

Texas Classroom Teachers Association

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Testimony to the Senate Education Committee Regarding Interim Charge #2

By

Holly Eaton, Director of Professional Development and Advocacy
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I am pleased to be able to talk to you today about one of the few remaining areas of education policy that is not subject to the ubiquitous education reform wars – and that is induction and mentoring for new teachers. Part of the reason that induction and mentoring has this special status is because it makes sense intuitively, and it's an area about which there's consistent agreement by those involved in education policy. Another reason is that the value and effectiveness of comprehensive mentoring and induction programs has long been well documented and supported by the research. Finally, there have been compelling quantitative studies showing the enormous cost savings that can be gained by investing heavily up front and early in teachers' careers.

Yet as a state, we have failed to put into place a comprehensive statewide induction /mentoring program or even framework for new teachers. Rather, we have one piece of such a program, mentoring, reflected in statute. The Beginning Teacher Induction and Mentoring grant program was underutilized by school districts since its inception and funding for the program was finally cut last session, although the statute remained in place. In an attempt to remedy this situation, Chair Shapiro filed SB 570 last session, a comprehensive statewide induction/mentoring framework and grant program for school districts. Despite widespread support for, and no obvious opposition to the bill, it died in House Calendars late in the session. However, in an effort to keep some semblance of the program viable, Chair Shapiro successfully included in the budget funding for up to \$10 mil for the 2012-13 biennium that the Commissioner was required to set aside for an educator mentor program in accordance with Texas Education Code, Chapter 21 (Rider 53).

However, it's our understanding that ultimately, \$8 million of the \$10 million ended up being directed into Project Share, TEA's online platform for professional development for educators. The remaining \$2 million has been directed to the

Texas A&M PACT (Performance-based Academic Coaching Team) program, with which TEA is partnering to offer statewide e-mentoring to all 0-2 year teachers at no cost, as well as providing funding to Regional Education Service Centers to train district-level on-site mentors and to help facilitate the program in local districts.

Although these efforts may be of some benefit to beginning teachers, in the absence of being part of an overall comprehensive induction program, it's unlikely that the potential for achieving long-lasting effectiveness in retention of beginning teachers will be realized.

So we return to the need to put into place a comprehensive statewide induction/mentoring framework and program. Here are a few facts that make a compelling case for doing so. In 2010-11, Texas had an overall teacher turnover rate of 11.9% (TEA, 2011, AEIS). In other words, 39,850 teachers left their positions. Using the most conservative method employed by various experts to determine teacher turnover costs, the loss of these teachers costs the state and districts at least \$629 million per year, a figure which has held fairly consistent since 2000 (see Texas Center for Educational Research [TCER], 2000, *The Cost of Teacher Turnover*). A 2006 report showed that 32 percent of beginning teachers in Texas left the profession within 5 years. Using 2010-2011 data to calculate a cost estimate to the state and districts, the cost of this rate of beginning teacher turnover is approximately \$82 million over 5 years.

This alarming tide of teachers leaving their positions was successfully stemmed for a couple of years in Texas, when we had in place the Texas Beginning Educator Support System (TxBESS), a comprehensive mentoring/induction program for teachers with 2 or less years of experience. The program was initially funded with a three-year \$10 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Then, in 2003, the U.S. Department of Labor and the Texas Workforce Commission provided TxBESS with an additional \$3 million grant. According to a 2001-2002 third-year evaluation report and a spring 2003 final report to the Texas Workforce Commission, a total of 11,986 beginning teachers were served in that four-year time span. However, after that year, funding for administering the program ceased.

Due to the length of time TxBESS was in place, researchers were able to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the program over a three-year period. That evaluation found that 89.2% of the first group of teachers who received assistance through TxBESS (1999-2000) returned for a second year of teaching compared to 80.8% of new teachers who did not; the statistics for those returning for a third year of teaching were even more compelling – 84% of the first group of TxBESS teachers returned for the third year compared to 75% of teachers who did not participate in TxBESS.

But the most notable of the TxBESS evaluation findings was that its strongest positive effect was on non-white beginning teachers; for example, 91.4% of Hispanic teachers and 87.4% of African American teachers who participated in TxBESS returned for their second year of teaching, compared to a statewide average of 73% of Hispanic teachers and 76.8% of African American teachers returning. The program was also associated with improved retention rates for secondary teachers, especially high school teachers.

These statistics are especially important because schools had to be high needs to be included in the TxBESS pilot. For these purposes, high needs schools were those identified as having low student achievement, a high percentage of low socioeconomic status students, and/or high rates of teacher turnover. *Texas Beginning Educator Support System evaluation report for year three, 2001-02*, Charles A. Dana Center. 2002.

SB 570 from last session drew from the TxBESS program in establishing a state induction framework and program, including performance standards aligned with the state teacher evaluation system, high-quality mentoring, program standards, ongoing professional development, standards-based formative assessment, and partnerships and collaboration. Each of these has been repeatedly cited in teacher induction research as necessary components of any good system, and they provide the framework for the infrastructure needed to have a successful program. By establishing the program as a grant program, the bill provided a workable mechanism by which participating districts could offer the program locally in accordance with locally developed plans based on state standards and approved by the commissioner.

So we have the model for legislation moving forward, and after several starts and stops, the time has come to finally act on what we know to be good educational policy that will have long-lasting and positive effects on one of our most precious resources, our beginning teachers. We hope to work with you to accomplish that goal in the upcoming legislative session.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Attachment

Sec. 21.458. MENTORS. (a) Each school district may assign a mentor teacher to each classroom teacher who has less than two years of teaching experience in the subject or grade level to which the teacher is assigned. A teacher assigned as a mentor must:

- (1) to the extent practicable, teach in the same school;
- (2) to the extent practicable, teach the same subject or grade level, as applicable; and
- (3) meet the qualifications prescribed by commissioner rules adopted under Subsection (b).

(b) The commissioner shall adopt rules necessary to administer this section, including rules concerning the duties and qualifications of a teacher who serves as a mentor. The rules concerning qualifications must require that to serve as a mentor a teacher must:

- (1) complete a research-based mentor and induction training program approved by the commissioner;
- (2) complete a mentor training program provided by the district; and
- (3) have at least three complete years of teaching experience with a superior record of assisting students, as a whole, in achieving improvement in student performance.

(c) From the funds appropriated to the agency for purposes of this section, the commissioner shall adopt rules and provide funding to school districts that assign mentor teachers under this section. Funding provided to districts under this section may be used only for providing:

- (1) mentor teacher stipends;
- (2) scheduled time for mentor teachers to provide mentoring to assigned classroom teachers; and
- (3) mentoring support through providers of mentor training.

(d) In adopting rules under Subsection (c), the commissioner shall rely on research-based mentoring programs that, through external evaluation, have demonstrated success.

Added by Acts 2006, 79th Leg., 3rd C.S., Ch. 5, Sec. 4.07, eff. May 31, 2006.

Amended by:

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 796, Sec. 1, eff. June 19, 2009.

By: Shapiro
(Shelton)

S.B. No. 570

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

relating to beginning teacher induction and mentoring programs for public schools.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Chapter 21, Education Code, is amended by adding Subchapter N to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER N. BEGINNING TEACHER INDUCTION AND MENTORING PROGRAMS

Sec. 21.651. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1) "Beginning teacher" means a classroom teacher who:

(A) has less than two complete years of experience teaching the subject or grade level to which the teacher is assigned; or

(B) has less than three complete years of

experience teaching the subject or grade level to which the teacher is assigned and is identified as in need of assistance under an appraisal system developed under Section 21.351 or 21.352.

(2) "Program" means the beginning teacher induction and mentoring program established under this subchapter.

Sec. 21.652. BEGINNING TEACHER INDUCTION AND MENTORING PROGRAM. (a) To enable establishment of sustainable district-wide high-quality beginning teacher induction and mentoring, the commissioner by rule shall establish a beginning teacher induction and mentoring program under which school districts may participate in accordance with local plans approved by the commissioner that are based on guidelines adopted under this subchapter. A participating district receives program grants from the agency from funds appropriated to the agency for the purpose of planning for and providing high-quality induction and mentoring to beginning teachers in the manner provided by this subchapter. A district is not required to participate in the program, but each district may ensure that beginning teachers have access to high-quality

induction and mentoring consistent with the guidelines established under Section 21.653(a).

(b) In establishing the program, the commissioner, in consultation with the committee established under Subsection (c), shall, not later than January 1, 2012, adopt program guidelines in accordance with Section 21.653(a), and the commissioner shall, not later than January 1, 2012, adopt program guidelines in accordance with Section 21.653(b) for a school district to follow in developing a local plan.

(c) To assist the commissioner in developing program guidelines under Section 21.653(a), the commissioner shall appoint a committee of interested persons, including agency staff, education policy makers, representatives of educator preparation programs and educator associations, and educators who work with beginning teachers under beginning teacher induction programs, as determined appropriate by the commissioner.

(d) In adopting rules under this section, the commissioner shall provide for participating school districts to receive

technical assistance and planning and program guidance.

Sec. 21.653. PROGRAM GUIDELINES. (a) The program guidelines must establish quality indicators for each of the following required components of the program:

(1) research-based program standards, including:

(A) assigning a district-level coordinator to administer the program at the district level;

(B) establishing a local advisory committee of teachers and other educators to assist in implementing the program in the school district;

(C) establishing district administrative policy roles and responsibilities for persons involved in the program;

(D) establishing, for each beginning teacher in the program, a support team composed of:

(i) the campus principal or the beginning teacher's appraiser;

(ii) an educator preparation program field supervisor; and

(iii) the beginning teacher's mentor provided
by the district;

(E) requiring each beginning teacher and that
teacher's support team members described by Paragraph (D) to meet
at least three times each school year; and

(F) providing training for support team members
described by Paragraph (D);

(2) mentoring standards to ensure high-quality
mentoring, including:

(A) requiring each district to assign a mentor
teacher to each beginning teacher;

(B) requiring each teacher who is assigned as a
mentor to:

(i) have at least three complete years of
teaching experience with a superior record of assisting students,
as a whole, in achieving improvement in student performance;

(ii) teach the same subject or grade level, as
applicable, as the beginning teacher the mentor teacher is

mentoring;

(iii) teach in the same school as the beginning teacher the mentor teacher is mentoring, to the extent practicable; and

(iv) complete a research-based mentoring and induction training program approved by the commissioner and provided by the district;

(C) providing for release time from classroom instruction duties for the mentor teacher, as applicable, and the beginning teacher the mentor teacher is mentoring in order to meet, conduct observations, and engage in other activities focused on enhancing the student achievement of the beginning teacher's students;

(D) providing, to the extent practicable, for common planning time for the mentor teacher and the beginning teacher the mentor teacher is mentoring;

(E) limiting the assignment to two beginning teachers for each mentor teacher who is a classroom teacher; and

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(F) providing for stipends for mentor teachers;

(3) performance standards aligned with the criteria for the recommended appraisal process adopted by the commissioner under Section 21.351;

(4) ongoing professional development requirements, including required training for:

(A) participating program administrators regarding successful implementation and administration of the program; and

(B) participating school administrators, mentor teachers, and beginning teachers;

(5) standards-based formative assessments; and

(6) provisions for partnership and collaboration, including consistent and regular collaboration between participating districts and appropriate educator preparation programs.

(b) The commissioner shall adopt guidelines for funding the program, including requiring a participating school district to provide matching funds in an amount determined by the commissioner.

Sec. 21.654. LOCAL PLANS. (a) A district-level committee for a school district that intends to participate in the program, such as the district-level planning and decision-making committee established under Subchapter F, Chapter 11, shall, beginning January 1, 2012, develop a local beginning teacher induction and mentoring plan for the district. The local plan may provide for participation in the program by all campuses in the district or only those campuses selected by the district-level committee. A local plan that does not provide for participation in the program by all campuses in the district must include an analysis and timeline for future district-wide implementation.

(b) A majority of classroom teachers assigned to a campus that is proposed for selection to participate in the program must approve participation to be included in the local plan.

(c) A school district must submit a local plan to the agency for approval. The plan must be submitted together with evidence of significant teacher involvement in the development of the plan.

(d) The agency may approve only a local plan that meets

program guidelines adopted under Section 21.653.

(e) The agency may approve a local plan for implementation beginning with the 2012-2013 school year.

Sec. 21.6541. PROGRAM EVALUATION. (a) The commissioner shall:

(1) provide for the periodic evaluation of the program during the school year by surveying program participants and by any other means determined by the commissioner; and

(2) not later than December 1, 2014, prepare and deliver to each member of the legislature a report describing the results of the program conducted under this subchapter, including the results of the evaluations conducted in accordance with Subdivision (1).

(b) This section expires January 1, 2015.

Sec. 21.655. COMPONENTS OF BEGINNING TEACHER INDUCTION AND MENTORING PROGRAM. Any beginning teacher induction and mentoring program adopted by a district may include the following components:

(1) research-based program standards;

(2) mentoring standards to ensure high-quality mentoring;

(3) performance standards aligned with the criteria for the recommended appraisal process adopted by the commissioner under Section 21.351;

(4) ongoing professional development requirements;

(5) standards-based formative assessments; and

(6) provisions for partnership and collaboration, including consistent and regular collaboration between the district and educator preparation programs.

Sec. 21.656. RULES. The commissioner shall adopt rules as necessary to administer this subchapter.

SECTION 2. Section 21.458, Education Code, is repealed.

SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2011.

