

Staffing Models Working Group Notes

Task Force Members Present: Natasha Garcia, Ashley Osborne, Brandon Chandler, Casey Morgan, Chris Tatum, Christie Volmer, Justin Terry, Suzanne Kirkland, Sherry Taylor, Kimberly Davis

Staff Members Present: Jessica McLoughlin, Xochitl Rocha, Melissa Yoder, Colin Dempsey

Invited Panelists Present: Karen DeMoss, Aisha Haynes, Jason Jeitz, Troy Smith, Sarah Beal, Jina Eksaengsri, Allie Martin

Introduction

Jessica McLoughlin, Director, Educator Standards, Testing and Preparation with the TEA welcomed the Staffing Models Working Group Task Force members and shared the objectives, agenda for the meeting, and potential topics for future meetings. Ms. McLoughlin introduced the task force leads, Ashley Osbourne and Dr. Justin Terry. Ashley Osbourne serves as the Executive Director of Talent Development for Ector County ISD. Dr. Justin Terry serves as the Superintendent at Forney ISD.

Ms. McLoughlin grounded the working meeting in the shared group objectives:

- To build shared understanding of current approaches to strategic staffing to support talent pipelines.
- To discuss enabling conditions and barriers to effective strategic staffing practices.
- To begin to develop recommended strategies to support implementation of strategic staffing more broadly.

Strategic Staffing Overview

Ms. McLoughlin provided an overview of strategic staffing models as well as the primary challenges a strategic staffing model can address. Ms. McLoughlin shared that the focus of the June meeting would be strategic staffing to support talent pipeline development including paid teacher residencies and grow-your-own models.

Future working group meetings will be informed by working group recommendations, but potential topics could include strategic staffing models to address teacher workload.

Ms. McLoughlin then shared an overview of the current teacher residency work happening in the state and summarized the types of strategic staffing approaches being used in Texas.

She then re-introduced Dr. Justin Terry, Superintendent of Forney ISD. Ms. McLoughlin asked Dr. Terry to share his experience in Forney ISD where they have implemented a grow-your-own and residency model.

Dr. Terry shared that his district began this work because their district is a high-growth district, and they knew their supply of teachers would be impacted by COVID. He shared that the current system of teacher training and recruitment was not meeting their needs. To tackle these challenges, his district introduced two main programs:

1. Approach of recruiting paraprofessionals, aides, long-term subs that are currently in the school district by creating a pathway to certification for that employee. In this process they are using

some of the funding to pay for the certification / helping the employee obtain their undergraduate degree.

What makes this program more unique is that Indiana Wesleyan University (IWU) has allowed the district to create internal courses aligned to new-teacher training (classroom mgmt., class culture etc.) and converted those training hours into course credits toward their degree.

2. High school students being recruited into a certified teacher track for grow-your-own.

Research Foundation for Strategic Staffing

Ms. McLoughlin then introduced Melissa Yoder to lead a reflection on the pre-work that the task force working group members completed before today's meeting.

Ms. Yoder asked participants to reflect on the pre-work reading, "Simple Shifts: paying aspiring teachers with existing resources", which provided several examples of partnerships across the country who had developed strategic staffing models.

The group then transitioned to a presentation from Dr. Karen DeMoss, Executive Director of Prepared to Teach, and Dr. Aisha Haynes, Director of Texas Partnerships, Prepared to Teach, on some research foundations for strategic staffing.

The presenters shared foundational information to address the following key questions:

- *What does the research tell us about the impact of the funded residency supported by strategic staffing?*
- *What should LEAs be taking into consideration when designing a strategic staffing model?*

Strategic Staffing TA Provider Panel

Taskforce members then transitioned to a panel discussion facilitated by Melissa Yoder. Ms. Yoder began with an introduction of the panel participants: Dr. Sarah Beal – *Executive Director of US PREP*, Jason Jeitz – *ESC 6 Texas Strategic Staffing Lead*, and Troy Smith – *Assistant Vice President, Opportunity Culture*.

The panel members addressed three questions, and key takeaways from their discussion are included below:

What are some of the challenges or barriers you have faced in implementing a strategic staffing model?

- Communication is key for all parties around resident requirements and expectations.
- There is currently a high demand for teacher residents across Texas LEAs and many EPPs are still working in partnership to supply the desired number of residents and that funded residency positions specifically work to help address this issue.
- LEAs should be clear on their "why" for implementing a strategic staffing model, naming that when designing strategic staffing models, LEAs should prioritize both short and long-term needs and to be strategic in their model.

What has led to successful strategic staffing model design and implementation in your experience working with LEAs and their educator preparation program partners?

- The alignment of EPP production and district needs is critical, including the importance of partnerships where the educator prep program is training new teachers in the areas and skills that the district needs to staff.
- The efficacy of the coteaching model positively impacts student achievement.
- Successful implementation aimed to make the mentor teacher a prestigious role, including extending their reach to support other teachers with funding.

What should LEAs take into consideration when entering this work?

- The sustainability of funding after the end of state grant funding.
- Be realistic and intentional, taking into consideration what can truly be sustained year after year.
- Consider mentor selection and quality and ensure intentional planning for the mentor role so that teacher do not view it as ‘another thing’ but as an accolade that is both rewarded financially and alleviates other burdens.
- Consider other initiatives the LEA has in place.
- Get clear about the LEA’s “why” and the need you’re trying to address.
- Think about the LEA’s EPP partner and ensure they’re included in the work.

The task force working group then broke for a lunch break.

District Leader Perspectives on Strategic Staffing Approaches Panel

Ms. McLoughlin then introduced the second panel, comprised of district and campus leaders currently implementing strategic staffing models that support the implementation of strong talent pipelines. The panel members introduced themselves and the strategic staffing model they currently implement. The summary of the panel members and their strategic staffing models can be found below.

- Ms. Eksaengsri serves as the School Improvement Officer, Socorro ISD. Socorro ISD currently implements a model in which teacher residents serve as substitute teachers one day per week to meet immediate substitute teacher needs and support funded teacher residency models.
- Ms. Martin serves as the principal of Klenk Elementary, Klein ISD. Klein ISD currently implements an Opportunity Culture model that supports implementation of funded teacher leader roles and teacher residency models.
- Ms. Osborne serves as the Executive Director of Talent Development, Ector County ISD. Ector County ISD currently implements an Opportunity Culture model that supports implementation of funded teacher leader roles and teacher residency models.
- Dr. Justin Terry serves as the Superintendent of Forney ISD. Forney ISD currently implements a strategic staffing model that enables local talent to transition to teaching roles while pursuing teacher certification

Below is a summary of the panel questions and panelist responses:

Why did you decide to do this work? What challenge were you trying to address?

- Panelists noted the struggle to find teachers in high-need areas and secondary positions and, when layered with the pandemic, that challenge has increased the labor shortage difficulties.

- Panelists spoke of the need to address short term and long-term challenges at once. They need teachers not just in the future, but immediately and asked what model could help get teachers now, and not down the road.
- Panelists noted they had to make sure the efforts could be sustainable. They had to create an approach that was cost-neutral to the school district and wanted to continue to give back and grow their community.
- Panelists noted the status quo was not good enough. They noticed a trend in that traditional teacher preparation was not providing strong teachers and they did not have systems in place to promote the program and teacher profession. They wanted better-prepared teachers and hoped to make the first year in the classroom less of a shock.
- Panelists noted an early need for a strategic and systemic approach. They looked at every single system in place (campus selection, mentor selection etc.) and took a holistic approach to their residency model implementation.

What has gone well so far? To what do you attribute success?

- Panelists noted the success of strategic staffing can be attributed to strategic interdependency (EPP, TA provider, in-district folks), naming that there is a collective “we” effort in this work, including the teachers.
- Panelists believe this is a community effort. One success was the ability to scale and begin to have conversations with Regional Service Centers on how they can support smaller districts.
- Panelists spoke to the importance of clearly defined and communication of roles and responsibilities.
- Panelists noted solid partnership with all the stakeholders was key. The relationship always needs to be fostered and improved.
- Panelists saw opportunities with strategic compensation. On compensation, strategic staffing models allowed for “stackable” opportunities that teachers can benefit from.
- When it came to challenges, The biggest barriers have been in-district with the finance team, for example. The CFO and HR lead needed a model to see the holistic approach. There is also a need for continuous monitoring of implementation to increase the positive impact of the staffing models.

What have you seen in terms of the impact on the talent pipeline?

- Panelists spoke to the importance of strategic implementation to make sure that all the initiatives dovetail and align. For example, the district-run alternative certification program has been informed by the work they do with candidates in the full year residency program. This has increased the quality of other pathways in the pipeline.
- Panelists shared examples of retention. Residents that have been hired have been effective and advanced to teacher leadership roles. It was also shared that one district has hired 12 high school students through their program, however, they have drained the teaching assistant and paraprofessional pipelines.
- Panelists spoke to long term, needs informed planning. For hard-to-staff positions, they were able to communicate those hard-to-staff certifications with the EPP and ensure that they were preparing teachers accordingly.

- Panelists spoke to sustainability models. One district used the substitute model, where they were able to save time and intentionally reallocate funding.

Are there examples where initiatives from two departments that demanded teacher time were dovetailed to lessen the burden on the classroom teacher?

- Teacher residents serve as paras and then provide relief time for a small team of teachers to receive embedded professional learning.
- From the campus perspective: one of the things that they can do is adjust the master schedule. There is a need to prioritize efficiency, support for teachers and ensure they are focused on student supports.

Any impact on engagement or satisfaction results?

- They are about four years into the work and are looking into the softer data with their next round of teacher residents.
- Climate surveys are used that ask for the entire campus to respond, to see the impact across the school upon the implementation of the opportunity culture model. Initial results look positive.

Break Out Groups for Reflection

Task force members then divided into two break-out groups to discuss some key enablers and barriers to these residency models:

- *Given today's discussion, what are the primary enablers and barriers to this work? What additional enablers or barriers have we not yet raised?*
- *Given these enablers and barriers, what does this make you think about next steps and strategies for your district AND potential statewide recommendations?*
 - *As you consider ideas for next steps, how could these ideas/recommendations address the following:*
 - *Considerations for our hardest to staff certification and placement areas: Special Education and Bilingual*
 - *Teacher recruitment and related marketing messages that could make the teaching profession more attractive to future candidates*
 - *Teacher retention and creation of conditions that make more teachers able to stay in the profession.*

Whole Group Discussion

Task Force members rejoined the whole discussion to provide a high-level summary from their breakout room discussions. The synthesis from their discussion can be found below.

Share-out from group 1:

Enablers:

- Possible Enablers noted include that the models will be well received because they address a demand for early experience and practice in the classroom. Additionally, the use of existing early success with

strategic staffing can be used to provide a compelling ‘why’ for people to start strategic staffing efforts. It was also suggested to provide guidance for districts on the use of DOI to make models possible.

- Barriers noted included funding to move forward beyond TCLAS and other unsustainable grants and to make sure that future funding plans are truly sustainable.
- Viable solutions included the development of playbooks of best practices and case studies for everyone to reference.

Share-out from Group 2:

- Suggested Enablers included: the belief that the organizations’ people can be “the coalition of the willing” to support progress; larger districts could support and share information; ESCs could support districts with grants and technical assistance; and the overall alignment to strategy could be the biggest enabler.
- Suggested Barriers included: the bandwidth of districts to support this work and lack of funding to support technical assistance to plan and implement strategic staffing. Districts also must ensure the enabling structures are in place locally to get the work done, including that strategic staffing is part of the overall strategic plan.
- Viable solutions included provision of financial assistance for the technical assistance providers and support for partnership opportunities between EPPs and rural districts.