

Fort Worth Community Conversation Summary December 5, 2017

Host(s): Erika Beltran and Patricia Hardy

Participant Description: Approximately 60 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 Fort Worth 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?

- Ability to use an inquiry-based approach to interacting with the world
- Allow students to learn everyday (ALL kids)
- Be productive citizens of the society they are living in
- Be ready for a more “automated” workplace and changing future of work (e.g., more robots and machines)
- Being adaptive to what you are learning
- Collaboration
- Common body of knowledge
- Constitutional responsibility
- Contributing member of community, specifically civic engagement
- Core American values
- Create lifelong learners who have a passion to continue to grow
- Creating foundation that provides motivation for students to develop a thirst for knowledge as a lifelong learner
- Critical and forward thinkers, able to solve the questions of the future
- Democratic foundation and understanding
- Education for all (preservation for the rights of all)
- Education includes curriculum of ELA, social studies, science, lifetime skills such as working in a group
- Education leads to success in their vocation, leadership and further education
- Encourage and promote in a broad range (arts, etc.)
- Encourage critical thinking, strong communication skills/ soft skills
- Equal access for all
- Equal access to productive future
- Fair treatment of all groups/kids
- Focus on the core subjects and less on social and emotional learning
- Further us nationally for young people to be ambassadors of family, community, city, nation**preparing people for adulthood
- General diffusion of knowledge, being essential to the preservation of liberties and rights of the people
- Gifted students have same opportunities and access as challenged students
- Global perspective (not in isolation)
- High-functioning citizens
- Integrate people (not separate)
- Knowledge through a lifespan to address change in the world
- Learning how to learn (self-directed) and finding the right info and resources
- Literacy in all of its forms: math reading communications

- Make a living for themselves but also do community service
- Make American dream accessible to all
- More educated and informed population, better government, people take better care of themselves
- Move from elementary school to middle school transition into career skills – technology to prepare for world of work
- Not only to college, but through college and career
- Part of our responsibility in public education is to give opportunities and experiences for goal setting, career paths and future plans
- Preparation for a competitive world
- Preparation for world of work or college or technical training and to utilize skills
- Prepare children to be collaborative and build community with peers with confidence
- Prepare students for changing workplace
- Prepare students to be future ready
- Prepare students to be global citizens
- Primary burden to educate all in a public school setting
- Providing Pre-K, it helps to interact socially, emotionally in a school environment regarding academics
- Reach every child where they are to elevate their learning process
- Real-life experiences to prepare them for career choices
- Social, community, political awareness. Financial competency (financial literacy). Communication capacity (public speaking, professional writing and verbal presentation).
- Soft skills, “decision making,” etc. Getting along with people in groups. Understand how local community works and participate in that.
- Students have the ability to communicate broadly, adapt to new forms of communication, prepared to be information literate
- Students realize their full potential, their best self, no matter what path they choose
- Supporting strong communities
- The outcome for high standards and levels
- To expose children to possibilities in careers, skill sets, and experiences
- To help develop citizens of good character, ready to impact the community. Parents, partnership, personalized learning
- Well-educated students in the basics (reading, composition, history, science, math)



Educator Preparation, Recruitment, and Retention

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative certification programs that don't have the depth of training needed for success in the classroom • Consistency in high-quality teacher training program • Educator Prep: Studies not followed, training for diverse population, time for PLCs, funding • ESL and bilingual certification • Ethics and moral standards (accountability) • High-stakes assessment • Intense expectations of our new teachers from the beginning – high level of maturity, organization, communication skills required • Lack of coordination between TASB, Coordinating Board and state organizations and legislators in expectations, standards regarding certification • Lack of leadership (even found at the selection process) of principals and poor experience of campus/upper-level district • Leadership that is prepared to meet the needs of teachers • Poor retention tied to lack of school/administration/community support • Recruitment: Negativity for teacher profession, no incentive plans, funding • Retention: Burnout, asking more than possible, paperwork, feeling like you can't do it all, lack of time and planning ability; Go to other profession, retirement package lacking, quiet and compliant teachers; Funding • Salary • Teachers overwhelmed with tasks and overload of expectations, lack time, resources, support, salary • Work load
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 96% of districts meeting standard – success of teachers • Best teachers are given coaching opportunity to support other teachers • Ed Prep: Keep standards, highly qualified, a lot of local training, Masters in school counseling • Education programs have changed at higher ed level w/internships, more classroom experience • Honor and celebrate teacher success – to give more recognition • Local certification of individuals to teach in their profession • Results are going well. We have never been at this high rate of success for our children; we are in the top 5 in graduation rate in the country. • Retention: teacher passion for the kids, T-TESS if done appropriately and T-PESS

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salary levels are higher to recruit teachers at beginning level • Several strong teacher prep programs – UTA, Tarleton, Sam Houston • Some districts have strong induction programs • Strong leadership creates strong community in teacher group • The majority of those entering the profession still have a passion and desire to make a positive impact on children – there for the “ah-ha” moment • Town Hall meetings are a good start, but more accessible to different areas • Use of PLCs
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocating for funding, support, benefits • Allow teachers more voice and teachers union to have a voice • Becoming active in promotion of profession • Educator prep: understand IEP, more oversight of how teacher does the job, quality conversations from training, remove “us vs them,” 360 degree review/feedback, funding • Funding for education in state • Get educators to vote, foster a climate of voting and advocacy • Get legislators and state officials in place that are educators • Get professionals to promote the profession of teaching • Get university to write grants to give scholarships to help lower income • Honoring our own profession in speech, actions, and ethics, and broadcast widely • How/what can teachers/administrators do to build themselves up? • More support from administration, not just lip service, action is needed • Opportunities for professional pathways clear to new teachers, organized, purposeful • Reasonable expectations of teachers • Recruitment, better marketing of teaching profession • Recruitment: talk about success of public ed, not negativity, funding • Retention to help teachers grow • Retention: publicize the good items, voting block....teachers could help themselves, time, class size limit, scheduling better • To be a principal, there should be a strict 3–5 year experience requirement



Equity and Access

Challenges

- Access to internet for ALL students at home and proper internet at school, not functioning
- Behavioral expectations for minority students, partially due to teacher demographic
- Better identification of students, SPED as well as gifted students
- Curriculum that's not relatable for African-American community, thus students less engaged
- Differentiation
- Diverse populations continue grow, ELL – but not more funding
- Enough teachers that are trained, highly qualified, certified as GT to service each campus within a district; specific content areas for advanced courses
- Ensure every child with disability has access to education and services
- Experiential learning, like opportunity and experience, prior knowledge
- Extracurricular and co-curricular programs – do these mirror our student populations?
- Funding discrepancies – all students across the states are not funded equally
- Internet, not enough access to technology
- Lack of minority in gifted programs because test is biased for Caucasian
- Lack of resources /infrastructure at schools
- Meeting educational barriers in language, culture: English learners, economics, bilingual funding rates – WADA not changed in 31 years
- Money, funding formulas are outdated; the funding system is broken
- Most districts (Chapter 41) are maxed out at 1.04 M&O tax rate
- Negatively burdened by high-stakes assessment
- Resources for high SPED and LEP population schools
- Segregation in schools = lack of exposure, lack of resources
- Self-fulfilling prophecy mindset – change to proper mindset of “anyone” with right resources can succeed
- State continues to lower the funding level and local districts are having to pick up a larger percent
- Support for advanced placement across various student populations is often overlooked (meaning not everyone has equal access)
- Technology barriers – not every student has internet or appropriate speed
- Technology has barrier of funding for upgrades and ongoing tech literacy from preK – 12
- Tenured teachers going to easier schools

<p>Strengths</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1:1 device access for high schoolers • Access to online educational resources – Quizlet, cool math games, online coding, etc. • Allowing districts to become districts of innovation • Benefits for collegiate academies that earn an associate’s degree with HS degree • Best practices – be cognizant of course selection and dual credits and stay plugged in with counselors. Would like more vocational opportunities. More technology appropriations? • Conscious effort to redirect resources • Look to school districts that do have lots of options. Have discussions and negotiate with other areas. There are many success stories in the state. • Lots of effort put toward ensuring equal access for all populations • Monies are less or none for students (OnRamps from UT) • More discussion about student-centered • More discussions about race, for example Mexican-American textbook • New teachers coming in with skill sets to offer students access to technology and innovation • Open enrollment to all students with transportation provided at no cost to most students • Options for learning pathways for students – earned certificates (endorsement), dual enrollment, AP courses, basic, etc. • Push for technology and internet access • Schools are providing so many varied activities even with less funding
<p>Opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing emotional intelligence – suicide • Build our public perspectives to promote a high-quality education with quality funding and technology for all • Consider the need of all districts such as grants – are they competitive or non-competitive grants? • Cooperative learning across districts for unavailable content or lack of teachers with skillsets • Decision makers go to schools during normal hours for engagement of student, parents, and teachers • Elected officials create incentives for business and community involvement • Engage business community for internet access – partner with business to put their names on building, etc., in exchange for money • Ensure teachers are in classrooms that match content, training, and certification • Expose students to excellent people of color in community • Funding for education to go to teachers and classrooms, fiscal responsibility at the federal and state levels

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grants available for equipment and internet and technology in high schools• Growing population in Texas• Increase counseling services in schools• Limits on number of students in classrooms for high SPED & LEP schools• Locally driven curriculum and industry certifications matching local need• Mentorship for teachers in high-need schools• Need money for schools that need it – fair is not always equal• Negotiate with College Board for access and cost breaks• Options such as charter schools promote better ideas for all• Overt communication with the under-represented groups to encourage participants, make them feel valued and welcome. Meeting their needs to ensure their students can participate.• Partnerships and financial incentive to be involved in local schools (including parents)• Reporting, audits locally – does your student population reflect the participation?• State release education funds• Teach culture: modeling campus culture, teach them their culture (self-knowledge) and teach them to understand why they are learning• Teach students and parents the process of education and how to attempt solutions• Vocational certificates
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Family Engagement and Empowerment

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apathy • Communication distribution plans needed • Communication with family, all ways, needs to be more proactive instead of re-active • Communication – how do we know/find out what’s going on? • Cultural barriers and language barriers • Customer service, welcoming atmosphere • Demographics – single parent homes • Economics – working parents/ poverty • Educate on how to get what they need/parent education is necessary • Expectation on both sides • Fear of legal status (Hispanic parents scared to go to the school) • Language barriers (translation)/jargon • Listen to parents – discounted • Making sure our kids are in their home school • Need to know about various opportunities/activities • Parents don’t know their rights and what is available to them • Parents have a voice, but not really • Relationship between educators and parents – Do they want us? Respect? • Resources – What do they need? • School districts aren’t aware of their own population culturally • What shows up when I swipe my driver’s license to enter the school? Do they see my recent speeding ticket? • Work shifts/homework not priority • Wounded parents from their educational experience
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charter school has a parent/teacher/student conference day • Excellent – Maria Paredes publication on ESL and parental involvement • Funding special programs such as education • Good teachers (to support families) • Leadership programs for parents/community • Parent groups (e.g., support or advisory) – some districts • Parent input committee • Parent liaison (wish they could be fulltime) • Parenting classes offered by the district – how they manage time, handling anger/stress • Partnership with public library, e.g., family literacy

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs for students and multiple talents (well-rounded child) • PTA/PTOs • Resources to help families • Social workers that work with the district • Some districts train parents on how the district works • Some individual teachers do well to engage parents – experience good things – some teachers seem open
<p>Opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barriers to see school staff, need to have better access • Community service projects w/parent volunteers (community gardens!) • Enrichment opportunities? • Google classroom allows parents to see more work • Have a collaborative website for special populations (GT, ELL, etc.) for parent support • Have students rate teachers at the end of class • Home visits/outreach/engagement • Identify educational needs of that particular school – all schools are different • Include nontraditional guardians (grandparents, nanny, aunt, uncle, etc.) • Invite parents and community members into the classroom • Offering food/extra credit to families/students – extra budget dedicated to funding family events • Parent involvement and on various district communities • Partnership with businesses and universities help with ties to students • Progress reports available – can use online translators to help with barriers of parents • Provide parents with homework help/tutoring sessions so they feel more empowered to help their kids at home • Requiring parents to volunteer at school an amount of hours per month • Secure social media to post activities for parents to see what kids are doing • Teachers and staff being present in community in which they go to school (sporting events, fine arts, festivals), building relationships • Use all forms of communications to help parents who use different types of communication – parents subscribe and choose • Use the students to advocate for themselves and encourage their parents to come • What are action plans?



Student Engagement and Empowerment

Challenges

- Cannot lay solid foundation of core subjects
- Classes aren't leveled to competency
- Competition. Students don't feel like they can compete in these programs because of grades, etc.
- Disconnect of what universities expect and what is required of students; students can pass TEKS and not be able to place into entry level courses
- Funding – infrastructure dollars needed; help/aid available to families and may be unaware help exists
- How do we reach middle kids, upper kids?
- How do you wake people up for low-performing schools?
- How to make connections with businesses and schools that might offer internships
- Eliminating antiquated grading
- Issues with closing gap, so many different levels, some not up to level
- Kids not trained to advocate for themselves
- Lack of exposure to colleges, businesses, career choices/options
- Lack of student passion
- Low standards, so everyone can meet standards
- Maybe not enough counselors on campus to share information, new duties for counselors impacting effectiveness as counselor
- Maslow- can't meet the needs of students, can't engage students, lack of time, resources, strain on teachers, counseling, teacher preparation in special populations (gifted, SPED)
- Not knowing about self, poverty, disparity
- Quality intervention is too short
- Rather than close the gap, raise the bar
- Set curriculum that may go against student interest, for example, having to take x number of math courses
- Student fear
- Students are made to feel like a victim because, for example, teachers telling students "This test is out to trick you."
- Students made to be a number in the system instead of a whole person of value
- Teacher challenge to engage students with STAAR looming, not memorization, no critical thinking
- Teacher training is needed to support and serve all groups (special populations)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching to test vs. creative learning, causes student disengagement, hinders learning, prescriptive accountability process. • Too many TEKS • Too many tests • Transportation for rural districts beyond normal school hours • Unfunded mandates, bullying
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice, election of STEM focus • Collaboration/professional learning community • Districts of innovation offer more choice; possibly expand to every campus • Diversity • Dual credit, AP, collegiate high schools • Education foundations that fund, and the internet • Electronic monitoring of grades • Focus on success and progress • Future-ready: funding through grants (e.g., Jet grant) • Great teachers • House Bill 5 • Implementation of technology • Interest by business community to engage students • Learning platforms where students seek answers • Local school district control is a strength • Lots of resources • Many programs and internships already exist • Many support organizations exist: Destination Graduation, Avid, college and career nights • Mobile learning, 1 to 1 learning (e.g., iPads) • Public private partnerships where companies donate items or other support • School counselors • Student clubs and extracurricular, e.g., robotics, First LEGO League • Teach about self • Tech centers and tech education • Video tutorials for self-directed learning • We are teaching better than in the past
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability (non-tested) for global, citizenship productive skills • Advocate for fewer tests • Appropriate assessments • Capitalize on partnerships (public and private) • Community involvement in mentorship

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on core subjects • Focus on forgotten groups (middle) as well • Focus on parent engagement • Funding • Give students more opportunity for research • Group-project based learning • Growth mindset, fail forward • Growth vs. proficiency • Have community meetings at schools for student engagement • High school credit for work experience or internships (e.g., give government credit for a government internship in the community) • House Bill 5 – allowing students to have choices in classes • Implication of mental health w/standards – students, teachers • Incentivize career tours in the community • Incentivize schools to take students on college tours to increase exposure and foster engagement outside the class (especially for students with BIPs and IEPs) • Inclusion • Internships • More student choice in learning • Needs assessments to see what is going on in community and your students • Parent support groups for special population engagement • Parents taught how to use online grade reporting access • Portfolio and performance-task state assessments to facilitate and incentivize engagement in classes • Process mindset • Provide differential curriculum clustered classrooms, to come from district • Provide professional development to teachers for project-based learning • Re-introduce transportation allotment from the state • Reduce high-stake standardized testing • Reduce TEKS • Repetitiveness to student input • School-business partnerships to sponsor trips • Specifically provide funding for college, career, and field trips • Student voice – involve students in goal setting for everything • Technology access and training • TEKS should be age appropriate • Tests without a ceiling • Too much emphasis of standard
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