

Date: March 10, 2022

Time: 8:30am – 3:00pm

Session: Challenges and Opportunities (Statewide Data and Trends from Prework)

Deputy Commissioner Kelvey Oeser shared a recap of the key takeaways from Commissioner Morath's statewide data trends discussion. In particular, she noted the trends in attrition and new teacher production, the filling of openings by teacher interns, the relatively higher rates of attrition for early career teachers, and the importance of quality preparation. Dr. Mark Olofson, Director of Educator Data, Research, and Strategy, shared summaries of the Task Force member prework survey on local teacher vacancies and hardest to fill subject areas. He noted that respondents identified relatively more unfilled teacher positions at the beginning and middle of the current school year, and that those positions tended to be in identified teacher shortage areas. Task Force members asked how additional education stakeholders and particularly teachers would be included in these conversations. Ms. Oeser clarified that additional teachers, educator preparation program providers (EPPs), and other education stakeholders would be part of panel discussions in future Task Force meetings, and that additional ways to include teacher perspectives and perspectives from other education stakeholders were welcome and being considered.

ISD such as multiple strategic recruitment efforts including district-specific marketing messages and branding, incentives for early notice of resignation to support early hiring processes, and international recruitment through J1 and H1B visas.

Session: Certification Flexibilities and Hiring Processes Panel Discussion

Ms. Oeser welcomed everyone back from lunch and highlighted the importance of continued flexibility in certification assignments and hiring processes. Ms. Oeser introduced Marilyn Cook, Director of Educator Certification, to provide opening comments and anchor the session's conversation. Ms. Cook asked Dr. Olofson to explain the introductory data slides that addressed the production of teachers and confirmed the ongoing need for a well-prepared education pipeline of talent for our classrooms. Dr. Olofson noted the trends in teacher production and the difference between newly certified teachers and the total numbers of newly hired teachers. Lastly, Dr. Olofson spoke briefly about the use of emergency credentials and flexibilities through districts of innovation.

Ms. Cook stated the session goals and introduced the two panelists, Ms. Amy Campbell, Director, TASB HR Services, and Ms. Karen Salerno, Partner, TNTP. Ms. Cook introduced four discussion prompts throughout the session that allowed panelists to share information, engaged the taskforce members in conversation, and obtained helpful feedback to inform future sessions.

Discussion Prompt #1 – Staffing Changes

Ms. Campbell started with recognition of ongoing work being done and introduced options that address short-term solutions on the pathway to long-term sustainability. She referenced the commissioner's earlier comments in the day around master schedules and shared that most teachers are looking for additional time and relief around the work being put in. She highlighted that staffing is often discussed as a puzzle, and every

scenes as relates to internal processes (e.g., streamline application processes - eliminate redundant signoffs, reduce paperwork)?

Ms. Salerno stressed revisiting vacancies and considering opportunities to maximize positions to meet district needs. Districts that prioritize hiring in the winter have the strongest candidates. Finding opportunities to apply for multiple positions; use data to study trends and identify top talent. Cultivate candidates for roles and spend quality time on recruitment and retention plans. Some districts have changed board policy to grant final hiring approval to the superintendent. Important to acknowledge the key role of boards and their varying approaches across the state.

Ms. Campbell shared that money is always a concern and encouraged TEA and districts to continue looking for ways to offer state and district-based support in paying for certification related activities (where possible and allowed) because supporting teachers candidates through the certification process can go a long way.

Ms. Salerno discussed early hiring strategies and thinking about how you continue to cultivate candidate interest and engagement in the role after contract has been signed and prior to start of duty.

Ms. Campbell spoke of TASB's longstanding work with districts regarding teacher pay structures and abilities to get ahead by sharing pay scale.

Discussion Prompt #3 – Recruitment Strategies

Ms. Campbell shared her excitement about this topic and her recent presentations at TASBO conferences. Most districts have in their policy that salaried staff are paid across 12 months, and she suggested changes to frequency of pay if possible – 24 payments instead of 12. Other strategies include a referral bonus or an alumni bonus for coming back home to contribute to your community. She wondered about an in-between route to facilitate and support the education pathway and also how we could help certification of candidates who have hit their 5-time test limit and encourage individuals in that situation to explore other certification areas.

Ms. Salerno recommended taking time to take stock of your current state. What do recruitment efforts look like now and recommended talking with stakeholders to determine what was successful with your recruitment strategies. She suggested continuing to broaden the employee value proposition in districts to utilize meaningful, compelling, easy to access marketing opportunities.

Several Task Force members shared their successful recruitment strategies including targeted marketing messaging specific to their district, utilizing surveys to obtain key feedback that allows the district to adjust for ongoing success, and sharing district specific innovations, like a 4-day week instructional calendar. One Task Force member spoke of their district-run EPP and shared that they are seeing a stronger product from their local program versus other online offerings, while acknowledging it is an expensive option that requires district support, but a great investment in development and retention of talent.

LEA instructional needs. Ms. McLoughlin provided an overview of TEA's Principal Residency Grant, which funds paid principal residencies that leverage LEA/EPP partnerships to develop a strong bench of future instructional leaders for the LEA.

Ms. McLoughlin introduced Allison Friedlander, Director of Teacher Pathways. Ms. Friedlander outlined TEA's Grow Your Own initiative, which provides grant funding for districts to support paraprofessionals in earning their teacher certification and/or expand high school Education and Training courses. Ms. Friedlander outlined TEA's Mentor Program Allotment, which supports districts in implementing high-quality mentoring programs to support beginning teachers. Ms. Friedlander outlined TEA's Teacher Leadership grant opportunities that support districts in building teacher leadership models in one of three pathways: Distributed Leadership, National Board Candidacy Cohorts, or District Practices Fellowship. Associate Commissioner Garcia then outlined the Texas Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA), which recognize effective teachers on three different levels: Recognized, Exemplary and Master. These teacher designations generate additional teacher-focused allotment funding for districts.

Ms. Garcia divided the group into smaller breakout groups to discuss the essential questions introduced at the beginning of the session. After the breakout sessions, each group shared their key takeaways. The first group shared the challenges districts faced with the timing of TCLAS grant opportunities and some districts not being aware of these opportunities. The second group shared challenges with teacher perception of TIA and the challenge that the timing of grant awards doesn't align with the hiring cycle. Additionally, the group discussed the challenges created by student to teacher ratios and the negative perception from the community when class size waivers are requested by the district. The third group shared challenges with TIA and not always having their board aligned on the details of their TIA plan and shared thoughts on the rigor of National Board Certification and belief that a teacher who earned that status should qualify for "exemplary" teacher status under TIA. The fourth group shared the challenge that they face with being able to participate in grant opportunities when they are short staffed and have many administrators wearing multiple hats. The group also shared that it would be helpful for TEA to simplify grant processes and requirements and provide more resources and guidance to allow districts to be more responsive to grant opportunities. The final group shared the challenge of having staff bandwidth to participate in grant opportunities provided by the state or federal government. The group also shared that larger districts need additional flexibilities with state requirements in order to overcome challenges staffing their schools.

Ms. Garcia concluded the meeting with logistics and next steps for the Task Force and gratitude for the rich discussion and engagement of Task Force members throughout the meeting.