Leadership in Learning Organizations Capstone

Cooperating Teachers Matter:

Leveraging Work Motivation to Attract and Retain Cooperating Teachers to Train the Teachers of Tomorrow

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Abstract

Significant literature exists investigating the importance of clinical teaching during a teacher candidate's development – specifically, the clinical teaching placements of teacher candidates. However, an important perspective largely missing from the literature is that of the cooperating teachers. If the research is clear that being coached by a strong cooperating teacher is so productive for clinical teachers during their pre-service year, then why isn't this practice more common? This question is explored in further detail below.

This project explores findings through the lens of a quality improvement study – using qualitative and quantitative research techniques and methods to describe the role, experiences, and extrinsic and intrinsic motivations behind becoming a cooperating teacher within a large metropolitan PK-12 public North Texas school district. The project unearthed the barriers cooperating teachers experience that are structural in nature, and, through discovery, can largely be attributed to the school district itself. The project also offers insight and future considerations for the district to better understand what is necessary to develop a comprehensive Cooperating Teacher program.

Keywords

clinical teaching, cooperating teacher, educator preparation, teacher effectiveness, quality improvement, improvement science, work motivation

I. Executive Summary

This project examines a large PK-12 public school district located in a North Texas metropolitan area, the Dallas Independent School District ("Dallas ISD"). Serving nearly 155,000 students and employing over nearly 10,000 educators across 230 schools, Dallas ISD is the second-largest public-school district in Texas and the fourteenth largest district in the nation. While the district has experienced challenges over the course of the last decade, it has undergone significant improvement, moving from one of the lower performing districts in the state of Texas to one of the higher performing ones – particularly when factoring in its diverse student body.

Much of this progress is linked to a robust multi-year Improvement Plan process the Dallas ISD Board of Trustees initiated in 2017. Through this process, teacher recruitment strategies, compensation incentives, and, quality professional development for both novice and veteran teachers were named as areas needing improvement – which is significant given the strategic and financial investments in these areas the district has received over the last five years. Areas of improvement identified in the Dallas ISD Improvement Plan were also significant given they addressed challenges related to the district's approach to supporting its cooperating teachers (hereafter sometimes referred to as "CT(s)"). In this context, the district lacked a systematic and unified approach to supporting the holistic role of the CT – and as a result, failed to optimize the clinical teaching experience for pre-service teacher candidates. This approach also made it difficult for the district to retain as well as build a robust pipeline of strong CTs from year-to-year. In both cases, students' learning is jeopardized.

These challenges and Dallas ISD's current status as a significantly improved urban school district led me to review the literature on high quality CT models, qualities of effective teacher

preparation, and elements of work motivation. Additionally, I reviewed literature assessing various approaches to system improvement and improvement science within the context of schools and school districts. To frame an understanding of qualities of high-quality CT models, I drew upon the work of Wang and Odell (2002) and Clark et al., (2014) as well as work from leading organizations in this space such as National Center for Teacher Residencies, and, the Learning Policy Institute. These works highlight that while CTs are viewed as key partners in teacher preparation, there is little known about the reasons they choose to engage (or not) in the role – a central question this project seeks to answer. I also draw upon several works by Linda Darling-Hammond and colleagues to highlight the links between high quality teacher preparation and the role of the CT as well as the roles schools and school systems play in defining the CT experience. The work of Grant and Shin (2011) was a central focus of my literature review on work motivation and parallel project analysis examining the intrinsic and extrinsic factors leading to engagement in the CT role. Finally, I used the work of Bryk et al (2017) to give context to the principles that can be helpful in thinking of how to improve schools through the use of an improvement science framework.

Aligning the context, problem of practice, literature review and project framework, I established three research questions. First: What are the intrinsic or extrinsic motivators behind engaging in a cooperating teacher role? Second: How do school district and school leaders within Dallas ISD perceive their role in supporting cooperating teachers? The final research question asked: What are the barriers to becoming and succeeding as a cooperating teacher?

To investigate these questions in partnership with Dallas ISD, I used a quality improvement lens – leaning largely on qualitative research techniques and methods to describe the role,

experiences, and extrinsic and intrinsic motivations behind becoming a cooperating teacher from their perspective. I conducted my initial data collection using qualitative interviews from key stakeholder groups – including CTs, school principals, and, district leaders. I used thematic coding to extract ideas to further probe. I collected quantitative data through a survey which I developed to include a variety of response types. I conducted in-person interviews and focus groups throughout the fall and spring 2019-2020 academic year. However, the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted the (originally scheduled) end-of-year interviews.

Finding 1: Overall, intrinsic motivators influence teachers more than extrinsic ones when deciding whether to serve as a cooperating teacher.

The project results demonstrate that while extrinsic and intrinsic motivations often coexist for CTs, intrinsic motivators more heavily influence CTs when deciding whether to serve in that role. There is still room for further exploration on this – specifically as it relates to the generalizability of results across all Dallas ISD schools. Additionally, CTs clearly articulated the benefits of being provided with autonomy in the CT role. In this context specifically, CTs identified the level of freedom and discretion they had to perform the role in ways they found intrinsically motivating.

Finding 2: Although Dallas ISD does not have a comprehensive cooperating teacher selection process, teachers overwhelming exhibited many characteristics deemed necessary for success in that role.

The qualitative and quantitative data highlighted that over seventy percent of CTs embodied these core characteristics. However, it was neither conclusive, nor overtly evident that CTs, or, other district stakeholders were aware of the internal CT talent the project participants held. This is notable when discussed in alignment with other project findings and sheds light into future opportunities Dallas ISD has to leverage its existing CT talent pool.

Finding 3: Stakeholders are unclear and inconsistent concerning their expectations of cooperating teachers' roles and responsibilities.

With respect to the question of barriers that may exist and therefore, may be linked to CT success, results revealed lack of systems, structures, and, strategy at the district level. While there are several factors to consider, the results overwhelmingly point to district level obstacles and the need for a more clearly defined CT role and job description. The results also expose the lack of an intentional system and process for pairing CTs with clinical teachers.

Finding 4: Cooperating teacher experiences vary across campuses and geographic regions.

CT survey results and CT focus group interviews indicate that CT experiences varied across geographic regions within Dallas ISD. I gathered data focusing on better understanding CT motivations for assuming the role as well as district level structures that may hinder the CT experience. Dallas ISD is a very diverse district, and there appeared to be connections between CTs' experiences and their schools. This finding is consistent with historic disparities across the district among student academic performance and, among the allocation of district resources (human capital, economic, and physical). There is a need to further explore the specificity of each disparity as well as to better understand additional school level characteristics that may or may not impact the CT experience.

Based on these four primary findings, I make four recommendations to Dallas ISD to improve the experience of cooperating teachers across the district.

Recommendation 1: Institutionalize the Cooperating Teacher position as a formally recognized role within the district – clearly defining the roles and responsibilities.

Data revealed that participating stakeholders (CTs, Principals, and, District Leaders) are unclear about the roles and responsibilities of the CT. This uncertainty and inconsistency around

job function creates unnecessary barriers that can inhibit a CT's success. Dallas ISD must clearly define CT standards and CT competencies to clearly communicate those to prospective CTs and key stakeholders across the district which will help formalize the CT role, attract optimal candidates and increase the perceived and actual value this role serves as a key teacher training tool.

Recommendation 2: Establish a formal Dallas ISD-sponsored cooperating teacher program to support the recruitment, selection, and, ongoing development of cooperating teachers.

Research emphasizes that the degree of impact CTs have on pre-service teacher learning, efficacy, and effectiveness is as dependent upon CTs' capacity to teach and coach effectively as the coaching and mentoring supports provided to them by the preparation program and the district. Since CTs clearly play an instrumental and formal role in developing pre-service teachers competent and qualified to teach our students – they must also receive systematic and ongoing support. This can be acquired by Dallas ISD adopting standards for CTs that are competency and evidence-based to develop a meaningful and successful CT program.

Recommendation 3: Evaluate and redesign the use of CTs' time and school schedules to increase opportunities for professional learning and collaboration, including participation in professional learning communities, peer coaching and observations across classrooms, and collaborative planning.

Tasked to deliver differentiated, high-quality instruction that prepares students for the social and academic challenges in college and beyond, Dallas ISD should push their thinking on how they allocate time throughout the school day. Innovative school schedules should meet diverse student needs and ensure that all teachers are primed to deliver engaging, rigorous content. Dallas ISD will be most successful if they customize the use of time to meet content needs rather than adapting content to fit a fixed schedule.

Recommendation 4: Engage in this work collaboratively alongside and in partnership with Educator Preparation Programs and Institutions of Higher Education.

More than ever before, school districts are counting on collaborative partnerships that include states, education reform groups, philanthropy, teacher prep programs, and schools to improve teacher prep (National Center for Teacher Residencies, 2016). As Dallas ISD continues to engage in the work of improving the experiences of their CTs – which in turn, will improve the experiences of their pre-service teacher candidates, Dallas ISD should look towards effective partnerships and reach across the aisle to tackle this complex work alongside others in the field.

Like all projects, this one must acknowledge its limitations, and jointly take into consideration when evaluating project recommendations. The limitations include the project's heavy reliance on interview and focus group data, potential bias as the result of purposive sampling techniques, and, the researcher's/author's noted past engagement with the district. The project also is limited in its extensive statistical analysis. However, it can still be suggested with some degree of confidence, and through connecting these results to the literature, that Dallas ISD should enact several systematic recommendations that provide insight and future considerations for the district to better understand what is necessary to develop a comprehensive Cooperating Teacher program. Given the importance of strong CTs for new teacher effectiveness, improving the CT process and experience should improve the quality of new teachers within the district.

II. Introduction

A growing body of evidence indicates the need for strong educator preparation. According to Desiree Carver-Thomas and Linda Darling-Hammond (2017), not only does quality educator preparation have links to lower rates of teacher attrition, it also has a direct impact on student academic achievement. In their text, *Linking Teacher Evaluation and Student Learning*, authors Pamela D. Tucker and James H. Stronge thoroughly articulate the transformative power of an effective teacher – citing that students who have highly effective teachers for three years in a row will score fifty percentile points higher on achievement tests than students with less effective teachers three years in a row (Tucker, P. D., & Stronge, J. H., 2005). Educational researchers have for decades extensively researched educator preparation, and its (theoretical) impact on teacher, school, and district performance. As explained by subject-matter expert Richard Ingersoll from the University of Pennsylvania: "few educational problems have received more attention in recent times than the failure to ensure that elementary and secondary classrooms are staffed with qualified teachers" (Ingersoll, 2001, pp. 500).

In order to strengthen educator preparation, programs have been called to intensify and lengthen clinical teaching experiences using different models – such as year-long experiences, teacher residency programs, and, fifth-year internships (to name a few) (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2020). In these intensified, lengthy, and fully immersed field experiences, cooperating teachers have been identified as a promising lever linked not only to enhancing the clinical teaching experience, but also, to positively impacting the effectiveness of the clinical teacher themselves once they become employed as a teacher of record (Ronfeldt, M., Bardelli, E., Truwit, M., Mullman, H., Schaaf, K., & Baker, J. C., 2020). While the link between the instructional effectiveness of clinical teachers and their cooperating teachers is firmly grounded in research,

there remains a limited research base that provides insight or perspective directly from the cooperating teacher. Furthermore, there is a limited understanding of the motivations that drive a cooperating teacher to serve (or not serve) in this critical role. This is significant given the challenges the focus district of this project experiences attracting and retaining cooperating teachers and even more significant given what we know about the impact cooperating teachers have on future teacher effectiveness.

This project seeks to better understand both the motivations leading to cooperating teachers serving in these roles as well as the organizational barriers that may exist inhibiting the cooperating teacher's future participation. Through exploration of these two components, the project provides recommendations that addresses the central question of – *"why is the placement of clinical teachers with strong cooperating teachers not common practice within the school district of focus?"* This central question is raised under the premise and the assumption that this practice is not common throughout the district in its current state.

A secondary goal of this project is to provide a framework rooted in improvement science that can be used by the focal school district to inform their approach to this work moving forward (Byrk, 2017). A series of stakeholder group interviews, focus groups, and, surveys are used in order to unpack perceptions of the role of the cooperating teacher embedded within the district. The qualitative data produced from these tools led to project findings, next steps, and recommendations. The extent to which other districts have taken an active role in defining the cooperating teacher experience is unclear, but the experience of the focus district of the project suggests that playing an active role in the process can be a positive step toward improving the training received by both the pre-serve teacher candidate and by the cooperating teacher.

It is the intent of this project that the findings and recommendations presented can guide school districts and educational practitioners to better understand what the project uncovers as the "systematic challenges" facing cooperating teachers within school districts.

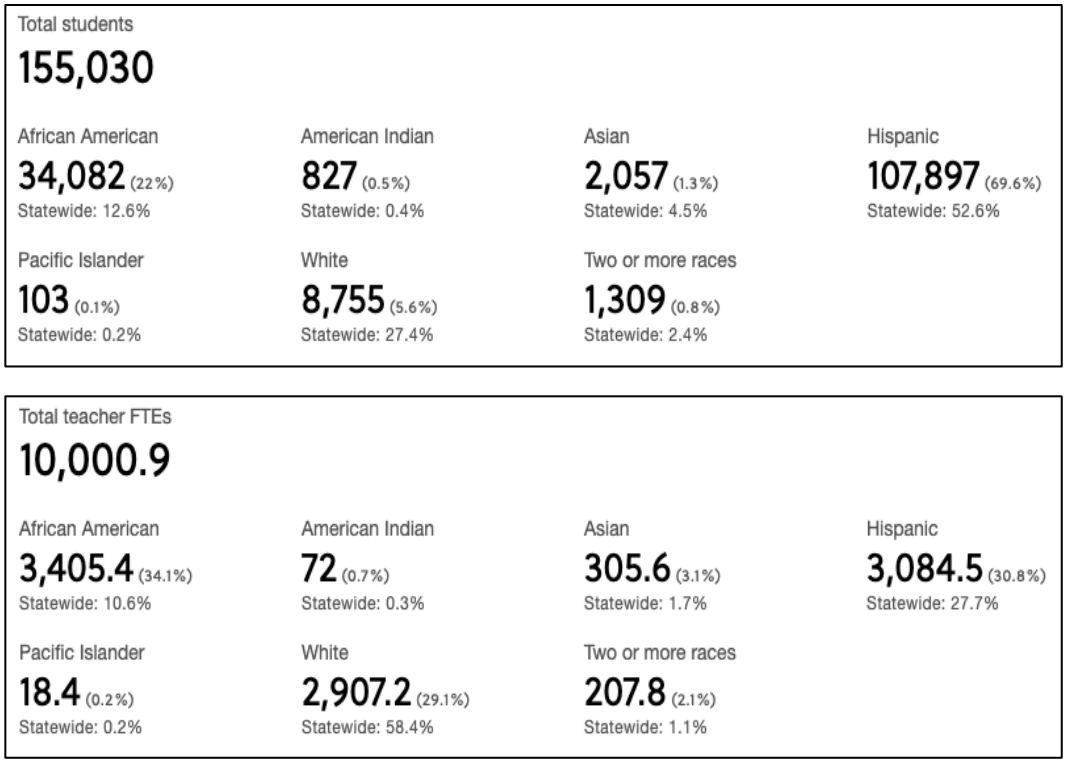
III. Project Context and Project Partner

The organizational context for the qualitative quality improvement project is the Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD), located in Dallas, Texas. The Dallas ISD sits in the heart of North Central Texas - a large, diverse, and dynamic metropolitan with a population of 6.5 million spanning twelve counties. Dallas ISD comprises 384 square miles and encompasses the cities of Dallas, Cockrell Hill, Seagoville, Addison, Wilmer and parts of Carrollton, Cedar Hill, DeSoto, Duncanville, Farmers Branch, Garland, Grand Prairie, Highland Park, Hutchins, Lancaster, and Mesquite. The district is the second-largest public-school district in Texas and the 14th-largest district in the nation.

Figure 1: Dallas ISD Boundary Map (*Source: Texas Tribune, 2019)*

Dallas ISD serves approximately 155,000 students in pre-kindergarten through the twelfth grade throughout 230 schools and employs nearly 22,000 dedicated professionals – 10,000 of whom are teachers. Over sixty-five percent of Dallas ISD teacher are teachers of color – which is significant given what is known about the importance of diversifying the teaching profession and its correlation to the academic and social emotional success of African American and Latino students (Gershenson, Hart, Hyman, Lindsay, and Nicholas, 2018). More than ninety-three percent of students in the district are students of color and eighty-seven percent of students are considered economically disadvantaged. The demographic breakdown of students and teachers in Dallas is depicted in the figures below:

Figure 2: Dallas ISD Student & Teacher Demographic Information



(Source: Texas Tribune, 2019)

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local community. The district Over the last five years, Dallas ISD has rewritten a positive narrative. In this context, Dallas ISD has seen continual gains in student achievement and an increase in public support from the local community. has moved from one of the lower performing districts in the state of Texas to one of the higher performing districts – particularly when factoring in its diverse student body. The district received an accountability rating of 'B,' for the 2018-2019 school year while 62.9% of students were considered at risk of dropping out of school. 42.8% of students were enrolled in bilingual and English language learning programs (Texas Tribune Database, 2019). This is a dramatic improvement from just seven years ago when nearly one-fifth (forty-three schools) of the schools in the district were considered 'failing schools' by the state for not meeting accountability measures. Only three schools in the district did not meet state accountability measures in 2018-2019 (Texas Tribune Database, 2019).

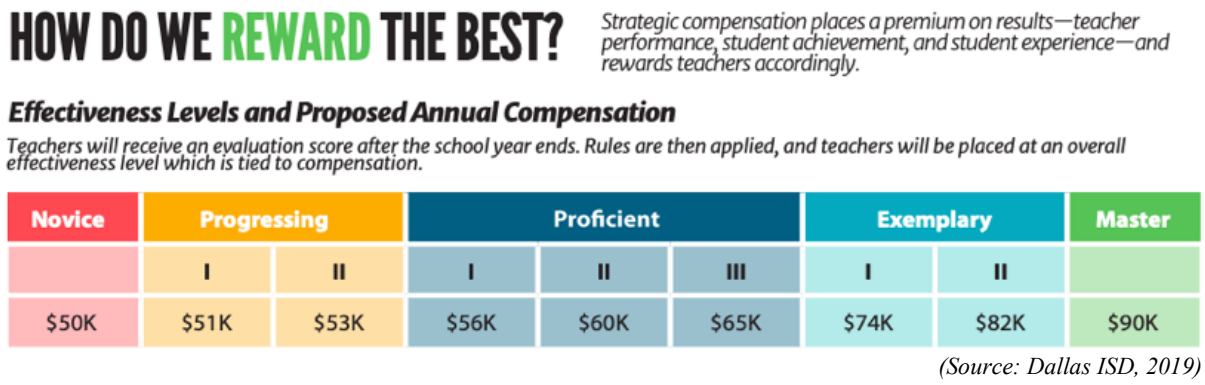
Three Dallas ISD schools rank among the 2020 Best High Schools "Top 20 List", according to *U.S. News & World Report*. The School for the Talented and Gifted (TAG) at Yvonne A. Ewell Townview Center sits at number six, nationwide, while Irma Lerma Rangel Young Women's Leadership School ranks tenth, making Texas the only state to have two schools secure a spot in the top ten. The School of Science and Engineering (SEM) also housed at Yvonne A. Ewell Townview Center ranks number seventeen.

Additional accolades by the district include: (i) increasing the number of children reading at grade level by the end of third grade by ten percent - the highest rate of improvement for any school district in Dallas County; (ii) the successful passage of two large bond projects - delivering what was a $4 billion vote of confidence from the public to invest in much needed capital improvement projects across the district; (iii) continued large investments by Dallas ISD in early

learning to support full-day pre-kindergarten; and; (iv) the development and implementation of a comprehensive teacher evaluation system where high performing teachers can each earn upwards of $90,000 in salary annually.

Differing greatly from the 'system of old', the evaluation system includes both qualitative and quantitative measures in its structure – allowing for a level of objectivity so teachers understand upfront a set of clearly defined outcomes driving their evaluation. This evaluation system, the "Teacher Excellence Initiative" ("TEI") allows the district to focus on investing in its people and to develop their human capital. An overview of key TEI attributes the district highlights are displayed in a TEI Infographic below:

Figure 3: Teacher Excellence Initiative Infographic



(Source: Dallas ISD, 2019)

Like most Dallas ISD innovations over the past decade, the TEI initiative is driven by district leaders and aligned with the district's annual improvement plan process. Per district policy, "Dallas ISD shall have a district Improvement Plan that is developed, evaluated, and revised annually, in accordance with district policy, by the superintendent with the assistance of the district-level committee" (hereinafter referred to as the "Improvement Plan"; Dallas ISD Board Documents, 2019). The purpose of the Improvement Plan is to guide district and campus staff in

ways that enhance the academic performance for all student groups, including students in special education programs, to meet state standards with respect to the achievement indicators. The Improvement Plan includes actionable and measurable strategic initiatives to improve student academic achievement. Notwithstanding, it is also a working document that allows for strategic adjustments to be made based on data trends and ongoing feedback from stakeholders.

In 2016, the Dallas ISD Board of Trustees held a series of workshops from January through March to consider the state of the district and plan for future needs and improvement. Throughout those conversations, the Board reviewed current district data on student performance, employee recruitment, performance and retention, student enrollment and attendance, as well as stakeholder satisfaction. As a result of those workshops and ongoing conversations during the 2016-17 school year, the 2017-18 school year, and the 2018-19 school year, prior to the beginning of the 2019-2020 academic year, the Board formally adopted a revised five-year plan that identified four student-centric goals and one parent/family engagement goal:

> **Goal 1:** Student achievement on state assessments in *Domain I*[1] academic categories will increase from 39 percent to 47 percent;
>
> **Goal 2:** Student participation in extracurricular or co-curricular activities will increase from 59.0 percent to 78.0 percent by 2022;
>
> **Goal 3:** The percent of graduates who are college, career, or military-ready (CCMR) from Domain 1 will increase from 45.0 percent to 49.0 percent by 2022;
>
> **Goal 4:** Student achievement on the third-grade state assessment in reading at the *Meets*[2] performance level or above will increase from 35.6 percent to 45.0 percent by 2022; and,
>
> **Goal 5:** Ensure active parent and family engagement strategies are in place to foster meaningful participation, feedback, and collaboration with parents and families.

[1] Dallas Independent School District Improvement Plan 2019-2020, pp. 26: https://www.dallasisd.org/Page/6952
[2] Dallas Independent School District Improvement Plan 2019-2020: pp.34: https://www.dallasisd.org/Page/6952

The Dallas ISD Board of Trustees identified the following problem statement (one of several problem statements) to address student achievement related goals addressed by Goal 1, Goal 3, and Goal 4: "Attracting and retaining the highest performing principals and teachers to the lowest performing schools remains a problem." Through the Improvement Plan process, the Board also established that "teacher recruitment strategies, compensation incentives, and, quality professional development for teachers needed to improve" – naming these each contributing root cause factors aligned with the problem statement. Each of these root causes – addressing issues related to teacher recruitment, compensation incentives, and, quality professional development are uniquely related to the scope of this project.

The need to address these issues is also unearthed through the analysis of certain educational data specific to the challenges the region faces in attracting, preparing, and, retaining top educators. A 2017 Bain & Co. study produced for the Commit Partnership in Dallas found that:

- The Number of Texas four-year university graduates is **decreasing nearly 2%** per year;
- Student interest in education-based careers is **down 16%** since 2010, and **only 20%** of students interested in education-based careers meet ACT benchmarks across science, reading, English, and mathematics;
- The teaching profession is currently viewed unfavorably among college students due to **low perception of salary, career trajectory, and lack of prestige.**

These issues are magnified in Dallas ISD – where the district has had an especially difficult time retaining teachers with three or less years of experience – losing on average of fifteen to twenty percent of these teachers each year over the last five years. In its efforts to satisfy all CT placement requests, a perennial challenge for Dallas ISD has been simply finding enough

cooperating teachers. In its current state, there are no tangible incentives provided by Dallas ISD to CTs.

To this tune, Dallas ISD has witnessed their cooperating teacher pool decrease fifteen percent from academic year 2018-2019 to 2019-2020. In 2018-2019, 25 different educator preparation programs (traditional undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, and alternative certification program) prepared nearly 250 new teachers for the district with the help of over 200 cooperating teachers. CTs in Dallas ISD are selected by the district in a variety of ways - ranging from asking pre-service teachers to locate their own school placements and CTs, partnering with select district schools and their administrators who determine CTs, reaching out directly to previous CTs with whom the district has prior experience or relationships, or, working with the educator preparation programs to help identify CTs. The selection processes are typically not managed or centralized at the district level, however Dallas ISD does have a centralized registration process for CTs which allows Dallas ISD to maintain records on CTs, their pre-service teacher candidates, and their educator preparation programs. During the 2019 spring semester, 198 teachers served in the CT role in Dallas.

Because of this, there was an opportunity as a student in the Peabody College of Education and Development at Vanderbilt University to conduct an improvement project in partnership with Dallas ISD. The project hones in on a specific area of the educator preparation cycle that is widely cited in academic research as playing an instrumental role in educator preparation and educator effectiveness – the cooperating teacher. *Given the importance of strong CTs for new teacher effectiveness, improving the CT process and experience should improve the quality of new teachers within the district.*

IV. A Review of the Literature

Cooperating teachers (CTs) are one of the most acknowledged yet least understood contributors to the clinical teaching experience (Clift & Brady, 2005; Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1993; Grossman, 2010; Guyton & McIntyre, 1990; National Research Council, 2010; Zeichner, 1980). The notion that preservice teachers learn to teach in their CTs classrooms' during clinical teaching has been regarded as a capstone experience in teacher education programs over the decades (Anderson & Stillman, 2013; Veenman, 1984; Wideen et al., 1998). CTs are frequently found to play the most influential role in preservice teachers' learning to teach in their program (Clarke et al., 2014; Wang & Odell, 2002). Despite being viewed as key partners in educator preparation, we know little about the reasons why CTs choose to engage (or not engage) in this role.

Teachers can have profound effects on students. This is intuitively obvious, but also supported by a large amount of empirical research demonstrating teachers' influence on academic achievement and longer-term life outcomes, such as college-going behavior and labor market earnings. Although evidence indicates that teachers tend to become more skilled with additional experience, particularly early in their careers much of a new teacher's ability appears to be predicted by the quality of their training, and, by the effectiveness of their CT (Rivkin et al., 2005; Rockoff, 2004). This points to the importance of how to most effectively pair cooperating teachers with pre-service teacher candidates and understanding the motivation(s) of cooperating teachers to take on these responsibilities.

Work Motivation

Work motivation is an important phenomenon for both scholars and practitioners to understand (Grant, A. M., & Shin, J. 2011). Work motivation is described as the psychological processes that direct, energize, and maintain action toward a job, task, role, or project (Campbell & Pritchard, 1976; Kanfer, 1990). According to Grant and Shin, scholars have distinguished between two principal types of work motivation theories: endogenous process theories and exogenous cause theories (Katzell & Thompson, 1990). Endogenous process theories focus primarily on the psychological mechanisms that explain motivation inside an employee's heads, while exogenous cause theories focus primarily on external forces related to work motivation that can be changed and altered (Grant, A. M., & Shin, J. 2011).

In the work domain, researchers have proposed that since external rewards and incentives can be pervasive, extrinsic and intrinsic motivations often coexist (Adler & Chen, 2009; Staw, 1984). If this is true, employees might be expected to invest more time and energy in their work when they find it both intrinsically motivating and can identify or integrate it with their values. Some studies also demonstrate that intrinsic motivation is associated with higher levels of creativity (e.g., Amabile, 1985; Amabile, Hill, Hennessey, & Tighe, 1994), whereas others have shown weak or nonsignificant associations (e.g., Dewett, 2007; Perry-Smith, 2006; Shalley & Perry-Smith, 2001). In light of these conflicting findings, George (2007, pp.445) observed that "rather than assume that intrinsic motivation underlies creativity, researchers need to tackle this theorized linkage more directly and in more depth." Organizational scholars need new theoretical perspectives and empirical investigations to deepen knowledge of the motivational processes that drive creativity (Shalley et al., 2004).

Little research has explored the costs of intrinsic motivation in organizational settings. Research suggests that intrinsic motivation is less effective for performance in tasks that are simple or require considerable self-control and discipline (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Koestner & Losier, 2002). Scholars have begun to speculate that intrinsic motivation can distract attention away from organizational goals, or at the very least, is not necessarily aligned with them (Grant & Berry, 2010; Osterloh & Frey, 2000). In addition, scholars have raised concerns that employees can be intrinsically motivated toward activities that are directly destructive or harmful, such as theft and sabotage (Osterloh & Frey, 2000). As we noted for goal-setting, more research is needed on the contingencies that affect whether and when intrinsic motivation is conducive to effective task performance and organizational citizenship behaviors (Gagné & Deci, 2005).

The purpose of this project is not designed to be an exhaustive review of work motivation theory – as comprehensive literature on this topic exists. Rather, the goal is to provide an overview of core theoretical perspectives as they relate to motivation theory, highlight unanswered questions in this space, and, use a theoretical approach in order to better understand what ultimately becomes a systemic problem facing cooperating teachers, school districts, and, educator preparation programs. Because research has examined the motivational effects of redesigning jobs to connect employees to their impact on the beneficiaries of their work— exploration of this dynamic is especially relevant in the context of the cooperating teacher role. As will be discussed in more detail later, this opens up the opportunity to understand how the cooperating teacher role can (or needs to) be designed to enhance employee motivation.

Cooperating Teachers

Clinical teaching is widely regarded by teachers, teacher education practitioners, and researchers as the key formative experience that preservice teachers have before entering the teacher labor market (Anderson & Stillman, 2013). The quantitative studies that connect clinical teaching experiences to teachers' in-service outcomes show that various aspects of those experiences matter. For example, Boyd et al. (2009) found a positive association between the level of involvement a educator preparation program had in a teacher candidate's field experience(s) and their effectiveness as first year teachers (as measured by value added metrics). Rondfeldt (2015) found that placing student teachers in higher functioning schools leads to better outcomes for those student teachers who enter the teaching profession in terms of retention and student achievement. Goldhaber, Krieg, and Theobald (2017) found that teachers tend to be more effective when their school's demographics are similar to those of the school where they completed their clinical teaching.

As mentioned, recent evidence suggests that the person who serves as the mentor, or "cooperating teacher," also matters. For example, Matsko et al. (2018) found that teacher candidates feel better prepared when their CTs received better performance ratings. Ronfeldt, Matsko, Nolan, and Reininger (2018) noted a relationship between CTs' observational ratings and their student teachers' observational ratings as first-year teachers. Finally, Ronfeldt, Brockman, and Campbell (2018) found that both the observational ratings and value added of CTs predicts these same measures for student teachers who go on to teach themselves. However, these findings may only reflect correlational, rather than causal, relationships. In a recent randomized controlled trial, Ronfeldt et al. (2018) provided some evidence that these relationships are indeed causal:

teacher candidates randomly assigned to higher quality CTs reported receiving more and higher quality coaching during their clinical teaching internships.

Orland-Barak and Wang examine the CT role from the lens of a 'mentor' (2020). Examining the four existing approaches to teacher mentoring while training a student teacher, their work analyzes each approaches' focus and practice and identifies the major challenges of each approach in guiding preservice teachers to learn to teach (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2020). The terms 'mentor' and 'mentoring' are used frequently in the teacher education literature to refer to various individuals and processes that share the goal of improving a teacher's practice (Matsko, K.K., Ronfeldt, M., Greene Nolan H.L, Klugman, J., Reininger, M., Brockman S., 2018). One might serve as a mentor to, or engage in the mentoring of, a preservice teacher, a beginning teacher, or even a more experienced teacher—the terms are often used interchangeably across the continuum of teacher development. Exploring the role of the CT as a 'mentor' while important, is not the focus of this project.

In their research, Desiree Carver-Thomas & Linda Darling-Hammond (2017), acknowledge that numerous factors inhibit the overall experience and success of beginning teachers – ranging from school culture to new teacher support. For student achievement however, almost all of the studies connect student achievement outcomes for beginning teachers with the following solutions: 1) strong educator preparation, 2) formal new teacher induction and/or formal mentoring, and 3) presence of an effective school principal. When these conditions (or a combination thereof) are not present, beginning teachers are less likely to generate positive academic outcomes from their students (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). This

project focuses on the first solution listed above – strong educator preparation, specifically focusing on the role of the cooperating teacher.

In their 2016 policy report, The New Teacher Center posed several questions further highlighting the impact of CTs not only at the individual school or district level, but also at the state level. According to the report, without strong support and continued growth, many CTs do not stay on the job—and fewer who do can be effective in helping future teachers reach higher academic standards (The New Teacher Center 2016).

Researchers caution that cooperating teacher training programs must be intentionally developed ensuring quality controls exist to guarantee fidelity to the model. As outlined by The National Center for Teacher Residencies (2016), programs must answer key questions when thinking about the role of the cooperating teacher. These questions include whether CTs are selected based on specific guidelines aligned with research and knowledge; the type of support CTs are provided in their role; the level of access CTs have to high quality professional learning; the number of pre-service teachers CTs support; and, whether CTs have opportunities to plan and collaborate with their colleagues.

The rationale behind cooperating teacher training, according to Richard Ingersoll, confirms that teaching is complex work (2011). Furthermore, academia experts warn that pre-service educator preparation insufficiently provides beginning teachers with all the training and skills they need prior to taking over a classroom of their own. As a result, there is also the need to look beyond simply the CT when examining a clinical teacher's pre-service training. For example, there is merit in the fact that some aspects of teacher training can only be acquired while on the job. While Ingersoll and Strong acknowledge that more research must be done in the field of new teacher

induction and mentoring, their 2011 study provides empirical support for the claim that induction for beginning teachers, and teacher mentoring programs in particular, have a positive impact on student achievement by beginning teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

As the questions related to the significance of cooperating teachers continue to gain more traction, more and more studies are beginning to focus on different elements crucial to developing, supporting, and, retaining high quality cooperating teachers throughout a district. The research base crosses both traditional and alternative teacher certification routes, involving varying school populations and measures of teacher effectiveness and student progress yet the results overwhelming show the impact and importance of the quality of the cooperating teacher quality in learning (Goldhaber, Krieg, and Theobald, 2019).

In sum, anecdotal evidence provided by student teachers along with data linking certain clinical teaching factors with outcomes for in-service teachers demonstrate that student teaching training matters for the development of teacher candidate competencies. Less evidence is available regarding the relationship between *how* a new teacher is trained and their in-service outcomes. Darling-Hammond (2014) discussed the practices of seven exemplary Teacher Education Programs (TEPs) as being critically important to effective teacher education. These seven practices include “extensive and intensely supervised clinical work—tightly integrated with coursework—that allows candidates to learn from expert practice in schools that serve diverse students” (pp. 550). However, she also acknowledged that although “developing sites where state-of-the-art practice is the norm is a critical element of strong teacher education...it has been one of the most difficult” goals to achieve (pp. 554).

One reason it is difficult to develop high-quality clinical teaching experiences is that TEPs and districts have limited control over the clinical teaching process. Typically, TEPs define the duration of the practicum and clinical experience and have some influence over with whom student teachers are placed (Greenberg, Pomerance, & Walsh, 2011). But TEPs are constrained by the willingness of school districts and in-service teachers to take on the responsibility of mentoring a novice teacher. In a literature review on the participation of cooperating teachers in teacher education, Clarke, Triggs, and Nielsen (2014) noted that, "University and school-based selection policies for the most part do not include robust options for choosing the best possible mentors for student teachers," and that, "Attempts to make suitable matches become logistically challenging with very large numbers of student teachers who need to be placed annually" (pp. 191). To the extent that TEPs have only limited control over the *where* and *with whom* aspects of clinical teaching, they are likely to have even less control over the *how* aspects of clinical teaching.

Overall, the capacity of a district to improve clinical teaching is likely to be limited without the development of new kinds of relationships with the TEPs, school districts, and cooperating teachers who host their teacher candidates (Darling-Hammond, 2014). It is noticeable then, that the relationships between these elements that are central to the overall experience of a pre-service teacher candidate are not given more attention by the literature. It is also noticeable that the literature provides a limited view on the specific role school districts play (and need to play) in the clinical teaching process. This is a significant gap given that school districts are (1) uniquely positioned to influence what the clinical teaching process looks like, and (2) have an interest in teacher candidates receiving the best possible training.

This project seeks to address and begin an ongoing dialogue around these gaps in literature by describing the cooperating teacher placement process (or lack thereof) from the cooperating teacher perspective in Dallas ISD. This perspective highlights the challenges associated with the student teacher placement process and several initiatives Dallas ISD has undertaken to improve clinical teaching experiences for teacher candidates. To our knowledge, this is the first effort by Dallas ISD to create a more purposeful structure around the cooperating teacher experience.

V. Research Questions and Conceptual Framework

Building upon the literature, the project focuses on three research questions to understand the nature of the cooperating teacher role within Dallas ISD. While the answers to each question may overlap, each question explores different concepts, literature, and discoveries important to addressing the overarching role of a cooperating teacher.

These three questions are:

Research Question 1: What are the intrinsic or extrinsic motivators behind engaging in a cooperating teacher role?

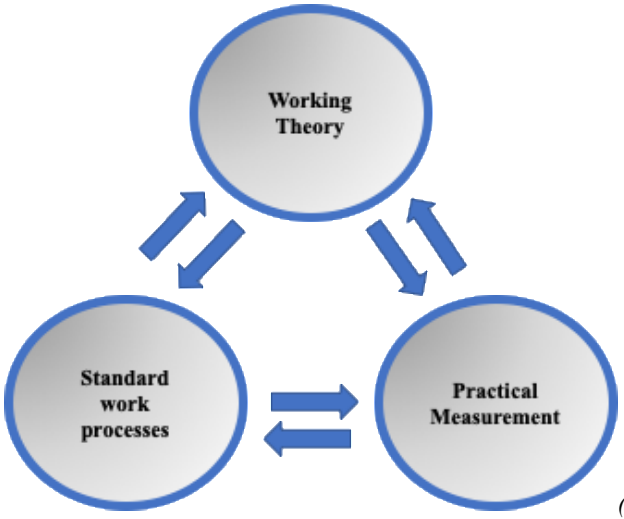
Research Question 2: How do school district and school leaders within Dallas ISD perceive their role in supporting cooperating teachers?

Research Question 3: What are the barriers to becoming and succeeding as a cooperating teacher?

The first two research questions seek to understand motivations and various perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of cooperating teachers throughout Dallas ISD. The third question explores organizational barriers that may inhibit entry or the ultimate success in that role.

These questions form the conceptual framework of this improvement project – which is based off of: *The Learning Loop for Quality Improvement* (See figure below):

Figure 4: The Learning Loop for Quality Improvement



(Source: Byrk et al., 2017)

According to the book, *Learning to Improve*, Anthony Byrk, Louis Gomez, Alicia Grunow, and Paul LeMahieu (2017) use this framework to illustrate the fundamental dynamic that undergirds improvement science. In this context, theory, measurement, and standard work processes are the pillars of organizational improvement (Byrk et al., 2017). This systematic interplay of insight, theory and evidence is also a characteristic of disciplined inquiry – well suited for this type of improvement type project (Byrk et al., 2017).

A 2017 report by the Carnegie Foundation: *Continuous Improvement in Education,* defines "Improvement Science" as: "a body of knowledge that describes how to improve safely and consistently" (Park, Hironaka, Carver, Nordstrum, 2017). Improvement science is not the same as research. Research is designed to find out what is possible. "Improvement science describes how to reduce the gap between what is actual and what is possible" (Health Foundation, 2011). Shojania and Grimshaw (2005) describe the goal of this research process as ensuring that quality improvement efforts made by organizations are based on a high warrant of evidence. In other words, strategies for the utilization and adaptation of evidence-based quality improvement

methods should themselves be based on a foundation of evidence (Park, Hironaka, Carver, Nordstrum, 2017). In this sense, improvement science seeks to discern what works for addressing a particular problem, for whom, and under what set of specific conditions (Berwick, 2008; Bryk, Gomez & Grunow, 2010). It represents a field of study focused on the methods, theories, and approaches that facilitate or hinder efforts to improve quality in context-specific work processes, and centers inquiry on the day-to-day "problems of practice that have genuine consequences for people's lives" (Bryk, 2009: 598; Health Foundation, 2011).

Defining improvement science necessitates delineation of the second term – "quality improvement". Quality improvement as defined by the Carnegie Foundation, is "the disciplined use of evidence-based quantitative and qualitative methods to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, equity, timeliness or safety of service delivery processes and systems toward the pursuit of better services or outcomes for 'users' or customers of the system" (Park et al., 2017). This definition comprises five interrelated aspects of quality improvement:

1) Quality improvement focuses on system outcomes for a defined population of beneficiaries, as well as the processes that lead to these results: it requires both a problem- and user-centered design. That is, the work should center on engaging relevant actors in co-developing testable hypotheses for the specific problem the organization is attempting to solve (Park et al., 2017).

2) Variation in system performance, inclusive of processes and outcomes, is essential to improvement work. Indeed, improvement cannot occur in the absence of standard practices since variation makes it difficult to determine what has been improved and what is due to random noise (Park et al., 2017).

3) The ability to 'see the system' is paramount. There is the implicit recognition in quality improvement work that every system is perfectly designed to achieve the results it gets, which means that results are the natural products of the current state of affairs (Byrk et al., 2017). This also requires that quality improvement is context-embedded: it "entails an engineering orientation where the varied demands and details of local contexts are a direct object of study and design" (Bryk & Gomez: 10). Such information about user needs and the context of use are essential for innovation work in education and instrumental to guiding the work of this project (von Hippel, 2005; Bryk et al., 2010). A 'systems' perspective implies that in order to achieve improved results one must of necessity alter the system and the ways of working in it.

4) A prerequisite for quality improvement is the capacity to measure and track key processes and outcomes. The act of measurement should be embedded in day-to-day work and used to determine whether a change in fact constitutes an improvement (Park et al., 2017).

5) Quality improvement entails the employment of a specific and coherent methodology to improve system services and processes. Many such formal methodologies exist, however the point here is that quality improvement requires the application of an evidence-based methodology, with its inherent standards, protocols and guidelines (Byrk et al., 2017).

While a handful of educational organizations and school districts have begun to embed continuous improvement in their work, this work often times takes place in isolation and results in

organizational pitfalls. *The Learning Loop for Quality Improvement* provides a framework for school districts such as Dallas ISD to navigate complex problems in a structured, systematic, and ongoing manner – increasing the likelihood for the local system to make a broader impact.

For the purposes of this project, there is the underlying assumption that school districts, cooperating teachers, and, educator preparation programs alike have a mutual interest in creating high-quality pre-service teaching experiences for teacher candidates. A fundamental challenge in improving the pre-service teaching experience is that there exist inconsistencies in the cooperating teacher experience as well as the structures that exist (or do not exist) perpetually hindering these experiences. Using the quality improvement framework outlined above, this project employs the following working theory:

If Dallas ISD better understands both the motivations leading to CTs serving in these roles as well as the organizational barriers that exist inhibiting the CTs' future participation, then, formal structures can be established within the district to intentionally and systematically place pre-service teachers with strong CTs during their clinical teaching experience. This enhanced educator preparation experience will thus have a positive impact on student learning and school performance throughout the Dallas ISD.

VI. Methods

In order to go about answering the three project research questions, the project follows principles rooted in quality improvement. As improvement science directs explicit attention to a detailed analysis of the problem, the first stage of the data collection and analysis involves an

attempt to holistically understand Dallas ISD. By understanding the system and its actors – this produced a functioning theory for our improvement work.

Consistent with *The Learning Loop for Quality Improvement* framework, after establishment of a working theory, a way to measure to organizational progress – or *Practical Measurement* – is necessary. While this project uses both qualitative and quantitative methods, it relies heavily on qualitative methodologies – through the analysis of open-ended survey questions and focus group interviews. Qualitative methods provide an avenue to understand the topic at hand from the perspective of CTs in a very local context. It also provides the project with the opportunity to obtain culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of CTs, school and district leaders within Dallas ISD. Using data to track an organization's progress toward its goals is a critical piece of improvement. Throughout the data gathering phase(s) of the project, it was evident that Dallas ISD used data to monitor their work. However, with respect to the specific focus of this project – the way in which Dallas ISD collected, and the frequency the data was collected, varied.

Due to a familiarity of the district and, a close working relationship with various district stakeholders involved in this project, the project anticipated significant participation from those involved in completing interviews and focus groups. However, there were initial reservations around the length of the survey (which included both qualitative and quantitative components) – fearing the survey length would detract teachers from completion. Because surveys were distributed early on in the project and results were analyzed as they were received – this data was used to frame questions (**outside of the standard CT interview guide found in Appendix A**) in subsequent interviews and focus group meetings conducted throughout the project with different stakeholder groups.

Finally, all data collected for the purposes of measurement were collected and analyzed through the lens of improvement science. In this context, the methodologies selected for data collection and analysis were aligned with broad goals – providing a platform for Dallas ISD to (eventually) use project findings to improve outcomes across classrooms and schools.

Qualitative Data

The strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue (complete citations). It provides information about the "human" side of an issue – that is, the "often contradictory behaviors, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals" (Simundić A. M., 2013). Qualitative methods are also effective in identifying intangible factors, such as social norms, socioeconomic status, gender roles, ethnicity, and religion, whose role in the research issue may not be readily apparent. When used along with quantitative methods, qualitative research can help us to interpret and better understand the complex reality of a given situation and the implications of quantitative data (Simundić A.M., 2013). Although findings from qualitative data can often be extended to people with characteristics similar to those in the study population, gaining a rich and complex understanding of a specific social context or phenomenon typically takes precedence over eliciting data that can be generalized to other geographical areas or populations.

Data collection began at the end of the 2019 fall semester and initially focused on gathering qualitative information received both through a survey as well as through a series of in-person stakeholder interviews and focus groups. Described in further detail below, the 42-question survey was first distributed to each of the participating CTs (178) in the district. The district Human Capital Management (HCM) department assisted the project with this process and ensured that all

CTs serving in the role during the 2019-2020 academic school year were securely distributed the survey link through their district email. Four of the survey questions were open-ended questions. Responses to these survey questions were analyzed on a rolling basis as they were used to inform subsequent focus group and stakeholder interviews. Open-ended survey questions were analyzed using thematic coding – an approach described in more detail below. Of the completed surveys (118 responses), 80 percent of respondents (94 responses) completed the four open ended questions.

Open-ended survey questions were borrowed from the National Center for Teacher Residencies Program Diagnostic – one of several assessment tools utilized by network partners in identifying testing, and scaling best practices for clinically based teacher preparation (National Center for Teacher Residencies, 2017). Developed in partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's *Alliance for Advancing Justice by Transforming Teacher Education* project, the Program Diagnostic tool has been used for nearly a decade by over 30 teacher education programs across the country (National Center for Teacher Residencies, 2017). Assessment tools within the Program Diagnostic tool, including mid – and end of year perception surveys (of which this project borrows from the survey used for Clinical Teachers) have been used by over 4,500 pre-service and CTs that have collectively taught over 200,000 students nationwide (National Center for Teacher Residencies, 2017).

After the initial review of open-ended survey questions, thematic coding was again used to identify trends and refine future interview and focus group questions. Figure 5 below includes a list of the top ten thematic codes that emerged from the qualitative coding of the four open ended

questions. The list of open-ended survey questions (Questions 39-42) can be found in the *Work Motivation Survey* in **Appendix B.**

Figure 5: Thematic Codes from Open-Ended Questions

Open Ended Questions Coding Themes

Success
Partnership
Professional Development
Enjoyment
Continuity
Feedback
Challenge
Students
New Learning(s)
Improvement

Following the distribution of the survey, purposive sampling, a common sampling strategy used in qualitative projects, was used to identify focus groups and stakeholder interviews. Using this sampling method, pre-selected criteria were used for those who were part of each focus group and interview(s) relevant to the project research questions. School leaders assisted in identifying CTs at their respective campuses to participate in the interviews. These characteristics are provided in the chart below:

Figure 6: Selection Criteria used to Determine Focus Groups

Focus Group Pre-Determined Selection Criteria

- ***Stakeholder Role (CT, Principal, District Leader)***
- ***Stakeholder School Type (elementary, middle, high)***
- ***Stakeholder School Location***
- ***Stakeholder Demographic(s)***
- ***CT Experience***

Figure 7: Categorical Breakdown of Number of Total Focus Group Participants

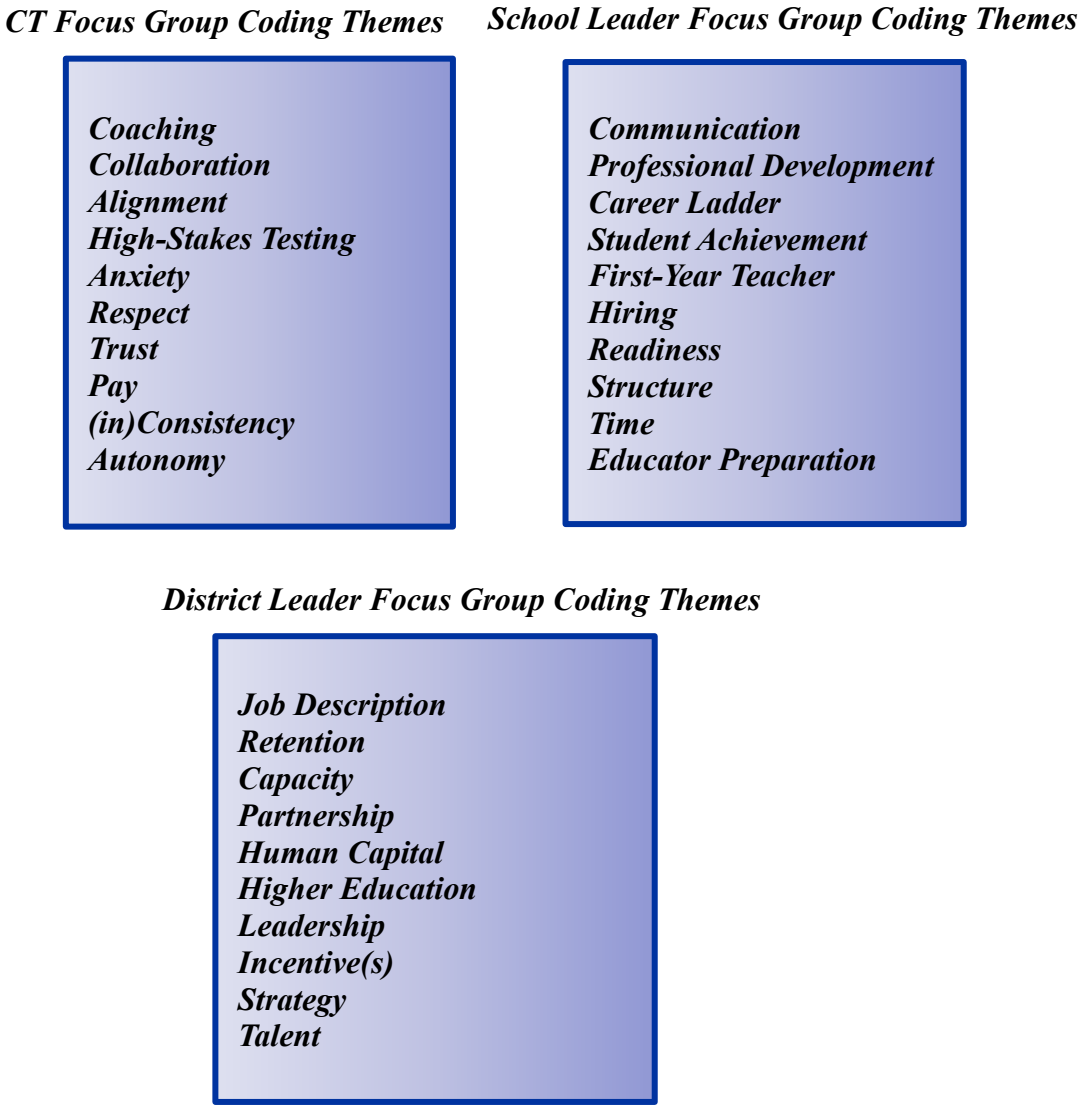
Employee Category	**Number of Employees**	**Demographic Data (%)**		**Demographic Data (%)**	
Cooperating Teachers	13	*Male* (31%)	*Female* (69%)	*White (27%)*	*Non White (67%)*
School Leaders	5				
Central Office Leaders	4				

Focus group conversations were conducted using interview protocols uniquely developed for each stakeholder group and conducted over the course of two academic semesters (Fall 2019 through the early stages of Spring 2020) with School Principals, School District Leaders, and CTs. The guides were used to help frame the conversations and to ensure a level of consistency among questioning for each group. Understanding that purposive sampling is most successful when data review and analysis are done in conjunction with data collection – project data collection and analysis was ongoing throughout the course of the project. Stakeholder questions used to guide focus group interview conversations can be found in **Appendix C.**

In total, there were five focus groups (ranging between 4-6 participants each) assembled. Three separate CT focus groups (one at each instructional level), a principal focus group, and, a focus group made up of district leaders. The original plan also called to have a fourth cooperating teacher focus group that was made up of CTs were no longer serving as cooperating teachers – however, this was disrupted as the result of COVID-19 and will be expanded upon in the limitation's section of the paper. While demographic data was not collected from the survey, CT focus group participants were provided with the opportunity to voluntarily share this information for the purposes of having relevance to project. **This information is included in Figure 7 above (*Categorical Breakdown of Number of Total Focus Group Participants*).**

Focus group interviews with each group were conducted monthly over the course of five months (November – March) and did not continue once the school year abruptly moved to an online learning environment as the result of COVID-19. After the initial interview, subsequent interviews were informed by thematic coding used to identify trends and refine future survey questions. Figure 8 below includes a list of the top ten thematic codes that emerged from the qualitative coding of each specific focus group. Stakeholder questions used to guide focus group interview conversations can be found in **Appendix C.**

Figure 8: Thematic Codes from Stakeholder Groups



As noted above, focus group participants were not randomly selected, however there was a concerted effort to ensure each stakeholder group was representative as much as possible of the larger Dallas ISD population. There was also an intentional effort to select participants serving different geographic regions of the city (specifically North and South). As these are vastly different parts of the city – economically, racially, politically – ensuring representation from both sectors of the city make the overall 'take-aways' more generalizable across the entire district. A list of the schools represented in the focus groups are included below:

Focus Group Schools	
School Name	**% of Students Economically Disadvantaged**
Elementary Schools	
Ben Milam (Central Dallas)	87.1%
Anne Frank (North Dallas)	79.1%
Peeler Elementary (South Dallas)	96.0%
Middle Schools	
Ben Franklin (Central Dallas)	85.6%
Thomas Marsh (North Dallas)	89.7%
Hector Garcia (South Dallas)	91.8%
High Schools	
Hillcrest High School (North Dallas)	76.9%
Adamson High School (South Dallas)	92.0%
Pinkston High School (West Dallas)	89.2%
Average %of Students Economically Disadvantaged	**~ 87.5 percent**

Quantitative Data

In addition to the focus groups, a cooperating teacher survey was created and distributed to cooperating teachers across the district at the end of the 2019 fall Semester. The surveys, created in Qualtrics, were then sent by the Dallas ISD Human Resources district directly to all 178 participating cooperating teachers in the district that semester. Cooperating teachers who participated in the cooperating teacher focus groups also received the survey. One hundred eighteen survey responses were completed – a response rate of 66%. Qualtrics, Excel, and Tableau,

were used to analyze survey responses. A breakdown of the CT response rate by grade level grouping is below:

Figure 9: Distribution of CT Survey Responses by Grade Level Grouping

CT Grade Level	# CTs Surveyed	# of CT Responses Received	Responses as % of CTs in Grade Level
Pre-K	0	0	0
Grades K-2	61	41	67%
Grades 3-5	52	34	65%
Grades 6- 8	35	26	74%
High School (9-12)	30	17	56%
Total	**178**	**118**	**66%**

As the primary stakeholder group of interest in this project, all CTs across Dallas ISD were the recipients of the survey. As discussed earlier in this project, and, as highlighted in the literature review, the CT perspective is not often captured. Therefore, there was an intentional effort to isolate and capture the CT perspective through survey. For example, distributing a survey to all of the school leaders across the district, may take away from the CT focus and dilute the CT voice. Noted earlier, the overall survey response rate was fairly high at around 66 percent. The rates by each grade-level grouping are slightly distributed – reaching as high as 74 percent in the middle school category to as low as 56 percent in high school. Looking at the response rates of survey responses received as a percentage of the received surveys – CTs in grades K-2 represent nearly 35 percent of the 118 survey responses received, while the high school CTs represent only 14 percent of the survey responses received. The ramifications and possible implications of the response rate(s) will be discussed in further detail in the discussion section. The actual number of CTs serving in each respective grade distribution will also be discussed – noting also that the district has zero CTs in PK classrooms.

Survey respondents were asked to report the length of time that they have been employed in the CT role at their role at the school as well as how long they have been employed overall in the district. A large majority of CTs (89%) responded they have been employed by the district for at least five (5) years. However only 37 percent indicated they had previously served in a formal CT role, and 57 percent of CTs responded they had previously served as an informal CT. From the data collected, it was not distinguishable whether or not prior experience serving as a CT was in Dallas ISD.

This is important as it has implications for how the role is perceived among a key stakeholder group within the district. While outside the scope of this project, the implications of an 'informal CT' and a 'formal' CT on the pre-service teacher candidate experience should be noted and provide an avenue for future exploration.

Finally, a combination of factors led to the development of the survey (**Complete *Work Motivation Survey* available in Appendix B**). The 42-question survey consisted of both open-ended (free response) and scale-based questions. Questions 1-15 relate to work motivation while Questions 16-30 relate to their role as a cooperating teacher. Survey questions and format were taken or adapted from the National Center for Teacher Residencies Survey for Cooperating Teachers and, from the Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (WEIMS) from the Journal of Behavioral Science. Questions 1-15 of the survey were adapted from the original WEIMS – an 18-item measure of work motivation theoretically grounded in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Notable is the fact that current research presents the WEIMS as a reliable and valid work motivation instrument in its own right, assessing six theoretically driven motivational tendencies and offering multiple indexes (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The WEIMS has also been found

particularly 'useful' and applicable in presenting both reliable and valid findings in organizational settings (Tremblay, Blanchard, Taylor, and Pelletier, 2009).

Generally speaking, a variation of both instruments have been used independently for over a decade – and have proven utility in their respective fields of behavior science and educator preparation. With that said, it is unclear whether or not these surveys have been combined or adapted in the way in which the instrument was used for this project. This is a notable project limitation and will be explored in further detail in the project implications section.

VII. Findings

Finding 1: Overall, intrinsic motivators influence teachers more than extrinsic ones when deciding whether to serve as a cooperating teacher.

This first finding is linked to research question one. Project results demonstrate that while extrinsic and intrinsic motivations often coexist for CTs, intrinsic motivators more heavily influence CTs when deciding whether to serve as a cooperating teacher. Additionally, CTs clearly articulated the benefits of being provided with autonomy in the CT role. In this context specifically, CTs identified the level of freedom and discretion they had to perform the role in ways they found intrinsically motivating.

This finding was primarily developed from data provided by the survey instrument – specifically, analyzing Questions #1-15 of the *Work Motivation* section of the survey. Using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*does not correspond at all)* to 7 *(corresponds exactly)*, the *Mean* for the intrinsic motivation questions were higher than the *means* associated with any of the other listed categories – which each fall within the spectrum of extrinsic motivators along the self-determination theory continuum (Deci, and Ryan, 2008). Each of the questions were asked in an

attempt to better understand to what extent each of the survey items corresponded to the reasons the CTs were involved in their work (at the time of taking the survey).

The chart below provides an overview of the survey data, which is further analyzed in the discussion section of the project.

	Values are Aggregated by Category Type		
Coded Question Category Type	Mean (*M)*	SD	V
Intrinsic Motivation			
Because I derive much pleasure from learning new things (Q3) For the satisfaction I experience from taking on interesting challenges (Q7) For the satisfaction I experience when I am successful at doing difficult tasks (Q13)	5.04	0.96	0.91
Integrated Regulation			
Because it has become a fundamental part of who I am (Q4) Because it is part of the way in which I have chosen to live my life (Q9) Because this job is a part of my life (Q15)	4.54	1.11	1.23
Identified Regulation			
Because this is the type of work I chose to do to attain a certain lifestyle (Q1) Because I chose this type of work to attain my career goals (Q6) Because it is the type of work I have chosen to attain certain important objectives (Q12)	4.19	1.01	1.01
Introjected Regulation			
Because I want to succeed at this job, if not I would be very ashamed of myself (Q5) Because I want to be very good at this work, otherwise I would be very disappointed (Q10) I don't know why, we are provided with unrealistic working conditions (Q11)	4.69	1.07	1.13
External Regulation			
For the income it provides me (Q2) Because it allows me to earn additional money (Q8) Because this type of work provides me with security (Q14)	3.18	0.85	0.73
Total Survey Responses: *N = 118*			
Key			
1: Does not correspond at all			
4: Corresponds moderately			
7: Corresponds exactly			

In addition to the quantitative survey data, the qualitative data produced from open ended survey questions as well as from CT focus group interviews further supported the idea that CTs were more influenced by intrinsic motivators than extrinsic ones when deciding whether to serve in the role. For example, a common theme appearing in at least 62 percent of the open-ended

response to the question: *How has your cooperating teacher experience impacted your instructional practice, mentoring and coaching skill, and/or your classroom? – was the theme of enjoyment.* Per the work of Deci, and Ryan, 2008, enjoyment represents the far end of the Self-Determination Continuum (discussed in more detail in the discussion section) – and along with satisfaction and authentic interest, represent key component inherent to intrinsic motivation. One response from a CT read: "Being a CT for me isn't about always getting it right 100 percent of the time – that is unrealistic. The experience for me is all about the opportunity I have to continuously learn, and honestly, participate in work that is always challenging."

While not all survey responses leaned towards intrinsic motivation, the high survey response rate, and the foundational data to support a CT group that appears to be intrinsically motivated, provides an important lens for the next stages of data analysis.

Finding 2: Although the district did not have a comprehensive cooperating teacher selection process, teachers overwhelming exhibited many characteristics deemed necessary for success in that role.

This second finding is linked to research questions one and two and was an unanticipated project finding. The qualitative and quantitative data highlighted that over seventy percent of CTs embodied these core characteristics. However, it was neither conclusive, nor overtly evident that CTs, or, other district stakeholders were aware of the internal CT talent that existed among project participants. This is notable when discussed in alignment with other project findings and sheds light into future opportunities the district has to leverage its existing CT talent pool.

This project used three criteria consistent in determining a baseline for highly effective CTs (Killian & Wilkins, 2009):

- being midrange in number of teaching years (defined as having at least 5 years of teaching experience);
- having supervised more than five earlier field experience students; and,
- having closely collaborated with the university supervisor

Based on survey data (Q19), nearly 86 percent of CTs responding to the survey, self-reported at least 5 years of teaching experience at the time of survey administration. The Dallas ISD Human Capital Department was able to confirm this self-reported data with their own internal system – data the district was required to keep on file for teacher licensure reporting purposes. Although the exact number of previously supervised candidates by each CT cannot be determined based on the survey distributed, 94 percent of survey respondents indicated they had previously served as a CT in either a formal or informal capacity (Q 23, Q24). Additionally, 12 of the 13 CTs that participated in the CT focus groups indicated they had previously supervised at least five pre-service teachers. Finally, analysis of survey question 36 indicates that on average, 74 percent of CTs *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with the following statements around their experiences with their educator preparation program:

- "*I feel supported by the educator preparation program I am associated with as a CT" (72 % of respondents agreed or strongly agreed)*
- *"The educator preparation program provides me with timely and relevant feedback on my performance as a cooperating teacher" (79 % of respondents agreed or strongly agreed)*
- *"The support I receive from educator preparation program staff improves my performance as a cooperating teacher" (71 % of respondents agreed or strongly agreed)*

As discussed in the literature review, supervision of clinical experiences has too often been haphazard, loosely structured, and marginally connected to university coursework (Darling-Hammond, 2006). By establishing clear CT criteria, Dallas ISD can be more intentional in the selection of its CTs. Dallas ISD also has the opportunity to leverage its TEI evaluation system in

this process – using already established objective indicators as a method to help identify prospective CT candidates.

Finding 3: Stakeholders are unclear and inconsistent concerning their expectations of cooperating teachers' roles and responsibilities.

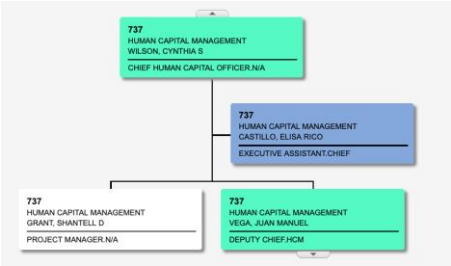
The third finding is linked to research question three. With respect to the question of barriers that may exist and therefore, may be linked to CT success, results revealed lack of systems, structures, and, strategy at the district level. While there are school level factors to consider, the results overwhelmingly pointed to district level obstacles and the need for a more clearly defined CT role and defined CT job description. The results also expose the lack of an intentional system and process for pairing CTs with clinical teachers.

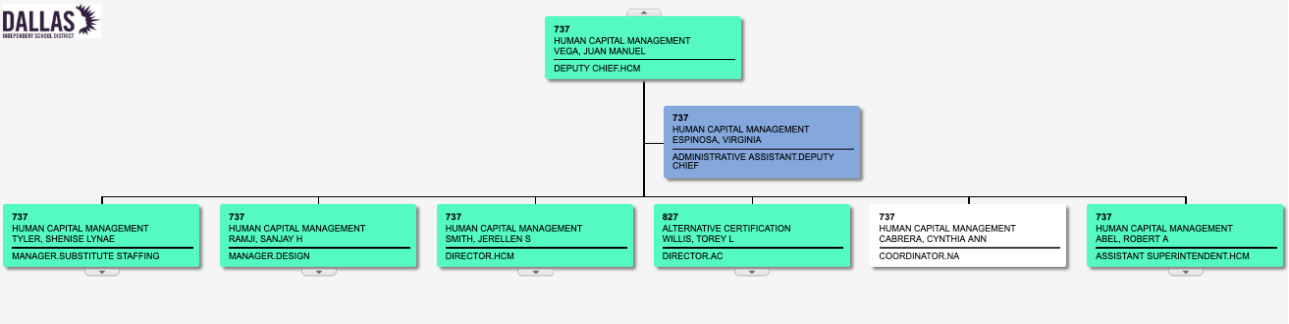
For example, of the 13 CTs interviewed as part of the focus group – they each had different 'CT job outlines' – which were provided to them by their program and not by the district. 83 percent of CTs surveyed responded they were not prepared upon first assuming the role – and because many (80 percent) school leaders interviewed were new – the majority of them were not well-equipped to successfully support CT's in their role. School leaders and District leaders also spoke to continuous change and leadership turnover in the Human Capital Department as one of the leading challenges to this work. In asking one district leader what they believed their role should be in the CT process – they responded, "I simply don't know."

The figure below represents the departments' executive level leadership including: Chief of Human Capital, Deputy Chief of Human Capital, Assistant Superintendent of Human Capital, and several directors. In addition to the figure below, the following are additional details about the Department of Human Capital:

- 110 total employees in the HCM department
- 68 percent of employees in department are women
- 65 percent of employees in department are 'people of color'
- 7 of 8 top department leaders are from historically underrepresented groups (women and/or minority groups)
- Department leader, Cynthia Wilson, is an African American female

Figure 10: Dallas ISD Department of Human Capital Management Organizational Chart (Executive Leadership)





Through the lens of positioning theory (Anderson, K. T. (2009), analysis of the organizational chart of the Dallas ISD HCM department provided additional insight into the conversations held with School and District leadership. In this context, examining the way in which individuals within the department participated within their respective work-place, spoke volumes about the systems and structures (or lack thereof) set up within the work place to facilitate the work taking place. One district leader spoke to the way in which structural systems within the district directly impeded progress in the CT space. They stated: "It isn't as if we don't have the

talent within our district to design a robust CT program – we do. It is my opinion that a lack of consistency among district leadership and, a bureaucratic organizational structure limits this important work from moving forward."

Finding 4: Cooperating teacher experiences vary across campuses and geographic regions.

The fourth finding is linked to each of the research questions: one, two, and three. CT survey results (listed in Figure 11 below) and CT focus group interviews indicate that CT experiences varied across geographic regions within Dallas ISD.

Figure 11: Work Motivation Survey Results

Survey Question	**Survey Response (%)**
Including this year, how many years have you taught as a classroom teacher of record?	➢ ~ 86 percent of CTs have 5 or more years of teaching experience ➢ ~ 21 percent have 10 or more years of teaching experience
Approximately what percentage of the students you teach receive special education services?	➢ 33 percent of students served by CTs received special education services
Approximately what percentage of the students you teach are identified as English Language Learners?	➢ 43 percent of students served by CTs received special education services
Approximately what percentage of the students you teach are identified as Economically Disadvantaged?	➢ 91 percent of students served by CTs received special education services
How were you matched with your current student teacher(s)?	➢ 85 percent of CTs were assigned clinical teachers
How often do you meet with other cooperating teachers in your school to discuss the student teachers you are cooperating teacher?	➢ 46 percent of CTs responded that they never met with other CTs ➢ 40 percent of CTs responded that they met with other CTs 1-2X p/ semester
How often do you meet with education preparation program staff to discuss the student teachers you are cooperating teacher?	➢ 66 percent of CTs responded that they never met with their EPP program staff ➢ 26 percent of CTs responded that they met with EPP program staff 1-2X p/ semester
When you first became a cooperating teacher to a student teacher, how prepared were you for this role?	➢ 83 percent of CTs responded that they were not prepared upon first assuming the role

At this moment, how prepared do you feel for this role overall?	➢ Greater than 60 percent of respondents articulated still not being adequately equipped for the role
How often have you engaged in the following activities this school year? (Questions 31 & 32)	➢ 36 percent of CTs responded that they engaged in these activities 1-2X p/ semester ➢ Less than 10% of CTs indicated these activities were being implemented/engaged with daily or weekly
How effective has your educator preparation program been at preparing you to engage in the following activities? (Question 33 & 34)	➢ 59 percent of CT respondents noted their EPP has been "not effective" and "somewhat effective" in engaging in these activities ➢ 12 percent of CTs noted their EPP was Very Effective
Indicate your agreement with the following statements about your experience as a cooperating teacher in the educator preparation program (Question 35 & 36)	➢ 52 percent of CT respondents noted their EPP has been "not effective" and "somewhat effective" ➢ 11 percent of CTs noted their EPP was Very Effective
At this point in the year, how prepared is your student teacher to teach next year as a teacher of record?	➢ 71 percent of CT respondents noted their student teacher was either 'somewhat prepared' or 'prepared'
How many student teachers do you currently support?	➢ 62 percent of CTs self reported they support more than 1 student teacher candidate
What geographic quadrant of the city is your school located in?	➢ 71 percent of CTs teach in schools located in the Northern part of the city

Through the stakeholder interviews, and through the survey results – there appeared to be connections between the CTs experiences and the location of their schools. Based on the survey responses, the majority of CTs worked in schools in the northern part of the district (71 percent). The survey data also revealed that nearly 85% of CTS indicated their clinical teacher was assigned to them – which has implications of equity discussed in further detail in the discussion section below.

I gathered data focusing on better understanding CT motivations for assuming the role as well as district level structures that may hinder the CT experience. Dallas ISD is a very diverse district, and there appeared to be connections between CTs' experiences and their schools. This

finding is consistent with historic disparities across the district among student academic performance and, among the allocation of district resources (human capital, economic, and physical). There is a need to further explore the specificity of each disparity as well as to better understand additional school level characteristics that may or may not impact the CT experience.

Focus group interviews with CTs revealed a common theme of inconsistency in experience. Noting that 'experience' is a broad term, especially in the context of the CT role – through further probing, it was evident that one of biggest variables in the overall experience was geographic location of school. Of the 13 CTs participating in the focus group, 11 of them indicated the prevalence of school location with their overall experience. One CT said: "The (inconsistencies) don't bother me anymore. I've worked in the district for over 10 years now and seen firsthand how things work in this district." When asked to elaborate and provide additional context to the comment, the CT indicated that there were major disparities between schools in high poverty communities (located in the southern and western parts of the city), and high-income communities (located in the downtown and northern parts of the city). These disparities were quite prevalent when it came to the types of district resources, and district supports teachers (and specifically CTs had access to). Another CT, who had taught in the district for five years – but had grown up attending Dallas ISD schools themselves – stated: "Dallas ISD has a deeply rooted (and troubled) history as it relates to issues of Diversity, (racial) Equity, and, Inclusion. For context, nearly thirty years after the Brown v Board of Education ruling, in August of 1983, the DISD school board finally ended its fight against court-ordered desegregation by unanimously accepting the Fifth Circuit's upholding of Judge Sander's desegregation plan." These statements – while broad, also reiterate important issues of equity and inclusion raised by the Dallas ISD School Board throughout the Improvement Planning process.

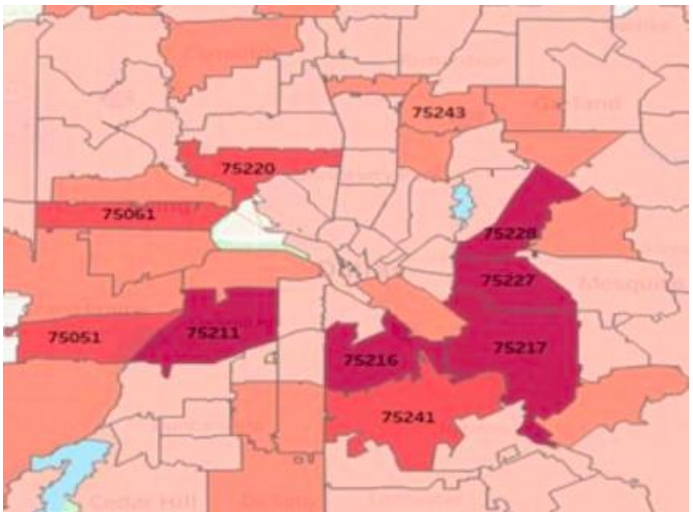
While CTs do express inconsistencies in their experiences based on geographic location, this did not appear to demotivate them to serve in the role as 12 of the 13 CTs participating in the focus group had previously served as a CT (in a formal or informal capacity) to a pre-service teacher. This is also consistent with Finding 1 – revealing that the majority of Dallas ISD CTs surveyed were intrinsically motivated to serve in the role. Stated by one CT: "This work is somewhat flawed, but it is critically important - I know this because I was fortunate to have had a caring cooperating teacher myself when I was training to be a teacher. I'm not certain how much support (they) received either – but I do know that they did everything in their power to ensure I was successful and that approach has stayed with me."

In addition to geographic location, educator preparation affiliation and school leadership were noted as variables that also provided inconsistent CT experiences. In this context, CTs affiliated with different educator preparation programs noted differences in CT training received as well in differences in the way in which they received their pre-service teacher candidates. Interestingly, 2 CTs interviewed affiliated with the same educator preparation program, but teaching in the different geographic locations – also expressed a variation in experiences. One of these CTs noted their building principal was a first-year school leader and didn't appear to fully understand their role. They stated: "We point to and talk about teacher turnover a lot in this district – but I feel we don't highlight enough the consequences of having churn at the Principal position. When there is instability in School leadership – it becomes nearly impossible to foster or facilitate any type of instructional culture … particularly related to the CT role." A district leader interviewed from the HCM department articulated something similar, stating: "year after year we are expected to help equip our school leaders with the professional learning they need to continue

to meet the demands of our students and of our teachers. This task gets more daunting given it seems like we are constantly training a batch of new leaders each year."

These sentiments around high levels of turnover at the Principal position is consistent with district level data. Just five years ago, the turnover rate within the district was as high as 30 percent (Texas Education Agency, 2019). While the Principal turnover rate has decreased – the rate is still around 20 percent - meaning that nearly 1 in 5 schools in the district have new school leaders. In schools located in the 10 zip codes below, the turnover rate is nearly double (around 39 percent).

Figure 12: Inequality in Dallas ISD – 10 lowest Earning Zip Codes



A review of the Dallas ISD Improvement Plan demonstrates the district's commitment to serving *all* of its students. This equity lens is further evident in academic goals (Goal 4) set by the district for students – particularly around third grade reading achievement. According to the Texas Education Agency, only 31 percent of third grade black students in Dallas, Texas are reading on level compared to 65 percent of White students who are meeting the mark – a rate of more than two times the proficiency rate (Texas Education Agency, 2018 State Report Card). Each of the CTs interviewed as part of the focus group were well versed in the district's focus on increasing

third grade reading achievement and articulated that the CT role – if viewed with an equity lens could be used as a strategy to support student achievement. Congruent with this statement, one CT interviewed stated: "It goes without saying that historically, our school system has not addressed the unique needs of all of our students – if we start doing that, then maybe we start ensuring that all of our teachers have equitable access to resources and supports as well."

VIII. Discussion and Limitations

The data collected from stakeholder focus group interviews and surveys allows Dallas ISD to better understand CTs' motivations to serve in that capacity as well as the organizational barriers that exist inhibiting CTs' future participation in these positions. Although robust statistical analysis was (intentionally) outside this project's scope, the qualitative and quantitative data gives way to findings generally indicating room for improvement within the CT space in Dallas ISD.

As the results from questions 1-15 of the Work Motivation survey show, CTs corresponded intrinsic motivation more than "moderately" to the reasons they were involved in their work (*M = 5.04)*. Using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*does not correspond at all)* to 7 *(corresponds exactly)*, the *mean* for the intrinsic motivation questions were higher than the *mean* for any other listed category – each of which fall within the spectrum of extrinsic motivators along the self-determination theory continuum: integrated regulation (*M = 4.54*), identified regulation (*M = 4.19*), introjected regulation (*M = 4.69*), and, external regulation (*M* = 3.18) (Deci, and Ryan, 2008).

While respondents demonstrated their propensity to be motivated more by intrinsic factors, it is nonetheless notable how the CTs rated the questions concerning extrinsic motivators.

Following intrinsic motivation in decreasing order, the Dallas ISD CTs surveyed were influenced on average by integrated regulation, identified regulation, introjected regulation, and, finally, external regulation – each category moving further from intrinsic motivators along the self-determination continuum (see below):

Figure 13: The Self-Determination Continuum

Source: (Ryan and Deci, 2000 and The Center for Self Determination Theory, 2017)

This pattern is consistent with the work motivation literature previously highlighted. While external rewards and incentives such as extra compensation can be pervasive, employees often demonstrate the desire to invest more time and energy in their work when they find it intrinsically motivating and identify or integrate the work with their values (Adler & Chen, 2009; Staw, 1984). This is significant in the sense that several key data points from the Work Motivation survey begin to paint a picture of the broader CT workforce across Dallas ISD and thus present an opportunity for improvement.

This Work Motivation Survey data is corroborated by thematic codes that were unearthed in the open-ended CT responses. Key phrases such as *New learning, challenge,* and *success* each appeared in over 50 percent of the survey responses and are each tied to elements inherent to intrinsic motivation. Although the CTs self-reported these perceptions, developing a baseline understanding of the CT perspective was imperative to this project because it had simply never been done. In their work, Bryk et.al., (2017) articulate that improving outcomes is nearly impossible when there is little to no appreciation for how systems operate that produce routinely-observed outcomes. If Dallas ISD clearly understands that most CTs are intrinsically motivated to serve in that role yet perceive structural barriers inhibiting them from maximizing their effectiveness and longevity in the role then Dallas ISD can take a substantial first step towards institutionalizing larger changes needed to improve the CT experience.

While this project focuses primarily on individual-level motivation of CTs, there is also the opportunity for future discussion on the role motivation on CTs in a group or team environment. CTs participating in the focus groups and completing open-ended survey questions revealed common themes aligned with high-functioning groups and teamwork: *partnership, collaboration, feedback, trust, improvement,* and *respect.* In their work on team productivity, Boning, Inchioski, and Shaw (2007) demonstrate the effectiveness of teams on productivity – particularly when the work is complex. Falk & Inchino (2006) also highlight the positive implications of teamwork looking deeper into the impact of productivity due to peer effect. In this context, when discussing peer effects it is possible that one person's productivity actually influences another. In the context of the CT role, if we know that two individuals working together towards a common goal are more productive than one person – this could alert Dallas ISD to the importance of CTs working collaboratively.

Research also supports the team model regarding increasing motivation. One of the most comprehensive perspectives on this phenomenon is Chen and Kanfer's (2006) theoretical model integrating individual-level, group-level, and cross-level processes. They propose that individual motivational states are a function of employees' traits, work experience, the quality of relationships with their leaders, and individual feedback. Conversely, team motivational states are a function of leadership climate, group norms, work design, and team feedback (Chen and Kanfer, 2006). If there is merit to their claim that individual motivators reciprocally influence each other the same way as do individual and team performances – Dallas ISD can ensure alignment between the CT job design, its function, and the research.

Another area worth exploring are the general responses to survey questions: 29 and 30. The two survey questions highlight CTs' level of preparedness to host a clinical teacher from when they started in their role to the time when they took the survey. From the survey responses, 83 percent were either: "not-prepared" or "somewhat prepared' upon first assuming the role. At the time of the survey, the same group of respondents indicated at 68 percent they remained either 'not-prepared" or, "somewhat prepared". This is significant given that 94 percent of CT respondents indicated they previously served as a CT in either a formal or informal capacity. Not only does this reveal that CTs perceive little growth in the level of their (self-identified) preparedness, it broadly indicates that the majority of Dallas ISD pre-service teachers are being coached and mentored by CTs themselves who do not feel adequately prepared. The implications of this regarding the potential impact to the overall clinical teaching experience are outside the scope of the project, however, Dallas ISD would be well positioned to explore this given the linkage to student achievement and the development of a robust future talent pipeline.

Finding 4 unearths issues of inequality and inequity that are important to address because they are not facially apparent in the data. Historically, Dallas ISD has not addressed all its students', teachers', or schools' unique needs. The Dallas ISD Improvement Plan developing by its Board of Trustees acknowledges this shortcoming and shared it with stakeholder groups. In particular, students from low-income backgrounds, students of color, English language learners, students with disabilities, and, students experiencing homelessness, foster care, or in the juvenile justice system continue to face barriers to success. Dallas' geographic boundaries only work to perpetuate this issue. Stakeholder groups' responses from the focus groups identified disparities in resource allocation across schools in different geographic areas of the city. While the survey did not ask for school-specific information, CTs interviewed in the focus group overwhelmingly noted that schools located in the northern part of the city typically receive more clinical teachers thus most of the district's CTs were located in those schools. This was supported by the responses to question 25 – where nearly 85 percent of CTs indicated their clinical teacher was assigned to them. In this context, if clinical teachers are overwhelmingly self-selecting (better resourced) schools located in a particular part of the city, this prevents not only the students, but also teachers in schools in certain geographic areas from accessing these critical resources. Given the academic benefits for students when they have access to high quality instruction – there is an opportunity for the district to use this information to inform the approach and design of a CT program from an equity lens. This ensures students of color are more likely to be represented in a system that has historically overlooked racism and institutional bias.

So often in education we find ourselves 'attracted' to the 'latest' and 'most advanced' available research that is also in support of a given idea. Given that improvement science is

imperfect in nature, it is certainly important to ground preliminary project decisions in sound research and evidence. However, it is also important to establish structures that allow for the research to be challenged. For example, in the context of my project partner, while there is strong research supporting the importance of a clinical teacher having a strong CT (Carver-Thomas, Desiree & Darling-Hammond, Linda, 2017), it became evident to me midway through the project that not enough time had not been spent by me understanding the system. As a result, I was in jeopardy of going about trying to understand (and find solutions to) my site in a way that would produce the exact outcome the system was designed to create.

In order to create the ideal system – a system in which everyone involved clearly sees, it becomes important for everyone on the team to; 1) fully understand how each of the different parts work or components of a system work and; 2) fully understand how to bring each of these pieces together to complement each other so that they will benefit the system as whole (Bryk et.al., 2017). As Atul Gawande notes, seeing the system is essential to achieving quality outcomes, especially when these outcomes are then scaled (Bryk et.al., 2017). From my own experience in my site, developing a complete understanding of the system, while seemingly obvious, is not what occurs. Rather, far too often as Gawande states: "a wide gap exists between what the profession believes it should be able to accomplish and what actually occurs" (Bryk et.al., 2017).

In the context of my own site, failing to see the system in full was a construct of not fully understanding initially how individuals within my site participated. In the education space we often jump to conclusions that problems involving educators must be solved by the experts – 'i.e., school or district leaders.' As Gawande argues – this approach is limited because even the ideas and levels of expertise of great people do not assure a quality result (Bryk et.al., 2017). Rather, there

becomes the need to recognize the power of diversity (in ideas, experience, and roles) when establishing an improvement project team. It also becomes important to understand how this diversity positively contributes to the system.

This approach, according to Gawande, and as discovered during my time digging deeper into Dallas ISD is one that ultimately led to a more comprehensive understanding of the problem by all those involved. Individuals gained buy-in, trust, and established social norms that allowed all to truly see the systemic failures that were embedded within the district that in-turn, limited what could be done with CTs.

In reflection, the project could also receive more relevant data by revising survey questions 33, 34, 35, and 36 (***See Appendix B***) to specify the district's role to support and engage CTs rather than educator preparation programs. The project focused more on Dallas ISD's specific role in shaping these CT experiences thus did not approach the issues in this reflective manner. While the culled data is not entirely useless and the fact that survey respondents worked with over eighteen different educator preparation programs is an interesting data point to digest for future consideration.

Finally, the project relied heavily on self-reported data through stakeholder interviews and surveys without significant statistical analysis cannot alone determine causality or correlation. However, the foundational data these findings unearthed, as well as the strategic stakeholders engaged in the data gathering stages, provide Dallas ISD a strong foundation to work within the improvement science framework towards actionable next steps.

Limitations

Like all projects, this study includes some noteworthy limitations to consider when evaluating project recommendations. As stated in the methods section, this quality improvement project relies heavily on qualitative data. Often times, qualitative research and techniques are criticized "as biased, small scale, anecdotal, and/or lacking rigor" (Anderson, 2010). Such approaches are also said to overuse interviews and focus groups at the expense of other methods such as ethnography, observation, documentary analysis, case studies, and conversational analysis. However, there are many benefits to qualitative research – especially work associated with quality improvement such as this project. In this context specifically, this project leverages the subtleties and complexities of the project participants, which were unearthed through unrestricted and robust interviews with key stakeholder groups. The qualitative data obtained through this project was very much based on human experiences of stakeholders embedded within Dallas ISD. Key limitations to the project are discussed below, with the information collected, providing a foundation for further investigation using additional qualitative and quantitative methods.

Limitation 1: The quality of the data is subject to a "novice" researcher's skills and thus more easily influenced by personal biases

By definition, *bias* is any trend or deviation from the truth in data collection, data analysis, interpretation and publication which can cause false conclusions (Simundić, 2013). This can occur either intentionally or unintentionally and is often more prevalent in the work of novice researchers (Ellis, T. J., & Levy, Y. (2008). In the context of this project, I gathered data in alignment with the improvement science framework. I also gathered data in a manner consistent with the identified problem and the research questions that guided the direction of the project.

With that said, it is important to highlight the way in which bias in data collection and analysis can become prevalent in a way that gives preference (even unintentionally) to the findings of a preconceived hypothesis. This is not to say there is intentional manipulation or abuse of the data. Rather, it is notable that I previously closely engaged with the project partner, Dallas ISD. Based on this previous work, I developed a deep understanding of academic and organizational practices that took place across the district and within individual schools. Additionally, while I have never been employed by the district, I have worked closely with and been former colleagues with stakeholders within the district who participated in this project. This prior engagement and connection to the district was certainly helpful throughout the scope of this project in terms of gaining access to relevant data and key stakeholders. However, my prior exposure to the district naturally influenced in some respects the way in which I went about analyzing the data.

Overtime, with additional research and experience with quality improvement projects, the ability to analyze data from organizations that I have had previous exposure to with a more impartial lens would hopefully improve. Engaging in this work jointly with a colleague unfamiliar with the organization would also lend itself to a more unbiased approach.

Limitation 2: Purposive sampling is not fully representative of each of the key stakeholder populations and creates possible issues of reliability

As described in the methods section, the project utilized purposive sampling, a common sampling strategy used in qualitative projects to identify focus groups and stakeholder interviews. Using this sampling method, I used pre-selected criteria for those who were part of each focus group and interview(s) relevant to the project research questions.

Purposive sampling provides non-probability samples which are selected based on a specific population's characteristics and the overall study. Unlike other sampling techniques useful under probability sampling, the goal of this work is to intentionally select subjects to gather information. In this context, the project approached the work of sampling with a specific goal in mind aligned with the scope of the project. The focus remained on identifying stakeholders within the district with specific characteristics in a targeted population group (i.e., CTs, School Leaders, District Leaders). Given this approach, I did not ask all CTs at the participating schools to participate in the focus groups or interviews. While I was intentional in selecting the participants, the information and data gathered from the focus groups was limited in representation.

For example, numerically, the three different CT focus groups held represented under 10 percent of Dallas ISD's CTs. Even though the group is diverse because it mirrored the district's diverse teacher population – this project recognizes the data collected from a small subset of the larger population may not be entirely representative. To minimize this effect – the survey was provided to all Dallas ISD's CTs to ensure the larger population's experiences was prevalent in the data and subsequent analysis. This method also allowed the project to generalize from specific samples to the larger population group(s) across the district – helping confer both the validity and reliability of the findings. The use of additional statistical methods, such as regression analysis, would help in better understanding the rate of sampling error produced by purposive sampling.

Finally, the project acknowledges that purposive sampling is prone to bias – especially when there is a novice researcher involved as described above. Every aspect is subject to bias – including me creating the sample, which was subject to my judgement and personal interpretation of the data. When the judgments are either poorly considered or ill-conceived, this can cause a

significant disadvantage creating roadblocks to a final result. However, I do note throughout that I leveraged existing relationships with the district's key stakeholders. This does not infer that the data collected is invalid - it is simply a point to note when understanding where the project's limitations exist. When there is elicitation, accepted criteria, or a theoretical framework in place, then this issue is minimized.

Limitation 3: The pure volume of interview and focus group data analyzed makes analysis and interpretation somewhat subjective

One of the strengths of qualitative research is the recognition that data must always be understood in relation to the context of their wider production. In the context of this project, the data gathered from small samples of different stakeholder groups was done in order to better understand the broader CT landscape across the school district. With this said, exploration of this type of educational improvement is complex. Human interactions are also complex and can rarely be studied or explained in simple or concrete terms. This project included over twenty separate interviews and informal conversations resulting in the production of hundreds of pages worth of interview notes and transcripts. Understanding that qualitative research can at times provide a better understanding of the complexity of educational problems the analysis and interpretation of the data is subject to the researcher and/or project leader.

In order to combat potential deficiencies brought forth by qualitative research, this project followed and adhered to proven research practices and techniques. The collection of high quantities of data throughout the project also led to informed project findings. Notwithstanding, aligning the project to a strong theoretical framework helped the analysis of the data remain focused, specific, and objective. A robust review of the literature and an in-depth understanding

of the identified problem heavily informed the data analysis. This approach attempted to limit subjectivity in the analysis and interpretation of the data.

Finally, while the scope of this project was not significantly impacted by COVID-19, there were certain implications. As previously mentioned, the original project plan called for a focus group made up of teachers who had previously served as CTs, or, CTs not choosing to continue serving in this role following the spring 2020 semester. Since the COVID-19 outbreak caused Dallas ISD to abruptly halt school in March (they subsequently returned to an online learning environment in mid-April), these focus groups were never assembled. As a result, the project was unable to fully capture the perspectives of those educators not wanting to continue to serve as CTs. Of the focus groups assembled prior to COVID-19, the original project plan also called for focus groups and interviews to continue through the end of the 2019-2020 academic school year (May). As the result of COVID-19, the final focus group interview was conducted in early March, and culminating stakeholder perspectives were not captured.

IX. Recommendations

The recommendations that follow are based on both qualitative and quantitative project findings. They are also in alignment with established Dallas ISD goals: Goal 1, Goal 3, and, Goal 4 as outlined in the District Improvement Plan. The recommendations focus on system level changes at the school and district level. These recommendations collectively address root causes identified by Dallas ISD and are central to addressing organizational problem(s) of practice. While not exhaustive, these recommendations offer insights and future considerations for the district related to better understanding the clinical teaching placement of teacher candidates throughout the district.

Recommendation 1: Institutionalize the Cooperating Teacher position as a formally recognized role within the district and clearly define their roles and responsibilities.

Finding 3 showed that participating stakeholders (CTs, Principals, and, District Leaders) are unclear about the roles and responsibilities of the CT. This uncertainty and inconsistency around job function creates unnecessary barriers that can inhibit a CT's success.

While not explicitly stated in this project, from a human resources perspective, there is great significance in clearly defining the roles and responsibilities within a job. According to Edward Lazear (2015), *job design* – the process of defining how work will be performed, what tasks a job will require, and, the job's core characteristics - skills, discretion, interdependence, and multitasking, must all be aligned. Job design also implicates job performance. In this context, performance evaluation and job design are intrinsically linked in that evaluation must incentivize employees to do well across all components of the job. Furthermore, clarity in performance evaluation is essential according to Lazear (2015), so that employees are themselves able to make the connection between the evaluation and the incentive – resulting in employees working harder to ensure they meet the standards of the evaluation.

It is thus problematic that Dallas ISD does not clearly define and documented CTs' roles and responsibilities nor have a basic CT job description. Not only does this create a system where CTs are expected to perform a critically important role in the clinical teaching process without structure, the lack of clarity around the CT role in Dallas ISD also creates an inconsistent experience for the pre-service teacher candidate, all of which ultimately impacts the future performance of teachers once they have their own classroom. Recent motivation theory research also supports the need to properly design jobs. Grant et al. (2007) examines the motivational effects of redesigning jobs to connect employees to their impact on the beneficiaries of their work –

finding that individuals are motivated to work harder and achieve higher performance and productivity when they perceive their jobs are valued. In the context of this project, it is difficult for a CT to perceive their job is valued when the actual CT job is not formally defined by the district.

Finally, it is important to note that there is no universal approach as to how Dallas ISD can formally institutionalize the Cooperating Teacher position. At the most basic level, a CT opens their classroom and provides the clinical teacher with multiple opportunities for them to teach and learn. However, it is clear that CTs do far more than this – guiding, instructing and supporting aspiring teachers as they apply what they have learned to real students in real classrooms. Therefore, creating clear parameters around the CT role within the district and, subsequently, identifying teachers that embody the necessary characteristics to be effective must be a priority. *Finding 2* outlines how the district currently has an existing pool of talented CTs – identified without a formal system. This presents an opportunity. The district is well situated to leverage the existing CT talent and, use the research as a guide to develop the very job descriptions they lack. Not only does this take advantage of existing expertise within the district, it also aligns with current structural systems that reward teacher leadership. For example, the TEI evaluation system requires teachers to demonstrate a commitment to the profession. Therefore, intentionally embedding the work, and, the role of a CT within the existing teacher evaluation system would not only help incentivize others to pursue the role, it would also elevate the role to make it recognizable by all district stakeholders.

In order to accomplish this, Dallas ISD could look to several innovative programs embarking in this work. The Boston Teacher Residency (BTR) in partnership with Boston Public

Schools (BPS) worked to define a framework for effective CTs then refined and adopted by the Boston Public Schools for use with CTs district-wide. Now, more than a decade later, with multiple cohorts of former clinical teachers serving as CTs, the partnership has the capacity to continuously reflect upon and revise the CT role to meet the adaptive needs of that school district. Similar collaborative practices are evident within the University of Chicago's Urban Teacher Education Program (UTEP) and their school district partners. Here, CTs hold the title of 'Clinical Instructor' – defined by UTEP as "accomplished, practicing teachers and leaders who host and guide clinical teachers during half-year placements in their classrooms." They model and observe instruction, provide constructive feedback, and help residents set realistic instructional goals to improve their practice in order to ensure development of a pipeline of teachers ready to meet the demands of teaching Chicago Public School (CPS) students in context-specific ways. They are considered, first and foremost, teacher educators in the clinical realm tasked with providing practical instruction to apply theoretical knowledge in the classroom setting. Clinical Instructors meet regularly with their educator preparation partners to maintain shared understanding of the progress of their clinical teachers and receive monthly training and support from both the UTEP program and CPS.

Finally, Matsko et al., (2018) provide further insight into proven practices in their district-wide study of CTs in Chicago Public Schools – which include the development of a standard job CT job description and job design. Their study supports the importance of a comprehensive district sponsored CT program – where providing CTs with extensive training as both mentors and coaches contribute positively to the clinical teacher experience, and, their preparedness to teach at the end of their preparation. In order for this to take place, Dallas ISD much also have clearly defined

standards and CT competencies embodied by key stakeholders across the district. Examples of these high-level competencies include:

High Leverage Practices and Characteristics of Effective Mentor Teachers

(Source: National Center for Teacher Residencies and Boston Teacher Residency)

1. CT holds high expectations for Clinical Teacher

- Shows through words and actions the belief that Clinical Teacher can meet high expectations
- Supports Clinical Teacher to problem-solve in challenging situations
- Builds on Clinical Teacher's strengths and identifies areas of challenge with clear accountability and support mechanisms.

2. CT reflects on own practice as a CT

- Regularly reflects on mentoring strengths, skills and areas of weakness; sets and assesses progress against learning goals with Site Director, Clinical Teacher and other CTs.

3. CT uses data to inform instruction

- Works with Clinical Teacher to use a variety of formal and informal assessments to evaluate student learning and needs and uses that information to individualize instruction.

4. CT works to communicate effectively with Clinical Teacher

- Uses appropriate communication techniques with Clinical Teacher to discuss practice and to address conflicts
- Engages in inquiry-based conversations with Clinical Teacher around practice
- Matches coaching approach with Clinical Teacher's need for support and structure.

5. CT provides daily opportunities for Clinical Teacher to practice teaching

- Encourages Clinical Teacher to implement ideas from coursework and practicum; holds Clinical Teacher accountable for careful implementation and assessment of effectiveness
- Fully participates in the structured release of responsibility by allowing and demonstrating to Clinical Teacher how to take over specific portions of classroom instruction and activities
- Explicitly discusses with Clinical Teacher philosophical approach and reasoning behind instructional decisions Maintains focus on student achievement.

6. CT model's professional behavior

- Fully participates in teacher residency activities by being punctual and prepared; fulfills teacher residency commitments in the face of conflicting priorities
- Uses respectful language and discretion when discussing challenging situations; maintains confidentiality
- Routinely analyzes professional interactions and serves as a model for resolving concerns and issues in a timely and constructive manner.

7. CT functions effectively in a multilingual environment
• Engages in two-way conversations with Clinical Teacher around issues of equity, achievement, experience, race, class, and ability, and how these issues intersect with teaching and learning for the Clinical Teacher and CT.

8. CT displays a commitment to implementation of TEP and District initiatives
• Effectively implements district instructional and curricular initiatives
• Effectively uses teacher residency structural and curricular initiatives
Monthly CT professional development meetings, documentation of Clinical Teacher progress and goals**.**

Dallas ISD is well positioned financially, politically, and structurally to look to models such as these to guide the work of formally embedding the CT position within the district.

Recommendation 2: Establish a formal District-sponsored cooperating teacher program to support the recruitment, selection, and, ongoing development of cooperating teachers; the program must adopt standards for cooperating teachers that are competency and evidenced-based.

This recommendation is based from finding number three and linked to research question number two.

Research emphasizes that the degree of impact CTs have on pre-service teacher learning, efficacy, and effectiveness is as dependent upon CTs' capacity to teach and coach effectively as the coaching and mentoring supports provided to them by the preparation program and district. Since CTs clearly play an instrumental and formal role in developing pre-service teachers who are competent and qualified to teach our students – they must also receive systematic and ongoing support. As evident from the findings, the majority of CTs across Dallas ISD are intrinsically motivated to engage in this critical work – inspired by the simple pleasures of elevating their own craft, and, ensuring the next generation of educators are well prepared prior to taking over a classroom of their own. Too often however, CTs engage in this work independent of one another resulting in a disconnect for the new teacher and a limited understanding how to put into practice all that they have learned as they prepare to be a teacher. In order to move the work of the district

forward, Dallas ISD must truly value the role of the CT, and design and develop a CT program that ensures a consistent training experience for clinical teachers.

From the findings, it is clear that CTs within Dallas ISD receive the majority of their training directly from the educator preparation program of the clinical teacher they are hosting. This typically includes attending a workshop – mostly on the logistics of hosting a student teacher. Very rarely do CTs receive the holistic professional development they need to be clinical instructors who provide real-time feedback to teacher candidates.

Similar to the first recommendation, Dallas ISD should look towards programs and models with a proven track record of success in designing and implementing strong CT programs. Many such models are evident within Teacher Residency programs – where the role of the CT itself is positioned as an ongoing learning process. With this lens, these programs acknowledge from the beginning that most teachers do not enter the CT role with a lot of experience systematically observing, analyzing, and discussing each other's practice. Therefore, in many of these programs, CTs receive regular training and support to develop the attitudes, skills, and strategies that will make them competent coaches through a monthly seminar, coaching from program staff, and participate in a learning community. At the CT seminar, program staff cover a variety of topics, such as how to give feedback on lesson plans and teaching strategies, and how to map the release of responsibility from CT to the teacher-resident.

These programs also place a premium on CT selection – using defined selection criteria to identify those who assume the roles. For example, CTs in Denver Public Schools are expected to perform in the top thirty percent of their school or school district and achieve a year's worth of growth or more for each student. This is possible because Denver Public Schools have a

comprehensive teacher evaluation system – something that Dallas ISD should note, given the presence of their own teacher evaluation system.

In addition to identifying a cadre of strong CT candidates through the use of student achievement data, programs also use a number of other criteria in their CT selection process. The New Visions for Public Schools Program in New York has prospective CTs engage in role playing, interviews, and debrief sessions with school and district leaders as part of their CT selection process. Once CTs are selected, they engage in comprehensive professional learning with other CTs across the district – founded on problems of practice, high leverage practices in mentoring and coaching, and, a clear understanding of the knowledge and skills their clinical teachers need to master in order to be successful as day one teachers.

As noted in *Finding 4*, there are real implications for equity in this work. This was also evident in the nature of the conversations I engaged in with the stakeholder focus groups. While conversations around equity can be difficult, these issues quickly rose to the surface during focus group interviews – particularly those with the CTs. One CT stated: "It goes without saying that historically, our school system has not addressed the unique needs of all of our students. Where you live in this city matters – if we start doing that, then maybe we start ensuring that all of our teachers have equitable access to resources and supports as well."

Given the academic benefits for students when they have access to high quality instruction – there is an opportunity for the district to use this information to inform the approach and design of a CT program from an equity lens. Centralizing the selection and recruitment of CTs at the district level for example can help ensure that students as well as teachers across the district are

not limited in their access to critical resources simply based on the geographic location of their campus.

Recommendation 3: Evaluate and redesign the use of time and school schedules to increase opportunities for professional learning and collaboration, including participation in professional learning communities, peer coaching and observations across classrooms, and collaborative planning for CTs

This recommendation is based from finding number three and linked to research question number two.

The minutes and hours of the school day are critical to build knowledge, foster student motivation, and drive student outcomes. To make the most of instructional time, teachers must first develop engaging lessons that meet the various needs of students. This requires teachers to collaborate, plan, and reflect outside of instructional time. Effective school schedules maximize the time teachers spend with their students but also recognize teachers' additional responsibilities beyond instructional time. Unfortunately, not enough schools successfully balance these priorities (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2015). Reimagining planning time for teachers would not only enhance the practice of all teachers in schools across Dallas ISD, it could also better support CTs who overwhelmingly articulated the need for a more systematic approach towards their own CT training.

As evident in the findings, CTs working with the majority of educator preparation programs may receive some tips by attending a workshop, mostly on the logistics of hosting a student teacher but overall, they may see their role as transferring their expertise to the novice. However, they do not receive the professional development needed to be clinical instructors who provide real-time feedback to teacher candidates.

The inconsistency among CT training raises the question then as to whether the opportunity exists for a district to be proactive in embedding sacred time within its schedule to better support CT training? According to the Center for American Progress (2017), teachers in the United States spend far more time engaged in active instruction than teachers in other high-performing countries. Based on self-reported data, teachers in the United States spend 27 hours teaching out of 45 hours of work per week (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2014). Compare this with teachers in Singapore, who teach for only 17 hours per week, or teachers in Finland, who teach for a total of 21 hours per week (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2014). Schools in these countries prioritize time for planning and collaboration, recognizing that developing and executing lessons take time and preparation. According to a recent analysis of more than 140 school districts, the average length of a U.S. teacher's workday is 7.5 hours (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2014). In another analysis of more than 120 school districts, the most common length of time allotted for planning was 45 minutes per day (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2014). In this short time, teachers must grade student work, plan for future lessons, engage with families, and complete necessary paperwork. As a result, teachers have little time to plan or collaborate with peers.

In addition, providing teachers with more time to plan and attend to other responsibilities throughout the school day creates systematic opportunities to support new teachers and stretch more seasoned teachers—increasing the likelihood of teacher retention. During this structured planning time, new teachers should receive the coaching and personalized training they need to maximize their effectiveness and meet their professional goals. Meanwhile, experienced teachers can pursue leadership roles or coach new teachers.

Fortunately, schools can look to several promising models to change their typical schedules. The Center for American Progress compiled five of these innovative school schedules. Some of these schedules have already been implemented in schools across the country to improve instruction and ensure teachers have ample time to teach, prepare, and develop their craft (Benner and Partelow, 2017). The Center for American Progress has also included teachers' ideas for alternatives to the traditional school day model. While each example schedule varies, there were similarities in how school leaders and teachers at each school reimagined the use of time. These innovative schedules all included (Benner and Partelow, 2017):

- Additional time for planning and collaboration
- Flexible instructional blocks to differentiate content to student need
- Opportunities for small group instruction or student-directed learning

With this dynamic schedule, teachers can select preferred preparation times, allowing teachers to shape their day to fit their working style. In other words, teachers can deliver instruction at the height of their energy.

Tasked to deliver differentiated, high-quality instruction that prepares students for the social and academic challenges in college and beyond, Dallas ISD should expand their thinking on how they allocate time throughout the school day. Innovative school schedules should meet diverse student needs and ensure that all teachers are primed to deliver engaging, rigorous content. Dallas ISD will be most successful if they customize the use of time to meet content needs rather than adapting content to fit a fixed schedule.

Recommendation 4: Engage in this work collaboratively alongside and in partnership with Educator Preparation Programs and Institutions of Higher Education.

This is a broad recommendation based off each of the collective findings: one, two, three, and four. The recommendation is linked to research question two and three.

More than ever before, school districts are counting on collaborative partnerships that include states, education reform groups, philanthropy, teacher prep programs, and schools to improve teacher preparation (National Center for Teacher Residencies, 2016). Today's schools and diverse students require better-prepared teachers. This holds true for Dallas ISD – particularly given their commitment to improving academic outcomes for students.

As outlined throughout this project, the holistic work surrounding the CT role is complex. Not only are there a number of different internal stakeholders who influence the overall CT experience, there are also many external stakeholders who play a significant part in shaping the role. These external stakeholders include (but are not limited to), Institutions of Higher Education, non-profit partners, philanthropic partners, state agencies, and, educator preparation programs. According to the National Center for Teacher Residencies, there are clear benefits for school districts to engage in authentic partnerships with Educator Preparation Programs as well as with Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) to advance the work of providing every student access to a high-quality classroom teacher every year. The most obvious is a steady stream of new hires who have not just cleared a high bar by being selected for an educator preparation program.

There are examples of different teacher training models that include strong partnerships between school districts and external organizations such as IHEs. These partnerships exist

throughout the country within traditional undergraduate teacher educator programs, alternative certification programs, and, post baccalaureate programs. The New York City Teaching Collaborative, a collaboration between the New York City Department of Education and multiple IHEs, is one key example. The partnership offers a uniquely structured teacher residency program where pre-service teachers spend an entire year of clinical training in a New York Department of Education School. The Collaborative also offers CTs intensive professional development throughout the school year to strengthen their coaching skills. On-site support for CTs continues through the remainder of the school year as candidates engage in an intensive residency assignment in the spring semester (National Center for Teacher Residencies, 2017).

For the purposes of this project, I would encourage Dallas ISD to look into the teacher residency models as a way to formalize and embed the CT role within the district. In a residency model both the teacher candidate and the CT have cleared a high bar by being selected for that program. CTs in residency programs are chosen because they demonstrate effectiveness in the classroom as well as demonstrate the capacity to coach others and critically reflect upon their own practice. Residency programs provide the platform for both teacher candidates and CTs to embed their practice in district curriculum, systems, and structures. Residencies also recruit notably high numbers of diverse candidates, and residency graduates have an unusually low rate of attrition once they are hired as full teachers (National Center for Teacher Residencies, 2017).

Programs that are part of the National Center for Teacher Residency Network have a three-year teacher retention rate of 87 percent, and at five years it is 82 percent (National Center for Teacher Residencies, 2017). These strong alliances between school district and educator

preparation partner work to impact the human capital pipeline into their affiliate school systems by preparing teachers specifically to work in their schools and districts.

Dallas ISD already has some experience engaging with the teacher residency model. In 2018, the district approved nearly $19 million in funds to support three separate teacher residency partnerships – in hopes of developing 500 new teachers, and, training the required CTs for the district. Dallas ISD should leverage this early investment in an effort to scale best practices learned from these partnerships to pre-service teachers and CTs across the district. In speaking with one Dallas ISD district leader about their early work with teacher residency partnerships they articulated that clear and constant communication between the district and residency partner lead to strong experiences not only for pre-service teacher candidates, but, for the CTs participating in that residency program as well. The official went on to state that within these partnerships, it was evident that the program itself shared the organizational values of the district – and recognized that the district had an opportunity to proactively extend elements of these partnerships to other educator preparation programs.

Across Texas, there are additional examples of how partnerships between school districts, education preparation programs, and institutions of higher educations can lead to transformation in the educator preparation space. Recently, TPI-US partnered with Raise Your Hand Texas (RYHT) to inspect teacher prep programs around the state, zeroing in on the strength of collaboration between Institutions of Higher Education and their local school districts. Raising Texas Teachers is a powerful example of how partnerships can be catalysts for change. In this context, TPI-US has worked closely with RYHT, their partner programs and with USPREP to

translate inspection findings into high-impact improvement plans for leveling up candidate preparation to meet the needs of Texas students.

As Dallas ISD continues to engage in the work of improving the experiences of their CTs – which in turn, will improve the experiences of their pre-service teacher candidates – the district would be wise to look towards effective partnerships and reach across the aisle to tackle this complex work alongside others in the field. Ultimately this approach will help Dallas ISD and its partners develop a shared understanding of what effective teaching looks like and a framework for how the partners will hold each other accountable for knowing whether or not effective teaching is being achieved.

X. Conclusion

As catalysts of the clinical teaching experience and of the cultivation of a high-quality future educator workforce, school districts have a clear stake in the CT experience. Yet, in spite of the important role CTs play, the perspective of the CT has largely been missing from the literature around clinical teaching. Throughout this project, this gap in the literature is addressed by discussing the challenges and opportunities that exist to enhance the CT experience from the perspective of CTs in the Dallas Independent School District.

This quality improvement project sought to better understand both the motivations leading to cooperating teachers serving in these roles as well as the organizational barriers that may exist inhibiting the CT's future participation. Through exploration of these two components, major project findings reveal CTs in the partnering district are largely intrinsically motivated when deciding whether to serve as a CT, however, a lack of a systematic and formal approach to the CT

role by the district hindered the overall experience. This is significant given the challenges the district faced in attracting and retaining CTs in recent years, as, given the correlation between a highly effective CT and a well-trained pool of novice teachers.

District stakeholders (including school and central office administrators), overwhelmingly articulated the importance of CTs and their role in the clinical teaching process. Additionally, these groups discussed the need for schools and districts themselves to take a proactive approach in supporting CTs in being successful in their role. However, findings revealed a lack of systems, structures, and overall strategies across the district – preventing a cohesive approach to supporting CTs. The results also expose inconsistencies in the definition of the CT roles and responsibilities which in turn, hinder the process of pairing CTs with clinical teachers. Given the complexity of improvement work of this magnitude (within a district this size) – this project does not recommend a single approach to moving the work forward. Rather, the recommendations that were developed in response to the findings using themes rooted in an improvement science framework. In this context, theory, measurement, and standard work processes are pillars of organizational improvement across any industry – and thus, can be more generalizable as the project offers insight and future considerations for school districts in general to better understand what is necessary to develop a comprehensive Cooperating Teacher program.

The ultimate impact of the recommended CT initiatives remains to be seen. The demonstrated success of several CT focused endeavors taken on in partnership by both school districts, and by educator preparation programs is promising. Moreover, recent evidence from Goldhaber et.al (2018)—who identifies the lack of preparation and training provided to cooperating teachers as a persistent weakness in the training of teacher candidates—suggests that

cooperating teachers who received *some* form of training for their role provided higher-quality clinical teaching experiences than cooperating teachers who had not received any training (Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Educator Research, 2018).

A fundamental challenge in efforts to improve clinical teaching is that educator preparation programs have little authority over what happens in the classrooms of public-school districts. To achieve meaningful improvements in the quality of student teaching experiences, it may be necessary for school districts to provide more leadership in defining the clinical teaching experience. The extent to which other districts in North Texas have taken an active role defining the CT experience is unclear. For Dallas ISD thus far, the efforts to improve clinical teaching through enhancing the CT experience is overwhelmingly articulated by district leadership as a positive step toward improving the development of clinical teachers and, towards improving the academic outcomes of Dallas ISD students.

Finally, opportunity to spend time exploring a partner site outside of my own work environment provided me with the opportunity to learn about the site from a new lens. Although I have worked in partnership with this site for years, this experience required me to expose many of my own previously held assumptions, biases, and, misunderstandings of *how* and *why* work within the site was conducted in a certain manner. As I move forward as a leader in my own organization, taking-into-account key learnings rooted in this new approach to understanding learning environments will help me better formulate my approach to different situations with different stakeholders. In this context, I also have a new understanding of actions organizations can take to ensure their employees and their leaders are able to fully participate in a way that moves learning forward within the organization.

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APPENDIX A – Cooperating Teacher Interview Guide

Cooperating Teacher Focus Group
Guiding Questions (for current cooperating teachers)

Below are a set of questions that will be used to conduct the interviews and focus groups with cooperating teachers – whom serve as the end user in this project.

Questions around the role:

- Talk to me about your role as a CT (note: leading question as introduction)
    - Level of experience as a CT (as a teacher)
    - School/grade level
    - Length of time/logistics around the role
- In your mind, what does the role of a CT entail?
- Now that you have been in the role for (x amount of time) does the role meet your initial expectations (why or why not)?
- What do you need from the student teacher to be successful in this role?
- What do you need from the school/school leadership to do this job well?
- What do you need from the prep program to do this job well?
- What do they need from the school district?
- What do you need from your teacher colleagues to do this job well?
- How often do you speak to the prep program during your time as a cooperating teacher
- How often do you speak to your school leader during your time as a cooperating teacher
- What do these conversations entail?
- What do you need from the prep program and school leader to do their CT job well?

Questions around motivation

- Why did you want to be a cooperating teacher? (note: ask first in series of motivation questions)
- What benefits do you see in being a CT? (are their opportunities for additional benefits)?
- Did you have any hesitations prior to becoming a CT? Have these hesitations gone away over time or do they still exist?
- Do you feel successful in your role as a cooperating teacher? (tell me about a time that you felt successful/unsuccessful – what led to that success/or failure)?

General Questions:

- What advice would you give to a new cooperating teacher?
- Tell me about your preparation experience as a pre-service teacher.
- As a teacher what would you identify as your strengths … areas for improvement?
- How are you supported by school leadership (or others) as a cooperating teacher (talk to me about your school environment)?
- What has been the most difficult part of being cooperating teacher?
- Knowing what you know now, if you were to participate as a cooperating teacher through your educator preparation program again, what would you want done differently?
- Talk to me about the professional development you currently receive as a cooperating teacher
- What would have helped you as a cooperating teacher that your educator preparation program could have provided?

APPENDIX B – Work Motivation Survey

Why Do You Do Your Work?

Introduction

Thank you for participating in this survey. The survey sections are designed to capture information on background, perceptions, and experiences with your current or past work as a cooperating teacher.

The estimated completion time is 20-25 minutes.

Your feedback is important because it will be used to help schools and school districts improve the cooperating teacher experience. Your responses will remain anonymous and be kept confidential. If you encounter any issues with the survey, please contact Robert DeHaas for help at David.r.dehaas@vanderbilt.edu

Directions for Questions Related to Work Motivation

For Questions 1 – 15 please use the scale below. Please indicate to what extent each of the following items corresponds to the reasons why you are presently involved in your work

Scale: 1 through 7

(legend)

1: Does not correspond at all
4: Corresponds moderately
7. Corresponds exactly

1. Because this is the type of work I chose to do to attain a certain lifestyle.
2. For the income it provides me.
3. Because I derive much pleasure from learning new things.
4. Because it has become a fundamental part of who I am
5. Because I want to succeed at this job, if not I would be very ashamed of myself.
6. Because I chose this type of work to attain my career goals.
7. For the satisfaction I experience from taking on interesting challenges
8. Because it allows me to earn additional money.
9. Because it is part of the way in which I have chosen to live my life.
10. Because I want to be very good at this work, otherwise I would be very disappointed.
11. I don't know why, we are provided with unrealistic working conditions.
12. Because it is the type of work I have chosen to attain certain important objectives.
13. For the satisfaction I experience when I am successful at doing difficult tasks.
14. Because this type of work provides me with security.
15. Because this job is a part of my life.

Note (key to questions):. Intrinsic motivation: 3,7,13; integrated regulation: 4,9,15; identified regulation: 1,6,12; introjected regulation: 5,10,11; external regulation: 2,8,14

Source: *(Tremblay, Blanchard, Taylor, and Lue, 2009): Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale: Its Value for Organizational Psychology Research, Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science, Canadian Psychological Association 2009, Vol. 41, No. 4, 213–226*

Directions for Questions Related to your Current or Previous Role as a Cooperating Teacher

Please indicate your answers to questions 16-30 below:

16. What educator preparation program are you affiliated with as a cooperating teacher? (write in name)

17. What grade(s) do you currently teach as a cooperating teacher? (please select all that apply)

- Preschool
- Pre-Kindergarten
- Kindergarten
- 1st grade
- 2nd grade
- 3rd grade
- 4th grade
- 5th grade
- 6th grade
- 7th grade
- 8th grade
- 9th grade
- 10th grade
- 11th grade
- 12th grade

18. In what assignment area(s) do you currently teach? (Select all that apply)

- Early Childhood Education
- Linguistically Diverse Education
- Elementary Fine Arts
- Secondary Math
- Secondary English and Language Arts
- Secondary Humanities (e.g., foreign language, philosophy, psychology)
- Other Secondary
- Special Education
- General Education
- Other Elementary
- Secondary Science
- Secondary History/Social Studies
- Secondary Fine Arts

19. Including this year, how many years have you taught as a classroom teacher of record?

- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years

- More than 20 years

20. Approximately what percentage of the students you teach receive special education services?

- Less than 10%
- 10-25%
- 26-50%
- More than 50%
- I don't know

21. Approximately what percentage of the students you teach are identified as English Language Learners?

- Less than 10%
- 10-25%
- 26-50%
- More than 50%
- I don't know

22. Approximately what percentage of the students you teach are identified as Economically Disadvantaged?

- Less than 10%
- 10-25%
- 26-50%
- More than 50%
- I don't know

Cooperating Teacher Role Information

23. Including the current semester, how many total semesters have you served as a formal cooperating teacher? *A formal cooperating teacher is assigned by an educator preparation program, compensated with money or release time from teaching duties.* (write in number)

24. Not counting your experience as a formal cooperating teacher program cooperating teacher, what is the total number of semesters you have served as an informal cooperating teacher to novice teachers? *An informal cooperating teacher listens, advises, and acts as a sounding board or provides other help in an unstructured, casual manner on a regular basis. An informal cooperating teacher is usually not assigned.* (write in number)

25. How were you matched with your current student teacher(s)?

- Student teacher(s) was assigned
- Student teacher(s) was selected by me
- Some student teachers were assigned to me, and some were selected by me

26. Including you, how many cooperating teachers are in your school? (write in number)

27. How often do you meet with other cooperating teachers in your school to discuss the student teachers you are cooperating teacher?

- Never
- 1-2 x per semester
- Monthly
- Weekly
- Daily

28. How often do you meet with education preparation program staff to discuss the student teachers you are cooperating teacher?

- Never
- 1-2 x per semester
- Monthly
- Weekly
- Daily

29. When you first became a cooperating teacher to a student teacher, how prepared were you for this role?

- Not prepared
- Somewhat prepared
- Prepared
- Very well prepared

30. At this moment, how prepared do you feel for this role overall?

- Not prepared
- Somewhat prepared
- Prepared
- Very well prepared

For Question 31 -32 Please use the scale below to answer the each of following questions (and sub statements):

- Never
- 1-2 x per semester
- Monthly
- Weekly
- Daily

31. How often have you engaged in the following activities this school year?

- Use coaching strategies to support student teachers
- Use adult learning strategies to support student teachers
- Examine strategies for effective instruction with your student teachers
- Examine how to assess student progress with your student teachers
- Examine the progress of students in your class with your student teachers
- Examine with your student teachers how to adapt his/her teaching approach to meet students' learning needs/styles

- Support student teachers to use new instructional approaches
- Examine with your student teachers strategies for classroom management
- Examine with your student teachers strategies for student, family, and community engagement
- Have dedicated meeting time with your student teacher (e.g. during a planning period, before/after school)

32. How often have you engaged in the following activities this school year?

- Work with your student teacher to use multiple types of student data to inform planning and instruction
- Use student teacher performance and effectiveness data (i.e., video of student teacher teaching; notes from a lesson observation; scores on a teacher performance rubric; student data, cooperating teacher tools, observation tools) to set instructional improvement goals with your student teacher
- Co plan instruction with your student teacher
- Co teach with your student teacher
- Release full responsibility for all aspects of classroom instruction to your student teacher
- Support your student teacher to observe your practice
- Support your student teacher to promote diversity and inclusion in the classroom
- Examine feedback on your cooperating teacher/coaching practice with educator preparation program staff
- Examine feedback on your cooperating/coaching practice with fellow cooperating teachers
- Set specific cooperating teacher/coaching improvement goals

For Question 33 -34 Please use the scale below to answer the each of following questions (and sub statements):

- N/A (Preparation not yet provided)
- Not Effective
- Somewhat Effective
- Effective
- Very Effective

33. How effective has your educator preparation program been at preparing you to engage in the following activities?

- Use coaching strategies to support student teachers
- Use adult learning strategies to support student teachers
- Examine strategies for effective instruction with your student teacher
- Examine how to assess student progress with your student teacher
- Examine the progress of students in your class with your student teacher
- Examine with your student teacher how to adapt their teaching approach to meet students' learning needs/styles
- Support student teachers to use new instructional approaches
- Examine with your student teacher strategies for classroom management
- Examine with your student teacher strategies for student, family, and community engagement
- Examine with your student teacher strategies to demonstrate professionalism and leadership
- Conduct meetings with your student teacher during dedicated meeting time

34. How effective has your educator preparation program been at preparing you to engage in the following activities?

- Work with your student teacher to use multiple types of student data to inform planning and instruction
- Use student teacher performance and effectiveness data (i.e., video of student teacher teaching; notes from a lesson observation; scores on a teacher performance rubric; student data, cooperating teacher tools, observation tools) to set instructional improvement goals with your student teacher
- Co plan instruction with your student teacher Coteach with your student teacher
- Release full responsibility for all aspects of classroom instruction to your student teacher
- Support your student teacher to observe your practice
- Support your student teacher to promote diversity and inclusion in the classroom
- Examine feedback on your cooperating teacher/coaching practice with educator preparation program staff
- Examine feedback on your cooperating teacher/coaching practice with fellow cooperating teachers
- Set specific cooperating teacher/coaching improvement goals

For Question 35 -36 Please use the scale below to answer the each of following questions (and sub statements):

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strong Agree

35. Indicate your agreement with the following statements about your experience as a cooperating teacher in the educator preparation program.

- My educator preparation program's selection process to become a cooperating teacher was rigorous
- My educator preparation program's selection process to become a cooperating teacher increased my desire to participate in the educator preparation program
- The vision and expectations for effective cooperating teacher/coaching in the educator preparation program are clearly defined
- The vision and expectations for effective teaching in the educator preparation program are clearly defined
- My school's expectations for instructional practice align with the educator preparation program's vision and expectations for effective teaching
- My roles and responsibilities as a cooperating teacher were clearly defined by my educator preparation program
- I have a manageable workload as a cooperating teacher My student teacher has a manageable workload
- The coursework provided to student teachers by the educator preparation program is relevant to my school context and classroom
- The gradual release of teaching responsibilities from me to my student teacher is paced appropriately
- My educator preparation program offers student teachers a good balance of theoretical and practical strategies to strengthen their effectiveness in the classroom
- The educator preparation program is preparing my student teacher to be an effective teacher
- My student teacher is a good match for me

36. Indicate your agreement with the following statements about your experience as a cooperating teacher in the educator preparation program.

- I feel supported by the educator preparation program
- The educator preparation program provides me with timely and relevant feedback on my performance as a cooperating teacher
- The support I receive from educator preparation program staff improves my performance as a cooperating teacher
- My school leader supports me in my role as a cooperating teacher
- My school leader provides me with timely and relevant feedback on my performance as a cooperating teacher
- My school/school district/ educator preparation program supports me in my role as a cooperating teacher by providing a stipend that sufficiently compensates me for the time and effort I spend serving as a cooperating teacher
- My school/school district supports me in my role as a cooperating teacher by providing sufficient time to serve as a cooperating teacher
- Being a cooperating teacher in this educator preparation program makes me a more effective teacher
- My experiences as a cooperating teacher have improved my abilities as a teacher leader
- Coursework instructors who partner with the educator preparation program support me in my role as a cooperating teacher
- I plan to return as a cooperating teacher for my educator preparation program next year
- I would recommend cooperating teacher in the educator preparation program to another teacher

37. How many student teachers do you currently support? (select below)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- More than 4

38. At this point in the year, how prepared is your student teacher to teach next year as a teacher of record?

- Not prepared
- Somewhat Prepared
- Prepared
- Very Well Prepared
-

39. At which school are you currently teaching? Again, your responses will remain anonymous and be kept confidential (Optional response – write in name)

40. How has your cooperating teacher experience impacted your instructional practice, mentoring and coaching skill, and/or your classroom? (free response)

41. What can your residency program can do to improve the overall experience for cooperating teachers? (free response)

42. How can your educator preparation program strengthen the training provided to student teachers? (free response)

APPENDIX C – Stakeholder Focus Group Interview Guide

Below are a set of questions that will be used to conduct the interviews and focus groups with school and district leaders that participate in the study.

Questions around the role:

- Talk to me about your role as a school/district leader (note: leading question)
    - Level of experience as a leader
    - School/grade level
    - Length of time/logistics around the role
- How is the role of CTs viewed (perception) on your campus/across your district?
- In your mind, what does the role of a CT entail?
- What does success for a CT look like for you?
- How often do you interact with your CTs specifically about their role as CTs?
- What do you talk about with them? How do you see your role in helping them be a successful CT?
- How often do you interact with the student teacher?
- What do you talk about with them? How do you see your role in helping the student teacher be successful?
- How often do you interact with the prep program?
- What do you talk about with them?
- How do you see their role in ensuring the student teaching experience is successful for all involved?

Questions around motivation:

- Why did you want to host a cooperating teacher on your campus/district?
- What benefits do you see in having CTs at your campus/district? (are their opportunities for additional benefits)?
- Did you have any hesitations prior to welcoming a CT on your campus/district? Have these hesitations gone away over time or do they still exist?
- Do you feel well equipped to support CTs on your campus/district? (what has specifically led to these feelings)

General Questions:

- Have you ever been a CT?
- Talk to me about your experience working with CT's
- What advice would you give to a new cooperating teacher?
- How are you supported by school/district leadership to support the work of CTs?
- What has been the most difficult part supporting cooperating teacher's?
- Knowing what you know now, if you were to host another CT on your campus/district participate what would you want (or do) done differently?
- Talk to me about the professional development you currently provide CT's?
- What would have helped you as a school/district leader better support CT's in their role?