

Salado/Waco Community Conversation Summary January 18, 2018

Host(s): Tom Maynard and Sue Melton-Malone

Participant Description: Approximately 60 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 Salado/Waco 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/.

What is the purpose or desired outcome of public education?

- Able to advocate for themselves.
- Build character and respect; facilitate safe self-exploration; expose children to opportunities.
- Create a baseline of public knowledge, an informed and educated electorate.
- Creativity/problem solving/innovation.
- Employer perspective: educated, think on feet, problem solvers, cares, work ethic, do your job because it's your job.
- Equitable access and free/affordable schooling.
- Give opportunity to learn and socialize and obtain skills to be successful.
- Help them find their place, talents, interests, passions.
- Learning how to ask good questions and find the answers.
- Literacy – think, calculate, read, write.
- Prepare our students with the skills and trades that will enable them to be competitive in our ever-changing world.
- Prepare people to be citizens so they can function in a democracy.
- Prepared to enter college, career, workforce (globally).
- Produce thinkers and problem solvers.
- Provide and educate citizenry to support our democracy, to provide level playing field to meet their full potential.
- Soft skills, work ethic, accountable, responsibility, time management.
- We want to have informed, educated citizens that are productive and can make good choices in their civic and personal lives.



Educator Preparation, Recruitment, and Retention

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First-year teachers: No formal teacher prep programs. Alternative certification doesn't always adequately or fairly prepare student. • Hold Teacher Education Programs to higher standards. Look at teachers preparing students as Applied Science. • Lack of SPED techniques for all teachers to address general education. • Lack of trauma-informed teachers (prep). • No career paths for teacher leadership to keep excellent and passionate teachers teaching. • Reconstruct teacher preparation and principal preparation – making it more applied. • Review programs like UTEACH National Science department and UMHB program as models.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity plan for highly qualified teachers of low economically disadvantaged students and children of color. • Higher education programs adapting to more regions in preparation. • Internship/Externship programs that allow teaching to go into industry to experience the workforce setting. • ISTE Standards for Educators aligned now with education prep standards. • Many avenues and opportunities to become a teacher. • Mentoring beyond first year. • Some exemplary examples to teacher preparation. • Some people who come through alternative certification have a desire/passion and make great educators.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better salaries, benefits, retirement, safety, longevity pay/bonuses. • Better training, better educator preparations, more classroom experience before actually teaching. • Build capacity of teachers, coaching principals for hiring. • Grow-your-own programs/scholarships. • Holding teacher and principal certification programs to higher standard; including alternative certification – redefine expectations. • If we could come together as teachers to help elevate the teaching field...opportunity to increase teacher autonomy and elevate teachers as experts. • Increase technology training for teachers and administrators. • Less focus on the test. • More classroom management training. • More qualified para/support personnel will help retain teachers.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prepare principals to know how to develop teachers.• Similar standards for preparation in both traditional college education program and alternative certification.• Work to elevate community recognition or perception.
--	---



Equity and Access

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficult to find advanced course in all areas – technology could help with online access.• Federal testing pressure.• Funding system isn't working well. Fix it. Rural schools are not doing well. They're expected to do without.• Inequity among school districts in what they can provide based on funding, age of facilities.• Internet access at home.• Not all people have technology training and knowledge.• Not allowing equal access to advanced courses due to low scores. All kids at all levels deserve the opportunities.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 10% of cost of broadband through E-rate.• Allotment can be used for equity of access.• AVID program (if can afford it).• Many districts provide transportation in order for students to access advanced courses such as IB.• More access to technology than in other decades.• More industries recognize need for technology – funding, grants, curriculum, business partnerships, mentorships.• Regional centers are resources.• Some districts use flexible scheduling (night courses) to give access to advanced courses.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to quality programs – CTE, Advanced coursework, foreign language – across the state.• Co-op and consortiums for districts to have access for more opportunities.• Joint use agreement with other local institutions.• Librarians – certified and trained in all schools – reach all students; technology access for those without.• More grant opportunities with dedicated funding.• Partnering with outside agencies, communities.• Provide opportunity to allow students to learn on their own time – internet/online.• Schools open later.• Technology update to be done using LRP as a guideline.



Family Engagement and Empowerment	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bad experience when they were a student. • Fears – immigration, background checks. • Lack of cultural proficiency. • Lack of time (parents working multiple jobs just to get by). • Lack of transportation. • Parents who don't feel empowered, lack education. • School is not inviting. • Team meeting versus individual meeting (us verse them).
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College prep – PreAP/AP, IB. • Family engagement nights in ESSA technology communication. • Parents volunteering at schools makes an impact. • Schools more aware of family involvement – from federal level – and own how important family is. • Social media – we can turn into a strength sending kudos. • Technology – Google classroom/parent portal, apps.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community databases of volunteer speakers available to educators. • Expanding the definition to include community members; extended family. • Funding for effective programs to break cycles of behavior. • Parent liaisons on campus to help families feel comfortable approaching education/educators. • Scheduling for parent involvement outside the traditional 8 a.m. – 3 p.m. school hours. • Set up digital libraries for parents to use. If we can, show parents how to be engaged in nontraditional ways. • Tap into secondary student program/services to reach outside of elementary. • Traveling literacy opportunities at school and in communities.



Student Engagement and Empowerment	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employers: not teaching what industry needs for workforce. Technology disconnect between school systems and business.• Lack of motivation from topic disinterest, students afraid to step out of comfort zone.• Mobility challenged based on factors (example: economic status).• One-size-fits-all doesn't work. Class sizes too high: 32–36.• So many students with a variety of needs.• Social promotion prevents student success and active learning engagement. Need more male teachers in elementary.• Students have been trained to only regurgitate multiple choice answers from standardized testing.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Awareness of need for college/career readiness and making progress.• How do we prepare teachers to teach in a modern learning environment? (opportunity for engagement)• Increased technology access on the rise.• More real-world applications through opportunities in course offerings.• Opportunity to design personal and learning experience for students.• Teacher externships – put teachers in industry for understanding.• Validate experiences/opportunities with HB5.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build on relationships with business community.• Business sponsored P.D.• Flexibility of academic timing (Block vs. Traditional) – those needed in 2030. (i.e., inclusion of digital literacy)• Student choice and voice based on their interests.• Teach persistence and hard work.