

Improving Educator Preparation Working Group

Task Force Members Present: Brandon Enos, Linda Galvan, Natasha Garcia, Valerie Haywood, Roland Hernandez, Chane Rascoe, Greg Rodriguez, Rick Rodriguez, Jean Streepey, Josue Tamarez Torres, Roland Toscano, and Faye Urich

Staff Members Present: Emily Garcia, Marilyn Cook, Pam Wetherington, and Zoraida Martinez

Invited Panelists: Priscilla Aquino-Garza, Jonathan Feinstein, Doug Hamman, Kevin Malonson, Sandra Nix, Zach Rozell, Rene Ruiz, Carl Sheperis, and Calvin Stocker

Introduction

Associate Commissioner Emily Garcia welcomed the Improving Educator Preparation Working Group Task Force members and shared the objectives, agenda for the meeting, and potential topics for future meetings.

Pam Wetherington identified the various pathways to the classroom (e.g., traditional, alternative) and statistics regarding each of the pathways.

Marilyn Cook provided an overview for the State Board for Educator Certification's (SBEC) purpose, charge, authority, core principles, and ways in which TEA staff provides administrative support to the SBEC. Additionally, Ms. Cook described the policy initiatives the SBEC has been engaged in since 2015 to help improve educator preparation.

Identifying Methods to Improve Teacher Preparation

Associate Commissioner Emily Garcia facilitated a discussion regarding the article, [State of the States 2021](#).

After reviewing the article, Task Force members shared their key take-aways: (1) methods to attract and encourage candidates of color to enter the teaching profession; (2) requirements for mentors during preparation and induction; and (3) lack of the requirements regarding the 'science of teaching reading' for candidates seeking special education licensure.

Panel #1 Teacher Preparation Programs

Superintendent Rascoe facilitated the first panel discussion and began with introductions of the panel participants: Dr. Sandra Nix, *Austin Community College*; Dr. Rene Ruiz, *Inspire Texas*; Dr. Zach Rozell, *iteach Texas*; Dr. Carl Sheperis, *Texas A & M University – San Antonio*; and Dr. Doug Hamman, *Texas Tech University*.

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

If you had a magic wand that could change teacher preparation in Texas, what would your first magic trick be?

- Work on the perception of the teaching profession and focus on its benefits (e.g., change the vision from "fast-track" to "preparation for a profession").

- Broaden the educator preparation program experience to ensure candidates have additional time under the guidance and support of a teacher preparation program before they are eligible for a standard certificate.
- Incentivize universities to recruit and prepare more teachers (e.g., clinical teaching should be a full year; create “teacher preparing” universities; explore changes to semester credit hours and weighting).
- Establish financial supports necessary to fully engage in and sustain effective preparation for the profession (e.g., year-long residencies).
- Offer multiple pathways in teacher preparation that seek to support the development of effective teachers.
- Highlight the value of the educational aide experience in the transition to becoming a teacher and ensure that every core teacher has an aide.
- Maintain meaningful collaborations between teacher preparation programs and school districts.

What are the major factors that contribute to candidates enrolling in an EPP but not completing the program and becoming certified?

- Candidates are unable to pass certification tests;
- Teacher preparation programs are not teaching content as part of their preparation methods;
- There are financial constraints (e.g., it is hard to balance getting quality preparation for the profession and still be able to support a family).

What is the highest leverage move your EPP has made in the last year to improve teacher readiness?

- Developing and sustaining district partnerships;
- Piloting edTPA (i.e., benefits for being in the pilot has prompted program’s curricular decisions to support candidate development);
- Working in rural schools; and
- Adopting teacher residency programs.

Panel #2 Teacher Preparation Organizations

Ms. Streepey facilitated the second panel discussion and began with introductions of the panel participants: Priscilla Aquino Garza, *Educate Texas*; Kevin Malonson, *TeachPlus*; Jonathan Feinstein, *The Education Trust*; and Calvin Stocker, *US Prep*.

The panel members addressed three questions (with key takeaways from their discussion included below).

Regarding the EPP panel discussion, what resonated with you that you’d like to highlight before we begin engaging in this panel discussion?

- The importance for high-quality preparation (e.g., we must equip teachers with the foundation, knowledge, and confidence in the profession to make them want to stay);

- Recognition that our future educators are in our K-12 classrooms (e.g., we need the entirety of the educational community to help recruit, prepare, and support more educators so they stay in the profession);
- Embrace edTPA as a support system for teacher preparation programs, candidates, and school districts;
- Consider a robust tiered licensure system;
- Acknowledge the importance for extended time for authentic experiences (e.g., there is no substitute for being in front of kids in a classroom); and
- Our new educators must have and deserve a solid path to grow and thrive in the profession.

Given the broad/diverse EPP landscape in Texas, what are the trends you see in your work related to improving teacher preparation?

- Commitment to and need for higher quality;
- Impact of US Prep’s work (e.g., strengthening school partnerships, adopting residency models);
- edTPA and the positive impact on teacher preparation programs and their candidates;
- Impact of teacher preparation programs and educators that adjust to change and grow in their craft;
- Teacher preparation programs reflecting on and reimagining their programs (e.g., forced challenging conversations to happen – Are we doing a good job? How are our teacher preparation/school district partnerships going?);
- Embracing the “coalition of the willing;” Change is becoming cool (e.g., all members of the educational community are buying in to the importance of education);
- Establishing a common language (e.g., developing and using more sensitive, inclusive, accurate common language; having a handbook of terms transferable among teacher preparation and school districts)
- Providing technical assistance (e.g., WHO is supporting programs; WHO is helping to operationalize and normalize change);
- Beginning to see money move where the talk has been in the past (e.g., when districts invest their own funds in something, it is equally impactful); and
- Collaboration and innovation across the profession are supporting candidate development.

If you had a magic wand that could change teacher preparation in Texas, what would your first magic trick be?

- Diversify the population of K-12 students transitioning to secondary education;
- Separate the “quality” conversation from the “need” conversation;
- Get clear on what is happening in teacher preparation programs;
- Articulate the education profession like a trade that has value and matters in society;
- SBOE accepts SBEC’s recommendation to move forward with edTPA;
- Incentivize partnerships;
- Find ways to promote more diversity in the teacher workforce and make it happen; and
- Ensuring all students have high quality teachers in their classrooms.

Breakout Room Discussions

During today's discussion, what were the recurring themes that should inform our recommendations to improve teacher preparation?

Task force members in Breakout Room #1 noted the importance in:

- Maintaining high expectations for teacher quality and reinforcing how this was not the time to lower teacher quality expectations;
- Recognizing how important mentorship is for new teachers, both in teacher preparation and in school districts;
- Compensating the mentor teacher;
- Consistent teacher preparation; however, recognizing that one-size-fits-all does not work for all candidates and their districts;
- Strengthening district/teacher preparation partnerships to ensure preparation aligns with districts' needs;
- Providing high quality residencies; residencies allow for a better pathway during preparation as well as provide a better understanding for the day-to-day aspects of teaching; and
- Offering financial incentives for teacher candidates (e.g., pay for clinical teachers); this may increase candidate quality with minimal cost increase to candidates and give candidates more experiences in authentic school settings.

Task force members in Breakout Room #2 noted the importance in:

- Improving mentorship for new teachers – both from the teacher preparation programs and school districts;
- Providing more opportunities for candidates to access and rely on their support systems (e.g., mentors, colleagues);
- Offering innovative ways to support new teachers (e.g., New Teacher Academies);
- Acknowledging community, conversation, collaboration, continuation, and commitment when supporting new teachers; and
- Differentiating supports across candidates' various contexts (e.g., districts in rural settings).

Task force members in Breakout Room #3 noted the importance in:

- Identifying ways to mitigate costs (e.g., exam fees) for candidates entering and completing teacher preparation;
- Reimagining and differentiating teacher preparation programs so that all candidates have the opportunity to be successful;
- Strengthening teacher preparation and school district partnerships;
- Sharing what is working and what is not working in teacher preparation so programs can modify their preparation methods to best meet their districts' needs;
- Connecting strong mentors with new teachers;
- Providing more time to practice (e.g., yearlong residency);
- Supporting new teachers after they leave the teacher preparation program; and

- Using data (e.g., principal survey data) to stay informed, remain nimble, and/or improve preparation methods.

Whole Group Discussion

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

- Maintain high standards for teacher preparation; now is not the time to lower standards.
- Efforts should be focused on recruiting high-quality candidates that reflect the diverse population of Texas.
- Mentorship must be improved and in a comprehensive effort. Teacher preparation programs should be working with school districts to implement a plan that will ensure all new teachers have a strong, consistent mentor.
- There needs to be consistency in quality preparation across the state.
- Teacher preparation programs should be transparent with how they are preparing new teachers.
- There needs to be ongoing communication and collaboration between school districts and teacher preparation programs so that programs preparation methods align with school districts' needs.
- Teacher preparation programs must be required to differentiate for their candidates, like teachers must differentiate for their students.
- Teacher preparation programs should focus on career preparation rather than test preparation.
- Provide innovative ways to the classroom (e.g., residency models).
- Provide financial incentives (e.g., grants, scholarships, paid clinical teaching) to enter and complete a teacher preparation program.
- Provide authentic, frequent experiences with students during preparation so candidates remain in the profession.
- Teacher preparation programs should support new teacher development after the candidates have completed the programs, and this can be accomplished in partnership with school districts. This strategy will support teacher retention.