Texas Teacher Workforce

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Initial Research Framework

— Working Draft —

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LONESTARP3

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TEACHER WORKFORCE

The Texas Teacher Workforce

Texas is navigating a period of transformation in building and sustaining a strong educator pipeline. The state's teacher workforce is affected by declining interest in teaching, uneven preparation quality, and persistent shortages in high-need subject areas and rural areas. At the same time, new legislation signals growing attention to recruitment, preparation, and retention. Together, these efforts reflect both the urgency and complexity of addressing workforce needs statewide.

The Purpose of this Document

The purpose of this document is to present an initial research framework focused on the Texas Teacher Workforce. The framework reflects areas of convergence that emerged from a recent LONESTARP3 strategy team session and is intended to serve as a starting point for discussions to generate a consensus research agenda.

By sharing this draft, LONESTARP3 aims to support collective sensemaking to move toward a shared agenda that reflects a set of shared priorities among its members and key actors across the state.

Toward a Shared Research Agenda

LONESTARP3 will facilitate iterative feedback and revision cycles with researchers, practitioners, and policy advocates across the state to refine this initial research framework. Feedback will be used to clarify, revise and prioritize themes and potential research questions. The goal is to generate a shared research agenda that reflects common priorities, practical relevance, timeline insights, and mutual ownership across the LONESTARP3 network.

THEME ONE: Educator Preparation Pathways, Certifications, and Completion

Why this is important

Preparation pathways and certification are central pressure points in the teacher workforce, with barriers not only in entry into preparation programs, but in where and why candidates stall, exit, or delay completion and certification—particularly in high-need subjects and contexts. Investigations can illuminate specific leverage points for improving program completion, certification, and alignment with district workforce needs.

Key idea clusters

- Points of attrition and stagnation across preparation and certification pathways
- Certification barriers (e.g., testing requirements, timelines, unpaid clinical teaching)
- Variation in pathway uptake and outcomes by geography, subject area, and district context
- Design features of pathways that support completion (e.g., paid clinical experiences, flexible pacing, targeted exam supports)
- Alignment between pathway design and district hiring needs, particularly in high-need subjects and regions

Potential areas for investigation

1.1 Pathway progression and completion

1.1a At what points in preparation pathways (traditional, alternative, residency, GYO, online) do candidates most frequently stall, exit, or delay progress, and why?

1.1b How do enrollment, program completion, time-to-completion, and certification outcomes differ across preparation pathways, subject areas, and geographic contexts?

1.1c How do candidates navigate movement across pathways (e.g., switching programs, stacking credentials, re-entering after stopping out), and what does this mean for completion?

1.2 Certification requirements and candidate experience

1.2a Which certification requirements (e.g., testing, timelines, clinical teaching expectations) function as the most significant barriers to program completion during periods of shortage, and for whom?

1.2b How do financial demands on candidates (tuition, unpaid clinical teaching, testing costs, lost wages) affect program completion and time to certification?

1.2c How do preparation pathway design features (e.g., paid clinical experiences, flexible pacing, cohort models, exam supports) influence completion and certification outcomes?

1.2d How do completion and certification outcomes vary for candidates from different backgrounds (e.g., paraprofessionals, career changers, bilingual candidates), and which supports appear most consequential?

1.3 System alignment and consequences

1.3a In what ways do preparation pathways align—or fail to align—with district hiring needs, particularly in high-need subjects and rural or hard-to-staff contexts?

1.3b What are the district-level consequences of delayed or incomplete certification for staffing stability and instructional quality?

1.3c How have recent changes in certification policy altered preparation program design, candidate behavior, and district staffing strategies?

1.3d What unintended consequences have emerged from efforts to expand or streamline preparation and certification pathways?

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THEME TWO: District Capacity to Build and Manage Their Teacher Workforce

Why this is important

District capacity plays a critical role in whether teacher workforce strategies succeed or stall. Across the state there is wide variation in districts' ability to plan for, implement, and sustain efforts related to recruitment, preparation partnerships, and retention – often more pronounced particularly in small and rural districts. Establishing effective organizational structures, staffing models, and cross-departmental coordination is critical for promising policies or programs to translate into durable workforce improvements.

Key idea clusters

- District-level organizational designs associated with successful workforce strategies
- Roles and responsibilities (e.g., cabinet-level ownership, cross-department coordination) that support teacher pipelines
- Capacity barriers affecting rural and small districts' ability to implement and sustain workforce initiatives
- District decision-making related to participation in state and regional workforce programs
- Sustainability planning for workforce investments beyond initial funding periods
- Return on investment for districts that invest in dedicated workforce infrastructure

Potential areas for investigation

2.1 Organizational structures and roles

2.1a What district-level organizational structures, roles, and routines are associated with stronger teacher recruitment, preparation partnerships, and retention outcomes?

2.1b What staffing, leadership, and cross-department coordination models enable districts to manage teacher pipelines effectively across recruitment, preparation, and retention?

2.1c How do districts make decisions about investing in workforce infrastructure (e.g., dedicated roles, partnerships, data systems), and what evidence informs those decisions?

2.2 Implementation capacity and supports

2.2a How do districts vary in their capacity to plan for, implement, and sustain teacher workforce strategies, and what factors explain those differences?

2.2b How do capacity constraints—particularly in rural and small districts—shape participation in workforce initiatives and partnerships?

2.2c What supports or partnerships most effectively help districts with limited capacity engage in and sustain workforce strategies over time?

2.3 Sustainability, evidence, and return on investment

2.3a How do districts use (or struggle to use) data and evidence to guide workforce planning and improvement?

2.3b What is the return on investment for districts that invest in dedicated teacher workforce infrastructure compared to districts that rely on short-term or fragmented approaches?

2.3c How do fiscal pressures (e.g., declining enrollment, budget constraints) interact with district workforce planning and long-term sustainability?

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THEME THREE: Retention, Working Conditions, Career Sustainability

Why this is important

Retaining teachers is as much about working conditions and support structures as it is about compensation. Early-career attrition, workload and time demands, and the uneven availability of mentoring and induction supports—particularly in high-need schools and districts – are well-documented concerns. Long-term career sustainability, including re-entry into the profession, often depends on whether teaching is experienced as a viable and professionally supportive career over time.

Key idea clusters

- Early-career supports and mentoring structures that mitigate attrition
- Working conditions (workload, time, instructional expectations) that influence persistence
- Supports for uncertified and provisionally certified teachers during transition to certification
- Conditions that support the retention of educators from historically underrepresented groups
- Re-entry pathways and supports for teachers returning to the profession
- Interaction of compensation, benefits, and non-salary supports with retention outcomes

Potential areas for investigation

3.1 Early-career support and persistence

3.1a What working conditions and supports are most strongly associated with reduced early-career attrition, particularly in high-need or high-turnover contexts?

3.1b How do mentoring and induction structures vary across districts, and which features appear most consequential for teacher persistence and development?

3.1c What factors contribute to higher attrition among uncertified or provisionally certified teachers, and what supports mitigate those risks during the transition to full certification?

3.2 Working conditions, workload, and compensation

3.2a How do workload, time demands, and instructional expectations influence teachers' decisions to remain in the profession across career stages?

3.2b How do compensation, benefits, and non-salary supports (e.g., childcare, health insurance, housing) interact to shape long-term career sustainability?

3.3 Career sustainability, opportunity, and re-entry

3.3a What conditions support higher retention among educators from historically underrepresented groups, and how do those conditions vary by context?

3.3b What motivates former teachers to return to the profession, and what barriers discourage re-entry?

3.3c How do school and district leadership practices influence teachers' perceptions of support, professionalism, and the long-term viability of teaching as a career?

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THEME FOUR: Professional Attractiveness, Recruitment and Entry

Why this is important

Recruitment into teaching is shaped by how the profession is perceived, experienced, and accessed—well before candidates enter preparation programs. Narratives about teaching, early exposure to the profession, and structural barriers such as cost, time, and access to testing all shape who considers teaching as a viable career. Recruitment challenges often vary by subject area, geography, and candidate background, underscoring that entry into the profession is determined by a multi-step decision-making process, rather than a single point of access.

Key idea clusters

- Narratives that shape perceptions of teaching before and during entry into preparation pathways
- Early exposure and recruitment strategies that influence interest in teaching as a career
- Barriers to entry related to cost, time, testing access, and geographic context
- Differential recruitment challenges in high-need subjects and regions
- Alignment between recruitment strategies and available preparation pathways

Potential areas for investigation

4.1 Perceptions and decision-making about teaching

4.1a What narratives, experiences, and signals most influence individuals' decisions to pursue—or avoid—the teaching profession at different life stages?

4.1b How do perceptions of teaching as a career differ across recruitment pools (e.g., high school students, paraprofessionals, career changers, veterans), and why?

4.2 Recruitment pathways and barriers to entry

4.2a What early exposure or recruitment strategies are associated with increased interest in teaching as a career, particularly in high-need subjects or regions?

4.2b What barriers most constrain entry into teaching pathways (e.g., cost, time, testing access, geographic availability), and for whom?

4.2c How do recruitment challenges vary by subject area, geography, and district context?

4.2d How do recruitment strategies connect prospective candidates to available preparation pathways, and where do breakdowns occur?

Appendix. Developing a Shared Research Framework

Background

To develop an initial research framework focused on the Texas teacher workforce, LONESTARP3 convened two strategy teams on November 12, 2025. Participants brought perspectives spanning research, practice, and policy and represented a range of roles, sectors, and geographies across Texas. Prior to the sessions, LONESTARP3 prepared a landscape analysis of the Texas teacher workforce for shared context.

Strategy team meetings were designed to support collective sensemaking around key problems of practice and policy and to surface areas potential future research. Rather than finalizing priorities or identifying specific studies, both teams used a common, structured protocol to generate and refine questions that reflect areas of alignment and momentum across the field. This draft framework represents an intermediate step.

How Themes Took Shape

To identify themes across both Strategy teams, we used a refinement density approach aligned with the strategy team protocol. Both sessions followed a multistep process: Generate->Categorize->Refine. Rather than emphasizing how often topics were mentioned, this approach examined how ideas persisted, sharpened, and carried forward across stages. Themes with high refinement density reflect areas of collective convergence—where participants across both groups became most aligned around questions that appeared actionable and ready for further development. This approach highlights momentum without implying that other ideas lacked value.

Potential Ares for Investigation

The questions included here reflect where participants were heading, rather than a fixed set of research priorities. They are meant to:

- Illustrate the substance and direction of each refined theme,
- Capture the types of questions participants were converging on after multiple rounds of reflection and refinement,
- Provide a concrete entry point for discussion and collective sensemaking,
- Remain flexible enough to be refined, combined, or replaced as the framework continues to evolve, and
- Propose questions that could plausibly be studied within a 12–24 month timeframe.

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