

Effective Schools Framework



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Introduction and Purpose

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) works to improve outcomes for all public school students in the state by providing leadership, guidance, and support to school systems, working towards the vision that every child in Texas is an independent thinker who graduates as an engaged, productive citizen prepared for success in college, a career, or the military.

The goal of the Effective Schools Framework (ESF) is to provide a clear vision for what districts and schools across the state do to ensure an excellent education for all Texas students. The ESF provides the basis for school diagnostics and for aligning resources and support to the needs of each school. The ESF was developed in conjunction with school and district leaders and included a national review of research about what makes high-performing schools excellent. The ESF is part of the TEA's five-year strategic plan and is the starting point for improving internal technical assistance capacity and aligning partners (ESCs, external vendors, etc.) to support the continuous improvement of Texas school districts and campuses. In the spirit of our commitment to data-driven inquiry and the "Plan, Do, Assess" model, we will be continuously evaluate the framework to examine effectiveness and make modifications as needed.



At the core of effective schools is effective instruction: interactions between students, teachers, and content determine learning outcomes. This instructional core is strengthened and supported by effective, well-supported teachers, high-quality curriculum, and positive school culture. Strong school leadership and careful planning encompass and ensure each of these prioritized levers.

The Effective Schools Framework consists of a set of district commitments and, for schools, essential actions. **District Commitments** describe what local education agencies do to ensure that schools are set up for success. The **Essential Actions** describe what the most effective schools do to support powerful teaching and learning. Beneath each Essential Action is a set of descriptions that define high level performance.

The first essential action listed under each priority is **foundational**--schools need to address the foundational actions before moving to those that follow. For clarity, these are framed in a box with a color that corresponds to the ESF graphic above.

Prioritized Lever 1: Strong School Leadership and Planning

Description:

Effective campus instructional leaders with clear roles and responsibilities develop, implement, and monitor focused improvement plans that address the causes of low performance.

District Commitments:

- The district places its most effective school leaders in its highest need schools.
- The district recognizes the unique needs of low-performing schools and provides the flexibility to address those needs.
- The district provides opportunities for ongoing support and coaching of the campus leader.
- The district provides the campus with adequate funding and sufficient control over their budget to ensure access to necessary resources for implementation of the school's improvement plan and high-quality instruction to meet students' learning needs.
- The district supports principals by protecting their time dedicated for school instructional leadership.
- The district ensures that principal supervisors have necessary authority to create conditions for school success (e.g. remove barriers).
- The district policies and practices prioritize principal and principal supervisor instructional leadership (e.g. manageable span of control, time dedicated to instructional practices).

Essential Actions:

1. Develop campus instructional leaders (principal, assistant principal, counselors, teacher leaders) with clear roles and responsibilities

- Campus instructional leaders have clear, written, and transparent roles and responsibilities, and core leadership tasks are scheduled on weekly calendars (observations, debriefs, team meetings).
- Performance expectations are clear, written, measurable, and match the job responsibilities.
- Campus instructional leaders use consistent, written protocols and processes to lead their department, grade-level teams, or other areas of responsibility.
- Campus instructional leaders meet on a weekly basis to focus on student progress and formative data.
- Principal improves campus leaders through regularly scheduled, job-embedded professional development consistent with best practices for adult learning, deliberate modeling, and observation and feedback cycles.

2. Focused plan development and regular monitoring of implementation and outcomes

- There is an improvement plan in place with few focused priorities, clear timelines, milestones, metrics, and task owners that address the root causes of low performance.
- Campus leaders monitor plan implementation and hold task owners accountable for execution of the work.
- Campus leaders regularly use data and other evidence to track progress towards intended outcomes.
- If milestones and benchmarks are not met, campus leaders make modifications to reach the required result.

Prioritized Lever 2: Effective, Well-Supported Teachers

Description:

Campus leadership retains effective, well-supported teachers by strategically recruiting, selecting, assigning, and building the capacity of teachers so that all students have access to high-quality educators.

District Commitments:

- The district provides the campus with sufficient control over teacher hiring and placement.
- The district provides incentives for the strongest teachers to work in the lowest-performing schools.
- The district effectively recruits adequate numbers of qualified candidates.
- The district has timely, efficient, and responsive hiring processes.
- The district makes it possible for high-needs schools to be fully staffed by July 1st.
- The district provides efficient organizational structures, processes, and supports to ensure opportunities for induction and continued development.
- The district provides an evaluation system that identifies low and high performers and allows for opportunities to remove low performing staff.
- District policies and practices ensure that campuses have effective, well-supported teachers.

Essential Actions:

1. *Recruit, select, assign, induct, and retain a full staff of highly qualified educators*

- The campus implements ongoing and proactive recruitment strategies that include many sources for high-quality candidates.
- Clear selection criteria, protocols, hiring and induction processes are in place and align with the school's vision, mission, values, and goals.
- Campus leaders implement targeted and personalized strategies to support and retain staff, particularly high-performing staff.
- Teacher placements are strategic based on student need and teacher strengths.
- Grade-level and content-area teams have strong, supported teacher leaders trained in adult learning facilitation and team dynamics.
- Preferred substitutes are recruited and retained.

2. *Build teacher capacity through observation and feedback cycles*

- Campus instructional leaders use normed tools and processes to conduct observations, capture trends, and track progress over time.
- Observation debrief conversations occur within 48 hours of observation and include high-leverage, bite-sized, clear, actionable feedback with clear models and opportunities to practice.
- Campus instructional leaders conduct follow up observations after coaching sessions to monitor implementation of feedback within agreed-upon time frames.
- Campus instructional leaders determine the frequency of observations based on teacher needs and student results on formative assessments.

Prioritized Lever 3: Positive School Culture

Description:

Positive school culture requires compelling and aligned vision, mission, goals and values, explicit behavioral expectations and management system, proactive and responsive student support services, and involved families and community.

District Commitments:

- The district provides campuses with best practice resources and tools for engaging families (i.e., translation services, parent/student surveys, online communication structures).
- The district provides data systems to track pertinent school culture data (e.g. discipline referrals, attendance, campus climate).
- The district provides campuses with access to external student support services.
- The district ensures that campus buildings are well maintained, safe, and conducive to learning.
- District policies and practices align with and promote positive school culture.

Essential Actions:

1. *Compelling and aligned vision, mission, goals, values focused on a safe environment and high expectations*

- Stakeholders are engaged in creating and continually refining the campus' mission, vision, and values.
- Campus practices and polices demonstrate high expectations and shared ownership for student success, with a drive towards college and career readiness and postsecondary success.
- Staff members share a common understanding of the mission, vision, and values in practice and can explain how they are present in the daily life of the school.
- Regular campus climate surveys assess and measure progress on student and staff experiences.

2. *Explicit behavioral expectations and management systems for students and staff*

- All staff and students are taught, practice, and reinforce behavioral expectations with a common language.
- All staff and students understand a system of rewards and consequences, including restorative practices, and consistently implements the system with fidelity.
- Rituals and public forums celebrate students who model expectations and demonstrate behaviors that reflect campus values.
- Data systems exist to track all discipline referrals, attendance, and interventions and the data is regularly reviewed to identify trends and adapt accordingly.

3. *Proactive and responsive student support services*

- The school has a campus-wide program to proactively teach mental health and wellness skills to students.
- School staff meet frequently to identify individual student needs and work together to support and monitor individual progress, behavior, and mental health needs.
- Students are provided with the support services (e.g., counseling, mentoring, external service referrals) that address their needs.

4. *Involving families and community*

- The campus creates an inclusive and welcoming environment that engages all families in critical aspects of student learning.
- Systems are in place to engage families on a regular basis about their child's performance in a positive, constructive, and personalized way, including their child's college and career preparation and postsecondary success.
- Multiple communication strategies with families are integrated into teacher roles and responsibilities.
- Family and community engagement and impact data are reviewed regularly, and plans are adapted as needed.

Prioritized Lever 4: High-Quality Curricular Resources

Description:

All students have access to a TEKS-aligned, guaranteed and viable curriculum, assessments, and resources to engage in learning at appropriate levels of rigor.

District Commitments:

- The district provides the campus with a standards-aligned guaranteed and viable curriculum (GVC) and scope and sequence.
- The district provide access to interim assessments aligned to the standards and the expected level of rigor.
- The district's annual academic calendar includes days for school-based professional development activities that align with the assessment calendar and allow for data-driven reflection.
- The district provides an interim data assessment platform to capture assessment data by item and student level.
- District policies support the effective use of standards-aligned GVC and interim assessments.

Essential Actions:

1. Curricular resources and formative assessments aligned to TEKS with a year-long scope and sequence

- Curricular resources are aligned to the TEKS, including a scope and sequence, units, and formative assessments aligned to state assessments for all tested subject and grade areas, and grades PK-2nd mathematics and reading, implementing “four star” curricular resources on the Instructional Materials Portal if applicable.
- Assessments aligned to state standards and the appropriate level of rigor are administered at least three to four times per year to determine if students learned what was taught. Time for corrective instruction is built into the scope and sequence.
- Instructional materials with key ideas, essential questions, and recommended materials, including content-rich texts, are used across classrooms. Campuses use “four star” instructional materials on the Instructional Materials Portal when applicable. The instructional materials include resources intentionally designed to meet the needs of students with disabilities and English learners among other student groups.
- High fidelity professional development calendars for teachers are implemented which provide introductory and ongoing content-focused, job-embedded training linked to high-quality curricular resources for early childhood through grade 12, in all core subjects.

Prioritized Lever 5: Effective Instruction

Description:

All students have rigorous learning experiences because the school ensures objective-driven daily lessons, classroom routines, and formative assessments that yield the data necessary for teachers to reflect, adjust, and deliver instruction that meets the needs of each student.

District Commitments:

- The district ensures access to high-quality common formative assessment resources aligned to state standards for all tested areas and PK-2nd grade math and reading
- For assessments that are district provided and graded, the district ensures that schools receive detailed reports within two instructional days
- The district provides schools with access to student academic, behavioral, and on-track to graduate data (present and historical)
- The district has effective systems for identifying and supporting struggling learners
- District policies and practices support effective instruction in schools

Essential Actions:

1. *Objective-driven daily lesson plans with formative assessments*

- All teachers create and submit daily lesson plans that include clear objectives, opening activities, time allotments that indicate the amount of time spent on each step of the lesson, multiple, differentiated paths of instruction to a clearly defined curricular goal, including paths to meet the specific needs of students with disabilities and English learners among other student groups, and daily formative assessments along with exemplar responses.
- Campus instructional leaders review lesson plans frequently for alignment to the standards, the scope and sequence, and the expected level of rigor, and provide teachers with feedback and lesson planning support.

2. *Effective classroom routines and instructional strategies*

- Three to five instructional strategies (e.g. monitoring aggressively, student-to-student discourse, strategic prompts), classroom procedures, and routines are introduced, modeled, and practiced with consistency and fidelity in all classrooms.
- Classroom instruction incorporates rigorous, high-quality experiences that promote critical-thinking skills, with differentiated and scaffolded supports for students with disabilities and English learners among other student groups.
- Teachers maximize instructional time through consistent, efficient, and visible structures (e.g., posted agendas, class opening, homework collection, within-class transitions, and formative assessments).
- Campus instructional leaders conduct regular walk-throughs and observations to ensure consistent implementation of expectations.

3. *Data-driven instruction*

- Campus instructional leaders review disaggregated data to track and monitor the progress of all students, including students with disabilities and English learners among other student groups, and provide evidence-based feedback to teachers.
- Teachers use a corrective instruction action planning process, individually and in PLCs to analyze data, identify trends in student misconceptions, determine the root cause as to why students may not have learned the concept, and create plans to reteach.
- Teacher teams have protected time built into the master schedule to meet frequently and regularly for in-depth conversations about formative and interim student data, effective instructional strategies, and possible adjustments to instructional delivery focused on meeting the needs of both struggling learners and learners needing acceleration.
- Student progress toward measurable goals (e.g., % of class and individual student mastering of objectives, individual student fluency progress, etc.) is visible in each and every classroom and throughout the school to foster student ownership and goal setting.

4. RTI for students with learning gaps

- All staff are engaged in coordinated and proactive planning to identify students who have significant learning gaps or who lack key foundational skills and provide them with timely interventions throughout the year.
 - All teachers use a student tracking system that includes assessment information, course grades, teacher referrals, and attendance to monitor individual student progress and the intensity and schedule of interventions.
 - Teachers or other school staff keep families informed and involved in the process of providing interventions for struggling learners.
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References

Guiding Documents

Four texts were foundational in the creation of the TEA's Effective Schools Framework (ESF). They are cited below.

1. [The Transformational Leadership Framework](#) (April 2016) developed by New Leaders and excerpted from: Desravines, Jean, et al. *Breakthrough Principals: a Step-by-Step Guide to Building Stronger Schools*. Jossey-Bass, 2016.
2. Bambrick-Santoyo, Paul. *Leverage Leadership: a Practical Guide to Building Exceptional Schools*. Jossey-Bass, 2012.
3. Bambrick-Santoyo, Paul. *Get Better Faster: a 90-Day Plan for Coaching New Teachers*. Jossey-Bass, 2016.
4. Lemov, Doug. *Teach Like a Champion 2.0: 62 Techniques that Put Students on the Path to College*. Jossey-Bass, 2015.

Useful Models

Part of the process of creating the ESF was a broad national review of other frameworks that seek to describe what highly effective schools do and have. The ESF borrows from and builds upon these ideas, and specifies a vision for Texas schools based on research, data, and feedback from stakeholders in our schools and districts. Three models were regular references in drafting the ESF.

- DCPS Effective Schools Framework, which can be viewed [here](#)
- Mass Insight Education & Research Theory of Action, which can be viewed [here](#)
- UChicago 5Essentials, which can be viewed [here](#)

An Evolving Approach

The process of creating the ESF began with stakeholder input as well as a review of data to understand what about the existing Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) and accompanying framework were most effective and useful. This informed what should be built upon, and prioritized. The TAIS was based on extensive research available [here](#).