



September 25, 2020

To: House Public Education Committee, Chairman Huberty and Vice Chairman Bernal

Re: Request for Information, Interim Charge 1, Questions 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9

Chairman Huberty, Vice Chairman Bernal, and members,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a response to your request for information on Interim Charge 1[B] regarding district partnerships with charter schools, institutions of higher education, non-profits, and government entities.

This letter is submitted on behalf of the Leadership Academy Network (LAN) in Fort Worth ISD (FWISD).

Texas is a hub of innovation, ranking nationally as one of the top three states with the greatest number of Fortune 500 companies. As a business-friendly state with a thriving startup ecosystem, resourcefulness is part of our identity. **Innovation in education, just like business, requires strong, strategic partnerships with subject matter experts.** Senate Bill 1882 ensures that schools have the opportunity to identify organizations with diverse expertise and differentiate school transformation models autonomously.

1. School Transformation: *(IC Q.5: The stated purpose of these partnerships with charters was to serve as incubators of innovative ideas in how to turn around failing campuses. Have any successful programs been identified that can be replicated by struggling campuses?)*

In the first year of operations, all Leadership Academies were removed from Texas Education Agency's "Improvement Required" list and demonstrated levels of student growth that placed them among the top half of campuses across the state. The university sponsors and supports the incubation of school models at our six Leadership Academy campuses, spanning grades PK through 8. The School of Education provides strong governance, independent management, data-driven academic oversight, professional development and school counseling resources.

Due to the success of Leadership Academy Network's campuses, FWISD is planning to replicate the model at other campuses. The autonomy provided by SB 1882 allows schools to identify which aspects of the model are most relevant to their community and result in improved student academic achievement among particular demographics. This autonomy and infrastructure have allowed for the expansion of this model. Further, we work to partner with **intermediary organizations like nonprofits, which specialize in social and emotional learning, literacy, and blended learning, providing these individual services based on the needs of the school.**



2. Cross-sector Collaboration *(IC Q.6: Have certain types of new partnerships been more successful than other types of alternative educational arrangements?)*

The Leadership Academy model focuses on implementing the following pillars, which have been correlated to high academic achievement with students who mirror the population served. The pillars are: strategically staffing school with high performing leaders, high achieving teachers, implementing a comprehensive instructional support model, extending learning opportunities in both extended school day and enrichment opportunities, a social-emotional school structure and system and community partnerships to provide enrichment, assistance and support. A first-of-its-kind initiative, the Network leverages not only the Texas Wesleyan School of Education but also the Fort Worth ISD Office of Innovation and Transformation. **The partnership ensures that teachers are successful in their transitions from residency to the classroom, resulting in a sustainable pipeline of high-quality educators, simultaneously combatting teacher shortages and improving student achievement.** SB 1882 allows for LAN's 230 teachers to achieve and sustain greater academic gains, changing the trajectory of 2,650 students and transforming five TEA-designated F schools to B schools in one academic year, schools that are poised for stable, long-term success.

The autonomy of a successful partnership like the LAN model allows for less institutional obstacles and for more nimble, strategic action. For instance, if a highly effective teacher excels at improving student outcomes within a particular demographic, subject area, or instructional strategy, that educator can easily move to any of the Network's six campuses where their skills would be magnified. This concept applies to successful school administrators as well. **SB 1882 allows for the incubation of talent from within, where high achieving teachers and principals are cultivated and strategically staffed across the Network's five schools.**

Education is not a one-size-fits-all, but a one-fits-one, and SB 1882 partnerships ensure there's a fit for every teacher and student. This impactful legislation encourages districts to expand the diversity of school models, bring in targeted expertise and empower school leaders and partners to innovate with greater autonomy in a financially sustainable way.

3. Diverse Funding Streams *(IC Q.7: What type of resources (financial and other types of supports) have been necessary to implement new turn-around partnerships?)*

The extra support provided through cross-sector collaboration is not limited to a district's budget. A diverse stream of funds drives the partnership, from public dollars to agency grants. Public dollars fund the individual school models while philanthropic dollars, the largest source of financial support,



fund wraparound services and the teacher residency program with Texas Wesleyan. **Of these dollars, 82% are used in the recruitment, retainment, and development of superior talent within our network.**

Job security is more necessary now, during a pandemic, than ever before. As thousands of Texans are still unemployed, a talented teacher shortage still exists, and we are thoughtfully growing our own. LAN has 10 resident teachers, six of whom are district employees who have upskilled from teacher assistants to full-time educators. Residents receive \$30,000 a year plus benefits to earn their certification within one academic school year. Once on staff as an educator, LAN teachers are encouraged to pursue career development. **Due to our commitment to talent management and development, the Network has achieved a 90% retention rate across its' schools.**

4. Accountability and Delegation *(IC Q.8: What measures of "success" are being used to know if these partnerships are working and sustainable?)*

There are two key levers we use to measure success:

- 1. Peer-based performance drives academic achievement in the Network, where students are compared to their demographic peers within the state, district, and across the country.**
Accountability is a key lever for gauging success and identifying areas of proficiency and growth. LAN teachers and students are held accountable to showing growth on both the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) and a norm-referenced test like the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP). **Student data along with community feedback, informs and drives continuous improvements in teacher instruction and school-wide success metrics.**
- 2. Strong relationships and trust between partners make successful partnerships. District reconstitution allows a seamless transition from district to partnership control, where partners can assume ownership of school improvement initiatives. A partner can exclusively focus on innovation and improving academics, while the district focuses on compliance, administrative duties, and facilities.** This process of delegation allows partners to address the needs of teachers, students, and families, forging a strong relationship with the community. The partnership allows our senior officer, Priscila Dilley, to spend 90% of her time on campuses. **Instead of being bogged down in administrative duties, she is able to ensure that students, teachers, and parents are receiving timely services and resources.**

5. Scalability and Replicability *(IC Q.9: Can programs that have been deemed successful at these low-rated campuses be replicated at other campuses within the district? If not, why? If yes, have similar results in increased student achievement been realized?)*

The partnership's success has led to the consideration of expanding strategic staffing to other low-performing campuses in FWISD. The LAN partnership can be replicated by other campuses using a community-based approach. The five academies lean on grassroots organizations, nonprofits, churches, and the Steering Committee members for wraparound services. Nonprofit partners like Freedom



Schools ensure our students receive additional academic support by providing targeted, literacy intervention in its reading program. Our community partners are in regular conversation(s) with schools and LAN leadership to provide services to families and supports to schools.

The power of community input makes partnerships replicable, while scalability depends on the context of the district, school, and community assets. The Network's community-based governance structure in the form of a Steering Committee, provides a constant feedback loop of what's working and what needs to be improved as well as a forum for public oversight, accountability and engagement.

Partnerships influence districts to pilot school models that best fit the needs of individual school communities. Innovation does not have to happen in a vacuum. It can be shared publicly, critiqued, replicated, and scaled. Much like Texas businesses innovate to serve Texas consumers, we too, as an education system, must innovate to serve Texas students.

In gratitude,

Priscila Dilley

Priscila Dilley, Senior Officer - Leadership Academy Network