

Texas Education Agency

Effective Schools Framework



**EFFECTIVE
SCHOOLS
FRAMEWORK**

Introduction and Purpose

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) works to improve outcomes for all public school students in the state by providing leadership, guidance, and support to school systems, working towards the vision that every child in Texas is an independent thinker who graduates as an engaged, productive citizen prepared for success in college, a career, or the military.

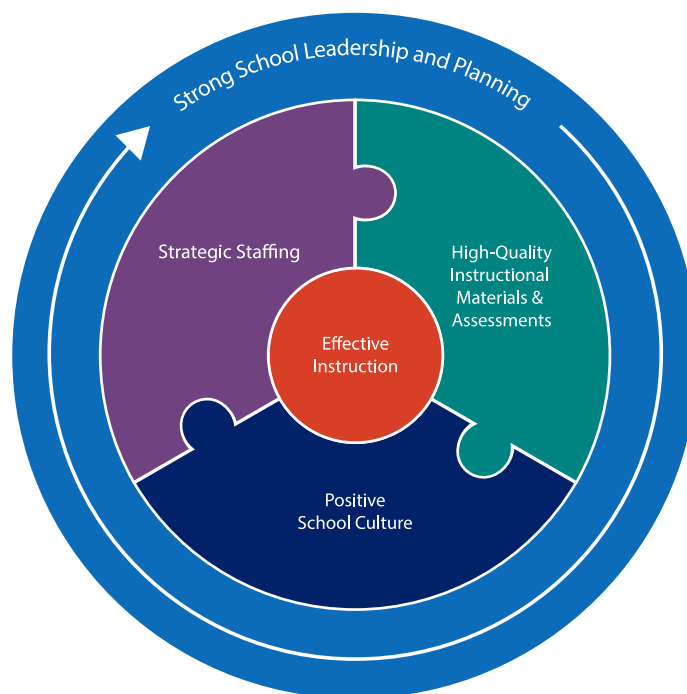
The goal of the Effective Schools Framework (ESF) is to provide a clear vision for what districts and schools across the state do to ensure an excellent education for all Texas students. The ESF provides the basis for school diagnostics and for aligning resources and support to the needs of each school. The ESF was developed in conjunction with school and district leaders and included a national review of research about what makes high-performing schools excellent. The ESF is part of the TEA's five-year strategic plan and is the starting point for improving internal technical assistance capacity and aligning partners (ESCs, external vendors, etc.) to support the continuous improvement of Texas school districts and campuses. In the spirit of our commitment to data-driven inquiry and the "Plan, Do, Assess" model, we will be continuously evaluating the framework to examine effectiveness and make modifications as needed.

At the core of effective schools is effective instruction: interactions between students, teachers, and content determine learning outcomes. This instructional core is strengthened and supported by strategic staffing, high-quality instructional materials and assessments, and positive school culture. Strong school leadership and careful planning encompass and ensure each of these prioritized levers.

The Effective Schools Framework consists of a set of district commitments and, for schools, essential actions.

District Commitments describe what local education agencies do to ensure that schools are set up for success. The **Essential Actions** describe what the most effective schools do to support powerful teaching and learning. Beneath each Essential Action is a set of descriptions that define high level performance.

The first essential action listed under each priority **is foundational**—schools need to address the foundational actions before moving to those that follow. For clarity, these are framed in a box with a color that corresponds to the ESF graphic above.



Lever 1: Strong School Leadership and Planning

Description:

Effective campus instructional leaders with clear roles and responsibilities develop, implement, and monitor focused improvement plans that address the causes of low performance.

District Commitments:

- The district places its most effective school leaders in its highest-need schools.
- The district recognizes the unique needs of low-performing schools and provides the flexibility to address those needs.
- The district provides opportunities for ongoing support and coaching of the campus leader.
- The district provides the campus with adequate funding and sufficient control over its budget to ensure access to necessary resources for implementation of the school's improvement plan and high-quality instruction to meet students' learning needs.
- The district supports principals by protecting their time dedicated for school instructional leadership.
- The district ensures that principal supervisors have the necessary authority to create conditions for school success (e.g., remove barriers).
- The district policies and practices prioritize principal and principal supervisor instructional leadership (e.g., a manageable span of control, time dedicated to instructional practices).

Essential Actions:

- 1. *Develop campus instructional leaders (principal, assistant principal, counselors, teacher leaders) with clear***

consistent with best practices for adult learning, deliberate modeling, and observation and feedback cycles.

- 2. *Focused plan development and regular monitoring of implementation and outcomes***

- There is an improvement plan in place with few focused priorities, clear timelines, milestones, metrics, and task owners that address the root causes of low performance.
- Campus leaders monitor plan implementation and hold task owners accountable for the execution of the work.
- Campus leaders regularly use data and other evidence to track progress towards intended outcomes.
- If milestones and benchmarks are not met, campus leaders make modifications to reach the required result.

Lever 2: Strategic Staffing

Description:

Campus leadership retains effective, well-supported teachers by strategically recruiting, selecting, assigning and inducting teachers so that all students have access to high-quality educators.

District Commitments:

- The district provides the campus with sufficient input over teacher hiring and placement.
- The district provides incentives for the strongest teachers to work in the lowest-performing schools.
- The district effectively recruits adequate numbers of qualified candidates.
- The district has timely, efficient, and responsive hiring processes.
- The district makes it possible for high-needs schools to be fully staffed by July 1st.
- The district provides efficient organizational structures, processes, and supports to ensure opportunities for induction.
- The district provides an evaluation system that identifies low and high performers and allows for opportunities to remove low performing staff.
- District policies and practices ensure that campuses have effective, well-supported teachers.

Essential Actions:

1. ***Recruit, select, assign, induct, and retain a full staff of highly qualified educators***

Lever 3: Positive School Culture

Description:

Positive school culture requires a compelling and aligned vision, mission, goals and values, explicit behavioral expectations and management system, proactive and responsive student support services, and involved families and community.

District Commitments:

- The district provides campuses with best practice resources and tools for engaging families (i.e., translation services, parent/student surveys, online communication structures).
- The district provides data systems to track pertinent school culture data (e.g., discipline referrals, attendance, campus climate).
- The district provides campuses with access to external student support services.
- The district ensures that campus buildings are well maintained, safe, and conducive to learning.
- District policies and practices align with and promote positive school culture.

Essential Actions:

1. *Compelling and aligned vision, mission, goals, values focused on a safe environment and high expectations*

2. **Explicit behavioral expectations and management systems for students and staff**

- All staff and students are taught, practice, and reinforce behavioral expectations with a common language.
- All staff and students understand a system of rewards and consequences, including restorative practices, and consistently implements the system with fidelity.
- Rituals and public forums celebrate students who model expectations and demonstrate behaviors that reflect campus values.
- Data systems exist to track all discipline referrals, attendance, and interventions and the data is regularly reviewed to identify trends and adapt accordingly.

3. **Proactive and responsive student support services**

- The school has a campus-wide program to proactively teach mental health and wellness skills to students.
- School staff meets frequently to identify individual student needs and work together to support and monitor individual progress, behavior, and mental health needs.
- Students are provided with the support services (e.g., counseling, mentoring, external service referrals) that address their needs.

4. Involving families and community

- The campus creates an inclusive and welcoming environment that engages all families in critical aspects of student learning.
- Systems are in place to engage families regularly about their child’s performance in a positive, constructive, and personalized way.
- Multiple communication strategies with families are integrated into teacher roles and responsibilities.
- Family and community engagement and impact data are reviewed regularly, and plans are adapted as needed.

Lever 4: High-Quality Instructional Materials and Assessments

Description:

All students engage daily with TEKS-aligned, high-quality instructional materials, and assessments that support learning at appropriate levels of rigor.

District Commitments:

- The district provides the campus with standards-aligned, high-quality instructional materials that include full unit and daily lesson plans, aligned assessments, scope and sequence, integrated supports to meet the needs of all students including special populations, and all necessary materials for implementation with fidelity.
- The district provides access to interim assessments aligned to the standards and the expected level of rigor.
- The district's annual academic calendar includes days for school-based professional development activities that align with the assessment calendar and allow for data-driven reflection.
- The district provides an interim data assessment platform to capture assessment data by item and student level.
- District policies support the effective use of standards-aligned, high-quality instructional materials and assessments.

Essential Actions:

1. ***Daily use of high-quality instructional materials aligned to instructional planning calendars and interim and***

Lever 5: Effective Instruction

Description:

Campus leaders provide teachers with job-embedded professional development and access to time and data needed to reflect, adjust, and deliver instruction that meets the needs of all students.

District Commitments:

- The district ensures that campus instructional leaders receive initial training and ongoing coaching to support the implementation of instructional leadership systems (feedback on instructional materials alignment and use, data-driven instruction, and observation and feedback).
- For assessments that are district provided and graded, the district ensures that schools receive detailed reports within two instructional days.
- The district provides schools with access to student academic, behavioral, and on-track to graduate data (present and historical).
- The district has effective systems for identifying and supporting struggling learners.
- District policies and practices support effective instruction in schools.

Essential Actions:

1. *Effective classroom routines and instructional strategies*

Campus instructional leaders ensure teachers are adapting instruction and materials to allow students to see the relevance between rigorous content and their lived experiences.

2. **Building teacher capacity through observation and feedback cycles**

- Campus instructional leaders use normed tools and processes to conduct observations, capture trends, and track progress over time.
- Observation debrief conversations occur within 48 hours of observation and include high-leverage, bite-sized, clear, actionable feedback with clear models and opportunities to practice.
- Campus instructional leaders conduct follow up observations after coaching sessions to monitor implementation of feedback within agreed-upon time frames.
- Campus instructional leaders determine the frequency of observations based on teacher needs and student results on formative assessments.

3. *Data-driven instruction*

interim student data, effective instructional strategies, and possible adjustments to instructional delivery

school to foster student ownership and goal setting.

4. **MTSS for students with learning gaps**

- All staff is engaged in coordinated and proactive planning to identify students who have significant learning gaps or who lack key foundational skills and provide them with timely interventions throughout the year.
- All teachers use a student tracking system that includes assessment information, course grades, teacher referrals, and attendance to monitor individual student progress and the intensity and schedule of interventions.
- Teachers or other school staff keep families informed and involved in the process of providing interventions for struggling learners.

References

Guiding Documents

Four texts were foundational in the creation of the TEA's Effective Schools Framework (ESF). They are cited below.

1. [The Transformational Leadership Framework](#) (April 2016) developed by New Leaders and excerpted from: Desravines, Jean, et al. *Breakthrough Principals: a Step-by-Step Guide to Building Stronger Schools*. Jossey-Bass, 2016.
2. Bambrick-Santoyo, Paul. *Leverage Leadership: a Practical Guide to Building Exceptional Schools*. Jossey-Bass, 2012.
3. Bambrick-Santoyo, Paul. *Get Better Faster: a 90-Day Plan for Coaching New Teachers*. Jossey-Bass, 2016.
4. Lemov, Doug. *Teach Like a Champion 2.0: 62 Techniques that Put Students on the Path to College*. Jossey-Bass, 2015.

Useful Models

Part of the process of creating the ESF was a broad national review of other frameworks that seek to describe what highly effective schools do and have. The ESF borrows from and builds upon these ideas, and specifies a vision for Texas schools based on research, data, and feedback from stakeholders in our schools and districts. Three models were regular references in drafting the ESF.

- DCPS Effective Schools Framework, which can be viewed [here](#)
- Mass Insight Education & Research Theory of Action, which can be viewed [here](#)
- UChicago 5Essentials, which can be viewed [here](#)

An Evolving Approach

The process of creating the ESF began with stakeholder input as well as a review of data to understand what about the existing Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) and accompanying framework were most effective and useful. This informed what should be built upon, and prioritized. The TAIS was based on extensive research available [here](#).