep talk.</li> <li>• Educator preparation programs/colleges and universities have up-dated their curriculum and are collaborating with school districts.</li> <li>• More alternative certification pathways for individuals to become teachers.</li> <li>• Opportunities for training at district and service center level.</li> <li>• Principal leadership programs to build capacity.</li> <li>• Providing pathway for current teachers to attain master's degrees.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Real clinical experiences in the actual classrooms in the desired subject areas.</li> <li>• Rigor of certification process.</li> <li>• Salaries are competitive.</li> <li>• Schools are recognizing the need to hire the best teachers.</li> <li>• Teachers are willing to work with parents – open communication with parents, welcoming environments at schools.</li> <li>• Tech communication with parents is immediate (social media).</li> <li>• Tiered professional development to meet the needs of teachers with different levels of experience.</li> <li>• T-PESS and T-TESS are helping in retaining teachers by building capacity (coaching/mentoring).</li> <li>• True collaboration between campuses – struggling school paired with high-performing campus.</li> <li>• We have good teachers and mentors in the schools.</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better technology preparation.</li> <li>• Build stronger collaboration between colleges preparing teachers and the districts.</li> <li>• Building positive school culture.</li> <li>• Different approaches for teaching – team teaching, video conferencing, distance learning.</li> <li>• Grow-your-own program.</li> <li>• Increase teaching salary.</li> <li>• Increase the amount of time for student teaching; year-long residency.</li> <li>• Leadership planning to take care of teachers.</li> <li>• Mentoring and coaching built into professional staff development.</li> <li>• Mentors and support for new teachers would help with retention.</li> <li>• More training in the social areas. Differentiation for the special populations – reevaluate courses and credits.</li> <li>• Need funding for mentoring programs and budget for higher salaries.</li> <li>• Need to gather together as a community and address legislators.</li> <li>• New certification process.</li> <li>• Promote a culture of appreciation for teachers.</li> <li>• Salary support from the state.</li> <li>• Teacher prep programs, mentoring programs, peer coaches.</li> <li>• Teacher workload requirements (paperwork) could decrease if technology was used.</li> </ul>



## Equity and Access

<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Additional funding for special populations, transportation funding needed.</li><li>• Advanced courses and regular classes need same attention and teaching strategies.</li><li>• Decrease in student enrollment.</li><li>• Dual enrollment opportunities, CTE courses, strict requirements.</li><li>• Equity and Access needs to be a priority so that all students are provided equal opportunities no matter where they are in Texas.</li><li>• Industry certifications – limited offerings based on personnel and geographic location.</li><li>• Internet availability for parents at home.</li><li>• More awareness to what students need.</li><li>• Need more counselors; new counselors need training; internship program for A.S. counselors.</li><li>• Not giving access to all students for high-level courses.</li><li>• PreK is only funded half day and not able to close gap.</li><li>• Priority for support; funding seems to be given to charter schools.</li><li>• Smaller districts cannot provide the same benefits (such as salaries, incentives) as bigger districts.</li><li>• STEM students need more technology access.</li><li>• Stigmas associated with being a poor district vs. a rich district.</li><li>• Students want to be engaged in technology, but may not have sufficient access.</li><li>• There is a lack of equity in funding – more funding for football versus other extracurricular activities.</li></ul>
<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Biggest problem...INEQUITABLE FUNDING. We won't solve any problems with inequitable funding.</li><li>• Building partnerships with universities and workforces for students.</li><li>• College-going culture for all.</li><li>• District issued iPad and Apps.</li><li>• Early childhood – rich oral language leading birth to age 3 biggest learning opportunity. Disconnect between Head Start and school funding from the same sources without alignment and standardized programs for bilingual students.</li><li>• Early college high school campuses – many students only have two years of college left when they graduate.</li><li>• Expansion of dual-enrollment college credit classes. More certifications.</li><li>• Increased partnership with other districts/programs to provide better access for our students.</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OnRamps is a low-cost resource for advanced courses.</li> <li>• School doing a good job in providing technology in libraries, access to internet, opportunities in the community.</li> <li>• Size of school may prohibit students from accessing programs.</li> <li>• Technology is allowing accessibility for students to take college courses online.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginning during elementary throughout life to prepare younger students for education for the future.</li> <li>• Cohorts – students/counselors stay within cohorts for their years in high school/middle school, etc.</li> <li>• Collaboration among all state agencies on early literacy and numeracy.</li> <li>• Community awareness – parents know the importance of technology and access.</li> <li>• Continuing to give opportunities with partnerships to students.</li> <li>• Create a position where a coordinator gives children information about colleges or applications for postsecondary education (giving opportunity).</li> <li>• Dual-enrollment college courses to keep them interested beyond high school; technical degrees; increasing prosperity.</li> <li>• Grants for Jetpack devices [mobile WiFi hotspots].</li> <li>• Grants for Wi-Fi availability.</li> <li>• Having students do community service before they graduate.</li> <li>• Keep adding advanced courses.</li> <li>• Maximize your human capital. Teachers are the best resource, but we can't attract them if you aren't funded at the right levels.</li> <li>• Opportunities for better school leadership development programs.</li> <li>• Opportunities for creative partnerships with business and industry.</li> <li>• Parent call crisis hotline; faith counseling sites.</li> <li>• Quality of support and resources.</li> <li>• Revamp funding, formula.</li> <li>• Support and training for counselors and teachers for awareness of students.</li> <li>• We need to demand that our legislators fund schools adequately.</li> </ul>



## Family Engagement and Empowerment

<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenging due to change in family dynamics. School offers more flexible parent meetings to address important topics (drugs, anger management, etc.). Students face real challenges and life struggles.</li> <li>• Communication is lost at high school; need cooperation and communication.</li> <li>• Financial challenges.</li> <li>• Inaccessibility of campus administrator.</li> <li>• Intimidation (parents afraid to visit the campus).</li> <li>• Lack of communication from school.</li> <li>• Lack of importance.</li> <li>• Language barrier.</li> <li>• Middle school and high school – less engagement with parents.</li> <li>• Most parents are left in the dark; students are responsible.</li> <li>• Not enough support from employers to understand or be flexible for parents to participate in or attend important school meetings, functions.</li> <li>• Parents are not technology savvy – afraid.</li> <li>• Parents do not know they need to be involved in student’s education.</li> <li>• Parents’ work duties make it difficult to attend meetings.</li> <li>• Some parents don’t care, even if the students are committed and are trying.</li> <li>• Transportation to school, meetings.</li> <li>• Young parents/divorce/blended families/single.</li> </ul>
<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community programs used to involve parents.</li> <li>• District committees involve parents and help share information.</li> <li>• Getting students to start earlier to engage parents earlier.</li> <li>• Including parent partners in all aspects of the school districts.</li> <li>• Making them feel welcomed.</li> <li>• More home visits.</li> <li>• Ongoing training for parents (language, technology, money management, conflict resolutions, literacy etc.).</li> <li>• Providing a list of opportunities for parent participation.</li> <li>• Schools/Districts are sending children/family materials to be successful in school.</li> <li>• Schools are providing internet and equipment to parents and families for additional communication.</li> <li>• Some schools still hold parent meetings.</li> <li>• Technology used to communicate more, give quick access to information – website, social media, mass email/messages, sending pictures of what is going on at school.</li> <li>• Volunteerism program.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow home visits.</li> <li>• Announce other parent events and news at sporting events.</li> <li>• Community for family engagement.</li> <li>• Community walks.</li> <li>• Engage work relationship to build opportunities for parents to be able to “miss” work for school engagement.</li> <li>• Invite parents to all meetings (including meetings with the superintendent, principal, etc.).</li> <li>• Make meeting worthwhile. Parents don’t want to sit and get. They want small groups, booth-type settings.</li> <li>• Make parent meetings mandatory for truancy, discipline-type situations – parent meeting in lieu of discipline.</li> <li>• Orientation is a great way to share what will happen throughout the year at each grade level.</li> <li>• Provide examples of school work to parents so they can assist with homework.</li> <li>• Provide learning opportunities for parents.</li> <li>• Reach out to the rural areas. Go into the community if they won’t come to you.</li> <li>• Team up parents.</li> <li>• Use different forms of social media/technology to communicate with parents.</li> <li>• Use students to engage parents – students teaching parents.</li> <li>• Variety of meetings, different times.</li> <li>• Warm-welcome environment.</li> </ul>
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## Student Engagement and Empowerment

### Challenges

- Amount of targeted staff development needs to be priority – special populations and content.
- Break down of family. Schools addressing more issues than before.
- Don't judge a student just based on a score.
- Empowering students to have a voice to become future leaders.
- Encourage individuality in students.
- Endorsements often limit students because they get booked in.
- Engagement is challenge because curriculum is boring; make learning fun.
- Finances are not adequate – resources.
- Give teachers autonomy with curriculum and allow students to give input.
- Invest in the teachers so they have skill sets needed.
- Not all students are involved in extracurricular activities. Many do not even know about UIL and all of the other opportunities.
- Obsession with STAAR, from state and from so many admins.
- Opportunities vary in different communities – not equal among schools, districts, and communities (even with what PTO/PTA can do for various schools).
- Plan for transition from elementary to middle school. Going from being a student in elementary to a number in middle school.
- STEM is not districtwide.
- Student exposure in order for them to know what opportunities are available.
- Students are pressured in academics and forget social skills.
- Students need early learning/early literacy opportunities.
- Students need to be able to be engaged in mentorships, and/or relevant learning opportunities in the classroom.
- Students need to understand there is more to life and it is their responsibility to succeed.
- Teacher-student ratio affects learning and building relationships.
- Teachers are approaching teaching as “one size fits all.” They are not differentiating instruction for all learners.
- Teachers are teaching only test, fearful of student-led activities and less structure.

<p><b>Strengths</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blended learning is providing more opportunity for personalized learning. Students are empowered to make decisions regarding their own learning.</li> <li>• Different activities for different interests to get students involved – a trade, athletics, UIL, etc.</li> <li>• Districts are being innovative.</li> <li>• Early College Prep High School programs – high percentage of students graduate with college credits. Students already getting in “college mode.”</li> <li>• Electronic access. Parental portals = parental involvement.</li> <li>• Empowering parents to understand the requirements.</li> <li>• Endorsements (from student) exposes students to variety of opportunities/fields.</li> <li>• Exposure to college and career opportunities – college credits, T-STEM, certifications, CTE, college visits.</li> <li>• Extracurricular acts foster a sense of community.</li> <li>• Financial aid coordinators and college specialists (GoCenter, etc.).</li> <li>• Focus on technology is helping students prepare.</li> <li>• Good initiative with magnet programs that allow for exploration. Channeling students to future professions, exposure to future career.</li> <li>• Hands-on, engaging experiences to connect them to the real world.</li> <li>• Have students connect through service projects/community service.</li> <li>• Having students be present; HEAR their voice.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring passion back to teaching—stop the STAAR pressure.</li> <li>• Elect state officials who are truly interested in fixing state funding for public education. Current state funding formula causes inequities among school districts.</li> <li>• Extracurricular activities to support the classroom.</li> <li>• Focus on CTE and pathways with more hands-on project-based learning.</li> <li>• Funding allocation for programs to engage students.</li> <li>• Give a standardized test, but don’t base a student’s education on it.</li> <li>• Give students a voice to decide which fields they want to explore further.</li> <li>• Implement a plan for early literacy, language development, etc. to ensure they are ready.</li> <li>• Implement student/parent surveys to get input about issues.</li> <li>• Internships/externships with employers in the community.</li> <li>• Look at what is happening from elementary to middle school that causes students to decline, especially when it comes to assessment.</li> <li>• More intentional individual plans.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Opportunities for all diverse learners.</li><li>• Provide a civics life skills class to teach students skills.</li><li>• Providing students with soft skills at a young age to help prepare them for the real world.</li><li>• Technology is the huge opportunity.</li><li>• Train teachers to differentiate instruction and address student needs.</li><li>• Virtual job shadowing.</li></ul>
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