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Focus: Teaching Quality

Teacher Preparation for Diverse Classrooms	3
Tool for Diversifying the Teacher Workforce	5
Educator Coaching Model Strengthens Schools	6

# State Policy Recommendations for Addressing Teacher Shortages

by Ana Ramón

Teacher shortages are both costly and detrimental to student learning. The Economic Policy Institute estimates that annual turnover costs \$7.3 billion to \$8 billion per year in the United States (2019). While the traditional university undergraduate preparation track is still the main source of educators, teachers increasingly use alternative certification programs. In Texas, these programs provided 103,536 teaching certificates in 2017-18, compared to 85,204 certificates in 2013-14. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) reports that individuals from alternative certification programs have higher employment rates than those prepared through other routes (Ramsay, 2019). Unfortunately, these programs do not always prepare teachers for serving in diverse classrooms.

To address teacher shortages in bilingual education and other programs, IDRA created an accelerated teacher certification model through multiple projects serving Texas funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Transition to Teaching initiative. Over a 15-year period, the program operated in 55 school districts across Texas and recruited and prepared over 800 recent graduates and mid-career professionals to teach in high-need areas. (IDRA, 2018)

IDRA partnered with colleges and universities to provide professional development, in-classroom training, and mentoring to diverse groups of program participants. IDRA's program resulted in a dramatic increase in highly-qualified and motivated teachers who, through collaboration, were prepared to teach in diverse classrooms. The lessons from this experience provide an important framework for systemic change in teacher preparation (see article on Page 3).

Teacher shortages demand state-level policy solutions based on proven strategies to recruit, prepare and support teachers in shortage areas. In the coming months, the Texas Senate Education Committee will study teacher shortages and policy recommendations that could potentially become legislation next session.

IDRA recommends the following state-level policies to recruit, prepare and retain highly-qualified educators.

1. The Texas Legislature should direct the TEA Commissioner to identify research-and evidence-based professional development that focuses on teaching asset-based, culturally-relevant curriculum in diverse classrooms and to increase access for teachers. These resources should be made available to school districts and regional education service centers. IDRA's successful model provided both in-person and online professional development to ensure teachers understood and supported diverse classrooms of students.

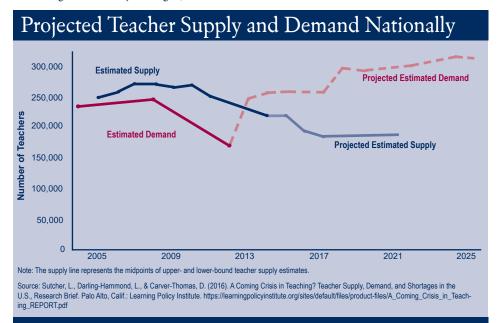
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Teacher shortages demand state-level policy solutions based on proven strategies to recruit, prepare and support teachers in shortage areas.

January 2020 idra newsletter 1

(State Policy Recommendations for Addressing Teacher Shortages, continued from Page 1)

- 2. The Texas Legislature should establish a consortium of colleges, school districts, nonprofit organizations and community-based organizations to identify research-based best practices to address teacher shortages. This research should include examination of effective teacher recruitment and preparation in collaboration with key stakeholders to generate comprehensive policies in addressing teacher shortages. IDRA's program demonstrated that such integrated partnerships with colleges and school districts are vital to identifying the best ways to provide direct services and set policies that assist teacher candidates throughout the accelerated certification process.
- 3. The Texas Legislature should direct the TEA Commissioner to identify school districts with the highest teacher shortages and should allocate funding for those districts to collaborate with universities in research- and evidence-based accelerated teacher preparation programs. These collaborations should be focused on the teacher preparation program and not require schools to enter into partnerships related to the administration of a campus or the school district. Such collaborations between IDRA, colleges and school districts were critical to the success of the IDRA program. Colleges served as collaborators in instruction and coaching for program participants. To increase teacher retention, partner school districts provided placements for new teachers along with in-service training and on-site coaching (IDRA, 2018).
- 4. The Texas Legislature should expand mentor teacher program criteria currently in the law to promote relationships between experienced teachers designated as "mentor teachers" and students in accelerated certification programs. Mentor teachers should



participate in recruiting and supporting teachers for shortage areas, including participants in accelerated certification programs.

- **5.** The Texas Legislature should increase funding for financial assistance programs to encourage teacher certification and address shortages in critical subjects. For example, "Grow Your Own" educator programs provide tuition exemptions and financial support to students, paraprofessionals and current teachers who want to become educators or obtain additional teaching certifications (see box on Diversifying the Field Online Assistance Package on Page 5). This could help incentivize individuals, rooted in communities with high shortages areas, to teach
- **6.** The Texas legislature should provide incentives for internet service providers to expand high-speed, reliable, affordable

internet access to rural communities in order to support robust online training opportunities and online communities of practice for teachers in training.

7. The Office of the Attorney General should end Texas' litigation seeking to invalidate Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). Texas has more than 2,000 teachers with DACA. Those teachers are more likely to teach in shortage areas (Balingit, 2017).

Through these key recommendations, Texas can help address the high costs associated with the teacher shortage and the harm it brings to students' ability to thrive in the classroom.

### Resources

Balingit, M. (October 25, 2017). "As DACA winds down, 20,000 educations are in limbo," Washington Post. García, E., & Weiss, E. (2019). The Teacher Shortage is (cont. on Page 4)

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## Teacher Preparation for Diverse Classrooms

by Chloe Latham Sikes, M.A.

Across the country, concerns about a growing shortage of quality teachers are at the forefront of education conversations. Enrollment in teacher preparation programs fell some 35% over the past seven years, representing a potential decrease of nearly one quarter of a million teachers in the workforce at the same time the student population continues to grow (Sutcher, et al., 2016; IDRA, 2018). In the 2017-18 school year alone, the teacher shortage topped over 110,000 teachers (Gallego, 2019).

In Texas, six areas of expertise consistently linger at the top of the teacher shortage list. These areas include bilingual education and English as a second language; computer science and technology applications; math; science; special education; and career and technical education (IDRA, 2018). Despite some recent legislative advances in addressing teacher compensation in Texas (Craven, 2019), teacher shortages in these urgent subject areas continue.

Not just anyone should enter the classroom though. To be a high-quality teacher, individuals need training to be prepared to teach and to do so in racially, linguistically and socioeconomically diverse classrooms. Schools that serve majority low-income students and students of color often experience the greatest teacher turnover, as teachers experience burnout from working in under-resourced schools with minimum support or preparation or are lured to higher-paying, less-demanding jobs in other districts (LPI, 2016). The teacher "churn," as it has been called (Attebury, et al., 2017), leaves many students without the quality teachers that they deserve.

IDRA led the charge to address teacher shortages in Texas for over 15 years through its series of federally-funded Transition to Teaching programs. We partnered with universities and high-need school districts across Texas to train high-quality teachers to educate diverse classrooms of students, particularly in the critical subjects of English learner education, STEM and special education.

Between 2001 and 2018, IDRA operated six programs through this accelerated teacher certification model. Altogether, these programs recruited, prepared and certified over 800 teacher candidates in the required subjects who went on to positively impact English learners, children who receive special education services, lowincome students and students of color across Texas.

IDRA's Transition to Teaching model uniquely combined university-level coursework, class-room experience and dynamic coaching with a focus on serving schools deemed high-need. IDRA released a report in 2018 offering three key recommendations for teacher preparation and certification programs to address the teacher shortage issue: (1) value and practice diversity; (2) include all key stakeholders; and (3) expand intervention models (IDRA, 2018).

## Value and Practice Diversity

University-level schools of education must place a high value on teacher education designed for a diverse student population and support the work of teacher candidates across areas of discipline. Universities should express commitment to diversity both in formal coursework and in practice by having teacher candidates experience diverse classrooms, use culturally-sustaining practices, and complete diversity training as part of their preparation.

To increase diversity among teacher candidates themselves, universities and other educational institutions can practice and share successful approaches for recruiting and retaining bilingual and more diverse teachers, especially in high-growth states. For example, IDRA added more mentors to the bilingual/ESL classrooms in participating schools to assure that teachers

(cont. on Page 4)

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## Top Teacher Shortage Areas in Texas

- Bilingual Education / English as a Second Language
- Computer Science / Technology Applications
- Mathematics
- Science
- Special Education
- Career and Technical Education

(Teacher Preparation for Diverse Classrooms, continued from Page 3)

of record received the quality time needed to become successful teachers.

The IDRA EAC-South developed a free on-demand web-based technical assistance package to help educators increase the diversity of their teaching staff (see box on Page 5).

### **Include All Key Stakeholders**

Universities and school districts can come together, particularly through nonprofit partner programs like IDRA's program, to expand the body of research and knowledge to improve effective teacher preparation programs.

Schools of education themselves also need innovative and meaningful partnerships with schools and their communities to support teacher recruitment, preparation and placement. Most communities have untapped human resources that can contribute to fill many of the current needs in the schools.

## **Expand Intervention Models**

Rather than rely on a test-based assessment system, teacher preparation programs should use holistic educator assessment and support programs. These programs should rely primarily on the demonstration of knowledge and performance in the classroom. For instance, in IDRA's Transition to Teaching programs, the assessment and support strategies included principal recommendations and successful completion of a one-year internship. These strategies contributed to better teacher preparation and retention.

New teachers in training need consistent, long-term support through asset-based coaching and mentoring (see article on Page 6). Teacher training should not stop with certification. As in the IDRA model, in-classroom teachers can engage in co-teaching, group planning and similar collaborative strategies to continuously engage teachers in their own learning of theory and practice

Through collaborative, persistent and cultur-

ally-sustaining models, such as the IDRA Transition to Teaching program, we can address the teacher shortage issue that affects many Texas students. High-quality, certified teachers have the potential to expand students' educational opportunities for the rest of their lives. More qualified teachers for a more multicultural nation benefits all students now and will for years to come.

### Resources

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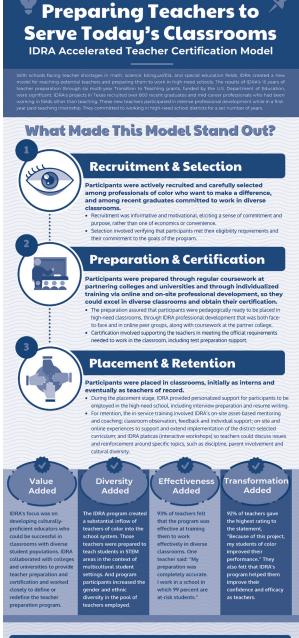
(State Policy Recommendations, continued from Page 2)

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### **IDRA** Recommendations

Value & Practice Diversity

All teacher education programs should include formal coursework in cultural diversity and have students experience diverse classrooms as part of their preparation.

2 Include All Stakeholders
Schools of education need to create innovative ar

Schools of education need to create innovative and meaningful partnerships between schools, communities and universities to support teacher recruitment, preparation and placement.

Expand Intervention Models

Schools of education are more effective when they provide consistent and long-term support for individuals as they enter teacher education programs to complete all requirements for certification and work in the classroom.

More recommendations and findings are available in the report, "IDRA Transition to Teaching Program 15-Year Synthesis, 2001 – 2017"

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l idra newsletter January 2020

## IDRA EAC-South Focus

## Diversifying the Teacher Workforce

The national teacher significantly shortage district's impacts ability to increase diver-



sity among its instructional staff. An increasing body of literature promotes the benefits of a racially-diverse teacher workforce. Concurrently, schools struggle with cultivating a robust pool of highly qualified educators. This is especially problematic for many districts across the South that are still under legal obligation to do so.

In most cases, the U.S. Department of Justice or Office for Civil Rights files a complaint against the districts. When a court finds a district to be noncompliant because of discriminatory faculty assignment, the district often enters into a voluntary agreement with the court or is under a consent decree. The court outlines a detailed plan for the district to increase recruitment, hiring and retention of teachers of color. If the district meets its required actions within the time set by the court, the court may grant the district unitary status.

The IDRA EAC-South is currently providing technical assistance services in five states to seven school districts that are under federal desegregation orders related to faculty recruitment and assignment.

Districts also can self-identify the need to diversify their staff. More than 20 school districts are presently under voluntary agreement with the courts to address inequitable hiring and retention of diverse and highly-qualified teachers of color. For example, one district partner in Virginia reported that its Black student enrollment was 26% while the staff comprised only 5% to 6% Black teachers. The Commonwealth's director of the equity and inclusion office seeks to increase representation of Black



teaching profession also can positively impact student educational experiences and outcomes. This IDRA EAC-South Diversifying the Field Online Assistance Package is designed to provide educators and policymakers tools for building a diverse workforce.

> This free online package includes four chapters, each with a video and supporting resources, infographics, articles & podcasts.



State

**Strategies** 

### Introduction to Diversifying the Field

Get an overview of the gap between teacher diversity and student diversity. Get highlights of multiple effective strategies.

10:15 min.

teacher diversity. And get specific research-based state-level implementation

### **District Strategies**

**Explore** challenges school districts face and strategies to counter those challenges and create a diverse teaching force.

Chapter 4

## **Analyzing the** Data and **Implications** for Policy and Practice

Review state-level data in the U.S. success.

Student<sup>®</sup> Teacher Demographic

**Diversity Gap** 

**Dynamic Map** 

Schools across the country struggle to hire a workforce racial diversity of their communities. See how your U.S.
South state is doing.

## 13:00 min. https://idra.news/webDiverseField

The IDRA FAC-South is the equity assistance center that provides free or low-cost technical assistance to schools in the U.S. South With roots in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the four federally-funded equity assistance centers help school districts build capacity to confront educational problems occasioned by race, national origin, sex and gender, and religion

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## idraeacsouth.org/resources/diversifying-the-field

educators and provide students with a more culturally-sustaining learning environment. The services we provide include research-based solutions and recommendations for districts.

In addition, the IDRA EAC-South published a web-based technical assistance package on

diversifying the teaching field that contains videos, literature reviews and other resources on recruiting and retaining teachers of color. The on-demand package is available free online. For information on IDRA EAC-South services, visit www.idraeacsouth.org or email eacsouth@idra.org.

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## Educator Coaching Model Strengthens Schools Serving Diverse Student Populations

by Nilka Avilés, Ed.D

By definition, coaches "transport people from one place to another." It means supporting people as they move to a higher level of competence, confidence, performance or insight in building self-efficacy, content knowledge and expertise. In schools, coaches help teachers reflect on their own practices to improve student achievement as well as further teacher growth.

Through IDRA's multi-year School TurnAround and Reenergizing for Success (STAARS) Leaders project, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, our coaches positively impacted a cluster of schools in San Antonio facing state education agency accreditation consequences.

IDRA brought its decades of experience, expertise and collaboration to 41 campuses through the project's comprehensive professional development program. Using 2018-19 state accountability results criteria, these 41 campuses likely would have received an F rating without this project. In 2019, the Texas Education Agency assigned a B grade to the district, an increase from a C the previous year. The number of individual schools receiving an F grade dropped from 41 to 16 within a four-year span of time.

In addition, IDRA provided specialized, intensive, differentiated professional development to five low-performing schools with dramatic results. One of the schools not only met the state standard two years ago, it gained a designated distinction in *Academic Achievement in Science* twice. The state recognized the campus for *Postsecondary Readiness* as well.

An elementary school met the state standard in 2018 and gained designated distinction in Academic Achievement in Mathematics, Academic Achievement in Science, and Top 25 Percent: Comparative Academic Growth. Another elementary met the state standard in 2018 and gained designated distinction in the Top 25 Percent: Comparative Academic Growth. In 2019, a high school also received a distinction recognition.

The schools serve a sizeable English learner population whose performance on the state assessment test showed substantive improvement in all subjects at the end of IDRA's project period. The high school improved by 14 percentage points. A middle school improved by 5 percentage points. And two elementary schools improved by 26 percentage points each.

When we asked principals to comment on the impact of the project's activities on success in turning around campuses, they named three major project activities:

- IDRA's coaching and mentoring, which enabled "principals to have a sounding board, share ideas, express concerns and allow for the mentor to provide a different lens on addressing issues and challenges on campus;"
- IDRA's professional development, which focused on "inferential skill development," led
  to significant improvement on the state assessment and contributed to project schools' success (Avilés, 2018b); and
- The project's campus leadership certification program, which added more than 24 certified principals who were specifically trained to work in urban schools with a diverse student body.

IDRA's unique model for school improvement demonstrated that coaching and supporting campus leadership leads to cohesive, meaningful change for struggling schools.

The transformation begins on Day I. In the initial meeting, we work with the principal and leadership team to outline how our coaching process will integrate with campus activities and identify students' academic needs and leaders' individual needs for professional growth.

Coaches then visit the school to become acquainted with the school faculty, get a sense of the school climate, and observe various operations of the school. Coaches and school leaders (cont. on Page 7)



Learn more about IDRA coaching and mentoring services https://idra.news/Coaching

**IDRA** 

idra newsletter January 2020

(Educator Coaching Model Strengthens Schools Serving Diverse Student Populations, continued from Page 6)

review the school's data and conduct classroom observations together. The observations have a specific focus on the identified teacher needs, such as student engagement, teacher content knowledge and classroom management.

Our coaches then sit down with the principal to debrief and compare notes. We then develop a plan of action to address the feedback and coaching that needs to follow. The plan includes professional development needed by individuals or groups of teachers.

Most of the professional development activities focus on areas of concern for reframing instruction and its delivery to a diverse population as identified though IDRA's analysis of student and teacher performance. A unique component IDRA offers is classroom demonstrations with the teachers' own students while teachers observe how their students interact with the lesson and show evidence of mastery of concepts. Debriefing sessions follow where coaches and teachers discuss what they learned and how to improve teaching and learning practices.

Coaches are non-judgmental throughout the coaching process in order to build the required trust and to support leaders' capacity-building to guide and manage systemic changes. Kosfin & Haeger (2006) state that an outside school coach, properly prepared and sensitive to individual and

## Podcasts about IDRA's Coaching Model

Coaching and Mentoring New Teachers – Episode 24

Growth Mindsets to Increase Achievement – Episode 180

Capacity Building Among School Leadership – Episode 177

A Principal on Leadership for a Turnaround School – Parts 1 & 2 – Episodes 168 & 169

The Teacher as a Culturally Proficient Coach – Episode 58

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whole-school concerns, can provide a balance of pressure and support to sustain meaningful school improvement.

When certain practices do not work or when addressing specific challenges, we engage in conversations to perform a root cause analysis of the issues at hand. It is paramount that teachers have space to take risks in sharing innovative ideas to increase achievement. Coaches, leaders and teachers ensure that the school vision becomes a reality by targeting priorities in the curriculum to increase students' mastery of skills and by making decisions to impact students' progress.

A leadership coach's essential goal is to ensure that the school organization works in harmony and that students reap the benefits from their school experiences. Effective school improvement coaches use two lenses: the asset-based lens and the social justice and equity lens. They examine the data to point to equity gaps, resource gaps and opportunity gaps, and they monitor the power dynamics present at the school.

Such coaching activities also help hold educators accountable for the actions they commit to do while establishing new strategies. As a catalyst for change, coaches are readily available to collaborate and provide resources to engage others to take action.

Following are some of the outcomes of coaching and mentoring that, if put in place with fidelity, will positively improve students' academic achievement:

- A new or renewed culture of valuing beliefs and attitudes;
- Enhanced people skills;
- Improved organizational efficiency and effectiveness;
- New internal and external networks;
- Habits for addressing internal and external conflicts;
- A system for planning, implementing and assessing school innovations and interventions; and
- An internal accountability system that guarantees transparency and respect for individual differences

Since every school is unique, skilled coaches can lead educators to reflect on their own school and instruction and to strengthen their individual leadership competencies.



Learn more about IDRA services on instructional strategies for building inferencing skills https://idra.news/Inferencing

IDRA's school improvement coaches are available to work with district and campus leadership teams to help them polish their own skillsets and take practical steps to raise student academic achievement through reflective practices. IDRA's coaching and mentoring is aligned to the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, grounded in current research and the real-life experiences of educational leaders to meet the needs of schools and students.

### Resources

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