



2018-2019 Grow Your Own Grant Program

Application Due 5:00 p.m. CT, March 13, 2018

NOGA ID

Three copies of the application are required to be submitted. One copy MUST bear the original signature of a person authorized to bind the applicant to a contractual agreement. All three copies must be received no later than the above-listed application due date and time at this address:

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Application stamp-in date and time

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Grant Information

Grant Period to (Pathways 1 and 2)
 to (Pathway 3)

Program Authority

Pre-award costs are not permitted.

Required Attachments

The following attachments are required to be submitted with the application. No other submitted materials will be reviewed.

Each of the three Grow Your Own pathways requires an attachment to be submitted with the application. You can find links to the required attachments on the TEA Grant Opportunities page. Download and complete the appropriate attachment and submit it with your application.

Applicant Information

Name CDN or Vendor ID ESC # Campus # DUNS #

Address City ZIP Phone

Primary Contact Email

Secondary Contact Email

Certification and Incorporation

I understand that this application constitutes an offer and, if accepted by TEA or renegotiated to acceptance, will form a binding agreement. I hereby certify that the information contained in this application is, to the best of my knowledge, correct and that the organization named above has authorized me as its representative to obligate this organization in a legally binding contractual agreement. I certify that any ensuing program and activity will be conducted in accordance and compliance with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations. I further certify my acceptance of the requirements conveyed in the following portions of the grant application, as applicable:

- Grant application, guidelines, and instructions
- General Provisions and Assurances and any application-specific provisions and assurances
- Debarment and Suspension Certification
- Lobbying Certification

Authorized Official Name/Title Signature Date

Grant Writer Name Signature Date

- Grant writer is an employee of the applicant organization.
- Grant writer is not an employee of the applicant organization.

701-18-106-001

Shared Services Arrangements

Shared services arrangements (SSAs) are permitted for this grant. **Check the box below if applying as fiscal agent.**
 The organization submitting this application is the fiscal agent of a planned SSA. All participating agencies will enter
 into a written SSA agreement describing fiscal agent and SSA member responsibilities. All participants understand that the written SSA agreement is subject to negotiation and must be approved before a NOGA can be issued.
 SSAs are not permitted for this grant.

Identify/Address Needs

List up to three quantifiable needs, as identified in your needs assessment, that these program funds will address. Describe your plan for addressing each need.

Quantifiable Need	Plan for Addressing Need
Increase retention rate of Waco Independent School District (WISD) paraprofessional and teaching staff.	With an average of 225 teacher vacancies per year (for the last 3 years), Waco ISD must address the need for paraprofessional and teacher retainment by providing pathways for career growth, as well as providing WISD students with an education pathway allowing them to return from graduation as WISD teachers.
Increase WISD diversity of paraprofessional and teaching staff.	With only 9% ethnically white WISD students and 52% white campus staff; the need to create a more ethnically diverse staff to better serve student demographics requires providing career opportunities for current diverse staff, as well as recruitment of WISD students to teach in the District post-graduation.
Expand the number of students with accessibility to dual credit courses, and increase involvement in the existing Career & Technical Education pathway.	To allow for the expansion of the Career & Technical Education pathway, the District must offer current invested WISD teachers a Master's degree pathway to be qualified dual credit course instructors. Additionally, WISD needs to enhance involvement by providing students with accessible education pathways.

SMART Goal

Describe the summative SMART goal you have identified for this program (a goal that is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely), either related to student outcome or consistent with the purpose of the grant.

Waco ISD has identified weaknesses in: 1) recruitment & retainment of diverse teaching staff, 2) qualified staff to teach dual credit courses, and 3) accessibility to & buy-in for the established Career & Technical Education program. This program offering career paths to both paraprofessionals and teachers not only cultivates investment in WISD, but allows the District to garner high-quality and diverse individuals that are willing to commit to the 2-year time frame of completion partnered with a 3-year commitment to the District. Additionally, a focus on the expansion of the CTE programs at the District's high schools (University HS & Waco HS) provides a streamlined identification of students seeking a career path of education, who desire to stay in Waco for their higher education and return to WISD with a promised teaching position. The collection of data for this program will be tracked by the HR, Career & Technical Education (CTE), and Grants Management Departments.

Measurable Progress

Identify the benchmarks that you will use at the end of the first three grant quarters to measure progress toward meeting the process and implementation goals defined for the grant.

First-Quarter Benchmark:
 Per TEA guidance of benchmarks aligning with performance measures, the following benchmarks will be used to measure progress for the first-quarter:
 Pathway 1 includes: 1) the number of teachers pursuing their Master's of Education degree, 2) the number of students enrolled on each high school campus per grade level, and 3) the demographics of students and teachers in the program. All of these will be identified through the HR Department.
 Pathway 2 includes: 1) the number of paraprofessionals receiving stipends to complete their Bachelor's degree, and 2) the demographics of students and teachers in the program. These will be identified through the HR Department.
 Both pathways will include: 1) ensuring grant expenditures are aligned with the grant proposed funding. This will be identified through the Grants Management Department (GMD).

Measurable Progress (Cont.)**Second-Quarter Benchmark:**

Per TEA guidance of benchmarks aligning with performance measures, the following benchmarks will be used to measure progress for the second-quarter:

Pathway 1 includes: 1) course attendance, and 2) attendance at the TEA-led Teacher Institute. These will be identified through the HR Department.

Pathway 2 includes: 1) course attendance, and 2) course grade checks. These will be identified through the HR Department.

Both pathways include: 1) the number of students enrolled in each education and training course, 2) the number of students participating in at least one Texas Association of Future Educators (TAFE) activity or event, and 3) ensuring grant expenditures are aligned with the grant proposed funding. These will be identified through the HR, Grants Management, and Career & Technical Education Departments.

Third-Quarter Benchmark:

Per TEA guidance of benchmarks aligning with performance measures, the following benchmarks will be used to measure progress for the third-quarter:

Pathway 1 includes: 1) the number of students completing each course in the Education and Training sequence, and 2) the course completion of teachers to ensure they are on track to finish their Master's degree within the allotted graduation time frame. These will be identified through the HR and CTE Departments.

Pathway 2 includes: 1) course completion of paraprofessionals to ensure they are on track to finish their Bachelor's degree and certification within the allotted time frame. This will be identified through the HR Department.

Both pathways include: 1) the percent completion of the bi-annual TEA survey of participant groups, and 2) the number of students completing Education and Training courses. These will be identified through the GMD and CTE Department.

Project Evaluation and Modification

Describe how you will use project evaluation data to determine when and how to modify your program. If your benchmarks or summative SMART goals do not show progress, describe how you will use evaluation data to modify your program for sustainability.

The project evaluation data will be collected and assessed by a collaboration of the Human Resources, Career & Technical Education, and Grants Management Departments. Data will include reports, meetings (i.e. notes, agendas), documentation submission, email communication, and surveys. The specifics of the data to be assessed includes, but is not limited to:

1. Attendance and demographics of students through the District's TEAMS system.
2. Numbers of students enrolled in Education & Training dual credit courses (including ongoing completion of those courses), and numbers of students active in the TAFE student organization.
3. Numbers of students dropping Education and Training courses after enrollment.
4. Graduation rates and STAAR testing scores of students enrolled in CTE courses.
5. Teacher attendance rates for Master's degree program courses.
6. Teacher hours spent shadowing qualified Master's teachers currently teaching dual credit courses.
7. Paraprofessional attendance rates for bachelor's degree program courses.
8. Paraprofessional grade checks throughout bachelor's degree and certification program.

If the benchmarks reflect a trend of not improving or showing appropriate growth, the first step will include meeting with all involved parties to assess the different elements of the program. Once the elements have been assessed, identification of possible associated problems will be discussed with improvement options outlined. If the problems include the teachers or paraprofessionals enrolled in the program, face-to-face conferences will take place with those individuals to re-establish expectations and set more frequent check-ins. If the problems are connected with students or the Education and Training Course Program, the evaluation team will revisit the marketing campaign and if needed, re-brand recruitment strategies.

Aside from the ongoing benchmarks and program goals, the overarching vision for this program will be aimed towards long-term growth and sustainability to ensure high-quality and diverse teacher retention and recruitment.

Statutory/Program Requirements

1. Describe your plan for the implementation of the Education and Training courses, Instructional Practices and/or Practicum in Education and Training, and CTSO (TAFE/FCCLA) chapter at participating LEA high schools.

Teaching is the only career in the United States that has the ability to recruit on a daily basis. Teachers stand in front of students every day, with the freedom to mold and encourage them in any way they desire. This empowerment for our teachers expands the focus on solely teaching students, to inspiring them to see the importance of teaching, planting seeds of excitement and passion, and ultimately guiding them to be future educators – potentially in their own community and school district. That is the vision that is driving Waco ISD towards the Grow Your Own program: to take what already exists, and turn it into something that changes the lives of both educators and students alike.

The two high schools in Waco ISD, University High School and Waco High School, both have active Education and Training courses as well as a TAFE student organization. The problem with the current program is that there are no qualified WISD teachers able to teach the dual credit courses -- forcing the District to bring adjunct professors from local institutes of higher education to teach. This not only limits the amount of courses that can be offered (limiting the number of students able to enroll), but removes the motivation piece of students being taught and encouraged by invested, district-employed teachers. Through this program, WISD desires to strengthen and expand its current CTE pathway, and provide further education for the teachers who have proven to inspire and motivate students in a way that points them back to education.

The Education and Training courses that will be offered at University High School (UHS) in the upcoming Fall include: 1) Human Growth and Development, 2) Counseling and Mental Health, 3) Instructional Practices in Education and Training, and 4) Practicum in Education and Training. At Waco High School (WHS), all of those courses will be offered in Fall 2018 except the Practicum course, which will be implemented for the 2019-2020 school year. The director of the WISD Career & Technical Education Department will be responsible for all planning, assessment, and growth of these courses.

The TAFE student organization was formed in 2016 at University High School (UHS), and recently formed in 2017 at Waco High School (WHS). There is a meager participation rate at each high school, with only 25 students at WHS and 35 students at UHS. These numbers are especially low when looking at the current enrollment of their Education and Training courses, at a total of 261 students at WHS, and 410 students at UHS. Additionally, neither of these schools attended any meetings provided by TAFE since originally forming. It has been made evident through the assessment of this organization, and collaborative conversations with relevant departments and individuals, that the students lack buy-in to the program. The District must take a change of approach that results in greater investment and excitement for involvement. That change is believed to start with CTE teachers and TAFE mentors becoming an active part of the District, and not adjuncts from another entity. This program will allow WISD teachers to walk alongside these students on a daily basis -- through classes, co-curricular activities, and post-graduate career planning. We strongly believe that relationships and a culture of trust are what will change the heartbeat of this program, we just need the resources to help us get there.

More tangibly, through this program, students will have a more specific opportunity to choose an education pathway when entering high school that enables them to graduate and have only two years (or less) at a local institute of higher education (IHE) to complete their degree. Students pursuing this pathway will have a letter of assurance from WISD that promises them a teaching job in the District following graduation. Recruitment of these students will provide a streamlined focus of identification, as well as contribute to the dire need of diverse and high-quality teachers within the District. Through conversations with not only District parties, but collaboration with partnered IHEs, there was unanimous agreement that providing students with an attainable goal of having a career at the end of graduation (versus simply a degree), could be the inspiring and investment-building change that these campuses need.

In addition to recruiting and providing an education career path to students, the District sees high value in recruiting current paraprofessionals to become District teachers. With one of the greatest needs of the District being retainment, it is encouraging to recruit from individuals who are familiar with the district's demographics and challenges. This provides a greater assurance of preparation when these paras step into a classroom as a teacher. The recruitment of high potential paraprofessionals includes a wide-range of factors, such as: current attendance rate, principal recommendation, participation in student activities, evaluation ratings, and current status of obtained degree. (Further details in attachment.)

Pathway Selection and Participation

Complete the following section(s) to indicate your choice of pathway(s) and total request for funding.
 You may apply for any pathway individually or for Pathways 1 and 2 together. Pathway 3 cannot be combined with any other pathway. Refer to the program guidelines for information on restrictions to the maximum number of participants.

Pathway 1

Check this box to apply for grant funding under Pathway 1.
 Number of participants 4 times \$13,000 52,000

Pathway 2

Check this box to apply for grant funding under Pathway 2.
 Number of participants pursuing BA and certification 6 times \$11,000 66,000
 Number of participants pursuing certification only times \$5,500
 Total of above two lines 66,000

Pathway 3

Check this box to apply for grant funding under Pathway 3.
 Number of participants times \$22,000

Education/Training Courses and Related CTSO Participation and Events

Number of high schools 2 times \$3,000 6,000

Funding Request

Pathway 1 52,000
 Pathway 2 66,000
 Pathway 3
 Education and training courses 6,000
Total grant funds requested 124,000

Statutory/Program Assurances: All Pathways

- The applicant assures that each high school campus within the participating LEA will offer the Instructional Practices and/or Practicum in Education and Training courses of the Education and Training course sequence.
 The applicant assures the each high school campus within the participating LEA will establish or continue a chapter of a
- CTSO that supports the Education and Training career cluster (TAFE or FCCLA) and participate in at least one competitive event.

Statutory/Program Assurances: Pathway 1

- The applicant assures that LEA campus participants will establish or continue a chapter of a CTSO that supports the Education and Training career cluster (TAFE or FCCLA) and participate in at least one competitive event.
 The LEA assures its participation in an initial TEA Teacher Institute on or around June 12-14, 2018, with participants
- including Education and Training course teachers, campus principals and college/career counselors. Principals and counselors will only be required to attend on June 12.

Statutory/Program Assurances: Pathway 3

- The applicant assures that the clinical teaching assignment is one academic year (28 weeks minimum) in length.
- The applicant assures that the IHE/EPP provides residents with with teacher certification; evidence-based coursework; and an opportunity to practice and be evaluated in a school setting.
 The applicant assures that the IHE/EPP provides residents with in-person and on-site coaching and evaluation, with at least five on-site observation and feedback cycles per semester, at least two of which include the observation of a full lesson.

Request for Grant Funds

List all the allowable grant-related activities and other costs for which you are requesting to expend grant funds, along with the amount of grant funds you are requesting for each. The maximum grant amount you are awarded will not exceed the total you request. Before funds are awarded, you will be required to budget your planned expenditures by class/object code. In the list, group similar activities and costs, keeping salaries, contracts, computers, and other related expenses together.

	Description of Activity or Cost	Amount Budgeted
1.	Master's Degree Tuition (\$10,000 for 4 teachers)	40,000
2.	Professional Development Travel Costs (\$2,600 for 4 teachers)	10,400
3.	Administrative Costs (\$400 for 4 teachers)	1,600
4.	Bachelor's Degree Tuition (\$11,000 for 6 paraprofessionals)	66,000
5.	Career & Technical Education Travel Costs (\$3,000 for 2 high school campuses)	6,000
6.	Indirect Cost Rate (x .03574)	4,596
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Total grant award requested 128,596

**Grow Your Own Grant
Pathway 1 Grow Your Own Program Attachment**

Pathway 1: Master's Degree Stipend to Support Education and Training Course Implementation

Program Participants: Applicant must specify the number of teachers who will participate in the program and receive the stipend.

There will be 4 teachers participating in the program and receiving the stipend.

Teacher Recruitment and Selection Process: Applicant must articulate how they plan to recruit and select quality teachers who will facilitate the Education and Training course sequence and receive grant funds to pursue their master's degree.

- The plan must address their process for identifying teacher participants, with potential indicators including a demonstrated track record of measurable student achievement, evidence of involvement in student organizations, strong evaluation ratings, recommendations from colleagues, etc.
- The plan must also address how the applicant has considered the following in their recruitment strategy: experience and proficiency of teachers and field-experience-classroom teachers, degree to which the diversity of teacher population mirrors that of the student population, and teachers and field-experience-classroom teachers in traditionally hard-to-staff areas.
- The plan should also include a description of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in which the teacher commits to remain in the LEA for an agreed upon length of time as a condition of receiving the stipend.

Without having initial knowledge of Waco ISD teachers that would be qualified as participants for the Grow Your Own program, the most effective method determined was to start broad and narrow down based on qualifications and high potential indicators. Therefore, participants for the Grow Your Own Program were initially identified through the HR Department extending information via email regarding the grant opportunity to all Waco ISD teachers and principals, and requesting a response from any interested individual that met the qualifications or recommendations from campus principals.

The purpose of the grant was explicitly outlined in the email, with the ultimate goals including: addressing teacher shortages, meeting the diversity of the student demographics, and stopping the declining perception of the teaching profession and encouraging high school students to pursue the profession. Also included was the significance of this pathway aligning with the expansion of the Education and Training courses and programming, providing incentives, opportunities, and positive perceptions for the teaching profession.

Following the set-up of program goals and purpose, the email then outlined preliminary qualifications to be considered as a candidate, including: must hold a standard or life teacher certificate in Texas, must currently be employed as a Waco ISD teacher, cannot currently hold a master's degree in education or have at least 18 hours in education courses at the graduate level, and must sign a Memorandum of Understanding committing to teach within the District for a minimum of three years following graduation. Additionally, the expectations of what would be required if chosen as a participant were outlined as not only completing the master's program within two years (starting in 2018 and graduating in 2020), but continuing the chapter of TAFE currently on the high school campuses and participating in at least one competitive event per academic school year.

The final information included in the email stated the indicators that the District would be using to assess and select the teacher participants, which included: principal recommendation, job performance (based on the most recent evaluation), T-TESS ratings, student achievement trends, current attendance rate, participation

in extra student activities, and the explanation of why they believe they should be chosen for this opportunity. The response from this initial outreach resulted in 82 interested teachers.

Once the HR Department is able to comprehensively assess the interested teachers, they will send an additional application that requests more information and includes an initial approval from their current principal that signifies a preliminary recommendation. Simultaneously, the campuses will be conducting an online student survey focused on teacher performance – this will include questions that assess students' perspective of inspiring and effective teachers. With these results, the District will be able to gather summaries on both the highest ranked (from students) teacher, as well as use responses to help assess potential teacher candidates that applied to the program. The ultimate goal of these teachers getting a master's degree and joining the dual credit program is to expand and enhance the existing program in a way that encourages and rejuvenates the student perspective of a career in education.

Once the candidates have been further narrowed, they will participate in an interview process with the HR and Career & Technical Education Departments. By having both quantitative (i.e. attendance, job performance rating) and qualitative (i.e. interest statements, surveys, interviews) assessment factors, the District feels confident in choosing candidates that can be retained beyond the requirements of the MOU.

The final strategy to determine the teacher participants for this program includes ensuring the diversity of teachers matches the diversity of students. Based on an assessment of current teacher demographics compared to student demographics, it was determined that this program will seek one Caucasian, one African American, and two Hispanic candidates; as well as two male and two female candidates. If the level of quality or diversity is not found within the initial batch of interested participants, the District will further recruit specific teachers through identification from principals, longevity in the District, and ability to complete the program within two years.

To ensure short-term and long-term expectations are clearly communicated and understood, the participating teachers will sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) prior to starting their degree pathway. In addition to outlining the timeline and process of receiving the stipend to fund the cost of the master's degree, the agreement will outline the following requirements and commitments:

- Attendance and grades will be monitored throughout the program.
- Proof of enrollment must be submitted (a failure to register or keep up with the program will result in removal of stipend).
- Regular conferences with the academy deans will take place throughout the program.
- Must establish or continue a chapter of a Career and Technical Education Student Organization such as Texas Association of Future Educators.
- Must participate in at least one competitive event per academic school year with student organization.
- Must attend the TEA-lead Teacher Institute on or around June 12-14, 2018, in Austin, TX.
- Teachers must agree to return to Waco ISD after graduation and work as a certified teacher for a minimum of three years.
- Waco ISD has the flexibility of assigning teachers in the CTE program based on student demand.

The participants that are chosen will need to apply and be accepted into the Master's Program at Tarleton State University – Waco, the local IHE that offers the Master's in Education program at an affordable price and works alongside Waco ISD to stay flexible and accommodating to the needs of the District.

IHE and LEA Partnership: Applicant must describe the plan to develop a partnership between the IHE and LEA.

- The plan must include an explanation of the potential partnership with a dual credit partner (community college or IHE), including the efficiency of the process through which students earn and transfer dual credits. The plan must also include a description of the intended timeline to develop the dual credit partnership by the time of the participant's successful completion of the master's degree program.

Waco ISD is fortunate to be situated in the center of a higher education hub, with a community that desires collaboration and encourages partnerships to expand educational opportunities for its youth. The District is currently partnered with multiple institutes of higher education (IHE) as well as community colleges, including: Baylor University, Tarleton State University – Waco, Texas Tech University – Waco, McLennan Community College (MCC), and Texas State Technical College (TSTC).

For the goals focused on in this program, the most feasible partnerships were with Tarleton, Texas Tech, and MCC – all of which are accessible, flexible, and affordable for this District initiative. When deciding to apply for the Grow Your Own Grant, District personnel from WISD conducted a meeting with individuals from all of these institutes to discuss changes that would need to be made to accommodate the program goals and timeframes. Specifically, these conversations included:

1. Creating a class schedule that allowed for **paraprofessionals** to take courses in the evenings, and continue working on their campus during the day.
2. Redesigning the pathways for **students** to be offered the dual credit courses they need to transfer to an IHE or community college and finish out their education degree with an 18 – 24 month time frame.
3. Ensure teaches are on an accelerate plan that enables them to finish their Master's of Education degree within two years, while simultaneously continuing their teaching career.

The timeline for changes that need to be made for all of the established processes that are already in place to fit the program timeframe is set to be completed by the beginning of the Fall 2018 semester – ensuring that all programs are set-up and accessible by the time this program would start.

It was evident during this initial meeting and continuous follow-up conversations that these institutes are prepared to delve deeper into a partnership with Waco ISD; in a way that creates a more practical and accessible streamline for staff and students to pursue higher education while staying invested in their community and school district. Waco ISD is a hard-to-staff area, with barriers ranging from performance to low socio-economic majorities, which is why it is so important to offer the people who are already invested in the District ways to stay "home" for their education and careers.

Student Recruitment: Applicant must articulate how they plan to recruit students to participate in the Education and Training course pathway.

- The plan must include a description of the profile of students targeted for recruitment, such as performance quartile, diversity, etc.
- The plan must also include a description of how the LEA leadership (district and school based) and staff will motivate students to enter and persist in the Education and Training courses.

Dr. A. Marcus Nelson, Waco ISD's recently hired Superintendent of Schools, has expressed the importance of providing students with not only high-quality education but provision of a career pathway that results in students desiring and having access to high-quality options beyond their years of schooling. He further stressed the significance of keeping WISD's students in Waco – admitting that the greatest chance the District has in recruiting and retaining quality and diverse teaching staff is to build up individuals who know the classrooms, know the demographics, and know how to navigate the problems that arise within the

District. These sentiments are echoed by administrative and campus personnel across WISD, who are equally committed to stopping the cycle of teacher loss and low performance, and creating a public school system that offers the rigorous education and quality educators that all of Waco's students deserve.

As stated within the application, the current Education and Training Courses offered at Waco High School (WHS) and University High School (UHS) have an enrollment of 261 students at WHS and 410 students at UHS. Although those numbers seem high, together they represent less than 18% of WISD's high school students. This is one (of many) reasons why the expansion of this pathway is vital for the District – there has to be more accessibility to and more priority placed on pathways that result in careers.

One of the techniques used for recruitment – that will continue to be used if the expansion of the program takes place – is presentations that are given by the director of the Career & Technical Education Department. These presentations outline the comparison of salaries for teachers vs. fast-food workers, and then further outlines salaries of principals and superintendents – the idea of this being to break the myth that a teacher's salary is not worth pursuing school for, and to show the career growth that can be possible when starting as a teacher. The response from this presentation often results in interested students pursuing further conversations with the director and/or current teachers, allowing for an opportunity to enter the Education and Training pathway.

Beyond this existing recruitment, new ideas to be implemented in WISD that have been discussed include:

- Starting at the elementary school level to recruit students, allowing students to sign "Letters of Intent" that promise them a teaching job in the District once they have graduated.
- Collaborating with teachers and principals to identify students that may not be obvious recruits based on grades or test scores, but have potential and self-motivation to pursue an education pathway.
- Seeking students who express plans to stay local for higher education, and introducing them to the Education and Training pathway.
- Partnering with parents to identify potential students that would have the ability to enter and complete the pathway.
- Holding career fairs at the middle school level to introduce the education pathway, and recruiting students to begin as soon as they enter high school.

In seeking students to take part in the Education and Training pathway/courses, priority will be placed on performance measures, attendance rate, and interest in education to ensure that the District is utilizing program spots for students that are motivated and committed. But an equally important priority is to make space for students who have not demonstrated as high of a performance, but have a passion for teaching – allowing these students in the pathway is vital, and can be the switch that takes an unengaged and complacent student to an inspired and goal-driven student. The expansion of the current program is what will allow for the District to take both profiles of students, as well as to ensure diversity of the students enrolled.

When looking at the three greatest needs associated with the application of this program, the District is seeking an increase of retention, an increase of diverse recruitment, and accessibility to Career & Technical dual credit courses and student organizations. Although there is an important focus on paraprofessionals and teachers, all three of these needs reflect the same goal: recruiting and providing pathways for students to graduate high school, have a set timeframe for a degree completion, and finish their higher education with a job already lined up: all while investing and staying in the Waco community and school district.

The Education Commission of the States reports that there is a nation-wide shortage crisis of teachers. More specifically, the shortages are often confined to high-poverty, high-minority, and low-achieving schools. Unfortunately, although a medium-sized district with potentially more resources, Waco ISD is still faced with all three of these characteristics. As a hard-to-staff District, the normal recruitment and retainment strategies are not enough to motivate outside educators to move into such a complex teaching situation. But with the opportunity to recruit *within our district*, providing accessible ways for local students to stay in the community they know and love, maybe Waco ISD's trajectory can be an exception to this nation-wide trend.

**Grow Your Own Grant
Pathway 2 Grow Your Own Program Attachment**

Pathway 2: Transition of Paraprofessionals, Instructional Aides, and Long-Term Substitutes to Full-Time Teaching Roles

Program Participants: Applicant must specify the number of paraprofessionals, instructional aides, and/or long-term substitutes who will participate in the program and receive the stipend.

There will be 6 paraprofessionals participating in the program and receiving the stipend.

Teacher Recruitment and Selection Process: Applicant must articulate how they plan to recruit and select high potential paraprofessionals, instructional aides and/or long-term substitutes to participate in the program and receive the grant stipend to pursue their bachelor's degree and/or teacher certification.

- The plan must address their process for identifying participants, with potential indicators including evaluation ratings, involvement in school activities, recommendations from colleagues, etc.
- The plan must also address how the applicant has considered the following in their recruitment strategy: pursuit of certification in hard-to-staff areas and degree to which the diversity of the teacher population mirrors that of the student population.
- The plan must also include a description of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in which the paraprofessional, instructional aide, and/or long-term substitute commits to remain in the LEA for an agreed upon length of time in a full-time teaching role as a condition of receiving the stipend.

Similar to the identification method used for teachers in Pathway 1, due to the large number of paraprofessionals and instructional aides that Waco ISD currently employs, it was determined that the most efficient and encompassing method to find the highest quality of potential individuals was to have an elimination method of recruitment and identification. Therefore, participants for the this pathway were initially identified through the HR Department extending information via email regarding the grant opportunity to all Waco ISD paraprofessionals, and requesting a response from any interested individual that met the qualifications.

The explanation of this program outlined the potential funding, as well as the preliminary qualifications to be considered as a candidate, which included: must be a current paraprofessional in Waco ISD, cannot hold a teacher certification in Texas, must be core complete in undergraduate coursework with the capacity to graduate with a bachelor's degree and teacher certification within two years, and must sign a Memorandum of Understanding committing to teach within the District for a minimum of three years following graduation. Additionally, the information included the indicators that the District would be using to choose participants if awarded the grant funds, which outlined considered factors of: job performance (based on the most recent evaluation), current attendance rate, participation in extra student activities during the school day and outside of school, principal recommendation, and their reason for wanting to become a teacher. The response from this initial outreach resulted in 88 interested paraprofessionals.

After more thoroughly assessing the responses from interested paraprofessionals, the HR Department will request preliminary documentation to ensure all qualifications are met, including a principal/supervisor recommendation and a transcript from their institute of higher education (IHE). Using this information to further determine high-quality candidates, the HR Department will begin gathering additional contributing factors including attendance, evaluation ratings, and extra-curricular participation.

With the narrowed list of candidates, the next priority will include ensuring diversity in the paraprofessional staff that matches the diversity of the student demographics. By compiling current district reports of student

and staff demographics, the District was able to identify the greatest demographic needs for teachers to accurately reflect the student demographics. To address this need, it was determined that the paraprofessional participants would include one Caucasian, two African American, and three Hispanic candidates; as well as three male and three female candidates. As with Pathway 1, if the level of quality or diversity is not found within the initial batch of interested participants, the District will further recruit specific paraprofessionals through identification from principals, longevity in the District, and obtaining course completion/degrees that allows for program completion within two years.

Although the desire for paraprofessionals applying to be a part of this program is that they are committed and passionate about Waco ISD, the District is aware of the potential for these individuals to move to more appealing districts once they have their bachelor's degree and teaching certification – such as districts with higher socio-economic and less diverse demographics, or even higher-performing campuses. To preemptively address this potential problem, the District will not only aim to choose invested paraprofessionals, but will have all of the program participants sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) prior to starting their degree pathway. In addition to outlining the timeline and process of receiving the stipend to fund the cost of the bachelor's degree, the agreement will outline the following requirements and commitments:

- Attendance and grades will be monitored throughout the program.
- Proof of enrollment must be submitted (a failure to register or keep up with the program will result in removal of stipend).
- Regular conferences with the HR Department will take place throughout the program.
- Paraprofessionals must agree to return to Waco ISD after graduation and work as a certified teacher for a minimum of three years.
- Waco ISD has discretion to hire paraprofessional as a teacher pending success and commitment to degree program.

Once the participants have been chosen, enrolled in courses at one of the local partner colleges (McLennan Community College, Tarleton State University – Waco, and Texas Tech University – Waco), and signed the MOU, a meeting with the HR Department will take place to ensure that clear expectations are set. This meeting will also serve as an opportunity to ensure the vision of the program is cast, and that each of the individuals are encouraged for being chosen as a program participant, and empowered with the level of potential that the District believes they hold based on the quality of work and investment they have demonstrated during their time at Waco ISD.