

Texas Education Research-Practice-Policy Partnership

Teachers and administrators across Texas employ effective practices within their individual schools and districts, yet in the current system it is rare that great learning and practices move from school to school, let alone classroom to classroom. The degree of variability from one classroom to the next or one school to the next is one of the greatest challenges to equity and excellence for Texas students. The quality of any child's educational experience should never be defined by their zip code or a poorly equipped teacher. Excellent teaching and leadership practices can be found across the state, and the challenge is to locate, study, elevate, and scale, and not to settle until all students experience great teaching and learning every day of every year.

Researchers in our institutions of higher education and the state's myriad educational organizations have produced evidence-based interventions and insights that can help PreK-12 students and teachers thrive. Too often researchers and practitioners are siloed apart from each other and have few chances to develop mutually beneficial relationships that can inform one another's work and lead to improved educational outcomes for PreK-12 students. Students, families, and communities with deep personal understanding of education problems and solutions are too often left out of the research-practice process to the detriment of student achievement and their social and emotional health and well-being. All stakeholders in the education system have valuable and important perspectives to offer in the quest to address our greatest challenges.

In response to the challenges highlighted by the pandemic and in fulfilling our role as a public institution of education, UT College of Education Dean Charles Martinez and Texas 2036 CEO Margaret Spellings convened a half-day summit in March 2021. The summit included or brought together a group of researchers and education stakeholders from across Texas to discuss the immediate and longer-term resources needed to ensure that Texas students recover and thrive in a post-COVID world. While this group has leveraged its collective expertise to develop a series of recommendations and urged that Texas' federal recovery dollars be used to support those recommendations, it became evident that the development of a statewide research-practice-policy partnership was needed to support and sustain any coherent statewide effort. Such a partnership will address the gaps that exist in identifying, researching, and scaling best practices. A Texas Education Research-Practice-Policy Partnership (RP3) will ensure relentless focus not only on the pressing and longer-term challenges of recovery and thriving post-pandemic that will require long-term investment and support but also ongoing statewide educational needs and innovations.

The partnership will leverage collective expertise to identify, adapt or develop curricula, tools, and resources that are culturally grounded and responsive in order to support the identified recommendations, student engagement, and academic content. Partners will develop trust and commitment to build and sustain a working collaboration over time to understand problems of practice within the community, generating a learning agenda to produce information and actionable items. Such a partnership will provide a continuous cycle of both best practices and

Developed in response to recommendations from *Forging a Path Forward: Supporting PreK-12 Students Post COVID-19* summit held in March 2021.

To learn more about the Texas Education RP3, contact Stacey Oliver, Assistant Dean for Development, at stacey.oliver@austin.utexas.edu or 512-471-8178 or visit education.utexas.edu/service-state

evaluation of practices within the field that can be scaled for the benefit of all students and school communities in Texas.

Existing research-practice partnerships, such as Michigan's Education Policy Innovation Collaborative (EPIC), were able to quickly respond to the current crisis and investigate what was happening in classrooms across the state. For example, as school districts across Michigan were providing instruction during the pandemic, EPIC partnered with the Center for Educational Performance and Information to analyze the responses from districts to understand how they have shifted their instructional models. Districts shared information about the different types of instruction they provided (face-to-face, remote/virtual, hybrid) and how different groups of students are being served by grade or setting.

This type of statewide analysis to teaching and learning during the pandemic will be extremely informative for Michigan schools.

Establishing the Texas Education RP3 ultimately will generate meaningful research that teachers, principals and other education stakeholders can easily access, understand, and use to continue to advance their improvement efforts, and will allow the state to be responsive to future crises. The research will inform and guide policy that helps scale best practices across the state. It will also equip teachers and school leaders with what they need to implement interventions in Texas classrooms to advance their improvement efforts. The work of the Texas Education RP3 will generate rigorous and groundbreaking research to advance the field and inform policy.

Examples of successes from local research-practice partnerships in Texas include those of the Houston Education Research Consortium (HERC). HERC testified before the Texas Legislature about its research showing that full-day Pre-K doubles the likelihood of school readiness in kindergarten. In May 2019, the Legislature approved House Bill 3, funding full-day Pre-K across the state. Their 2019 Houston ISD Needs Assessment described students' needs in healthcare, mental health, housing, food, and school supplies. Through a dashboard tool that links student needs to service providers, these findings are helping to meet those needs and local funders are using findings to inform giving decisions. Developing a statewide RP3 will provide all of Texas with useful and meaningful methods, tools, and information for school improvement.

The future economic and social well-being of our state depends on today's students. Supporting a robust recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic for our students requires strategic solutions and relentless focus. Investment in this approach amplifies best practices efficiently by connecting problems of practice in the field to the right researchers and then scaling solutions. Such an effort is an opportunity for Texas to model innovative, evidence-based disruptive solutions that meet student, family, community, and industry needs, enabling Texas to recover and improve in education.

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