



San Antonio Community Conversation Summary January 9, 2018

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Participant Description: 146

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 San Antonio 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?

- Development of critical thinking skills and leadership skills that enable students to examine the world and create positive change.
- Give valuable exposure to failure, safe and supported room to grow.
- In addition to academically prepared, being prepared socially to collaborate and work well as a team.
- Learning the systematic process of work ethic, studying, healthy routines.
- Preparing our children to be productive citizens and be prepared for college and career.
- Produce individuals who are ready to contribute to society, both in school or for the workforce. Our job is to produce good citizens.
- Provide all people with access and opportunity to succeed, thrive, and reach the highest potential.
- Provide resources for all children in all demographics to achieve a high education at minimum.
- Provide well-educated, well-adjusted kids to become active community adults.
- To allow our children access to engage their world as it truly exists, supply them with opportunities to utilize their lived experiences in connection with different perspectives, and create a more equitable and compassionate populace.
- To give each child the knowledge, skills/tools they need to move out of public education and into the next phase of their life – workforce, certificate/technical training or higher ed...whatever their choice is.
- To prepare students for college, career, and life.
- To realize and understand there are other people/ideas/mindsets beyond their own and to also learn how to constructively function with others who are diverse.
- To teach children to take charge of their education and that it's OK to make mistakes.



Educator Preparation, Recruitment, and Retention

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accountability systems are very stressful to keep up with and the advancement of knowledge is hard to maintain at any level.• Alternative certification programs are not equitable.• Burnout.• Failure to evaluate educator preparation programs.• Health insurance affordability to all teachers in all districts – shouldn't differ from district to district.• High teacher turnover in underserved communities and schools.• Keeping money in public education that some are trying to funnel into private schools, charter schools.• Lack of support, strong mentorship programs.• Not an honored or cherished profession.• Pay for teacher's growth over time doesn't increase.• Recruitment and retention in high-need areas (e.g., STEM, ESL, bilingual, SPED).• Supplies and materials not being provided. Lots comes out of their pockets and having to take a second job.• Teacher/student placement...master teachers are often at higher performing schools or teaching more advanced classes, so students with greater needs often end up with less-experienced teachers.• Teachers need to be skilled in instruction, technology, engagement, classroom management – first-year (or first- through fifth-year) teachers often struggle to balance; one semester of student teaching is not enough to master it all.• Teachers placed outside their content/specialty/strength.• Teachers unprepared to teach diverse population.• Too much time is spent on compliance issues and not enough on focusing on instruction preparation.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Earlier exposure to classroom experience for teaching candidates.• Entry-level salaries are more competitive.• Expansion of staff development through technology and other means.• Higher ed recognizing that teachers need to have competency in cultures and language.• Increasing accountability for educator preparation programs.• Loan forgiveness in some districts.• Mentor (strong) programs for first-year teachers are beneficial.• Out of school partnerships helping.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualified leadership that can support teachers. • Salaries aren't as low as other places. • San Antonio becoming an educator hub. • Teachers are passionate and committed to their profession. • Teachers are the best recruiters. • Team approach to teaching is growing. • Veteran teachers with new teachers.
<p>Opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better preparation for new and experienced administrators to work more effectively with beginner teachers. • Build up the mentorship program to assist new teachers in growing in the field. The objective is to keep teachers in public education more than 3 years. • Continue to build on cultural competence and bilingualism to meet the needs of our population. Create opportunities for schools to collaborate (charter, district). • Demographic changes can help diversify the profession. • Districts should share successful trainings/programs/strategies with one another. • Increase pay for educators and provide more vertical and horizontal pathways for educator growth. • Learn from the preparation programs that are working and raise the standards for teacher certification. • Loan forgiveness applicable to more teachers. • Make changes in the teacher preparation programs/pathways that will bring prestige to the license that educators must have to teach (ex., lawyers and doctors). • Replicate models like Trinity medical program. • Research-based educator programs can be expanded (teacher aides to become teachers). • Student surveys (age appropriate and valid) can be used to better inform teaching. • Supporting low-income students for opportunities to better represent their communities, "grow your own teachers."



Equity and Access

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to advanced courses for rural students.• Access to dual credit and AP courses from one school to the next.• Allocation of funding towards certain systems or programs.• Continuing inequities in funding and opportunities between schools and school districts based on zipcodes.• Internet/tech access still remains a challenge in some areas.• Not all students have access to properly funded education in San Antonio (ex., new schools with technology while others are not kept up).• Our funding system is not set up with equity and access in mind.• Programs and services/supports are not available to all students: poor, minority, English Language learners, students with disabilities. All need proper support services.• Some school districts cannot attract and recruit teachers to teach the advanced courses.• Systemic discrimination against underserved students (i.e., students of color, EL, students with disabilities, low income).
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Awareness in equity and access issues.• Awareness outside the schools that equity is a problem. Business partnerships.• Growing awareness of data collection and analysis on equity and access.• Growing involvement by corporations, support for CTE.• Increasing percentage of students taking advanced courses (though still problematic).• Laws that provide, at least on paper, equity and access.• Many districts providing technology for all kids.• Open education resources raises possibilities.• Relationships with community college and UT OnRamps – dual credit programs.• State is funding digital resources.• Strategic plan being put in place.• Teachers – growth mindset.• Title funds available.

Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Better educate public in how schools are funded.• Continue improvement of digital access.• Continue to increase access to AP classes and dual credit courses.• Fund the non-funded mandates.• Improve advanced course work teacher preparation.• Improve data collection/analysis for EL and students with disabilities to address access issues.• Improve transparency/accountability funnel.• Keep our good teachers!• Local control can be pushed down to campuses.• Master the technology you have now and not chase the “newest” tech.• Provide teacher training to effectively instruct all students.• Quantify the growth for students (i.e., something other than tests).• Reallocating resources to high-need students.• Remind/reconnect the system (school, legislature, parents) the purpose of education.• Under ESSA, opportunity to address resource inequities.
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Family Engagement and Empowerment	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge to not make parents feel “dumb” or like they don’t know how to be involved. • Engagement that caters to different families’ interests and needs. • Global look at what’s going on, can’t be everything in classroom, or in the school. Partnership with people that can provide the resources. • Helping all families of all socioeconomic backgrounds. • Lack of an engaging environment – from the receptionist to the administration to the teacher. • Need for consistent communication. • Opening dialogue between district level leadership and parents. • Providing education for parents so that they can help their children. • Some engagement programs work for some districts and not in other districts. • Stop assuming a deficit approach to our parents creating the proper vehicle. • Time and staff to implement programs. Such as going out to the community to talk to parents. • Too often the “one size fits all” approach is taken and simply doesn’t work.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community organizations exist that can serve as a bridge between schools and families when schools lack the resources to address issues at home. • NEISD Colonial Hills community garden fed 765 kids; kids want to be involved. Growth in 1 year: 23 kids to 96 kids. • Parent communication through all avenues (social media, photo to apps, newsletters, etc.). • Teachers are supported and have assistance with students. • WATCHDOG opportunities, gets parents involved and brought in to see what’s going on. • Worked around the language barrier by having students translate.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afterschool programming enables students and parents opportunities. • Educators can go to the community and have programs there, not just at the school campus (e.g., teachers go to community garden in the neighborhood). • Educators could seek out needs/desires of parents. What would get you involved? What do you need? Family needs assessment.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individualizing communication, have a welcoming environment.• Mandatory CIS, nurses, or family specialist on every campus.• School leadership can give teachers flexibility and support to go out into the community. Visit parents at their homes. Partner with local businesses and faith spaces.• Share ideas across districts.• Teacher training preparation programs — increase courses on family engagement, social-emotional.
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Student Engagement and Empowerment	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of goals beyond the minimum. • Lack of resources that provide differential and diversity to a very diverse student population. • Lack of student choice in pursuing topics of interest that will allow them to show and grow with their knowledge. • Lack of student mentorship/guidance. • Language diversity (different languages other than Spanish). • Look at special populations as problems and not opportunities – deficit mindset. • Looking at students in terms of their academics rather than their human aspects. • Not learning from people that look like them or have the same experiences – less engaged. • Some students might have other obligations that take them away from opportunities – job instead of chess club • Students not being engaged because they’re not interested in subject or challenged by material.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital portfolios which allows individual student’s strengths and weaknesses to be tracked over the course of their school career. • Dual credit opportunities, local universities working with schools. • Emphasizing dual language programs. • Extracurricular – fine arts teaches you to be creative, teaches dedication and accountability. • Growing number of academies that are career focused and specific. • More businesses wanting to be more involved with schools and students. • Positive relationships between student and teachers. • The endorsement system helps engage students by letting them take more classes that they’re interested in. • We have numerous authentic “good “ teachers.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An understanding of consequence. • Better education on what is right/wrong and why. • Community engagement through advocacy – need to hear good stories about education. • Hire teachers that speak the language or both languages – to help with a language barrier. • More effective support systems before alternative school.