



News Release

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Texas Initiative to Add Paid, Financially Sustainable Opportunity Culture Teacher Residencies Expands

CHAPEL Hill, N.C.—Bringing a fresh approach to teacher training, five more Texas school districts will be providing yearlong, paid teacher residencies on teaching teams led by excellent teachers in the 2021–22 school year, by implementing [Opportunity Culture roles](#) in partnership with local universities and [US PREP National Center](#) (University-School Partnerships for the Renewal of Educator Preparation).

The national Opportunity Culture [initiative](#), led by Public Impact, is now in more than 45 districts and charter school organizations in 10 states. Opportunity Culture teaching roles extend the reach of excellent teachers and their teams to more students, for more pay, within recurring budgets. Two of those districts, Ector County and Midland ISDs in west Texas, began Opportunity Culture implementation in 16 schools in fall 2020, placing 15 residents from the University of Texas Permian Basin on Opportunity Culture teams. Ector County and Midland will expand this work to 18 more schools in 2021–22.

As more Texas districts join this initiative, Public Impact projects that 450 slots will be created for teacher residents over the next two years.

These districts are preparing to implement their Opportunity Culture plans in 2021–22:

- Aldine ISD and Klein ISD, working with the [University of Houston](#) and [Sam Houston State University](#)
- El Paso ISD, working with the [University of Texas at El Paso](#)
- La Vega ISD and Waco ISD, working with [Texas Tech University](#) and [Tarleton State University](#)

Additionally, Spring Branch ISD, which has been an Opportunity Culture district since 2017, will place paid, yearlong residents in Opportunity Culture schools in 2021–22, working with the University of Houston.

See page 2 for details on and links to each district.

Residents play critical roles on Opportunity Culture 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. Residents in Ector County and Midland ISDs earn a full-time salary of \$24,000 plus full benefits.

US PREP National Center is a coalition of 22 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, universities spend three years piloting, scaling up, 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.

“Including residents as part of the Opportunity Culture models opens the door for districts to create robust teacher preparation pipelines for their schools, ensuring all new teachers are well prepared and ready to hit the ground running on day 1,” said Sarah Beal, executive director of US PREP. “It’s a win-win for all stakeholders—our schools, educator preparation programs, teacher candidates, and most importantly, our K–12 students.”

In Opportunity Culture districts, 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.

The design teams reallocate school budgets to permanently fund resident salaries and substantial pay supplements for those in Opportunity Culture roles, in contrast to temporary grant-funded programs. A grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation supports training for the school districts and their university partners to design and implement the Opportunity Culture model. Additional support comes from, among others, The Prentice Farrar Brown and Alline Ford Brown Foundation, Good Reason Houston, and Scharbauer Foundation. Funding from these sources will not be used for pay resident compensation or supplements for Opportunity Culture educator roles, but for planning and associated professional development.

In 2018, [researchers](#) at the Brookings Institution and American Institutes for Research released a study showing the effect Opportunity Culture roles 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. More recent data gathered by Public Impact shows that by the fourth year of implementation, as MCLs reach more students, Opportunity Culture schools' odds of high growth are more than 50 percent higher than schools without MCLs.

“We are so pleased to see enthusiasm continue to grow for Opportunity Culture implementation among districts and educator preparation providers in Texas,” said Stephanie Dean, Public Impact’s vice president of strategic policy advising. “These staffing models are a powerful combination of instructional and human capital strategies, designed to ensure every student has access to excellent teaching.”

[Aldine ISD](#), led by Superintendent LaTonya M. Goffney, has 82 schools and 4,503 teachers. They serve 63,324 students, of whom about 73 percent are Hispanic and 23 percent are Black. About 89 percent are economically disadvantaged.

“We are super-excited to be a part of Public Impact’s Opportunity Culture partnership with the University of Houston,” Goffney said. “Anything we can do to bring new and exciting ideas in teacher training is welcomed in Aldine ISD and we are honored to be one of seven school districts in Texas selected for this prestigious teacher training program.”

[Klein ISD](#), led by Superintendent Jenny McGown, has 50 schools and 3,537 teachers. They serve 52,846 students, of whom about 44 percent are Hispanic, 28 percent are white, 15 percent are Black, and 8 percent are Asian. About 49 percent are economically disadvantaged.

“I am so excited for Klein ISD to be a part of this Opportunity Culture initiative and its innovative approach to extending the reach of talented teachers,” McGown said. “This is one more way to help ensure that every student has access to excellent and equitable learning opportunities. I look forward to strengthening a best-in-class teacher leadership pipeline by recruiting strong teacher candidates and retaining strong teacher-leaders, as well as building even stronger relationships with our university partners.”

Aldine and Klein ISDs are working with the University of Houston and Sam Houston State University.

“We know that the best preparation future teachers can have is achieved by spending quality time in the field working alongside an effective mentor teacher for an entire school year,” said Amber Thompson, associate chair for teacher education at the University of Houston. “However, this can create hardship for students who must work to support themselves and their families. Partnering with districts to offer paid clinical residency experiences is a game-changer for us as we work to remove financial barriers for teacher candidates and provide them with access to high quality teacher preparation.”

“Our goal at Sam Houston State University is to prepare the very best teachers possible, teachers who are equipped and prepared to make a positive difference in the lives of students,” said Stacey Edmonson, dean of the College of Education. “Expanding our partnerships with Klein ISD and Aldine ISD through Opportunity Culture increases our ability to provide innovative, impactful ways for future teachers to have the dynamic preparation experiences needed to make this kind of difference. These partnerships open doors not only to expanding high-impact preparation for current teacher candidates, but also to increasing access to the teaching profession for future candidates.”

[El Paso ISD](#), led by Interim Superintendent Vince Sheffield, has 89 schools and about 3,900 teachers. They serve about 58,000 students, of whom 84 percent are Hispanic and 9 percent are white. About 76 percent of students are economically disadvantaged.

El Paso (EPISD) is working with the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). In a joint statement, Tamekia Love Brown, EPISD’s chief academic officer, and Clifton Tanabe, dean of the UTEP College of Education, said:

“The value in the partnership between UTEP and EPISD cannot be understated. Together, we are making a commitment to our community to ensure that every child has a Day One-ready teacher upon leaving the teacher education program at UTEP. Eighty-five percent of students who go to college out of EPISD go to UTEP. This work is an intentional investment in the teacher pipeline.

“Moreover, this work will increase the number of teachers serving in teacher leadership positions, increase the number of college students who experience a yearlong residency, increase the number of residents who transition into EPISD Day One-ready, reduce the achievement gap for EPISD’s learners, and enhance the partnership between public and higher education.”

[La Vega ISD](#), led by Superintendent Sharon M. Shields, has 5 schools and 210 teachers. They serve 3,100 students, of whom 57 percent are Hispanic and 26 percent are Black. About 89 percent meet the economically disadvantaged criteria.

“La Vega ISD is ecstatic about the opportunity to implement the Opportunity Culture model,” Shields said. “The Opportunity Culture mission and vision align very well with the districts. Components of the model support and expand on existing efforts in La Vega. The impact of OC in LVISD is limitless. The potential and opportunity to replicate our most effective teachers will further improve our instructional practices, leading to higher staff effectiveness and, therefore, student success.”

[Waco ISD](#), led by Superintendent Susan Kincannon, has 26 schools and 1006 teachers. They serve 14,475 students, of whom about 61 percent are Hispanic, 28 percent are Black, and 8 percent are white. About 91 percent are economically disadvantaged.

“A major challenge that we face is a higher teacher turnover rate than many other districts,” Kincannon said. “We hope that the Opportunity Culture model will help retain our best teachers by offering them new opportunities to grow as educational leaders and better prepare the new teachers who will follow them in the classroom.”

La Vega and Waco ISDs are working with Tarleton State University and Texas Tech University.

“When we dream of ways to build a coalition of teachers that represent the communities in which they will serve, and are ready day one—this is it,” said Amber Lynn Diaz, an assistant professor and head of the department of curriculum and instruction at Tarleton State’s College of Education. “Tarleton State University has been invested in excellent teacher preparation for a long time, producing quality teachers in today’s

classrooms. Our preparation program was defined by a set of faculty expectations, state requirements, and modeled the traditional teacher preparation mindset. We knew from our transformation efforts that we could do more, and allowed ourselves to dream big.”

“Texas Tech has a strong commitment to the communities in the Waco area, and our work with Opportunity Culture is a direct way to help provide support to partner school districts,” said Doug Hamman, chair of Texas Tech’s Teacher Education Department. “With the help of McLennan College, our colleagues at Tarleton State, and the guidance of directors at US PREP, we’re aiming to increase the number of new teachers prepared for this region and improve retention in meaningful ways.”

Midland ISD and Ector County ISD continue to expand their Opportunity Culture implementation, which began in the 2020–21 school year.

“This year, Midland ISD has been blessed to have the assistance of teacher residents in our Opportunity Culture schools,” said Chris Hightower, Midland’s Opportunity Culture director. “This amazing opportunity has put our district in a position to build a pipeline of well-trained educators with the assistance of our multi-classroom leaders and the instructional team in UTPB’s College of Education. Teacher residents will leave their positions able and ready to fully engage in improving the learning outcomes of students.”

Ashley Osborne, the Ector County ISD Opportunity Culture director, also highlights the multiple benefits to the district and its students.

“Ector County ISD is proud of the investment in teachers that Opportunity Culture has afforded our district,” Osborne said. “Opportunity Culture has not only provided amazing financial incentives for our best teachers to stay in the classroom, it has allowed us to extend the reach of these highly effective teachers by allowing them to serve more students and lead teams of adults. We benefit from their expertise and coaching abilities to grow teachers around them. In addition, adding the layer of teacher residents has proved to provide a robust pipeline of teachers into our organization. And better yet, the teacher residents are truly prepared to take on a classroom of their own after their yearlong residency, as they have had a year of learning and building their skillset with the support of the multi-classroom leader. The impact on ECISD students has been tremendous, and our district is grateful for the support from Public Impact and Opportunity Culture during this implementation!”

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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 the Opportunity Culture initiative on the [OpportunityCulture.org](https://www.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](https://www.opportunityculture.org). To arrange an interview with Public Impact, contact Sharon Keschull Barrett at sharon.barrett@publicimpact.com.

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 22 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.