

**State Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators
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**Submitted by
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Section 1. Introduction

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) submits to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) the following *2015 Texas State Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators* (2015 Equity Plan) in response to Section 1111 (b)(8)(C) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). As required, the 2015 Equity Plan sets forth specific “steps that the state education agency will take to ensure that poor and minority children are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers and the measures that the state education agency will use to evaluate and publicly report the progress.”

Texas faces several challenges with the development and implementation of a state plan to ensure equitable access to excellent educators. The first challenge is the size and diversity of the state. The Texas public school system consists of 1,227 school districts and charters with 8,571 campuses employing over 334,500 teachers and serving 5.15 million students. A diverse student population includes the following demographic features:

- 60.2 % Economically Disadvantaged
- 17.5 % Limited English Proficient
- 51.8 % Hispanic
- 12.7 % African American
- 8.5 % Special Education

Unlike many other states, Texas faces an additional challenge involving the availability of state-level data that identify excellent educators. The most accurate means of identifying an excellent educator is through a well-designed teacher evaluation system using classroom observations and multiple measures. While Texas currently is in the process of developing and piloting such an evaluation system, the resulting data will not be available to the state but rather will be retained at the local level.

Recognizing these challenges, Texas embarked upon the development of the 2015 Equity Plan by first identifying the following guiding principles that would be critical to the design of an effective plan:

- Seek input and guidance from those individuals and organizations in a position to make the 2015 Equity Plan succeed by relying on a robust stakeholder process.
- Ensure that districts and campuses at the local level, with access to the most precise data regarding effective educators and with the authority to enact local policies directed at increasing equity, are empowered.
- Leverage, not layer, initiatives selected to be implemented by taking advantage of existing resources, programs, and successes to build upon promising work already underway.
- Invest in actions with the greatest potential to narrow the equity gap by evaluating each proposed strategy in terms of both its feasibility and its likely impact.

To develop the 2015 Equity Plan, an Equity Planning Team (Planning Team) was established to include key policy and data experts from both TEA and the Texas Comprehensive Center (TXCC) at SEDL, an affiliate of American Institutes for Research (Appendix 1). In developing the 2015 Equity Plan, the Planning Team took advantage of data, tools, and guidance provided by

ED and the Equitable Access Support Network (EASN). To supplement these resources, the Planning Team accessed relevant educator data collected statewide by TEA and sought meaningful input from a wide-ranging and diverse group of Texas organizations, educators, and individuals with a commitment to and stake in the well-being and improvement of public education in Texas.

The planning process for development of the 2015 Equity Plan included the following steps:

- Conduct a policy scan of relevant statewide statutes, policies, and programs.
- Implement a strategy for soliciting stakeholders' input and engage them in the development of the 2015 Equity Plan.
- Analyze data secured from national and TEA data systems to identify equity gaps.
- Perform root-cause analyses with stakeholders to identify potential reasons for the equity gaps.
- Develop and prioritize strategies, with stakeholder assistance, targeting root causes for the equity gaps.
- Identify measures and methods for assessing and reporting progress toward implementation of the 2015 Equity Plan.

As a preliminary step in the planning process, TXCC performed a scan of current state policies and programs relevant to issues of equitable access to excellent educators. The purpose of the policy scan was to ensure that all individuals participating in the development of the 2015 Equity Plan had a clear understanding of the foundation on which the equity plan was to be built. The scan reviewed existing state statutes, policies, and practices for improving educator recruitment, evaluation, retention, development, support, and strategic compensation, including the status of Texas' efforts to develop, pilot, and implement a new Educator Evaluation and Support System. A summary of the policy scan is included as Appendix 2.

Section 2. Stakeholder Engagement

Recognizing that the success of the 2015 Equity Plan will depend in large part on the involvement of and input from organizations and educators firmly committed to improving public education in Texas, TEA and TXCC developed a robust stakeholder engagement process. Seeking to capitalize on the different strengths and perspectives of diverse stakeholders, the Planning Team created a stakeholder process that solicited input from both state-level policy organizations as well as local educators.

The Planning Team assembled a Policy Stakeholder Group (Appendix 3) comprised of state-level organizations representing the policy interests and concerns of the following groups:

- Teachers
- Campus and district administrators
- School board members
- Parents
- School personnel administrators
- Small and rural community schools
- Counselors
- Civil rights advocacy groups

The Planning Team then created a second stakeholders group, comprised of individuals who deal with students and their learning on a daily basis. This Practitioners Stakeholder Group (Appendix 4) was selected with a view to ensuring diversity of geographic area, district type (urban, rural, and small city), campus (elementary and secondary), ethnicity, and gender. Participating districts were also selected to ensure strong representation of educators and administrators serving students who are identified by their district as economically disadvantaged, minority, English language learners (ELL), and those receiving special education services. Of the seven districts represented on the Practitioners Stakeholder Group, the percentage of their student populations who:

- Are economically disadvantaged ranges from 60% to 70%,
- Are minority ranges from 56% to 100%,
- Are ELL ranges from 2% to 27%, and
- Receive special education services ranges from 7% to 13%.

The Practitioners Stakeholder Group consists of individuals working at the local level representing the following categories:

- Teachers
- Principals
- District administrators
- School board members
- Parents
- Human resource coordinators
- Counselors
- Educator preparation program (standard) directors
- Education preparation program (alternative certification) directors
- Regional education service center staff

To take advantage of the expertise, experience, and talent of these stakeholders, the Planning Team scheduled a series of stakeholder meetings, including an initial meeting with each stakeholder group followed by a “virtual town hall” meeting. Prior to the initial meeting of the Policy Stakeholder Group, a questionnaire (Appendix 5) was sent to all invited stakeholders requesting their thoughts and opinions on a variety of questions related to equitable educator access. This questionnaire provided policy stakeholders with an opportunity to communicate in writing their perspective on teacher equity challenges currently facing Texas and served as a mechanism to capture input from those stakeholders unable to attend. The Planning Team used the results of these questionnaires (Appendix 6) to frame the discussions.

The initial stakeholder meetings were designed to create an interactive opportunity for stakeholders to review data and serve as advisors on interpreting the data. Due to different levels of familiarity with data among the members of the stakeholder groups, the Planning Team ensured that one of its members with expertise in data analysis was on hand to walk stakeholders through the data discussion. Using the data collected and analyzed to identify equity gaps, stakeholders then participated in a root-cause analysis to identify reasons for gaps and strategies likely to impact the root causes. This process is described in greater detail in Section 4.

The virtual town hall meeting, held in late April, provided stakeholders an opportunity to review the draft of their work and make final suggestions. A survey designed to ensure a focused examination of the plan’s key features was distributed prior to the virtual town hall.

As the final stage for development of the 2015 Equity Plan, stakeholder feedback from both the virtual town hall and the stakeholder survey as well as suggested improvements offered by reviewers from the Equitable Access Support Network (EASN) in a thorough pre-submission process were carefully examined. Final revisions to the 2015 Equity Plan reflect this feedback.

Texas will continue to involve stakeholders in the implementation and monitoring phases of the 2015 Equity Plan. A key mechanism for this ongoing stakeholder engagement process is the Texas Equity Plan Website (website), designed and hosted by TXCC. The website will be used to update all interested stakeholders, local education agencies, policy-makers, and the general public on developments and progress made in implementing the 2015 Equity Plan. This website will serve as a central location for information and resources as well as a collaborative space for ongoing discussions about improving the state’s initiatives toward ensuring equitable access in Texas. The website has the potential to serve as an ongoing platform for soliciting stakeholder input through questionnaires, surveys, and posted responses to inquiries as well as a means by which updates can be broadly dispersed through electronic mailing lists and postings.

Outreach efforts to involve other organizations and individuals beyond the original stakeholders include plans to engage, inform, and solicit input regarding the 2015 Equity Plan from the following organizations:

- Texas Title I Committee of Practitioners
- State Board of Educator Certification
- Educator Preparation Advisory Committee
- Education Service Center Executive Directors and Core Group

