

Amarillo Community Conversation Summary

February 28, 2018

Host(s): Marty Rowley and Ray Cogburn

Participant Description: Approximately 38 participants

The State Board of Education (SBOE), under Texas law, is required to adopt a Long-Range Plan for Public Education. The 18-member steering committee, which is made up of state board members, various stakeholder group representatives and representatives from three state agencies, is leading the process. The steering committee will recommend long-term goals for Texas schools and will identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges of the system.

To help the board gather public input that will shape the new plan and set long-term goals through the year 2030, community conversations are being held around the state. In each community conversation, participants identify the purpose or desired outcome of public education and give feedback on challenges, strengths, and opportunities in four topics: educator preparation, recruitment, and retention; equity and access; family engagement and empowerment; and student engagement and empowerment.

This document provides a snapshot of the data collected during the Amarillo community conversation and highlights the main concepts captured during small-group conversations. Staff members from the Texas Comprehensive Center at the American Institutes for Research facilitated the community conversations and prepared this summary.

To learn more about the development of the Texas State Board of Education's work on the Long-Range Plan, visit https://tea.texas.gov/SBOE/long-range_plan/.

What is the purpose or desired outcome of public education?

- Able to think for themselves
- Automotive class, cosmetology, woodworking, etc. – important part of high school
- Awareness of community needs with action to positively change community – not users, but contributors to community
- Be kind
- Develop the skills and interests of students to help them excel in life
- Digital citizenship
- Educate all children to become contributing members of society
- Equitable access carves the path, gives a plan for adult life
- Establish a thirst for learning
- Literate, able to read and write
- Mental health providers are available and accessible to students and families in need
- Natural consequences and accountability and social skills
- Not testing
- Prepare students for their future pursuit of post-secondary education, career, and/or military service
- Prepared for real life, effective communicators, self-sufficient
- Produce next generation of educators, restore respect of profession
- Provide a safe learning environment for all students
- Provide ample nutrition to all students
- Provide communities with structure and unity
- Provide differentiated instruction to accommodate the learning needs for all students
- Provide scholars with the needed academic and social skills required for success beyond school
- Provides children with positive adult role models
- Respect for community (vote, civic responsibility)
- Reward/allow risk takers to try new ways of doing “school”
- Students need to own their education
- Support educators, including empowering them
- Teach students persistence and to be resilient in the face of rigorous tasks
- Teach the whole child – physical needs, mental/emotional needs, encourage the timid, unwind the overwrought, etc.
- To create an educated and empowered citizen body in the state of Texas
- To fulfill the requirements of federal and state law
- To produce individuals with the basic functions of reading, writing, and math to be self-sufficient and the skill set to navigate our social systems
- To serve all children, no matter the capacity, and show measurable gains/progress



Educator Preparation, Recruitment, and Retention	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New teachers report they are not prepared to handle parents, discipline, special populations, language barriers etc., and those issues accumulate to become overwhelming• Politics of education are driving people away from the career• Quality teacher education programs are not always “close” to rural communities• Retirement and salary not worth it• The rural nature of West Texas makes it difficult to get quality certified applicants• There is not enough exposure to real class applications in educator programs
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Awareness for growing your own• Awareness of pay and benefits (outside of box)• Community outreach for teachers• Grants available to allow community members to “grow” into teachers• Loan forgiveness• Professional learning communities• Programs to allow high school students to provide experiences to younger students• Targeted training and providing funds• Teacher choice staff development• Use of non-traditional programs• Working miracles with what we’ve got
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Address constantly changing standards from TEA• Administration and new teachers’ frequent meetings• Better training for alternative certification teachers to help them transition into education• Grants to “grow your own” teachers• Internship rather than student teaching• Make teaching a respected profession• More relevant training, being exposed to the classroom hands-on• More special education courses in educational programs• Pay teachers what they are worth• Preparation – more mentorships, length of probation, balanced development (academic, behavioral) earlier (precollege) exposure to future teaching• Recruit specialized labor pool at secondary level, targeted needs (SPED, BIL), internal growth like subs/paras/volunteers to be teachers

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Retention – bigger incentives for advanced education, higher incremental schedule of salary, on-campus stipends for teacher-coaches to grow; synthesizing intergenerational teaching norms (instructional styles all welcome)• Salary schedules – experience adds significant money so good teachers can be retained• Teacher academies that meet monthly (frequently), better mentorship during the first 5 years• Teacher-leader-coaches, expand career opportunity for experienced teachers
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Equity and Access

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access for rural schools (opportunities) • Access to Internet and technology (rural vs urban) • Attention to UIL academics compared to UIL athletics • Cannot get qualified instructors • Continued unfunded mandates from Legislative action • Disenfranchised population • Lack of state funding; funding formula inequity • Limited school access to raising funds • Local school districts being blamed for increasing property taxes when tax rates have not increased since recession 10 years ago • Not enough AP/dual credit courses • The way schools are funded • Threat of vouchers • Training for the effective use of technology • Unrealistic community expectations
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept a variety of cultures; provide support • Access to technology resources • Flexibility of pathways • Growing base of knowledge about equity • Growth mindset • HB5 • Industry certifications • Internet access – fiber has improved and is available in more locations (not some rural communities) • Realization/awareness of a broken system • Resources for economically disadvantaged and at-risk subpopulation • Schools educate all students • Small towns collaborating with technical schools, colleges, junior colleges to provide more dual credit courses
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change the mindset of the state to meet changing demographics • Communicate what schools do well. Make effort to advertise the successes of students and staff • Continued relationships with local colleges and universities to provide career training and college course work • Demonstrate character and integrity in the profession

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased analysis with applied research with universities• Industry partnerships – state could help facilitate, especially with rural incentives for corporations to partner with rural schools• Live-streaming of events for students who live too far from cities to participate in person (requires high-speed internet)• Make being a teacher attractive again
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Family Engagement and Empowerment	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication from schools to families regarding all aspects of education • Don't know how to help • Don't understand the value of education • Parents are working so much they don't have time • They don't feel welcomed • They don't want to be involved • They have had bad experiences with schools • We don't know how to engage them
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators are an asset • Face-to-face communication • Invites in many languages • Online grading portals for parents to check on child's progress • Opportunities through extra activities • Parent liaison and volunteers • Social media to communicate • Student-led Education Showcase • Technology for those that use it, i.e., grades "All-Calls", Remind app
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business people are realizing they need to be part of the solutions; find ways to involve businesses • Continue to address language barriers by sending notes in home language(s) • Find ways to offer internet access to community (within feet of school, central locations) • Make it a priority for parent/teacher contacts, from the top down • More parent/teacher conferences, even beyond elementary, provide times for teachers to meet, get subs • Offer parenting classes and practical life skills (tax prep, accessing online gradebook, etc.) • Positive postcards to students • Promote good things happening via social media • VIP=Volunteers, get t-shirts, ID batch make them feel involved



Student Engagement and Empowerment	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choosing endorsement too early• Class size• Demands/expectations for inclusion and differentiated instructions• Enabling our students• Family dynamic shifts• Increased emphasis on stupid standardized testing• Internship opportunities• Lack of consequences, work ethic responsibility• Language barrier• Partly hunger• Reduced social-emotional learning, PE, recess and play-based activities• School to prison pipeline• Student accountability• Too focused on college preparedness and readiness; people should be affirmed for career selection; we've pushed down career readiness and college decisions and forced students to leave childhood too soon• Too little autonomy and offerings for course selection
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 21st Century grants• Assistance with post-secondary education preparation (college applications, FAFSA, etc.)• Awareness of broken PBMAS monitoring• Better able to individualize education for all students• Distance learning initiatives• Home visits before school starts• Industry-level certification• Programs that improve culture• Project based, cross curricular instruction• School districts are partnering with community based colleges• Schools provide numerous resources for struggling students (counselors, social workers, special programs, etc.)• STEM• Talking about what life after high school means/offers• Technology (virtual labs, Google Classroom, etc.), access to information• Transition planning has improved• Understanding things need to change• We do a better job of assessing students and using the data to teach "better"

Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Abolish stigma about certification-related careers• Address educator multicultural competence• Either drop demand and expectation for inclusions/differentiation or provide training, resources, time and compensation to meet the demand• Emphasize social skills instruction for all students• Equipping parents to help empower their students• Focus on social and emotional learning• Increase efforts to connect school, business, and colleges as a means of preparing students for the expectations of the workforce and college• More internships• More play and enrichment• Offer certification programs such as nursing, plumbing, cosmetology, etc.• Project-based learning• Respect for students and parents• Schools should continue efforts to enhance CTE programs to produce students with skills that employers require for entry level positions• Students need more of a voice at an earlier age• Technology – Google Classroom – virtual
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