**TRAINING, SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT**

Effective training of teachers must be based in sound adult learning theory and must allow for multiple opportunities for supported implementation of new practices or ideas. Previous models of professional development relied heavily upon facilitator led, lecture-style training sessions that have not proven effective in making the changes in adult behavior and teaching practice that are required to significantly improve outcomes for students with disabilities. TEA will help ensure the availability of effective models of educator support and training that include face-to-face interactions with expert trainers but more importantly, allow for adequate space for coaching and professionally reflective practices. This will be done using multiple formats including in-person face-to-face sessions and distance learning opportunities. Technology will be leveraged to provide equitable access to high-quality training for educators in even the most geographically remote LEAs. Professional development should focus on effective implementation of practice rather than on seat time.

**Action Steps for TEA**

1. **Additional Evaluation Capacity:** As described in the section on Identification, TEA will dedicate technical assistance and resources to ensure the availability of bilingual evaluators, educational diagnosticians, and school psychologists in the short-term (2018). This could be done through the utilization of inter-local cooperation agreements through the Education Service Centers to facilitate deployment of existing evaluators, diagnosticians, and psychologists to LEAs and charter schools with shortages that affect timely initial evaluations and reevaluations. TEA will also coordinate with professional organizations of evaluators, educational diagnosticians, and school psychologists to develop a system for ensuring access to evaluators across the state, especially in rural areas.
2. **Professional Development:** TEA will create and execute statewide professional development for all educators (all education, special education, and others), structured initially as a training institute for teachers around the state, and which will include ongoing follow up through year- round support and modules. The content of this professional development will include elements both for inclusive practices and instructional techniques as well as broader identification and related Child Find practices. The content development would be informed by the perspectives of educators, students with disabilities, and field experts, as well as feedback and data gathered to date. For example, TEA will (re)train teachers/administrators on use of Rtl strategies with an emphasis on consistent procedures and practices across the state. TEA will include training related to Section 504, especially as it relates to the differences between Section 504 and IDEA, and considerations for appropriate placement. TEA will also address appropriate dyslexia identification and placement of students, and other best practices as outlined in the Dyslexia Handbook: Procedures Concerning Dyslexia and Related Disorders (Dyslexia Handbook). This training would launch in Summer 2019, be conducted through third parties, and require significant stakeholder feedback, including students, educators, parents, and administrators. In order to focus on impact, participants would likely be required to demonstrate content proficiency and implementation before being noted as having participated in the full program.
3. **Child Find Resource Development (CA: 3.c.):** TEA will release an RFP to create a suite of

resources which would describe the differences between RtI, the state dyslexia program (for dyslexia or dyslexia-related needs), Section 504, and the IDEA. Resource development will happen in conjunction with extensive stakeholder feedback. Guidance and resources will include how and when school staff and parents of children suspected of having a disability may request interventions and/or services, as well as time lines, forms, relatable and understandable translation of federal and state statute, etc. Resources may be available both online and in hard copy, for LEA and school personnel as well as for parents. The RFP may further require the awardee to develop a system of resource dissemination, which may include a plan to conduct online training sessions for parents and administrators (on-demand modules which can be utilized for in-person trainings across the state).

1. **Expert Support:** The existing call center will be strengthened to include access to state-funded experts in exceptional student cases, as well as a set of tools to support planning and resource allocation activities within the context of best practices. The call center will expedite significant concerns and complaints, for escalated investigation or inquiry.
2. **The Texas Dyslexia Handbook (CA: 3.a.):** The State Board of Education (SBOE) is in the process of considering amendments to current administrative rules for students with dyslexia and related disorders. Currently, the rule requires LEAs to implement procedures for identifying a student with dyslexia or a related disorder and for providing appropriate instructional services to the student according the strategies and techniques described in the Dyslexia Handbook. Administrative rule amendments are expected to clarify that to support and maintain full educational opportunity for students with dyslexia and related disorders, LEAs must provide each student with dyslexia or a related disorder access to each program under which the student might qualify for services. Amended rules are expected to more specifically outline steps that must be taken before implementing identification or evaluation procedures. Additionally, the proposed rule is expected to include more specific requirements for parent education programs. The SBOE has asked TEA staff to work on a proposal for updates to the Dyslexia Handbook. TEA began this process by soliciting input from stakeholders on areas that need updates and/or clarification. Small topic-specific committees will be convened to review input and develop recommendations for updates based on stakeholder input. Committee work will include clarifying the difference between dyslexia and dyslexia-related services, IDEA, Section 504, and RtI, as well as guidance regarding provision of the most appropriate services for each individual student. Committee work will also address guidance for LEA implementation of the required screening of all students at the end of kindergarten and grade 1 as required by legislation passed by the 85th Texas legislature in 2017. Committees will include representatives from K-12 education, higher education/researchers, learning centers, advocacy organizations/parents, and diagnosticians. Updates to the handbook are expected to be approved by the SBOE no later than September 2018.
3. **Dyslexia-Specific Support:** The educational needs of students with dyslexia vary greatly among students and can be fluid throughout a student's educational career. It is critical that such variance is reflected in the services provided to these students. TEA will improve services for students with dyslexia by providing LEAs with improved training regarding the interplay between the state's dyslexia program, services provided under Section 504, and services provided by special education, as well as how students with dyslexia should be effectively served in these programs commensurate with individual students' needs. When provided with high expectations and appropriately designed instruction, students with dyslexia can achieve academically at, or above, the level of their peers who are not identified with dyslexia. It is incumbent upon the state to ensure that LEAs are effectively supported in implementing services for these vulnerable students.
4. **Dyslexia and Related Disorders Reporting Study:** TEA is in the process of contracting for a study on the reporting of students with dyslexia and related disorders through PEIMS. The objective of this project is to examine how LEAs identify and report students as having dyslexia or related disorders. The project calls for the following:
   1. Policy and literature review documenting the history and current status of dyslexia requirements in Texas, as well as a review of federal and state requirements and policy regarding identifying and reporting students with dyslexia in public education;
   2. Summary of research regarding the true approximate percentage of students in public education that are identified as having dyslexia or related disorders;
   3. Data analysis to determine how many students are identified as having dyslexia or related disorders and whether any other factors such as LEA demographics, student characteristics, or available resources are correlated with this identification;
   4. Analysis describing the extent to which students identified and reported as having dyslexia or a related disorder are also identified and reported as receiving special education services; and the extent to which students identified and reported as receiving special education services are identified and reported as having dyslexia or a related disorder;
   5. Examination of the procedures used by LEAs to identify and report students with dyslexia or a related disorder. The examination may use surveys and interviews of LEAs to gather information and insight on past and current identification and reporting practices. The examination may include an estimate of the extent to which those practices vary across LEAs and identify barriers LEAs experience in identifying and reporting students with dyslexia and related disorders.

The project is intended to culminate in the development of a set of recommendations for TEA, ESCs, LEAs, and/or campus personnel to ensure proper, accurate, and prompt identification and reporting of students who have dyslexia or related disorders.

1. **Finance System:** TEA will create a handbook for understanding of the school finance system related to special education.
2. **Educator Preparation:** TEA will explore options related to possible improvements in educator preparation and continuing education, in partnership with the State Board for Educator Certification. TEA will explore updates to the continuing education requirements for certified teachers in Texas to include a more explicit focus on special education practices.
3. **Sufficient Special Education Staffing:** TEA will convene a special education personnel forum and will invite the State Board for Educator Certification, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Colleges of Education from across the state, and professional organizations. This policy forum may discuss and develop a report with recommendations about how Texas will meet the staffing needs in special education.
4. **Governance:** TEA will explore the development of training resources for school boards on special education, with a focus on monitoring outcomes and program implementation fidelity.
5. **Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) Partnership - General Workforce Resources and General Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Available to Individuals with Disabilities** : TEA will continue its collaboration with TWC to determine partnerships related to workforce preparation and readiness. These training resources may also include access to basic education skills, as well as basic job preparation skills training. VR helps eligible Texans with disabilities prepare for, obtain, retain or advance in competitive integrated employment, which is employment in full or part- time jobs with work settings, wages, benefits and advancement opportunities.