



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Texas Districts Launch Paid, Financially Sustainable Opportunity Culture Teacher Residencies

UT Permian Basin and US PREP Partner with Ector County ISD and Midland ISD for Innovative Teacher Preparation Residencies

ODESSA and MIDLAND, Texas— Two Texas districts—Ector County ISD and Midland ISD—will implement [Opportunity Culture with paid teacher residencies](#) in partnership with the [University of Texas Permian Basin](#) (UT Permian Basin). UT Permian Basin and its partner schools are the newest members in the [University-School Partnerships for the Renewal of Educator Preparation \(US PREP\)](#).

Both Ector County and Midland ISDs struggle with an extreme teacher shortage. Combined, the districts began the school year with 500 teacher vacancies. They will implement Opportunity Culture, a model developed by Public Impact, to provide greater teacher support, give excellent teachers the chance to lead small teams for higher pay, and help attract and develop new teachers. Their work will be a model for districts and education preparation providers nationwide to strengthen teacher pipelines collaboratively through paid teacher residencies.

US PREP is a coalition of 15 university-district partnerships focused on attracting, training and retaining high-quality, racially diverse teachers for underserved communities across the country. As a member in US PREP, UT Permian Basin will spend the next three years piloting, scaling and sustaining the [Teacher Preparation Quality Objectives](#), which will result in the training of teachers who are ready to meet the needs of their K–12 students. Taken together with the Opportunity Culture model, candidates will receive compensation during their residency year.

“The College of Education at UT Permian Basin is thrilled to have the opportunity to work with Ector County ISD and Midland ISD as they implement the Opportunity Culture initiative,” said Larry Daniel, dean of the college of education at UT Permian Basin. “We applaud our partner districts for seeking out this opportunity to invest in emergent teacher leadership development. This initiative dovetails incredibly well with our priorities as a US PREP coalition site and will go a long way in helping us recruit and retain more excellent teachers for the Permian Basin.”

The national [Opportunity Culture initiative](#), founded by Public Impact and now in more than 28 sites in nine states, extends the reach of excellent teachers and their teams to more students, for more pay, within schools’ recurring budgets. These Texas districts will provide aspiring teachers with paid, yearlong residencies on teams led by multi-classroom leaders—excellent teachers who continue to teach part of the time while leading small

instructional teams with intensive coaching and support, for more pay. Paid residencies provide a way to enter the teaching workforce for candidates who need to earn income while obtaining degrees and certification.

Each Opportunity Culture school forms a design and implementation team of teachers and administrators that determines how to use [Multi-Classroom Leadership](#) and other roles to reach more of their students with excellent teaching. Ector County and Midland will meet jointly with Public Impact to plan and implement a cost-effective transition to the new model over the next two years.

The school-level design teams reallocate school budgets to permanently fund substantial pay supplements to those in Opportunity Culture roles, in contrast to temporary grant-funded programs. In other districts, high-performing Opportunity Culture schools have made careful funding decisions to increase student growth without narrowing the curriculum.

Ector County ISD and Midland ISD are designing their Opportunity Culture plans now for implementation in fall 2020 in 16 schools—eight in each district.

In 2018, [researchers](#) at the Brookings Institution and American Institutes for Research released a study showing the effect Opportunity Culture can have. Student learning gains in classrooms that were part of multi-classroom leader teams reached the 75th to 85th percentile in math, and in six of the seven statistical models, from 66th to 72nd percentile in reading, up from the 50th percentile in the same teachers' classrooms prior to joining MCL-led teams.

UT Permian Basin will be a key partner in the districts' Opportunity Culture design work and is committed to creating a strong teacher pipeline through residencies.

[Ector County ISD](#), led by Superintendent Scott Muri, is located in Odessa, Texas. The district has 44 schools and 33,826 students, of whom about 77 percent are Hispanic, 16 percent are white, and 4 percent are African American; nearly 55 percent of the district's students are economically disadvantaged.

"Our biggest challenge is finding high-quality educators," Muri said. "With hundreds of teacher openings and an increasing number of teachers coming into education from other careers, we must find a way for our master teachers to increase their impact on their colleagues and, ultimately, students. We must also think more broadly about the 'traditional teacher' role in 21st-century learning designs. I have seen firsthand that Opportunity Culture builds the capacity of teachers by creating new roles and empowering educator leadership."

Muri, a member of Chiefs for Change, came to Ector County in spring 2019 after serving as Spring Branch ISD superintendent and implementing Opportunity Culture there.

[Midland ISD](#), led by Superintendent Orlando Riddick, has 40 schools and 26,000 students, of whom about 64 percent are Hispanic, 24 percent are white, and 8 percent are African American; 45 percent of the district's students are economically disadvantaged.

"In Midland ISD, we are on a journey of transformation to becoming a System of Great Schools," Riddick said. "That means supporting every school to be a great school, investing in 21st-century facilities, and developing and retaining talent. Opportunity Culture is a crucial element of our lift to deliver world-class human capital that drives academic growth. We are honored to partner with US PREP, the Gates Foundation, UTPB, and Ector County ISD to deliver for the Permian Basin."

This work should encourage other district and education preparation providers to work together in a similar way, said Stephanie Dean, Public Impact's vice president for strategic policy advising. "Public Impact and US PREP commend these district and higher education leaders for the vision they have to better serve students in

the face of dramatic teacher vacancies,” Dean said. “They are committed to working together to build a strong teacher pipeline and are willing to think differently to make that a reality.”

A grant from the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#) will support training for the school districts and their university partner to design and implement the Opportunity Culture model. Funding from the Gates Foundation will not be used for pay supplements for multi-classroom leaders or other Opportunity Culture roles, but for planning and associated professional development.

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About Public Impact

Public Impact’s mission is to improve education dramatically for all students, especially low-income students, students of color, and other students whose needs historically have not been well met. We are a team of professionals from many backgrounds, including former teachers. We are researchers, thought leaders, tool-builders, and on-the-ground consultants who work with leading education reformers.

Learn more about an Opportunity Culture on the [OpportunityCulture.org](#) website, which provides free Opportunity Culture tools, educator [videos](#) and [columns](#), and [instructional leadership and excellence resources](#). Funding for development of resources to help schools design and implement Opportunity Culture models and support teachers taking on new roles has been provided by [national foundations](#). Hear directly from educators who have worked in Opportunity Culture schools in [columns](#) published on national and regional news sites.

For more information, please visit [www.OpportunityCulture.org](#). To arrange an interview with Public Impact, contact Sharon Keschull Barrett at Sharon.Barrett@publicimpact.com; 919.590.4154.

About US PREP

The University-School Partnerships for the Renewal of Educator Preparation (US PREP) National Center provides on-the-ground support and services to a coalition of university-based teacher preparation programs. The current coalition comprises 15 school-university partners with a common mission of attracting, training and retaining high-quality, racially diverse teachers for underserved communities across the country. Our ultimate goal is to positively impact K–12 students by building teacher candidate content knowledge and competency to meet ALL students where they are and advance their learning by giving them what they need — especially focused on historically underserved students, such as Black, Latinx, Native American, and/or economically disadvantaged students.

In US PREP, coalition members share teacher preparation program goals. Members are committed to:

- Building teacher candidate competencies to meet the needs of all students, especially our historically underserved students
- Using data to support continuous improvement efforts
- Supporting teacher educators with preparing novices to work with all students, especially our historically underserved students
- Building strong partnerships with schools in order to meet the needs of the P-12 students in our communities

To learn more, visit [www.usprepnationalcenter.com](#), which provides [research and publications](#), [resources and tools](#), and stories from the coalition for educator preparation programs, school leaders, and policy makers to better the preparation of teachers in our most underserved schools.

To arrange an interview with US PREP, contact Sarah Beal at Sarah.Beal@ttu.edu.