



Dallas Community Conversation Summary December 6, 2017

Host(s): Erika Beltran and Lanet Greenhaw

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 Dallas 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?

- A place to meet colleagues, friends, and learn about their future (socialization)
- Communication skills
- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Develop productive (contributing, developing) citizens
- Develop relevant and motivating programs and curriculum to inspire and engage students in a transfer of learning ownership from the teacher to student
- Developing skills of independent, self-sufficient thinking to gain employment or employ themselves towards financial security
- Education is an access point, to access opportunities.
- Education is the key to disrupting poverty cycles.
- Education should be nonpartisan.
- Global awareness
- How to live out our purpose
- Innovative, creative, emphasis on the arts
- Prepare K–12 students to be college/career ready
- Providing opportunities to excel with skill development and exposure
- Purpose to create a strong democracy, strong citizens, and ability for each student to have the basic building blocks to think critically and equalize society
- Students should be able to analyze and be able to participate in systems—economic, government, public schools—and make informed decisions about their own lives.
- Technology savvy
- The purpose of education is to mold their community, citizens, families, country, nations.
- The purpose of public education is to educate students within their special gifts and talents so they will become productive and happy citizens.
- To create students that are self-directed and capable of their own long-range planning
- To learn, based in knowledge, facts, basic subjects—math, English, etc.—quality inputs



Educator Preparation, Recruitment, and Retention	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Funding—teachers can't afford to pay the bills.• Increasing IT/Data collection limits teachers' creativity.• Lack of professionalism and respect• Need more funding for summer school, eliminate summer regression• Preparation: teacher evaluation system—not in favor of value added model leading to high-stakes evaluation• Principals promoted mid-year because the campus doesn't have one• Segregation, crime, poverty, ¾ kids in DISD at disadvantage• Teacher prep programs are not preparing teachers for the realities of the classroom (parents, student discipline problems, planning good instruction).• Teachers are over-loaded, have their own families, not respected.• Teaching is the most physically, emotionally, and instructionally challenging job on the planet.• The way public education is portrayed in the press and by our state legislature• The way we evaluate teachers (TEI encourages competition)• We have experienced teachers who don't have support to succeed.• We hold educators accountable for all of societies' ills.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Innovation Districts—CTE Alternative certification• Instructional coaches and mentoring programs (like the Bell Mentor program or TX BESS) help new teachers succeed.• Most programs are up to date.• Multiple pathways to teacher certification, alt-cert, Texas• Programs funded by Gates• Some universities have outstanding student teacher mentoring programs.• Targeting bilingual teachers UNT Dallas, free tuition pathways ELL• The teacher evaluation system (TEI) has some possible strengths.

Educator Preparation, Recruitment, and Retention, *continued*

Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Better professional development opportunities• Bilingual special ed certification• Build empathy between teachers and community• Co-teaching, more internships• Create PR programs that put teachers in a good light, make teaching look appealing (focus on the positives). There are lots of great things happening in public schools!• Early college HS, go directly to 4-year college (dual enrollment)• Encourage more instructional coaching• Expand district “grow your own program”• Find ways to give teachers a pay raise• Forgiveness (loan), tuition waiver for teacher aides for college education• Identify teacher’s strength (narrow the certification EC-3)• More money for experienced teachers to coach new teachers• Program development to attract a diverse teacher workforce• Reinstate Social Security• School finance to address: salaries, TRS, TRS medical• Teacher “next door” program (purchase home in the neighborhood)• Teacher career pathways to keep them in the classroom
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Equity and Access

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to health care— shots, glasses• Childhood poverty rates• Cost of higher ed limits students’ access to college• Families need nutritional support, access to quality food• Funding is needed for innovation in schools, teacher funding for positions (library staff), research access for staff, facilities funding• Funds coming in are not necessarily going to the neediest areas• HS testing plan is inequitable with concentration on End-Of-Course and Texas Success Initiative (TSI) and not helping SAT/ACT (which the suburban schools concentrate on)• Need equity in funding for all students• New/experienced teachers should be balanced• Segregation• Technology gaps both in school and at home (such as Internet access)• Tested subjects have disproportionate resources, instructional materials• Trying to get support from administration for space and resources for external organizations and nonprofits• Waiting lists and applications for magnet programs and academies restrict many students
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accelerating Campus Excellence (ACE) – DISD programs to be intentional about incentivizing teachers to teach in higher needs environments• There are corporate businesses in the Metroplex• Democratic process that allows feedback from local community members, including accountability of these elected trustees• Educators understand we have to work collaboratively• Increase in community forums – more opportunities for community involvement and feedback and open school board meetings• Knowing and identifying equity issues through data better• Parental access – technology and apps to keep parents in the loop on their students’ education, and access to meet with school professionals• Partnerships between school districts and community college allow students access to school without cost• Robust program opportunities for SPED, dual language opportunities, gifted programs

Equity and Access, *continued*

Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build policy for all students to have equitable access to schools• Consider transient populations/renters – reduce the punitive impact current legislation has on poverty level areas.• Coordinate and partner with nonprofits, supports can be more intentional and impactful• Create K–8 neighborhood schools• Fund mandated expectations/needs.• Growth model is much more equitable• Improving public access to internet at home• Increase the number of teachers/service providers for special programs (SPED, dual languages, ESL, grade)• Incentives for teachers to teach in high-needs schools• Increase resources/funding based on population and specific campus demographics.• Increase taxes• Let students voice challenges and advocate to work towards solutions• Partner with real estate firms to provide accessible housing.• Provide wrap around services – community liaison to support the needs – health/food stamps/dentist, etc.• Require veteran and new teachers to be balanced at each campus – policy from state
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Family Engagement and Empowerment	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cultural taboos about interfering in schools• Disconnection between educators and parents• High bilingual ELL populations. Schools are not always a welcoming place. Multi-lingual staff needed.• Knowledge and information on how to navigate the school system is confusing, inaccessible, and overwhelming• Lack of understanding of how US education system works• Less help for refugee or African-American families• Not enough funding for proactive programs like the Home Instruction of the Parents of Pre-school Youth (HIPPY), Advance, Ed Councils• Parent accountability is missing• Parents can feel afraid to come to schools or don't feel welcome. Are intimidated, lack language and fear deportation.• People who don't follow the lead of the educators (helicopter parents, pushy parents)• PTA enrollment has declined• Sense of hopelessness• Some parents are too busy, both parents work• Some parents place responsibility on the teachers and teachers alone to educate• Title I liaisons are not treated as professionals
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community partners• Community school model (clinic inside the school)• Housing requires parental involvement• Innovative ways to support education• Nonprofits supporting public education• Parents write letters to their children about their goals• Programs exist to help parents become involved• PTA/PTO• Resources have been put to fund community liaisons in schools• Site Based Decision-Making Committees are legally mandated• Technology is used to communicate

Family Engagement and Empowerment, *continued*

Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employer flexibility with work hours to allow parents to go to school• Expand and improve parent liaison role• Have programs that go to parents like HIPPIY, life skills and education programs• Hire multilingual office workers• Hold events to bring companies and community members to engage with families• Increase counselor time to spend with students and families• Invite teachers and principals to be in community groups• Put resources in schools to attract/serve families, like clinics and services• School parent from birth to high school• Train teachers on relationship building with families (perhaps in homes)• Usability of websites so programs are known to community• Webinars for parent meetings and parent education for those unable to attend in person
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Student Engagement and Empowerment

Challenges

- Access to extra- or co-curricular activities for all students (focus on STEM/UII activities)
- Business partnerships for internships, mentoring, and career training
- Differentiated learning support for all kids
- Need incremental compensation for teachers to lead clubs/organizations
- Lack of funding/resources for public ed in general
- Lack of physical resources (space, materials, etc.)
- Lack of statewide focus by the legislature on workforce readiness
- Lack of support for students in poverty including shelter, food, and healthcare
- Quality access to early learning, pre-k for all
- Real-world experiences for students
- Reduction of special education, more inclusion creates more barriers for teachers creating engaging learning
- Some discipline policies need to teach more conflict resolution, give students tools for conflict resolution
- Some districts have a rigid curriculum that hinders student engagement
- Student apathy levels are high. The number of students that “hate school” needs to be reduced.
- Students in high school do not get enough guidance in long-range planning for courses/careers; lack of guidance counselors
- Teachers need tools to make the curriculum engaging. (Teachers have to find the resources themselves.)
- Teaching force needs to reflect the diversity of the school population. Lack of diverse educator force.
- Testing (STAAR) stunts creativity for teachers and students
- There are no standards in TX for early literacy teachers. Hard to empower students who can’t read.
- We need to give students a voice and a choice in their education

Student Engagement and Empowerment, *continued*

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acknowledging and emphasizing choices in graduation paths – CTE• Appreciation for technological advancement• Early college, CTE programs, vocational certs. Career academies, pathways, endorsements. Ex: city lab, Dallas ISD, IDEA Campus• Efforts/programs that work on bringing guest speakers/former alumni to speak• Existing programs for early childhood development and pre-k accountable to graduation rates• Focus on college and career• Increase in experimental learning programs• Personalized learning• Pre-schools• Programs like WATCH Dogs that engage families during the school day allow students to connect and be valued for more than just the numbers• Restorative practices alternative to traditional discipline• Social-emotional focused campuses are working• Student councils
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Student Engagement and Empowerment, *continued*

Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Address the needs of homeless students• Build SEL (social emotional learning) into school culture• Communication campaign on how to support schools (community engagement)• Connecting the future to the “now,” real life, hands-on lessons for students• Create a safe environment for students to express their needs• Create time capsules to develop long-term engagement in the community• Fund pre-k• Have librarians, counselors, nurses, etc., in all schools• Increase the “fun” in school, adapt implementation and best practices on methods• Make sure teachers are empowered and have all resources needed• More consistent career preparation programs• More opportunities for extracurricular activities; more arts, cooking classes, music• Online/technology tool to help high school students navigate a career path and plan• Shifting the view of students from just being a number to valuing the whole child beyond the classroom• Strengthen partnerships with private industry to prepare students for jobs/careers• Teacher professional development to strengthen student engagement practice
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