

Understanding the Teacher Experience Working Group Notes

Task Force Members Present: Jennifer Kuehne, Pam Fischer, Tiffany Kilcoyne, Alexandra Fain, Sergio Estrada, Tiffany Klaerner, Kisaundra Harris, Melina Recio, Diana Barrera Ugarte

Staff Members Present: Kyla Jaramillo, Natalie Brown, Andrew Hodge, Brian Doran, Leslie Hesketh, Shay Wise-Garland, Viviana Lopez

Understand the Teacher Experience Opening:

Kyla Jaramillo, Director of Teacher Perspectives and Staffing, welcomed the group and shared the agenda for the day. She reviewed the objectives, the recommendation framework, and the process for refining recommendations. The group had a discussion of the pre-work. Task Force members reviewed the various levels of decision making and government structures, then discussed the recommendation success criteria.

Task Force members then broke into the first round of subgroups on the topics of High-Quality Instructional Materials and Expanding Learning Models.

Understand the Teacher Experience Breakout Session #1 (Subgroups):

High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) Recommendation:

The facilitator reviewed that in the August 25th meeting, Task Force members had drafted a recommendation on increasing access to High-Quality Instructional Materials and that the group had questions about current policies and practices around adoption. The facilitator introduced Leslie Hesketh, Director of HQIM Strategy, and Shay Wise-Garland, Director of HQIM Scale Strategy to present answers to Task Force member questions. Ms. Hesketh discussed the process and timeline for adopting materials, defined High-Quality Instructional Materials, shared information on Open Education Resources, and discussed barriers in both adoption and implementation.

Task Force members had opportunities to ask questions, and then moved into a discussion of the recommendation framework:

- **Objective:** Expand access to High-Quality Instructional Materials
- **Impact:** The group discussed the research and evidence of this recommendation, as well as the potential impact:
 - Access to High-Quality Instructional Materials could reduce the number of hours teachers spend trying to find rigorous and aligned resources. Task Force members discussed that current research shows that teachers spend 7 hours per week, 250 hours per year on finding resources and instructional materials for instructional delivery.
 - Access to High-Quality Instructional Materials could decrease the percentage of misaligned materials used by districts.
 - HQIM could also increase the number of lessons delivered that are on grade level, which will improve the quality of instruction.

- **Actor(s):** The group discussed the role of the local school district in determining what instructional materials are adopted and purchased, and the role TEA (Texas Education Agency) plays a role in providing curriculum implementation support.
- **Next Steps and Questions:** The group had the following questions to discuss further in the December meeting:
 - What burden do rural districts have when it comes to personnel needed in providing professional development for new resource implementation?
 - What is the cost comparison between the fund's districts use to purchase materials vs developing their own?

School Calendar and Schedule Recommendation

The facilitator reviewed that in the August 25th meeting, Task Force members had drafted a recommendation on creating innovative schedules and calendars to increase teacher planning time. The facilitator introduced Brian Doran, Director of Expanded Learning Models. Mr. Doran presented existing models that have the potential to increase teacher planning time: Additional Days School Year (ADSY) Full Year Redesign, Intercession Calendars, Texas COVID Learning Acceleration Supports (TCLAS) Afterschool Tutoring, and Blended Learning. Task Force members had opportunities to ask questions throughout the presentation. After the presentation, Task Force members had a discussion on refining recommendations.

- **Objective:** The original objective the group had was to “re-engineer the schedule and calendar to maximize teacher planning time.” The Task Force members discussed that the objective was broad, and brainstormed ways to narrow the focus. Task Force members discussed a potential refined objective of providing technical assistance and support for administrators on creating schedules that maximize teacher planning time, with a minimum required 30 minutes a week of collaborative planning time.
- **Impact, Barriers, and Unintended Consequences:** Task Force members discussed the potential impact of this recommendation and there was consensus that this is a top priority for the group. Task Force members expressed that this recommendation would lead to teachers having more time during the workday to prepare for lessons and instructional delivery, disaggregate data, connect with parents, and reduce the number of hours they are working in the evening or on weekends. Task Force members shared that high schools and rural schools could experience greater barriers, and that we need to discuss those areas in greater depth.
- **Actor(s):** Task Force members discussed the roles various actors could play in this recommendation. While Task Force members believed it was mostly up to campuses and districts to implement this recommendation, Task Force members wondered if TEA could provide banks of resources and support campuses and districts through creating trainings on innovative scheduling. The group also expressed how this recommendation connected to both the Teacher Voice and Teacher Time Audit recommendations.
- **Next Steps and Questions:** The group had the following questions to discuss further in the December meeting:

- How could this be differentiated based on elementary or secondary? What are the requirements for High School, and how could those requirements be adjusted?
- What additional support could be provided for rural schools?
- What role could the Education Service Centers (ESCs) play?
- What role does Lone Star Governance play?

The breakout groups came together to share learnings from their sessions and key points from discussion. The group then moved into Breakout Session #2.

Understand the Teacher Experience Breakout Session #2 (Subgroups):

Teacher Time Audit Recommendation:

The group worked through the recommendation framework to refine the initial recommendation.

- **Objective:** Fund a teacher time audit. The group made no additional adjustments to the objective.
- **Impact:** The group discussed that this recommendation could lead to a reduction of the amount of time teachers spend on non-instructional tasks, so they have ample time to plan and prepare for instructional delivery during the workday. The group also shared that this recommendation would allow decision-makers to gain a better understanding of all the tasks teachers engage in throughout the day and where those requirements come from (campus, district, state).
- **Actor(s):** The group discussed a third party creating and overseeing the audit. A Task Force member shared that a similar audit was done at her school, and it involved teachers tracking their time. The group expressed the importance of ensuring that this audit does not add additional work to the teacher plate. Another Task Force member expressed the importance of keeping in mind the workload of administrators and counselors as well when thinking about the audit.
- **Next Steps and Questions:** The group wanted to further discuss the process of the time audit and what would happen after the audit. The group also expressed that they wanted to ensure this audit did not become a checklist item for compliance, and that the audit yielded action.

Teacher Voice Subgroup:

The group began discussing and identifying current opportunities teachers have in the decision-making process. The group looked at campus, district, and state level opportunities to provide feedback on policy or practice initiatives that impact the teaching profession and learning of students.

- **Objective:** The group reviewed the objective: Increase leadership opportunities for teachers and include teacher voice in the decision-making process. The group did not make any changes to the objective.
- **Impact:** The group discussed that increasing teacher voice could increase teacher retention and could also lead to stronger policies and practices. The group discussed how empowering teachers to have a voice would also lead to greater motivation and overall retention.

- **Actor(s):** The group discussed the role of each actor and discussed potential best practices for Campus and District Administration. The group expressed that it was important for teachers to have opportunities to provide input beyond just the local level. TEA could continue utilizing the teacher's voice with opportunities like the Task Force and could post on the website a list of opportunities for teachers to have input in decision making across the state.
- **Next Steps and Questions: The group wanted to discuss the following questions further:**
 - How are teachers made aware of district and state level opportunities for input?
 - Is there a place where TEA could post all state level teacher voice initiatives?

The groups came together to share key ideas from the group discussion.

The Teacher Experience working group worked together in whole group to discuss the support needed for school leaders in building climate and culture on their campuses, and discussed the following potential ideas:

- Examine the structure and implementation of a performance pay evaluation system for principals
- Develop coaching programs and training for school leaders, specifically with climate and culture
- Consider accountability and support for schools with high attrition

Ms. Jaramillo closed the session by talking about the next steps to complete prior to December. She emphasized that the next step is to examine cost and continue to research evidence and options. She thanked the group for their time and input.

The Teacher Experience Working Group then returned to the main Teacher Vacancy Task Force whole group meeting to share an update on their work and ideas.