

Supply and Demand on the Educator Workforce in Texas

Texas currently faces a significant teacher shortage. This shortage can be attributed to a growing student population, a decline in teacher preparation enrollments in key subject areas, and teacher attrition. Data shows that shortages of teachers are a much more acute problem in economically disadvantaged communities serving higher numbers of students of color (Learning Policy Institute, 2020). Additionally, in West Texas, surges in the population due to an oilfield boom causes an influx of families with children, needing K-12 educational services. The approved state-level shortage areas in Texas for the 2020-2021 academic year were: Bilingual/English as a Second Language and Special Education, for Elementary and Secondary Levels (including Technology Applications and Computer Science), and Career and Technical Education and Mathematics, both for Secondary Levels (Texas Education Agency). For the 2021-2022 school year, there continues to be a shortage for Texas in these same areas (Department of Education). There is a shortage of math teachers in 42 states and 3 territories. In addition, there is a teacher shortage in special education at all grade levels in 46 states and 3 territories (Department of Education).

According to Big 2 News, Ector County Independent School District (ECISD) started the 2019-2020 academic school year with a shortage of 349 teachers. To try to mitigate the number of vacancies, the school district looked at various efforts, such as long-term substitute teachers, electronic learning, revised student: teacher ratios and enticements for teachers to pick up extra classes. Recruitment efforts have continued, but more teachers are needed (August 20, 2019). There has been a substantial increase in population over the last ten years in the Odessa College service area. This population increase has strained educational services, particularly due to the increase in absolute numbers and the relatively young working age of the population.

In 2019, Odessa College partnered with The University of Texas of the Permian Basin (UTPB) in an OC2UTPB 3-year teacher pathway to accelerate teacher certifications and getting qualified teachers into the classroom. The service area for OC includes 13 counties, covering 33,000 square miles, and is the largest service area for any community college in Texas.

There are approximately 127 Educator Preparation Program (EPP) providers within Texas and of those, approximately 55 are alternative EPPs. Currently, there are 4 EPP programs within the Odessa College service area, serving multiple counties. Of those, 2 are offered in Ector County. EPPs offer multiple pathways to teacher certification – traditional and non-traditional. The traditional path requires a bachelor's degree, post-baccalaureate certification that includes graduate coursework.

Alternative Certification Programs (ACP) provides a non-traditional route to certification that in some instances allow individuals to teach while completing the requirements. Candidates for alternative programs must have at least a bachelor's degree, preferably, with a major in a subject area. Alternative Certification Programs will play significant role in helping to meet the demand for teachers.

According to the Texas Education Agency, in 2018-2019, approximately 23,733 new teachers were prepared. Of that number, 49.2 % were prepared by an Alternative Certification Program (Texas Education Agency Update, October 2019). Odessa College would like the opportunity to provide an Educator Preparation Program which will offer an alternative path to teacher certification. The program will help fill the growing demand for qualified teachers. Unqualified and unprepared teachers are less effective on average and are also 2-3 times more likely to

leave teaching than fully qualified teachers (Learning Policy Institute, 2020). Odessa College is in the position to provide a high-quality, low-cost alternative path to teacher certification. For these reasons, this program will be attractive to individuals who want to enter the teaching profession.

An Alternative Certification Program at Odessa College will prepare to serve the ever-changing demographics of students in Ector County. Currently, new teachers in Texas are more likely to work in schools with diverse populations of students (Texas Education Agency Update, October 2019). A diverse population might include students who are economically disadvantaged, academically challenged and English Language learners. These initial paths to certification will position OC to meet the needs of independent school districts across Ector County.

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