Texas Teaching Commission

Background and Purpose

National and state research has confirmed what many of us know intuitively, that the single most important variable in student achievement and quality education is the quality of the individual teacher in a classroom. Texas has an abundance of district and state initiatives, legislative and administrative policies and grant programs, and local traditional and non-traditional K-12 and higher education efforts focused on recruitment, training, development, and retention of elementary and secondary teachers. However, most of these programs, policies, and initiatives operate in isolation with little alignment or cohesion between state policies and investments with local district implementation, investments, and quality control. The challenge is magnified by the pending retirement of a generation of baby boomer teachers in the next decade, and a shortage of teachers in high need areas such as math, science, and bilingual education.

Over the past year the Texas High School Project/Communities Foundation of Texas (THSP) has seen a desire for better information, strategies and ideas on how to align various state policies and local programs to better train, support, evaluate, and compensate our state's teachers. The 82nd legislative session saw the introduction of several bills related to improving teacher preparation, evaluation, and compensation systems. Unfortunately, many policy proposals are viewed in isolation from promising practices, research, or district initiatives. Similarly, many districts are embarking on ambitious reform paths without an understanding of state policy opportunities and barriers, with neither state policymakers nor local districts having a forum to consider the broader effects on the entire spectrum of teacher pipeline in Texas.

THSP occupies a unique public/private arena that allows us to convene stakeholders from education, policy, business and philanthropy to take a holistic look at the teacher continuum in Texas. Our goal is to support a thoughtful, generative dialogue over 12 months on how to improve and align various programs and practices already in place.

Texas Teaching Commission Timeline and Continuum Components

Over the course of 12 months the Commission will address key policy gaps within the following areas outlined below and develop a coherent set of recommendations to build a seamless pipeline of policies for educators.

- Preparation
- Recruitment
- Hiring
- Induction
- Evaluating & Developing
- Strategic Compensation
- Retention

An organizational meeting will take place on December 5, 2011 with a full kick-off meeting in January 2012. The Commission will meet monthly throughout 2012 with occasional subcommittee meetings to address specific topics.

Texas Teaching Commission Activities
- Develop literature review of research on relevant topics and case studies of national best practices
- Review existing Texas policies and national examples to identify key areas for reform
- Coordination with Texas Education Agency on the redesign process for the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS)
- Monthly meeting of commission members to review specific focus areas, recommendations, and research
- Produce final report for policymakers

Texas Teaching Commission Outcomes
- Policy: A set of recommendations for the 83rd Texas Legislative session
- State Agency: Analysis and recommendations for administrative code
- School District: Tool kit of promising practices for Texas superintendents and school boards

Commission Members

Mike Moses (chair), former Commissioner of Education

Teacher Representatives
Holly Eaton, Texas Classroom Teachers Association
Ginger Franks, Association of Texas Professional Educators
James Harris, Texas State Teachers Association
Daniel Leija, former Texas Teacher of the Year
Louis Malfaro, Texas-American Federation of Teachers

Business Representatives
Michael Boone, Haynes and Boone, LLP
John Montford, General Motors
Lori Vetters, Wells Fargo

Human Resources Director
Ann Best, Houston Independent School District

College of Education Representative
Jeanne Gerlach, University of Texas-Arlington

Superintendent and School Board Representative
Steven Flores, Harlingen Independent School District
Julian Trevino, former San Antonio Independent School District Board President

Education Stakeholders
Elisa Beard, Teach for America
Jerel Booker, Stand for Children-Texas
Jim Nelson, AVID/former Commissioner of Education
Rod Paige, former Secretary of Education

Ex-Officio Members
Representative Rob Eissler, chair Texas House Public Education Committee
Senator Florence Shapiro, chair Texas Senate Education Committee
Commissioner Raymund Paredes, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
Commissioner Robert Scott, Texas Education Agency
John Fitzpatrick, Texas High School Project

Commission Staff

Mark Baxter, Texas High School Project
Julie Harris-Lawrence, Texas High School Project
Heather Gage, Education First