Texas Education Agency Teacher Prep Data Model Implementation

Request for Support: Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
June 27, 2019

TEA's Strategic Priorities

Charged with oversight of primary and secondary education in Texas, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) is responsible for ensuring that our schools and districts are effectively serving over five million Texas children. TEA works to improve outcomes for all public-school students in the state by providing leadership, guidance, and support to school systems.

In order to achieve the stated agency mission and goal, TEA has aligned on four priorities:

1. Recruit, Support and Retain Teachers and Principals
2. Build a Foundation of Reading and Math
3. Connect High School to Career and College
4. Improve Low-Performing Schools

To facilitate work towards these priorities, TEA also identified three key enablers:

- Increase transparency, fairness and rigor in district and campus academic and financial performance
- Ensure compliance, effectively implement legislation and inform policymakers
- Strengthen organizational foundations (resource efficiency, culture, capabilities, partnerships)

Problem Statement

In order to recruit, support, and retain great teachers, aligned to TEA's Strategic Priority 1 above, educator preparation programs (EPPs), local education agencies (LEAs), and state education agencies (SEAs) need consistent and reliable data on teacher talent. However, when it comes to teacher talent management data, particularly in the teacher preparation domain, data is scattered in multiple systems across organizations. As a result, EPPs, LEAs, and SEAs struggle to get the data they need to continue to improve and supply exceptional teachers for our nation's schools.

TEA seeks to support the strategic goal of cultivating our teacher talent by ensuring data is available for continuous improvement and accountability of our EPPs in the production of Texas' teachers. Despite the challenges outlined above, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Educator Leadership and Quality (ELQ) team is committed to helping the EPP community continue to improve the recruitment, support and retention of teachers and principals. Strong classroom instruction, supported by effective instructional leaders, makes a tremendous difference in ensuring that students are progressing to achieve the state's vision of preparing the public-school students in Texas for success in college, career, or the military. To accomplish this, TEA will help EPPs access the information they need to strengthen the teacher pipeline and support the development of teachers statewide.
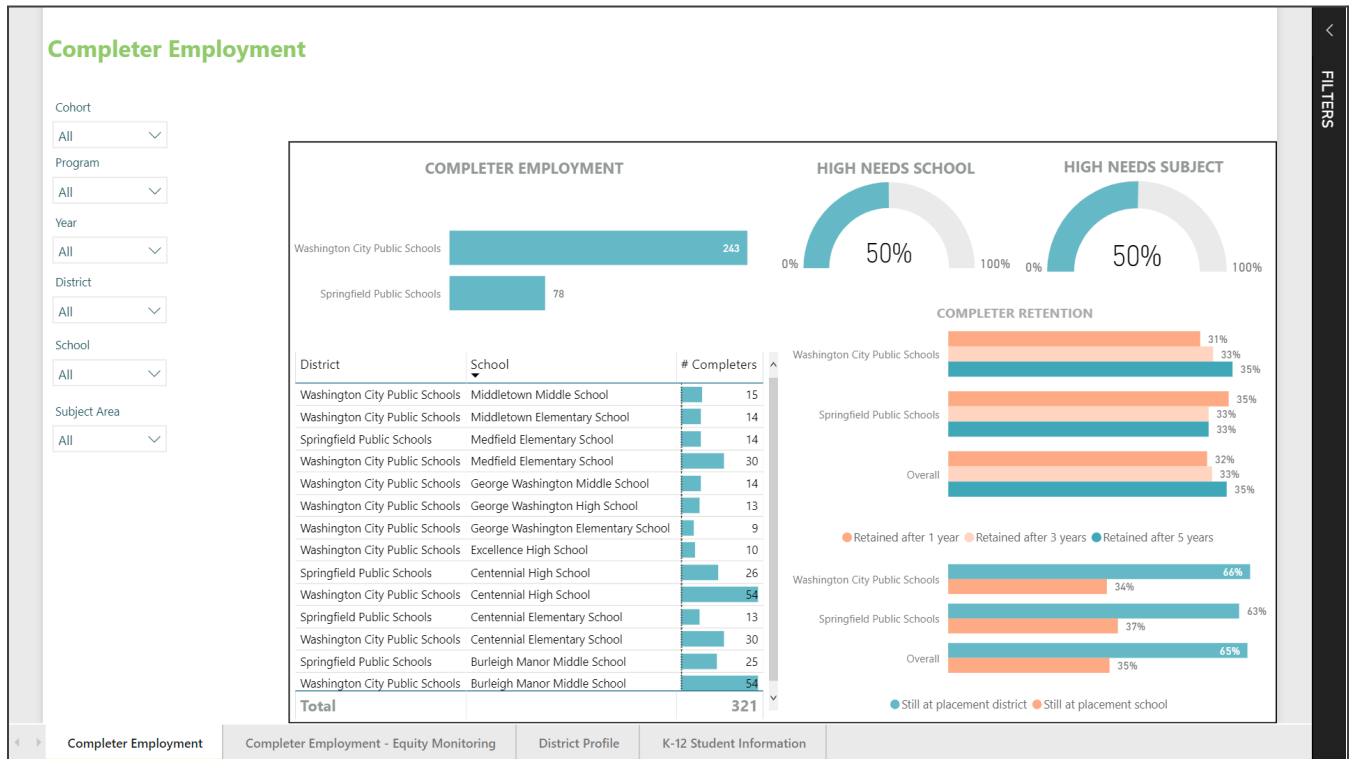
The Need

TEA requests support from the Gates Foundation to create an efficient data pipeline coupled with advanced analytics, which will fundamentally transform data operations in the educator preparation ecosystem in Texas to enable deeper analysis and greater responsiveness. The work will support all EPPs in Texas, and will serve as a useful proof point to SEAs, LEAs, and EPPs across the U.S.

Presently, the TEA collects data from EPPs throughout the year via numerous sources and methods, each of which could be improved in security, efficiency, and quality. Some EPPs submit data directly into an

existing information system called the Educator Certification Online System (ECOS). The information in ECOS is used to conduct analyses related to compliance and accreditation. Additional data are sent directly to the TEA from EPPs as flat files attached to email messages. That data is then manually standardized, validated, compiled, and analyzed. TEA returns this information back to EPPs via a static report updated once per year.

TEA seeks to develop user-facing dashboards to support EPPs, similar to the example below:

TEA will work with four pilot EPPs to shape and test this project, with the goal of making dashboards available to all EPPs in Texas by September 2020.

To further assist the agency in meeting the goals and metrics of this ambitious project, we are requesting support with strategic and tactical communications planning and implementation. The goals of this support are to collaborate with TEA to identify all relevant stakeholders and potential risk factors, create a plan that will effectively communicate the uses and benefits of the TPDM to the various audiences throughout the state, and generate necessary artifacts to implement this plan. This work is critical to the project's success as it encourages thoughtful engagement of the EPP community with the data being created by the project, furthers our work around increasing data literacy throughout the state and will assist in reaching the strategic goal of furthering EPP's continuous improvement in their production of Texas teachers.

What will this accomplish?
Through this project, TEA will be able to:

- **Drive improvement and Innovation in Educator Preparation:** By providing high-quality, actionable data on EPP inputs, processes, and outcomes, this project will support programmatic improvement.
- **Efficiently process and disseminate new information:** By connecting additional TEA data sources to the data EPPs report, this project will increase the quantity of data available to EPPs.
- **Increase EPP data quality.** By applying business rules to the new flexible-but-well-defined data pipelines, this project will improve data quality as EPPs gain access to a more robust and real-time data validation process.
- **Engage EPPs in deeper data conversations.** This project has a training and support component designed to ensure EPPs shape and understand the information being provided.
- **Increase transparency and stakeholder access to information.** EPPs and the general public will be able to access dashboards that display data on teacher production.

How will we measure success?
- **Increased data literacy:** The goal is to have 70% of our EPPs use the dashboard in some capacity within the first 2 years. From there we can further engage the community to ensure the data meets their needs and is actionable.
- **Usage of the public facing dashboard by general population:** Our current consumer information page generates more than 25,000 clicks per month. This project strives to match and exceed current usage, being especially useful in the selection of EPP programs to meet teachers' needs.
- **Creating a culture of "high accountability and high support":** Connecting reported data back to EPPs with additional data points, continuous improvement strategies, and technical assistance options will give EPPs a comprehensive view of how to improve their programs. While we are not proposing a specific metric around this outcome, we will be monitoring and engaging pilot participants to gain a sense of changes in their perception of this culture.
- **Richer analysis:** With better data, the agency can begin answering some of the toughest questions surrounding teacher retention, teacher success, and how that aligns with student achievement. We anticipate that we will increase the relevant, actionable analysis and reports we can produce based on these data.

Request
TEA seeks support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in the form of in-kind grant of services to support the IT changes required to catalyze the EPP community in adopting both data standards and data-driven continuous improvement practices, as well as to provide communications planning support. We estimate this in-kind grant to be valued at approximately $850,000, which accounts for approximately 125 FTE weeks of work over a 15-month timeframe. With the proposed kickoff being September 2019, the project closeout is slated for December 2020.

The coordination with vendors, as well as the maintenance and support required post-closeout will be conducted by current TEA resources through the end of the current biennium. Additional needs identified as part of ongoing project support may be included in a future legislative appropriation request, for consideration by the Texas Legislature.

Contact Information
Please contact Megan Aghazadian, Deputy Commissioner of Operations, with questions about the request outlined in this proposal.

Texas Education Agency
1701 N. Congress Ave
Austin, TX 78701
O: 512-463-9190 |C: 512-593-1939
megan.aghazadian@tea.texas.gov