



Teach Plus Teacher Leaders' Testimony to the House Public Education and Higher Education Committees on Interim Charges Related to the Educator Pipeline

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Marissa Castañón-Hernández

Theater Arts Teacher
Wayside Sci-Tech Middle School
Austin

Key Point: Addressing school climate by investing in high-quality DEI training and equity focused mentoring programs while establishing accountability systems linked to DEI would help attract and retain high-quality Teachers Of Color.

"I left my former school because the stress and fatigue associated with constantly trying to cope with and address inequities was overwhelming. I have re-discovered my passion for teaching because I am supported by a new principal who demonstrates a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion."

Recommendations:

- + Establish a system that creates opportunities for frequent and consistent DEI training throughout the school year, to underscore the urgency to establish equitable practices as a means of retaining teachers of color.
 - + Revamp statewide mentor program guidelines to include mentorship programs that are led by mentors of color that hold leadership positions.
 - Increase the mentor stipend.
 - Include cooperating teachers in mentor stipends.
 - Include experienced teachers new to the state, district, or campus in mentoring programs.
 - + Require surveys for staff, students, and parents on diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB).
 - Publicly post responses, look for patterns, and problem-solve.
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Yvette Peña

English and Social Studies Electives Teacher
The International School of the Americas
San Antonio

Key Point: Investment in high-quality educator preparation programs and teacher mentorship will drastically reduce teacher attrition rates.

“My first year of teaching ended when the pandemic began. In my second year, I taught students in a hybrid format, and in my third year, I navigated the new circumstances. I have never had a traditional teaching year. I was able to succeed, not because I was born a great teacher, but because I had proper training, mentorship, and support in the classroom. Rather than spending my first few years learning the ropes of teaching, I was able to use that time to adapt and respond to the needs of my students. When we invest in high-quality training for our teachers, we are investing in the students they teach, the schools they lead in, and the communities they are a part of”

Recommendations:

- + Invest in educator preparation programs, and form partnerships with universities in the community.
 - Use state funds to incentivize participation and make these programs affordable and accessible to promote recruitment of a diverse range of candidates.
 - + Support mentorship programs for new teachers.
 - Ensure mentors receive training on effective observation and feedback methods, along with compensation for their participation
 - + Include teachers in policy discussions
 - Asking for teacher feedback on implementation will help ensure that policy implementation is practical and feasible for educators.
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Patrick Powers

8th Grade English Teacher
DFW

Key Point: Guarantee a better education for All students through the recruitment and retention of a highly effective and diverse teacher workforce.

“Now, the fact of the matter is, there are a myriad of “Rayshun Jones” stories out there and great African American male teachers using their knowledge, skills, talents, and influence to best understand and meet the needs of their students. However, for every 1 “Rayshun Jones” there are 10 students who have fallen through the cracks of our flawed educational system. Imagine the success stories that we don’t hear because unfortunately, they don’t exist as a result of students not being afforded an equitable opportunity to learn, grow, and contribute to our nation’s future through the work of effective teachers.”

Recommendations:

- + Guarantee opportunities for greater access for educators to establish teacher learning communities both regional and statewide through the formation of affinity groups to acquire the best content and teaching strategies for their students.
 - These groups also serve as a social outlet for Educators to enable mental health check-ins, wellness, and accountability.
 - + Create a hub for tested lesson plans that include assessments, relevant data, and video instruction to enhance upon the given curriculum with an assortment of resources for teachers to have at their disposal.
 - This tool allows teachers to focus more on the execution process of the lesson plan instead of putting all their efforts into creating the lesson plan.
 - + Establish a database made up of general Education and Content Instruction Videos to enhance upon the skills and best teaching practices of Educators.
 - These videos would act as an online “Masterclass” series for teachers but with a hub of instructional content delivered from credible Educators.
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Dr. Salena Smith

Teach Plus Alum

DFW

Key Point: Addressing the teacher shortage should not involve lowering the criteria.

“In 2022, the overall workload for teachers increased by 81%. 80% of teachers are spending more time addressing students’ mental health without proper training or tools to do so in their teacher toolbox. 55% of teachers have less planning time due to staff shortages and other factors, placing the burden for instructional preparation to take place longer after the last bell rings. This is why 42% of teachers leave the workforce within 5 Years, and educational service sector resignations have surged 148%.”

Recommendations:

- + Ensure House Bill 18 is being implemented with fidelity
- + Ensure educators have access to quality instructional materials and differentiated professional development that includes trauma informed and resilience focused training.
- + Fund mental health days so that teachers can accurately address the second-hand trauma many teachers feel after supporting, hearing and consoling students from their own personal traumas that often fill a teacher’s day.



Tania Tasneem

8th grade Science Teacher

Teach Plus

Austin

Key Point: Support Current Teachers and Focus on Teacher Retention

"I am here. I stayed because being an educator is soulfully who I am---I get to connect, reflect and improve each year. I am here. I stayed because I'm halfway to retirement and while the pension feels like detention, it's good. I am here. I stayed not because I am a martyr for the children who are our future, but because I am a master at my job and see the value in it even when policies that I am supposed to enforce don't."

Recommendations:

As you work to improve the state's teacher workforce, I ask you to focus on retention. If we invest in supporting current teachers and making this noble profession enticing, recruitment and preparation will follow.

- + Ensure compensation and benefit models support teachers across experience and expertise levels.
- + Sustain and expand practices like the Teacher Incentive Allotment and strategic staffing models that promote high quality residency, mentorship, and differentiated roles for veteran teachers.