

Session: Working Group Share Out

Deputy Commissioner Oeser welcomed Task Force members back from their working groups. Mr. Tamarez Torres provided an overview of how working groups would share out summaries of their discussions and reminded the group of virtual meeting norms. A summary of each working group is included below.

Working Group 1: Improving Educator Preparation

- One of the reoccurring themes was teacher quality and ensuring there is a high bar for teachers. edTPA needs to continue to ensure the quality of the teaching workforce is maintained.
- There is a need for high-quality mentoring programs, quality teacher preparation across the state, more partnerships between districts and educator preparation programs (EPPs), and financial incentives for teacher candidates to select high-quality preparation programs (e.g., such as teacher residencies).
- EPPs should stay involved with teachers once they enter the classroom and support them early in their careers.
- Improve quality of preparation without increasing the cost to teacher certification candidates. Financial incentives and grants could help with this.
- A Task Force member asked how EPPs could differentiate their support for candidates that are going into diverse teaching roles? The working group representative mentioned that districts and EPPs could partner together to look at the progress of teachers throughout their preparation. The working group also talked about leveraging retired teachers to help with the transition into teaching.
- Another Task Force member asked about whether paying student teachers was discussed. A working group representative mentioned the group supports paying student teachers and interns. The group discussed a model in Forney ISD where the district is paying instructional aides. Another working group member mentioned that serving as an aide while working towards certification would provide valuable experience and insight for teacher candidates.

Working Group 2: Strategic Staffing Models

- The group first discussed research and heard from technical assistance providers that are working with districts to reconsider staffing and teacher pipelines in districts. The group discussed paid teacher residencies and learned from districts that are already implementing these models.
- The group discussed enablers, barriers, and recommendations for the Task Force to consider. Enablers and barriers discussed included capacity of staff, time, and the bandwidth of staff. Recommendations included considering how smaller districts could get access to technical assistance providers that could help them think through some of the innovative practices. Another recommendation was to consider a collective impact approach, specifically how to leverage Education Service Centers as a hub to assist districts in thinking through strategic staffing models.
- Additional considerations and questions the working group discussed include:
 - How do we continue to feed our teacher pipeline? Examples include working with high school students in a Grow Your Own Model.
 - What could districts strategically abandon for teachers to allow for more strategic staffing? How could strategic staffing support staff in working smarter, not harder.

- Finally, another Task Force member asked what types of support the technical assistance providers could provide. The working group representative mentioned that they could provide structures the district could use to ensure these staffing models are sustainable. This provider could also work with the EPPs to ensure a strong and sustainable partnership with districts.

Working Group 3: Compensation Models

- The group discussed different ways to compensate employees other than salary, examples of compensation support such as the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA), and the possibility of other innovative forms of compensation, such as childcare being offered to staff.
- A group of teacher and district leader panelists from Austin ISD, Diboll ISD, Longview ISD, and Slaton ISD shared best practices and strategies. For example, Austin ISD shared their teacher compensation model based on teacher evaluation and teacher effectiveness. Other districts discussed their experiences with TIA.
- The group discussed the extent to which compensation influences teacher retention and what other factors lead to attrition.
- Teachers in the group voiced that compensation matters and has kept them excited and motivated. Other members shared how daycare offered by the districts allowed district staff to save money they would otherwise spend on it.
- Sustainability is important when considering compensation models. Many models are left to the local district. Districts would benefit from state support geared towards sustainability and financial planning.
- The group discussed some tensions between state mandates and requirements in other areas.
- One Task Force member asked whether there were specific comments the group would want to share regarding TIA. The teachers in the working group wanted to see TIA implemented for all teachers and would like an assurance that this program could be permanent.
- Another Task Force member asked whether the group discussed how to incentivize hard to staff areas and the connection to TIA. The group discussed a differentiated compensation schedule (base compensation) for hard to staff areas. This is separate from TIA or stipends. The group discussed how this approach could vary in districts based on need. The group discussed using data to inform decisions around differentiated compensation. For example, districts should examine their data to determine the hardest to fill positions and consider compensation increases for those positions.
- Another Task Force member commented that many teacher spouses are self-employed. The Task Force member wondered whether there could be a state-supported insurance plan, especially for small districts, and if there were ways to decrease insurance premiums. One working group representative shared how her district is providing compensation packages that outline different incentives and benefits for employees. The working group would like to continue exploring health care in future meetings.
- Finally, another Task Force member asked whether the working group discussed retire/rehire opportunities. One representative discussed how their district pays the surcharges for rehires. Another working group member mentioned that the group would like to go deep into TRS benefits and surcharges moving forward. Deputy Commissioner Oeser mentioned the Task Force website has some

resources on retire/rehire options based on the discussion in the first Task Force meeting. She highlighted that many of the discussed changes would require legislative action.

Working Group 4: Understanding the Teacher Experience

- The working group discussed compensation and how teachers feel overworked and underpaid.
- Compensation topics discussed included TIA timelines for implementation across districts, health care costs, investments in support staff needed (e.g., counselors, aides, nurses), and paid teacher internships.
- Re-engineering the school day could help re-envision where/when work is done. This could address workload, mental health, provide time for important areas.
- Teacher career pathways could be a way to retain more teachers in the classroom, and the group suggested that this could be a new working group.
- Many teachers cite STAAR and accountability as a reason for leaving., and the group wanted to make sure that was being discussed.
- High-quality instructional materials could be transformational and could help with the workload.
- There should be actionable items that come out of this group, so teachers feel more supported, especially related to mental health supports for teachers and students.
- Retention is the best form of recruitment. The moves EPPs are making is important. If the profession doesn't become more sustainable and better paid, it will be a difficult to have compelling recruitment.
- There needs to be meaningful supports for students and teachers that will translate into more teacher retention and retention for hard to staff areas, such as bilingual and special education.
- The working group discussed how the political debates around curriculum components and library books is heavy on teachers' minds and hearts. A lot of people have opinions about what teachers should/should not do, and teachers want to feel valued and trusted. The way the legislature talks about these things will impact teachers.

As a closing to this session, Deputy Commissioner Oeser asked Task Force members to reflect on recommendations the Task Force should prioritize and consider what was not covered in working groups that should be discussed in future meetings.

Adjourn

Deputy Commissioner Oeser thanked the group for following the norms for today. She noted Task Force members productively listened, allowed room for Task Force Members to share different ideas, and there was both a lot of agreement and some disagreement across the group, which is to be expected. Task Force Chair, Mr. Tamarez Torres, also thanked the teachers and administrators for their role on the Task Force and their active engagement in the conversation.

Deputy Commissioner Oeser discussed next steps for the Task Force and encouraged Task Force members to complete the post work survey to share their feedback and reflections on priorities for future Task Force discussions. She reviewed upcoming dates for Task Force meetings and optional leadership sessions. She reminded Task Force members that the meeting summary notes and resources will be posted to the Task Force website soon.