

# HOW DOES TEXAS SUPPORT STUDENTS' SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT (SEAD)?

SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT (SEAD) IS A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO SUPPORTING STUDENTS' DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING THAT IS INTEGRAL TO ENSURING POSITIVE OUTCOMES IN SCHOOL AND BEYOND. Schools must ensure students experience healthy development and rigorous learning. Unfortunately, students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, and other underserved students often do not have positive learning experiences. There are six key policy issues that state leaders can implement to create equitable and safe learning environments that promote positive SEAD for all students. School and district leaders should:

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| <p><b>1</b> Develop inclusive school discipline and dress code policies</p>                                     | <p><b>4</b> Engage students, families, and communities as full partners</p>   |
| <p><b>2</b> Provide meaningful professional development and supports for all adults in schools</p>              | <p><b>5</b> Provide access to integrated wraparound services and supports</p> |
| <p><b>3</b> Ensure equitable access and support for success in rigorous and culturally sustaining curricula</p> | <p><b>6</b> Diversify the educator workforce</p>                              |

While many of these policy areas are led at the local level, state leaders can support local leaders with three key levers:

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| <p><b>1.</b></p> | <p>Prioritize policies that impact SEAD in state goals. In doing so, state leaders can set the expectation for local leaders to implement SEAD with an equity lens</p> |
| <p><b>2.</b></p> | <p>Provide evidence-based, equity-focused guidance and sufficient funding to ensure local leaders have the necessary resources to meet these goals</p>                 |
| <p><b>3.</b></p> | <p>Make data publicly available so advocates and local and state leaders can make informed decisions about what works and how to improve</p>                           |

## Notes on implementation

State actions set the stage for districts and schools to implement strong practices that holistically support students' social, emotional, and academic development. However, there is a wide range of implementation at the local level. Some states may have strong policies that are not yet being implemented with fidelity at the district level, and some districts may choose to implement strong policies and practices despite a lack of policy or guidance from the state level. If your school district is not fully implementing the policies discussed below, you can ask district leaders what they are doing to meet or surpass the expectations set forth by the state.

District leaders looking to implement better practices can utilize the tools available from the Alliance for Resource Equity (ARE), a partnership between Ed Trust and Education Resource Strategies, which categorizes the student experience into [10 "dimensions of equity."](#) ARE's toolkit includes a diagnostic tool that is organized around "key questions" and how to identify problem areas. It also includes practical guidebooks that offer actions to address these problems. Under each section below, relevant key questions from the ARE diagnostic tool and guidebooks are highlighted for district leaders and advocates who want to improve policies and practices at the local level.



## HOW DOES TEXAS SUPPORT SEAD THROUGH SCHOOL DISCIPLINE?

TOO OFTEN, HARMFUL SCHOOL DISCIPLINE PRACTICES AND DRESS CODES HAVE BEEN USED TO DAMAGE STUDENTS' SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT. As such, students of color and students with disabilities are disproportionately excluded from school and miss opportunities to learn and develop holistically. States can influence [district and school disciplinary actions](#) by setting clear goals to reduce disparities and overuses in discipline, ensuring a strong set of data is publicly transparent, and adopting more positive approaches to discipline, such as restorative justice, which empowers students to build, maintain, and repair relationships and resolve conflicts.

### Bright spots

Texas stands out as doing positive work in school discipline by...

- Setting policies and providing resources that...
  - [Limit out-of-school suspensions](#) for students below third grade to offenses involving weapons or drugs
  - Provide guidance and flexible state funding for implementing positive discipline, including [restorative practices](#)
  - [Provide free opportunities for professional development](#) to support educators in implementing positive discipline
- Collecting and publicly reporting district-level data on categories of offenses and types of punishments that are disaggregated by race

### How to improve

Texas still has much to improve, however, and should prioritize...

- Setting clear and equity-centered goals that aim to decrease the use of exclusionary discipline and reduce disparities in discipline
- Setting policies and provide resources that...

- Ensure the state education agency has staff to support districts with technical assistance and implementation for positive discipline practices
- Ensure students do not experience physical harm in schools, including by banning corporal punishment, or at minimum having a statewide opt-in policy for corporal punishment, and having sufficient parameters around the use of restraint and seclusion
- Prohibit harmful discipline practices, such as the use of exclusionary discipline for subjective, minor, and non-violent offenses, discriminatory hair and grooming codes, and the use of zero-tolerance policies.
- Provide guidance for co-developing clear, student-centered codes of conduct that align with a restorative justice approach
- Collecting and publicly reporting data that...
  - Shows the lengths of punishments, and identifies the number of students suspended or expelled more than once
  - Shows disciplinary and other actions law enforcement take against students
  - Is disaggregated beyond race and students with disabilities to also show information for gender and English Learner students and can be cross-tabulated to show the intersections of identities in discipline data

### **Key question for district leaders**

Does each student experience a safe school with transparent, culturally sensitive, and consistently enforced rules and discipline policies?



## HOW DOES TEXAS SUPPORT SEAD THROUGH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

TO EQUITABLY SUPPORT STUDENTS' SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATORS MUST HAVE THE SKILLS TO CREATE CULTURALLY AFFIRMING ENVIRONMENTS, BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR STUDENTS, AND SUPPORT STUDENTS' ACADEMIC SUCCESS. They must also have mindsets geared toward removing systemic barriers and supporting students' identity development. [Professional development](#) (PD) ensures that educators learn these mindsets and skills. States should encourage and support districts to provide [high-quality](#) and relevant [professional learning opportunities](#), especially in asset-based pedagogies (e.g., culturally responsive practices); creating a culture of belonging and inclusiveness; asset-based mindsets in which adults believe all students can thrive; adult competency in self-awareness and relationship building, and creating learning environments that support the holistic development of students.

### **Bright spots**

Texas stands out as doing positive work in professional development by...

- Setting policies and providing resources that...
  - Identify a [network of intermediary organizations](#) that provide high-quality professional development that develop skills and mindsets for equitable practices

- Provide guidance for districts to create evidence-based professional development structures, such as [mentoring and induction programs](#)
- [Require teacher preparation programs](#) to provide training in skills that equitably integrate and support students' social, emotional, and academic development

### *How to improve*

Texas still has much to improve, however, and should prioritize...

- Setting clear and equity-centered goals that clearly articulate a vision for professional development with an aim of addressing adult mindsets and competencies in relationship building, self-awareness and social awareness, and providing the skills necessary to support students' well-being
- Setting policies and provide resources that...
  - Require preparation programs to provide training that ensures educators understand how to support students from diverse backgrounds, and creates an inclusive environment where all students have a sense of belonging
  - Require educators to demonstrate mastery of a combination of skills and knowledge needed to support students' SEAD for licensure renewal or recertification
  - Ensure the state education agency has staff to support district leaders with identifying and funding high-quality professional development
  - Provide free opportunities or funding for professional development to districts to develop skills and mindsets for equitable practices
- Collecting and publicly reporting data that shows educators' perceptions of professional development offerings at the district level

### *Key questions for district leaders*

[Does each student have access to strong teachers?](#)

[Does each student have positive relationships with staff and other students?](#)

[Is each student enrolled in a school and attending classes that are racially/ethnically and socioeconomically diverse?](#)



## HOW DOES TEXAS SUPPORT SEAD THROUGH EDUCATOR DIVERSITY?

ACCESS TO A RACIALLY AND CULTURALLY DIVERSE TEACHER WORKFORCE IS BENEFICIAL FOR ALL P-12 STUDENTS, PARTICULARLY FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR, WHO OFTEN THRIVE IN CLASSROOMS LED BY TEACHERS WHO [SHARE THEIR RACIAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND](#). Educators of color are more likely to have [higher expectations for their students of color](#). Students of color and White students also [feel cared for and academically challenged by teachers of color](#). Additionally, research shows that Black students who have at least one Black teacher are [less likely to drop out of school and more likely to enroll in college](#), and [teacher-student racial matches affects social, emotional, and academic skills](#). By working to diversify the educator workforce and retain diverse educators, schools will foster a sense of belonging and challenge students to thrive.

## Bright spots

Texas stands out as doing positive work in educator diversity by...

- [Setting policies and providing resources](#) that...
  - [Adopt rigorous program approval standards](#) to compel teacher preparation programs to recruit and graduate candidates of color
  - [Aim to close pass rates by race and ethnicity](#) during the state's teacher and principal certification redesign process, including its multi-year pilot of [edTPA](#) for licensure
  - Provide funding and guidance for districts and preparation programs to support [Grow Your Own programming](#) and [Vetted Teacher Residency Programs](#) to increase the quality and diversity of the workforce
  - Invest in the [Principal Residency Grant](#) to provide districts with an opportunity to build strong campus leaders and support internal leadership pipelines through residencies
- Collecting and publicly reporting data that...
  - [Shares school-level data](#) on the racial demographics of the educator workforce
  - [Shares the racial makeup of candidates completing](#) in-state teacher preparation programs annually

## How to improve

Texas still has much to improve, however, and should prioritize...

- Setting clear, measurable, equity-centered goals that are developed with local stakeholder input
- Setting policies and provide resources that...
  - Invest in scholarships or loan forgiveness programs that target students of color and preparation programs that prepare a high number of teachers of color, including minority-serving institutions
  - Invest in educator preparation programs to increase enrollment and improve the preparation of teachers of color, such as with residency stipends, registered apprenticeships, targeted financial aid, and articulated Grow Your Own pathways
  - Invest in efforts to retain teachers of color that improve working conditions to provide opportunities for personal and professional growth, such as with induction and mentoring programs for early-career teachers of color, and opportunities for teachers of color to grow and develop in their abilities and qualification for leadership roles while in the classroom
- Collecting and publicly reporting data that...
  - Shares the racial makeup of candidates attending in-state teacher preparation programs
  - Shares school-level information about the retention rates of educators of color

## Key questions for district leaders

[Does each student have access to strong teachers?](#)

[Does the teacher workforce reflect student diversity?](#)



## HOW DOES TEXAS SUPPORT SEAD THROUGH RIGOROUS AND CULTURALLY SUSTAINING CURRICULA?

IN ORDER TO THRIVE, STUDENTS MUST BE CHALLENGED AND ENCOURAGED TO MEET HIGH EXPECTATIONS. This means students should have access to [rigorous, deeper learning](#) and [culturally sustaining](#) curricula. When students can both see themselves in the work and feel their teachers challenging them to excel, what follows is a stauncher belief in themselves to reach their goals.

### **Bright spots**

Texas stands out as doing positive work in rigorous and culturally sustaining curricula by...

- Setting clear and equity-centered goals that...
  - Identify the need to [equitably enroll students](#) in advanced coursework, including dual credit
- Setting policies and providing resources that...
  - [Provide guidance for schools and districts](#) to select standards-aligned curricula
  - Provide [funding opportunities](#) to encourage districts to expand advanced coursework enrollment
- Collecting and publicly reporting data on advanced coursework that is disaggregated by student demographics and type of advanced coursework

### **How to improve**

Texas still has much to improve, however, and should prioritize...

- Setting clear and equity-centered goals that...
  - Identify the need for curricula to be both rigorous and culturally sustaining
  - Identify specific actions that must be taken to equitably enroll and ensure student success in advanced coursework
- Setting policies and provide resources that...
  - Ensure the state education agency has staff available to support districts with the implementation of rigorous and culturally sustaining curricula
  - Provide guidance and funding for schools and districts to adopt rigorous curricula for core subjects that integrates culturally sustaining learning that leverages contexts by immersing them in local heritages, cultures, and experiences
  - Provide guidance on how to select rigorous and culturally sustaining curricula that is aligned to learning standards, and provide a review process for determining whether curricula meet these criteria
  - Require automatic enrollment in advanced coursework opportunities

### **Key questions for district leaders**

[Does each student have access to teaching practices that are engaging, culturally relevant, and standards-aligned?](#)

[Does each student have access to high-quality and culturally relevant curriculum and instructional materials?](#)

[Is each student enrolled in courses that set them up for success in college and a meaningful career, including equal access to advanced courses?](#)



## HOW DOES TEXAS SUPPORT SEAD THROUGH STUDENT, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

[STRONG PARTNERSHIPS](#) BETWEEN EDUCATORS, STUDENTS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES ARE ESSENTIAL FOR SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT. When educators engage the communities they serve, they gain a deeper understanding of their students, including their strengths, identities, and needs. This fortifies relationships with students and [increases students' academic success](#). It is also important that school leaders ensure that the voices of students of color and their families, and those from low-income and other marginalized backgrounds, are [centered in policy and practice decisions](#).

### *Bright spots*

Texas stands out as doing positive work in student, family, and community engagement by...

- Setting policies and providing resources that...
  - Include a [student, family, and community engagement network](#) that supports schools and districts with engagement
  - Include student, family, and community engagement in [teacher evaluation rubrics](#)
  - Provide [basic guidance](#) to schools and districts to engage students, families and communities that links engagement to student learning
  - Ensure family and community voice is included in state-level decisions for migrant children by having a [Texas Migrant State Parent Advisory Council](#)

### *How to improve*

Texas still has much to improve, however, and should prioritize...

- Setting clear and equity-centered goals that provide a clear plan that details how districts can use evidence-based practices for engagement
- Setting policies and provide resources that...
  - Offer ongoing professional development to districts or schools in student, family, and community engagement
  - Include guidance for engagement at all levels of P-12 that accounts for the unique needs of frequently marginalized student and family populations and specifies evidence-based engagement strategies to accelerate learning
  - Elevate student voice in state-level decision-making, such as by having a student representative on the State Board of Education or a student advisory council
  - Elevate parent and community voice in state-level decision-making, such as by having a parent advisory council for general state-level decisions
  - Require training in student, family, and community engagement for teacher certification and leader certification
- Collecting and publicly reporting data that shows disaggregated information about student, family, and community engagement, such as student and family survey and satisfaction data

### Key questions for district leaders

[Does each student attend a school that actively and meaningfully engages families?](#)

[Does each student who needs targeted social-emotional support receive it?](#)

[Does each student who needs targeted physical and mental health supports receive it?](#)

[Does each student who needs targeted family support receive it?](#)



## HOW DOES TEXAS SUPPORT SEAD THROUGH WRAPAROUND SERVICES?

MULTI-TIERED OR INTEGRATED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT (MTSS) — ALSO KNOWN AS WRAPAROUND SERVICES — PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH ACCESS TO RESOURCES TO OVERCOME ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC BARRIERS TO SUCCESS. [MTSS are frameworks](#) that districts and schools can use to [connect services](#) to students. When schools identify and provide targeted supports to each student, when the health and well-being of students are met, and when efforts are made to ensure students feel they belong, students can better engage in schools.

### Bright spots

Texas stands out as doing positive work in wraparound services by...

- Setting policies and providing resources that...
  - Includes a [Children's Commission](#) to coordinate interagency services for children and youth
  - Provides [guidance for districts and schools](#) to develop and fund evidence-based multi-tiered systems of support
  - Provide health and housing support, including [oral health supports](#) to students and information for supporting [students experiencing homelessness](#)

### How to improve

Texas still has much to improve, however, and should prioritize...

- Setting clear and equity-centered goals that prioritize developing and adopting multi-tiered or integrated systems for student support
- Setting policies and provide resources that...
  - Explicitly ensure the Texas Policy Council for Children and Families has a clear initiative for supporting the most marginalized groups in the state
  - Issue guidance for districts and schools to develop and fund evidence-based multi-tiered systems of support, and require districts to monitor their effectiveness
  - Provide guidance for supporting students experiencing homelessness
  - Ensure inclusive learning and extracurricular environments, including comprehensive anti-bullying policies that underscore groups of students more likely to be bullied and harassed, and policies supporting transgender K-12 student participation in athletics and facility use based on gender identity
  - Mandate and fund school counseling for all students in K-12 at the American School Counselor Association's recommended student-to-school-counselor ratio of 250:1



- Require districts to conduct student-level and system-level strengths and needs assessments, and requires districts to measure and report the fidelity of implementation of multi-tiered systems of support

### ***Key questions for district leaders***

[Does each student who needs targeted social-emotional support receive it?](#)

[Does each student who needs targeted physical and mental health supports receive it?](#)

[Does each student who needs targeted family support receive it?](#)