

+++++ **INTRODUCTION** +++++

“[Teacher leadership roles] have kept me in education. If you want teachers to lead without leaving, there has to be opportunity for growth.”— Texas teacher leader

Education promises to be a key issue in Texas' 86th Legislative Session, and with good reason. Texas is ranked 40th in K-12 student achievement compared to other states.¹ Because teachers are the most important in-school factor in student learning, focusing on ensuring an outstanding teaching force should be issue number one. Highly-effective teachers can impact thousands of students during their professional career, and if we provide them with leadership roles, they can impact significantly more. Texas can create a system that gives all teachers the knowledge, opportunities, and incentives to become leaders in our classrooms and beyond.

We are 30 Texas Teach Plus Policy Fellows and current classroom teachers who represent 30 schools in 19 school districts across Texas. Eighty-three percent of the schools we teach in are Title I campuses. We are demonstrably-effective teachers from across the state who advocate for our students by sharing our input with policymakers.

+++++ **THE CHALLENGE** +++++

Schools across Texas face the challenge of teacher attrition. Many schools impacted are those with the most critical need for stability and experience. Oftentimes, it is the strongest teachers who leave the classroom to advance their career, taking leadership roles at other campuses or districts. Our goal is to keep as many highly-effective teachers in the classroom as possible, while leveraging their strengths and experience to help their campus and district—and, ultimately, student achievement.

Teacher turnover is on the rise. According to the Education Resource Center at the University of Texas at Austin, teacher turnover rate in Texas is 17 percent, up four percent from 2012. Moreover, “on average, schools lose 35 percent of their teachers over two years, more than half (59 percent) of their teachers over five years, and 72 percent of their teachers over eight years.”² As experienced educators, we understand how the revolving door of teachers affects our students.

According to a study examining annual teacher turnover rate in Texas from 2004-2014, turnover is highest, at 31 percent, at schools with an “unacceptable rating” and schools with high-poverty and high-minority populations were second with 23 percent. Schools that have the highest need for improvement also have constant instability due to teacher turnover.³ This causes difficulty in building significant relationships. In schools that have low teacher turnover and the lowest chronic instability rates, teachers are able to build trusting relationships and establish professional learning communities.

We believe that when teachers are compensated fairly to take on leadership opportunities, teachers will more likely continue to teach at their campus because they are invested in their school community. Teacher leadership and stable staffing help to build a culture of learning among teachers—and help student learning improve.

In addition to teacher attrition, student success can also suffer because of lack of teacher collaboration. Without teacher leadership, teachers work in silos—and the outstanding practices in one classroom never make it to the classroom next door. Teachers often learn best from other teachers, so when outstanding teachers take on roles that allow them to lead their peers in instructional improvement, student achievement can improve across classrooms.

+++++++ **RECOMMENDATIONS** ++++++

- 1 Recommendation 1:** Incentivize districts to provide avenues for teacher leadership roles.
- 2 Recommendation 2:** Support statewide opportunities for differentiated compensation for teachers in leadership roles.

RECOMMENDATION 1: INCENTIVIZE DISTRICTS TO PROVIDE AVENUES FOR TEACHER LEADERSHIP ROLES.

Teacher leadership roles provide an opportunity to increase teacher retention while simultaneously offering an avenue for professional and lasting growth for Texas educators. We believe that all students have the right to high-quality teachers. We believe that to ensure student success, teachers should be provided with educational supports and leadership opportunities.

Opportunities for teacher leadership, both on teachers' home campus and within their district and state will invariably lead to better education systems within Texas schools. In our experience, when teachers are offered an opportunity to shape their school and district, they will be less likely to leave the profession.

(See Figure 3 for examples of the types of leadership roles that can retain teachers and influence student learning.)

Dallas ISD, Austin ISD, and Houston ISD can offer some examples of this in practice. Dallas ISD has implemented the Accelerating Campus Excellence (ACE) initiative, which pays outstanding teachers and principals more to teach in the highest-need schools, and provides additional supports to ensure that every child can succeed. The ACE model has demonstrated that all children can attain academic growth with access to highly-effective teachers and experienced administrators.

Positive effects from ACE in Dallas ISD:

- + Six of the seven original campuses earned their way off of TEA's Improvement Required (IR) list after having been on the list for multiple years.⁴
- + Over the past two academic years, there have been up to 40 percentage-point gains in the number of students meeting standards on these campuses on certain assessments.
- + These previous IR schools earned nine TEA distinctions for academic performance the first year, and 13 in the second year.
- + Students in kindergarten through 2nd grade showed 30 percentage point gains in proficiency from the kindergarteners the year before them in reading proficiency.⁵

We have seen similar programs work with Austin's Professional Pathways for Teachers (PPfT)⁶ and Houston ISD's Career Pathways which incentivized teachers for working at high-poverty schools that have the highest need for effective teachers and principals.⁷ These programs prioritized the needs of their

communities and campus populations, while giving teachers the opportunity to seek out new roles and continue to grow and learn as masters of their craft. A culture of learning and leadership amongst the administration and faculty of a school results in students who become lifelong learners and leaders.

RECOMMENDATION 2: SUPPORT STATEWIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIFFERENTIATED COMPENSATION FOR TEACHERS IN LEADERSHIP ROLES.

Because of its impact on teacher quality and retention, supporting teacher leadership is a crucial component of long-term student success. By providing teachers with opportunities to advance their career while earning additional compensation, teachers will be motivated to stay in the classroom long-term as well as create opportunities for highest-need populations to receive an education from our most effective educators.

Many schools provide teachers with leadership roles, but they are missing an

important part of the picture—compensation for those elevated roles. The Teach Plus Texas Fellows conducted an online survey asking Texas teachers about their experiences with teacher leadership.⁸ While 84 percent of teachers reported spending one or more hours engaging in leadership roles per week (and 44 percent reported spending three or more hours) (Figure 1), almost two thirds of teachers who have leadership roles reported receiving no compensation for these roles (Figure 2). That is not sustainable.

FIGURE 1⁹

How many hours a week do you spend on work related to teacher leadership?
(242 responses)

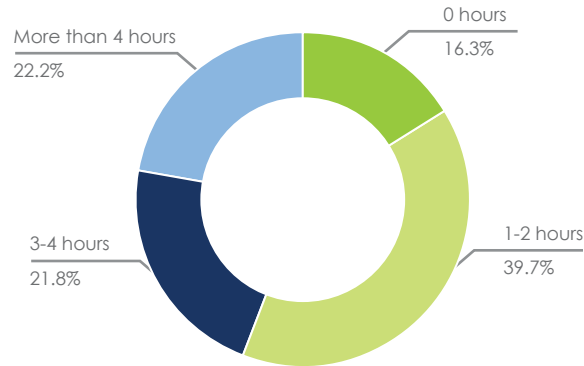


FIGURE 2¹⁰

How much are you currently compensated for the teacher leadership roles you hold?
(Responses from the 200 respondents who report having teacher leadership responsibilities.)

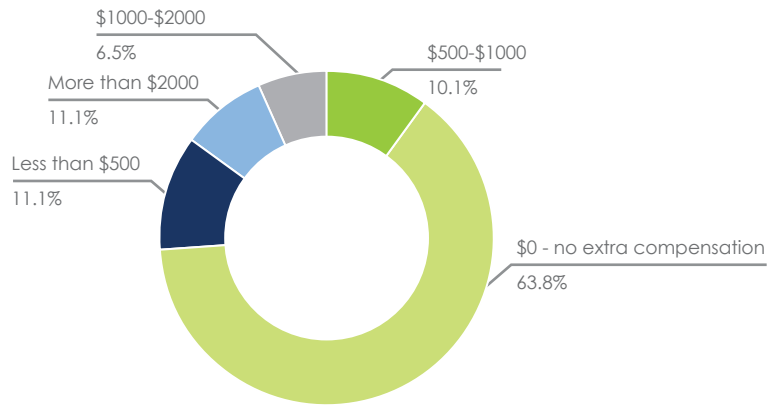


FIGURE 3

Leadership Roles that Impact Student Success.

MENTOR: Outstanding teachers should serve as mentors for early-career teachers, providing hands-on coaching. (See Teach Plus Policy Fellows' report, "[Smart Start: Mentoring for New Teachers Benefits Kids.](#)")

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY LEADER: Highly effective teachers can serve as the facilitators of professional learning communities made up of teachers in the same content area or grade level.

GRADE LEVEL CHAIR: A teacher can serve as the grade-level leader, working with the grade-level team to set goals, align curriculum, and even evaluate fellow teachers.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP TEAM MEMBER: Excellent teachers can serve on the instructional leadership team for their school, working with the administration to set and meet academic goals.

INSTRUCTIONAL COACH: Serving in hybrid roles, teacher leaders can teach part-time and coach fellow teachers in their content area part-time.

ADVISORY CABINET MEMBER: Decisions are better when they are made with teacher input, so state agencies, districts, and schools can create teacher advisory cabinets to advise them on key policy decisions.

+++++ CONCLUSION +++++

As in any professional career, teachers want the opportunity for advancement and a pathway that encourages professional growth. Teacher leadership roles afford teachers the opportunity to achieve higher rates of pay, have personal job satisfaction, stay in the profession for many years, and continue to serve students in classrooms across Texas. We believe that the education profession should be elevated in this way so that new teachers will be inspired to enter and current teachers will want to remain a part of one of the most important and respected fields.

+++++ ENDNOTES +++++

¹ Map: State Grades on K-12 Education (Quality Counts 2018). (2018, October 10). Retrieved December 06, 2018, from <https://www.edweek.org/ew/collections/quality-counts-2018-state-grades/report-card-map-rankings.html>

² Holme, J. J., Jabbar, H., Germain, E., & Dinning, J. (2017). Rethinking Teacher Turnover in Texas: Longitudinal Measures of Instability in Schools. Retrieved November 15, 2018, from <https://texaserc.utexas.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/31-Brief-Teacher-Turnover.pdf>

³ Holme, J. J., Jabbar, H., Germain, E., & Dinning, J. (2017). Rethinking Teacher Turnover in Texas: Longitudinal Measures of Instability in Schools. Retrieved November 15, 2018, from <https://texaserc.utexas.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/31-Brief-Teacher-Turnover.pdf>

⁴ Smith, C. (2016, August 15). Dallas ISD's turnaround program shows early promise, as six of seven campuses move off state's failing list. Retrieved December 06, 2018, from <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/2016/08/15/dallas-isds-turnaround-program-shows-early-promise-six-seven-campuses-move-states-failing-list>

⁵ Healey, J. (2018, May 07). 'Unprecedented' academic growth in DFW thanks to this growing initiative. Retrieved December 06, 2018, from <https://dallasftworth.teach.org/articles/unprecedented-academic-growth-dfw-thanks-growing-initiative>

⁶ Professional Pathways for Teachers. (2016). Retrieved December 06, 2018, from <https://www.austinisd.org/tad/ppft>

⁷ HISD Career Pathways Teacher Leader Program. (2017). Retrieved December 06, 2018, from <http://houstonisdpsd.org/pd/teachercareerdevelopment/career-pathways>

⁸ Teach Plus Texas Policy Fellows conducted an online survey from October 16, 2018 to November 15, 2018, and received 242 responses from teachers across the state.

⁹ Question: "How many hours a week do you spend on work related to teacher leadership positions?" Response: (n=242), "0 hours (16 percent), 1-2 hours (40 percent), 2-3 hours (22 percent), "More than 4 hours" (22 percent).

¹⁰ Question: "How much are you compensated for the teacher leadership roles you currently hold?" Response: (n=200), "No extra compensation" (64 percent), "Less than \$500" (11 percent), "\$500-\$1,000" (10 percent), "\$1,000-\$2,000 (7 percent), "More than \$2,000 (9 percent). Adds up to more than 100 percent because of rounding.

Teach Plus Texas Policy Fellows

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2018-19

Adrain Hudson
Aletha Williams*
Andrea Lucas*
Austin Hawk*
Brooke Ferguson*
Chris Green*
Coral Zayas
D' Juan Hych
Elizabeth Rodriguez*
Jen Rabat*
JoLisa Hoover

Kim Denning-Knapp
Kisaundra Harris*
Laura Herrera*
Maria Rives*
Maria Rocha
Mariesther Flores*
Mark Rogers
Martin Gonzalez
Megan Whalon*
Milton Perez*
Samantha Schleder

Sarah Carrola
Sarah Perez
Shontoria Walker
Tara Bordeaux
Taylor Serrata*
Travon Jefferson
Treveon Murdock
Veronica Rivera*
* Denotes lead author.



Teach Plus is a national non-profit organization whose mission is to empower excellent, experienced teachers to take leadership over key policy and practice issues that affect their students' success. Teach Plus Texas recruits, selects, and trains demonstrably-effective teachers from across the Lone Star State to share their expertise with policy makers in order to affect positive change for their students.

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