



Texas Teaching Commission Update

Background

Educate Texas, a public-private initiative of Communities Foundation of Texas, endeavors to advance new information, strategies, and ideas on how our state can align state policies and local programs to better train, support, evaluate, and compensate our state's teachers. In 2011, Educate Texas convened stakeholders from across the public and private sectors – including leaders in K-12 and higher education, business, and philanthropy – to launch the Texas Teaching Commission. The work of the Commission was supported by Communities Foundation of Texas, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, The Meadows Foundation, and the Sid W. Richardson Foundation.

The Commission's singular charge: honor and support the over 300,000 members of the Texas teaching profession by taking a holistic look at the teaching continuum, and recommend strategies for improvement at the state, state agency, and district level. This group – chaired by former Commissioner of Education Mike Moses and vice-chaired by fellow former Commissioner of Education Jim Nelson – spent a year hearing from national and state experts, evaluating research, and participating in a thoughtful, generative dialogue on how to improve and align policies and programs related to effective teaching and human capital, as well as next-generation policy recommendations that can promote dramatic improvements in teaching and learning. The Commission included 12 current and former classroom teachers, a former U.S. Secretary of Education (Rod Paige), two former school board presidents (Michael Boone and Julian Trevino), and a former state senator and university chancellor (John Montford).

The Commission focused on the entire teaching continuum including Recruitment and Preparation, Hiring, Induction, Evaluation, Professional Development, Strategic Compensation and Retention. Its report entitled *Recommendations for the Next Generation of Teaching Policy in Texas*, made 63 legislative, state agency, and district recommendations across all seven of these areas.

During the 83rd Legislative Session, more dialogue related to effective teaching was had than in any recent legislative session. The Commission report and the continued leadership of Mike Moses (chair) and Jim Nelson (vice-chair) contributed to filing eleven bills, and passing five, based all or partially on the Texas Teaching Commission report. Throughout the legislative session, Educate Texas served as a resource and advocate for a policy dialogue about the system changes necessary to produce more effective teaching. Since the Commission Report was published a number of teacher effectiveness activities and initiatives have occurred. Some are described as follows.

“We need to continue to make changes to strengthen and support the teaching profession to help Texas teachers better meet the needs of the next generation of students.”

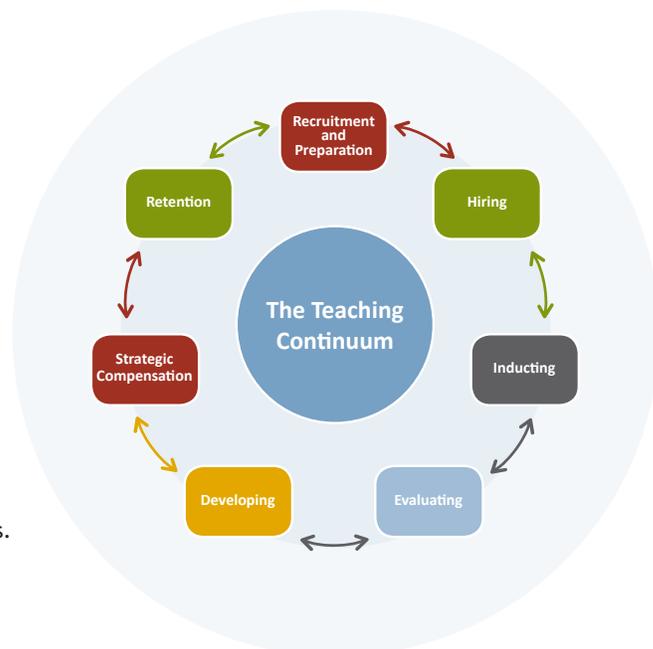
– Mike Moses, former
Commissioner of Education

Updates Since the Commission

Standards for Teachers, Principals and Educator Preparation Programs

The Commission recommended that Texas Education Agency (TEA) and State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) review the standards for teaching practice (known as Proficiencies for Learner-Centered Instruction). The purpose for reviewing these teaching standards was to ensure that they reflect best practices in teaching and learning.

In fulfillment of this recommendation, TEA revised its teacher standards in summer 2014. In addition, TEA also revised its standards for principal, and educator preparation programs and, ensured that they are aligned with the new standards for teachers.



Recruitment and Preparation

- The Texas Teacher Residency Program was created to develop a model residency program that allows students to receive a master's degree and teaching certification through extensive fieldwork with institutions of higher education at no cost to the student. Teachers accepted into the residency program are required to teach at traditionally hard-to-staff schools. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) awarded Texas A&M Commerce and University of Texas Tyler Grant funds of \$1.298 million for the biennium.
- Additional information must now be provided to teacher candidates about the skills necessary to be a successful educator, educator supply and demand, classroom management skills and teacher evaluation information. The state is now required to update requirements and standards for all educator preparation programs every five years.
- State law now requires a minimum grade point average as an admission requirement for teacher candidates into educator preparation programs.
- State law now requires separate scores for the E-6 certification exam for teachers for each of the core areas for the generalist teacher exam.

Induction

- The Texas Teacher Mentorship Advisory Committee was created to evaluate implementation of current mentorship and induction requirements, and to develop legislative recommendations to align teacher induction and mentoring activities with expectations for new teachers based on research-based teaching practices. The Advisory Committee was coordinated by the TEA and was comprised of education leaders including teachers, principals, district administrators, and policy advocates from across Texas.

Evaluation

- The Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) is the new state-recommended teacher evaluation system. It was designed by Texas educators to promote ongoing professional development and to support Texas teachers in their efforts to grow and improve in their profession. The system is comprised of three components: Observation (70%), Teacher Self-Assessment and Goal-Setting (10%), and Student Growth (20%). T-TESS is being piloted on over 300 campuses in approximately 60 districts and charters and is scheduled for statewide rollout during the 2016-17 school year.

- The Student Learning Objectives (SLO) is now one of several options available to assess a teacher's impact on student growth, particularly in grades and courses that are not tested with a standardized statewide assessment. Teachers and principals identify a limited number of measurable goals for a specific course. TEA will pilot the use of student learning objectives during the 2015-16 school year.
- The Value-Add Measure (VAM) is also now one of several options available to assess a teacher's impact on student growth in grades and courses that are subject to standardized testing. Statewide test scores are used not to determine the percentage of students that receive a passing score, but rather to measure student growth over the course of the school year. TEA will pilot the use of VAM during the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years.
- The Texas Principal Evaluation and Support System (T-PESS) is the new state-recommended principal evaluation system. It was designed by Texas educators to promote ongoing professional development and to support Texas principals in their efforts to grow and improve as campus instructional leaders. T-PESS is being piloted on approximately 450 campuses in 57 districts and charters and is scheduled for statewide rollout during the 2016-17 school year.

Professional Development

- TEA conducted a Professional Development Audit (PD Audit) of federal, state, and district requirements for educator professional development. The PD Audit was designed to identify conflicting requirements for possible elimination and duplicative requirements for possible consolidation. In addition, the PD Audit assessed the quality of professional development offerings as a foundation for recommendations for improvement.
- TEA is updating the Instructional Leadership Development (ILD) training and curriculum. ILD is required for a campus administrator to be certified as a teacher appraiser. The update to the training and resources will align with the new teacher appraisal system (T-TESS) and will reflect the latest research-based practices in teacher appraisal and support.
- The Teacher and Learning Conditions Survey, titled Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (TELL) survey, was created to gather input from teachers, principals, counselors, and superintendents regarding teaching and learning conditions in Texas schools. The TELL survey addressed such topics as safety, professional development, decision-making, time on non-instructional tasks, collaborative instructional planning, as well as facility, technology, and other supports needed for educators to be successful in the classroom.

Hiring and Strategic Compensation

- The Educator Innovator Program was created for districts to develop a plan to improve educator quality and effectiveness through new recruitment, preparation, hiring, induction, evaluation, professional development, strategic compensation and career pathways, and retention practices. The TEA awarded 17 districts and charter schools grant funds of approximately \$28 million for two years.
- The Educator Salary Report was required capturing how classroom teacher salaries compare to salaries of professionals with similar entry requirements. The analysis is based on salary data for classroom teachers collected by TEA, salary data for other professionals collected by the Texas Workforce Commission, and cost-of-living comparisons using the Comparable Wage Index.

Retention

- The Math and Science Scholars Loan Repayment Program was created for teachers who agree to teach mathematics or science in Title I districts for four years. The THECB will provide loan repayment assistance starting the 2016-2017 school year.

Moving Forward: 2015 and Beyond

Since the publication of the Commission report, leaders both at the legislature and the state agencies have continued their dedication to effective teaching policy in Texas. The many incremental changes outlined above have provided a foundation for continued improvements to the teaching continuum. Overall, the Texas Teaching Commission report generated the most significant policy dialogue on effective teaching policies in a single legislative session in a decade. Moving into the 84th Legislative Session, there are still Commission recommendations to consider. Some of the priorities include:

Preparation: Ensure that teacher preparation programs, including both colleges of education and alternative certification programs: 1. can be evaluated in terms of the performance of graduates and 2. provide relevant clinical experiences that increase student-teacher knowledge of content, classroom management, differentiated instruction, and state expectations for teachers. Review accountability metrics for educator preparation programs and ensure that they reflect the needs of teachers, students, and schools.

Induction: Implement recommendations from the Texas Teacher Mentorship Advisory Committee which was convened by Texas Education Agency to evaluate current mentorship and induction requirements.

Professional Development: Direct state and federal professional development funds toward incentivizing individually-tailored professional development that is linked to the teacher evaluation system and aligned with educator standards.

Evaluation: Develop a teacher evaluation system that provides timely and actionable feedback for strengthening instructional practice. The system should include a robust and updated observation tool; multiple measures of student growth and achievement; customized professional development; and significant mentorship opportunities for new and struggling teachers. The system should ensure that teachers are observed at least annually. Teachers should receive support and feedback that: 1. leverages technology and 2. provides iterative opportunities for feedback (from principals, assistant principals, curriculum specialists and other master teachers). The multiple measures of student growth and achievement should consider the use of student assessment data, student learning objectives (team and individual), student portfolios, and other measures.

Strategic Compensation: Create a compensation allotment in the Foundation School Program (FSP) that districts will access to drive funding directly to teacher salaries and incentivize districts to develop strategic compensation models.

Support and/or funding should be maintained for the following programs: Texas Teacher Residency Program, the Teaching and Learning Survey, and the Math and Science Scholars Loan Repayment Program.

The Commission further recommends a focus on the full teaching continuum and a holistic approach to effective teaching policies. With the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)/No Child Left Behind (NCLB) waiver negotiations still undetermined, the state will have to develop its evaluation system with flexibility in mind. Our state must continue to prioritize effective teaching while considering the following factors: the cost of public education to students and parents; the needs of teachers, administrators, superintendents and school boards; and best practices within Texas and across the nation.

Changes to effective teaching policies in Texas can ensure that we accomplish the following: recruit the best and brightest individuals to the teaching field; provide relevant feedback to improve instruction; ensure that funding for professional development is appropriate, aligned, and robust. The goal of these efforts is to improve both teacher instruction and student outcomes.

For more resources visit:

- **Texas Teaching Commission Materials:** <http://www.edtx.org/human-capital-strategies/effective-teaching>
- **Educate Texas Research and Reports:** <http://www.edtx.org/main/research-and-reports>
- **Texas Education Agency Educator Information:** http://tea.texas.gov/Texas_Educators