



# We're Always Negotiating: Getting in and Staying in to Facilitate Authentic, Inclusive Engagement Between Teachers and State-Level Leaders

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We're Always Negotiating:  
Getting in and Staying in to Facilitate Authentic, Inclusive Engagement Between  
Teachers and State-Level Leaders

Doctor of Education Leadership (Ed.L.D)  
Capstone

Submitted by

Madonna Nicole Ramp

To the Harvard Graduate School of Education  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education Leadership.

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## **Dedication**

*I dedicate this Capstone to my mother, Madonna Chapin, and to the many family members, friends, colleagues, and mentors who have supported me throughout this journey. This Capstone is a celebration of you. Your influence on me has been incredibly important, not just to me, but to the many other people whose lives have intersected with mine. Your belief in me has carried me through so much. I could not be who I am today, and could not have accomplished all that I have, without each one of you.*

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## Abstract

This Capstone examines outcomes and insights generated from a Strategic Project that took place during the founding of Teach Plus Texas. It explores how an intermediary organization seeking to impact education policy from outside schools can facilitate authentic, inclusive engagement between diverse groups of excellent teachers and systems-level leaders in a new site. Teach Plus builds teacher leadership by operating policy fellowships and instructional leadership development programs in nine states across the country.

This Strategic Project generated the first majority-minority cohort of Teaching Policy Fellows in the organization's history, supported them in advocating for and impacting important policies that meet real student needs, established an ongoing policy advising relationship with the State Commissioner of Education, and built a belief in the wider organization that policy fellows should reflect the diverse life experiences of the student body.

The author drew upon principles of diversity and inclusion, adult development, and interest-based negotiation to: (1) develop a process and engage 19 volunteer teachers to lead focus groups with 148 of their peers from around the state and then write and publish a high-quality policy memo advising state leaders on how to best implement a federal law, (2) lead the cultivation, recruitment, and selection of 12 of those volunteers, along with 18 additional teachers, to form the 30-member inaugural cohort of the Texas Policy Fellowship, (3) coordinate preparation for both groups to advocate for equitable policies together with the State Education Commissioner.

This Strategic Project yielded three insights regarding diversity and inclusion, adult development, and negotiation, that can guide leaders seeking to involve teachers in education policy. First, to uncover and meet the real needs of the most vulnerable students, we must build a group of teachers that reflects their diverse life experiences. Second, increasing diversity is necessary but not sufficient. Diverse groups also need inclusive adult development to bring that experience to bear to negotiate and co-create policy changes that meet the interests of our nation's students. Finally, it is helpful for leaders to adopt a mindset that they are always negotiating with a variety of parties on behalf of all students.

*Keywords:* adult development, diversity, inclusion, negotiation, education policy

## **Introduction**

### **The Context**

I begin with a question: *How can an intermediary organization like Teach Plus Texas facilitate authentic, inclusive engagement between diverse groups of excellent teachers and systems-level leaders in a new state?*

I am a product of the biggest education reform boom in the history of the United States. I became interested in this trend because of my experiences working in a mortgage company during the housing boom of the early 2000s, and the drastic changes I witnessed in that industry during its subsequent bust. Public funding for education, and all forms of support for education reform, has been contracting in recent years after over two decades of record expansion (Leachman, Albares, Masterson, & Wallace, 2016).

I am one of many well-intentioned education reformers who are looking back on decades of committed work and questioning the extent to which our efforts have had the impact we envisioned. Leaders of backlash against reform have been calling upon us to engage more deeply with those we seek to serve, to more carefully align our efforts to the real needs of the most vulnerable members of our society. The most recent presidential election cycle highlighted growing political polarization and criticism against the types of reforms the previous administration encouraged. I had this context in mind as I sought out a residency experience for my doctoral program in education leadership.

### **The Organization**

Teach Plus operates teaching policy fellowships and instructional leadership development programs in a variety of regions in nine states across the country. Initially, regions were concentrated in the Northeast and then the Midwest. Southwestern states

have seen more growth recently. As a new site branching out from the national organization that brings teachers' voices into policy, Teach Plus Texas (the Texas/local site) demonstrated that Teach Plus (the national organization) was beginning to respond to some of the trends I was thinking about.

In 2016-2017 Teach Plus launched a handful of pilot state policy fellowships focused on impacting statewide policy for the first time. Policies established by state government have the potential to impact hundreds of thousands—or in the case of a larger state like Texas, over 5 million—students. Yet many key decisions are made without input from the experts who work with students every day: excellent teachers. Teachers have experience that can inform which policy change may help to drive student achievement—and can flag strategies for avoiding unintended consequences in the fine print of well-intentioned policies.

**Teach Plus' formal mission.** Teach Plus' mission overflows with belief in the power of teachers to improve student outcomes, and positions Teach Plus as a partner to create a more performance-driven profession by designing and implementing leadership opportunities for teachers. “The mission of Teach Plus is to empower excellent, experienced teachers to take leadership over key policy and practice issues that affect their students' success” (Teach Plus, 2018).

### **The Residency**

In January of 2017, I began my Harvard Doctor of Educational Leadership residency with Teach Plus Texas while it was preparing to launch. I found this opportunity particularly compelling for three reasons.

**A testing ground.** First, because I worked in a public school district in Texas prior

to starting the Ed.L.D program, I knew that Texas offered a ripe test bed to learn about the next era of education reform. It is one of only five majority-minority states, and the rest of the country is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse as well. Texas is also the second largest state geographically, and it has the second largest and fastest growing population, which is spread across huge cities and expansive rural areas. This makes the state a microcosm of the shifting demographics in our country and our schools, and positioned it well for me to dig deep into organizational strategy.

**A visionary leader.** Second, Teach Plus Texas offered an opportunity to learn from a visionary leader. My residency supervisor led Teach Plus Massachusetts for several years, and then, about eight months before I arrived, set out to bring teacher voice to Texas. She had already met many influential figures in Texas education policy, and formed an informal Advisory Board made up of 19 excellent teachers from diverse backgrounds across the state, including the 2017 State Teacher of the Year. These teachers held firm beliefs on where education reform needed to go, and my supervisor was their committed talent scout who brought them into policy discussions.

**Deepening and broadening.** Third, this residency offered a balance of deepening my skills and broadening my understanding of the education sector. Helping to launch Teach Plus Texas would allow me to leverage the deep expertise I developed over two decades creating inclusive learning environments within and around the school systems we entrust our children to. It promised to uncover new understandings for me about the world of state-level policy and advocacy as well as entrepreneurship.

I had experience at all levels of the pre-K-12 education system. In addition to having taught high school students and mentored teachers, I had co-founded a political

action committee to elect great school board members, served as a fellow for the U. S. Education Department and another intermediary, served as the first Teach For America alumnus in two school district central offices, coached principals and MBA candidates, co-facilitated strategic planning for a state Race To The Top team, consulted with a variety of school districts and national organizations, coordinated human capital for a crisis center, and even led a team of designers and facilitators and collaborated with Harvard faculty members to create the first offering of a course leading to a Certificate of Advanced Education Leadership for systems-level educational leaders. I still perceived myself as having a gap in my policy and advocacy abilities, particularly at the state level. I felt this residency would help me fill in that gap, so I could see more clearly how each level of our education system works together.

### **The Strategic Project**

My Strategic Project was to build a diverse, excellent teacher talent pipeline for Teach Plus Texas' State Policy Fellowship. This included three work streams: (1) engaging 19 volunteer teachers to lead focus groups with their peers and publish a high-quality policy memo advising state leaders on how to best implement a federal education law, (2) leading the cultivation, recruitment, and selection of ultimately 12 of those volunteers, along with 18 additional teachers, to form the first cohort of a state policy Fellowship in Texas, (3) coordinating the preparation for both groups of teachers to negotiate inclusively and flexibly for equitable policies with the State Commissioner of Education (The Commissioner). To do this work, I planned to draw upon principles of adult development and diversity and inclusion.

## **Key Learnings**

This residency was successful in three ways: I achieved and, in many cases far exceeded, the Strategic Project goals and met my own learning objectives. Most importantly, in order to do that, I shifted my leadership paradigm to accommodate a more consistent systems-level approach to the work using interest-based negotiation.

Drawing on past experiences of myself and my supervisor, what we learned throughout the Strategic Project, and the academic literature, I arrived at three takeaways, which can be applied to my leadership, as well as to Teach Plus and the sector at large. I explore the strategies and tactics associated with each takeaway in more detail in the analysis and implications sections of this document.

**Reflect students' experiences.** First, to uncover and meet real student needs, we must build a group of teachers that reflects the *diverse life experiences* of the students we seek to serve. To do this, we must unapologetically recruit and cultivate excellent candidates, especially teachers of color, through referrals and follow up, rather than exclusively increasing the total number of possibly easier-to-find applicants from dominant groups like white females and selecting from that larger, but more homogenous, pool. For most organizations, the first step will be to focus on racial and ethnic diversity as Teach Plus has and to expand from there to add other dimensions of students' lived experiences.

**Develop adults inclusively.** Second, increasing diversity is necessary but not sufficient to produce better policy. To ensure the members of a diverse group can bring their experiences to bear in the complex work of co-developing policies for the most vulnerable students, they need inclusive adult development experiences and support. That

includes training for tasks that might be new, as well as thoughtful follow up and processes modifications to address any barriers they may encounter along the way.

**Negotiate based on interests on behalf of students.** Third, it is helpful to adopt a mindset that an education leader is always negotiating using interest-based negotiation with a variety of parties on behalf of students. This suggests digging deep and uncovering the interests (rather than positions) of negotiating partners to build creative options together, proactively co-defining success with them, negotiating how to negotiate before even beginning, and staying in conversation with them beyond any pre-conceived end to the engagement.

### **Overview of this Document**

In Chapter 2, the Review of Knowledge for Action (RKA), I lay out the research, experiences, and Theory of Action, that framed my thinking as I entered Teach Plus Texas, and then introduce the interest-based negotiation framework. Then, in Chapter 3, I describe in detail what I did in my Strategic Project and how the work progressed. In Chapter 4, I highlight the most relevant evidence to assess the effectiveness of my approach to the Strategic Project by determining whether I did what I set out to do, analyzing why the I got the results I got, and then proposing a revised Theory of Action based on what I have learned. Finally, in Chapters 5 through 8, I share implications for myself, Teach Plus, and other intermediaries seeking to influence education policy, and then close with a short conclusion in Chapter 9.

## Review of Knowledge for Action

As I began my residency I kept my guiding question in mind: *How can an intermediary organization like Teach Plus Texas facilitate authentic, inclusive engagement between diverse groups of excellent teachers and systems-level education leaders in a new state?*

I considered what was already known about the *where* of the environment I was operating in, or the context, and the *what* of the work I intended to do, or the content, that could inform my understanding of my Strategic Project. I thought about what knowledge would enable me to build from what was known and increase the likelihood of success and impact in my work with Teach Plus Texas.

I broke my guiding question down into three main research questions to inform my leadership. They are listed below with a note about the general topics they pertain to:

### Research Questions

1. **The role of an intermediary organization:** *How can an intermediary organization seeking to impact education policy from outside schools learn from for-profit intermediaries that grew stronger despite market decline?*
2. **Diversity and inclusion:** *How can we ensure our teachers intimately understand and are psychologically safe to communicate the needs of the students we most seek to serve?*
3. **Adult development:** *How can we support our teachers' development as they advocate for policies that meet the needs of the most vulnerable students?*

This RKA integrates scholarly research literature and professional practice case studies from a range of sources, organized around these three questions. Throughout the Strategic Project, I applied learnings chronicled within this RKA, which laid a foundation for the outcomes I achieved with the teachers.



At the end of this RKA, I review an additional body of knowledge using a fourth research question relating to negotiation, which turned out to be crucial to the *how*, or the process by which I achieved success and growth as I led the Strategic Project and engaged a wide variety of stakeholders in a complex environment.

### **Research Question One: The Role of an Intermediary Organization**

*How can an intermediary organization seeking to impact education policy from outside schools learn from for-profit intermediaries that grew stronger despite market decline?*

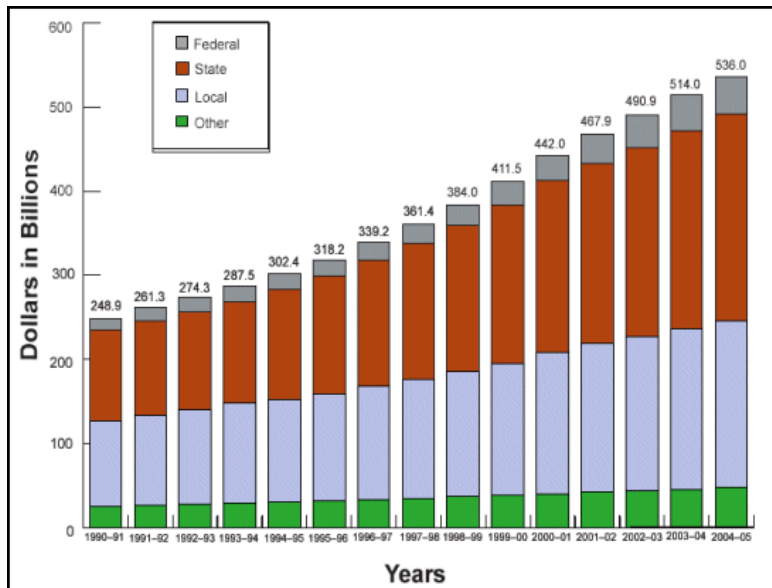
**A for-profit intermediary parallel.** In the summer of 2003, I sold mortgages. My employer was a small mortgage brokerage which had emerged during the real estate boom of the early 2000's. Interest rates had been falling steadily for years and were at an all-time low. This enabled homeowners to refinance their mortgages, lower their monthly payments, and buy homes they would not otherwise have been able to afford. The low interest rates we took advantage of were valuable to homeowners and lucrative to us.

Buckley and Barua (2016) described factors that drove the housing boom, including that “a growing proportion of buyers was using alternative financing (including subprime, interest-only, no-doc, and adjustable rates with very low teaser rates) to get into homes they would not have been able to afford otherwise” (p. 3).

Low interest rates also enabled speculation—investors bought homes they had no intention of living in, but instead hoped to sell for a profit. This speculative demand drove up the value of houses on paper until prices were far more than people in real-life housing markets could afford. There was real demand for low-income housing including apartments, but speculative demand in the luxury market created incentive to overbuild luxury homes instead of meeting the real demand for less lucrative low-income housing.

**An education reform boom.** The core funding for the business of teaching and learning in U.S. preK-12 public schools has traditionally come primarily from state and local tax revenues and been allocated on a per-pupil basis (ED, 2005, p.1). Reports like *A Nation at Risk* (1983) highlighted deficiencies in the educational system and made an urgent case for the need to reform it. This reform movement combined with increased tax revenues from three long economic booms that ran from the early 1980s to November 2007 to spur increased funding from all levels of government for the education sector for almost three decades (ED, 2005, p. 1). Private philanthropic organizations also took more interest in education reform, providing alternative financing of their own that drove further growth in the sector.

In 2005, a U.S. Department of Education document stated, “Total education funding has increased substantially in recent years at all levels of government, even when accounting for enrollment increases and inflation” (ED, 2005, p. 1). Figure 1 illustrates the upward trend of state, local, federal, and other funding from 1990-2005. Schools and districts were able to use this additional funding to purchase goods and services they would not have been able to afford otherwise, driving the biggest boom in education reform services this country has ever seen.



*Figure 1.* Total U.S. Expenditures for Elementary and Secondary Education. This figure illustrates the increased funding for K-12 education from all sources from 1990 through 2005 (ED, 2005, p. 1) (see Appendix A for a synthesis of this data along with census data through 2014).

I am a product of that education reform boom. Just as the mortgage company I worked for emerged to provide expanded services during the housing boom, an array of educational organizations external to schools—intermediaries—emerged to broker reform in education by providing services, offering resources, and influencing schools or government agencies on behalf of students. Teach For America (TFA), among the most iconic, sent me to teach in a Miami high school in the fall of 2004, at the height of the reform boom.

My teaching, leadership, and professional education has all been largely paid for by additional financing, most of which did not exist before the 1990’s, including: state subsidies for reading instruction; federal funding like Teacher Incentive Fund, Race To The Top, Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Titles I & II, Americorps, and School Improvement Grants; and foundation grants from local families, Jennifer

Buffett, and the Walton Family. Teach Plus was founded in this same environment, funded largely by philanthropists who felt that for their reform efforts to work they needed the buy in of one of their largest constituent groups: teachers.

**Housing and education reform busts.** Buckley and Barua (2016) highlighted the role of sharply declining family incomes from rising unemployment in 2007, which led to a “perfect storm in which many people could no longer afford to pay their mortgages or find buyers for their homes at prices sufficient to cover their mortgages. Prices began to plummet [sic] and foreclosures began to rise” (p. 3) (see Appendix B for a chart that illustrates the housing boom leading up to the 2006-2008 bust, contextualized within boom and bust cycles from 1980 to 2016).

When I began my residency, the education sector was already in a bust cycle due to government cuts. A Center on Budget and Policy Priorities report (Leachman & Mai, 2014) noted sharply declining per-pupil funding in the education sector. After the 2007-2009 economic recession, local school districts cut teaching and other positions despite a continued rise in student enrollment. By 2012, schools had cut about 330,000 jobs. Leachman and Mai (2014) stated: “This decline is highly unusual; normally, local education employment grows each year to keep pace with an expanding student population” (p. 8) (see Appendix C for an illustration of these spending cuts in terms of actual jobs lost in schools).

By 2015, schools were still down 297,000 jobs from the 2008 high (Leachman et al., 2016, p. 2). Cuts to private-sector organizations adjacent to schools are harder to measure but seem to have taken place as well (Brown, 2016). For example, in 2016 Teach For America cut 15% of its staff after failing to hit its recruitment targets for three

straight years, which was the second time the organization had downsized in recent years. In 2017, New York City’s Department of Education announced it would be canceling its contracts and managing two intermediaries’ flagship programs in-house: TNTP’s Teaching Fellows Program and NYC Leadership Academy’s aspiring principals program (Zimmerman, 2017). Many districts had been struggling to pay their usual operating costs, and so money for the politically-unpalatable reform services they contracted during the boom became harder to find.

**Student needs.** Reform efforts were not meeting the needs of students or communities. New financing by private philanthropy and government in education during our boom increased speculative demand for certain types of reforms—from curriculum standards to testing to school choice—that have not had their intended impact.

The U.S. still ranks 23rd out of 30 developed nations when considering inequality in income, health, poverty, and sustainability (World Economic Forum, 2018). In January 2015, Former Massachusetts Secretary of Education and standards champion Paul Reville wrote the following in the *Boston Globe*: “After more than two decades of good work, we must admit that our strategies—regardless of their comparative success—have failed to achieve our overall goal of all students learning at high levels” (2015, para. 3). In 2016, economist and standardized test expert Roland Fryer published a paper with Will Dobbie using longitudinal data from Texas that found, “charter schools that increase test scores have no discernible impact on earnings” (p. 26).

Leaders of an anti-reform movement are calling on reformers to engage more deeply with those we seek to serve so we can meet their real needs. In her 2015 book, *The Prize*, Dale Russakoff cited elections ousting education reform-oriented mayors in New

York City, Newark, and Chicago as evidence of growing public rejection of reform. She attributed the shortcomings of Mark Zuckerberg's aggressive funding of education reform in Newark to "the tenuous nature of disruptive changes made without buy-in from those who have to live them" (Russakoff, 2015, p. 210). That backlash has also included public calls to eliminate the U.S. Department of Education and a new presidential administration that has announced plans to significantly reduce the federal role in education.

**Intermediaries that thrived despite busts.** The mortgage company I worked for in 2003 no longer exists, and in fact 75% of the biggest lenders from 2006 no longer existed by 2012 (O'Brien, 2012). The lending market consolidated during the bust—most brokerages were bought out, shut down, or filed for bankruptcy. As Ladd (2010) explained, those who came out on top analyzed trends and responded to unmet customer needs by refining their value propositions and business models. Some strategies that worked included pivoting to perform a new function for their old customers, like helping the homeowners they had financed mortgages for avoid foreclosure, and homing in to meet specific needs of underserved markets, like building multi-family apartment buildings instead of mansions (Buckley & Barua, 2016; Ladd, 2010).

By the time I began my residency, some philanthropic leaders were already rethinking how to respond to real student needs. Priscilla Chan and Mark Zuckerberg launched the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative with a public letter to their daughter that highlighted equity and a holistic approach to reform, stating, "Promoting equality is about making sure everyone has access to these opportunities—regardless of the nation, families or circumstances they are born into...Our society must do this not only for

justice or charity, but for the greatness of human progress” (Zuckerberg, 2015, para. 20-21). Their website’s “Who We Are” page (Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, 2018) exemplifies responsiveness to real student needs: “We engage directly in the communities we serve because no one understands our society’s challenges like those who live them every day” (para. 3).

**Student Needs and Teach Plus.** Intermediary organizations seeking to impact the education system were re-thinking their value propositions to ensure they were responding directly to the needs of students and communities. Organizations focused on educational equity seemed most motivated to do that work when I presented them with arguments focused on the needs of our students rather than the economic realities.

Teach Plus could have pivoted to perform new functions to respond to economic trends but pursuing those ideas would have diluted the mission of the organization. Teach Plus was already skilled at bringing the voices of excellent young teachers into policy discussions, so the organization was positioned to attune themselves to student needs through the teachers with whom they worked. However, the demographics of Teach Plus teachers did not come close to reflecting those of the students in our U.S. K-12 education system—52% of students, but only 20% of teachers (NCES, n.d.; Loewus, 2017)—were people of color, and Teach Plus programs looked more like the teaching force than the student body. It seemed that to accurately identify and help meet the needs of all students, Teach Plus would need significantly more input from members of the communities that would use and directly benefit from reforms.

## Research Question Two: Diversity and Inclusion

*How can we ensure our teachers intimately understand and are psychologically safe to communicate the needs of the students we most seek to serve?*

Recent studies have found that diverse groups are more successful in solving problems than homogeneous groups in some scenarios. In one study of groups solving a murder mystery, “Adding an outsider versus an insider actually doubled their chance of arriving at the correct solution, from 29% to 60%. The work felt harder, but the outcomes were better. In fact, working on diverse teams produces better outcomes precisely *because it’s harder.*” (Rock, Grant, Grey, 2016, p. 3)

In *The End of Diversity As We Know It*, Davidson (2011) elevated more than two decades of research demonstrating that “very few organizations are actually thriving because of their diversity” (p. 20). He pointed out that traditional diversity efforts “don’t make the organization truly more inclusive, and they don’t catalyze the performance the organization needs to remain competitive in a dynamic global marketplace” (p. 20). He proposed going beyond diversity to leverage difference in a way that could “transform the way an organization operates, grows, and thrives” (p. 42).

Amy Edmondson and Kathryn Roloff (2008) argued that “psychological safety enables team diversity to be better accessed and leveraged—reaping the benefits associated with a diverse set of skills, experiences, knowledge, or backgrounds—in ways that would not be possible if team members are unwilling to take the interpersonal risks associated with speaking up and listening carefully for each other” (p. 202). Edmondson (2012) defined psychological safety as “a climate in which people feel free to express relevant thoughts and feelings without fear of being penalized” (p. 7).



Edmondson (2002) argued that leaders critically influence psychological safety. She advised managing the tension between structure and freedom by clearly communicating the meaning and importance of the team's goal while making as-needed modifications to that goal and the process by which the group goes about pursuing it, providing:

[E]nough structure to ensure inclusiveness and teamwork without restricting the spontaneity and creativity that can produce unexpected synergies—structure without rigidity...a climate of psychological safety that allows people to feel safe taking risks, while also setting high standards that require enormous effort and preclude settling into a comfort zone—safety without complacency (p. 30).

Surfacing and reframing the most pressing educational issues would require Teach Plus Texas to intentionally include teachers who could accurately represent the diverse experiences of the most vulnerable students and teachers across the state whose voices had previously been left out of policy discussions, and then to carefully manage those tensions so the group can access its diversity to create better policy. Assembling and supporting accurate representation of all interest groups is not a straightforward charge in a majority-minority state with vast urban and rural areas, and a wide range of conflicting interests from multiple teachers' associations to water park lobbyists (Residency Supervisor, personal communication, February, 7, 2017).

**A diversity and inclusion case study.** My work at a crisis center gave me a foundation for how to increase diversity and inclusion. I ran the recruitment, selection, and training program for the oldest all-volunteer crisis intervention center in the nation, The Listening Ear, in Michigan in the early 2000s. When I first arrived in the late 90's, most of our staff members looked like me—white, female, early 20s.

Our staff did not have the diversity of experience that could have prepared us for the types of challenges we faced when community members needed help. This drove staff

turnover as crisis counselors burnt out quickly. The organization sought to hurriedly fill gaps with the easiest volunteers to recruit—white female college students. This cycle is much like what happens in our schools, and in education startups with limited time.

To increase diversity, I invested time to apply the listening skills I learned in crisis training to listen to and cultivate leadership in staff members who did not meet our usual demographic. They helped me understand several ways in which certain aspects of our recruitment, selection, and training were designed by and for the demographic that dominated our crisis center staff, and thus were not inclusive. I was able to tap into the leadership potential of a more diverse group of counselors and to support them in implementing solutions they designed. We recruited in area churches, key community centers, and even intentionally increased the length of eye contact we directed toward applicants of color to ensure they felt welcome.

**Inclusion and engagement.** Because a diverse group of Listening Ear staff members on a team with high psychological safety designed our approach to recruitment and selection, it was better than anything I could have designed alone, and they felt included and were more comfortable joining in and even leading our efforts with me. Their engagement seemed to create a snowball effect, building an ever more diverse staff. We increased staff size by 150% while increasing the proportion of staff members from underrepresented groups from 10% to 25% of the total staff, which represented considerable progress toward a more diverse and engaged counseling staff.

Once included, our staff members of color transformed the organization. Staff members from diverse backgrounds moved into leadership roles and drastically improved the organization's ability to serve community members from diverse backgrounds. For

example, acceptable expressions of three core skills that crisis counselors used—empathy, self-disclosure, and feedback—became more nuanced. Counselors had a wider array of approaches to try and felt more effective, turnover decreased, and clients found our service more helpful.

Relationships among staff members also deepened as we became more flexible in our communication. A long-time staff member and friend who was African American advocated for more acceptance of the practice of giving direct feedback while expressing strong emotions. Later, in my master's degree program, I learned that there are trends in which conflict styles people from various racial and ethnic backgrounds tend to prefer (Hammer, 2005)—that staff member preferred an emotionally expressive style rather than an emotionally restrained style. Flexibility in our communication and conflict styles helped staff of various backgrounds to feel welcome and psychologically safe to raise critical issues that led to additional improvements.

**A for-profit case study.** For-profit companies are learning that a diverse, psychologically safe staff can keep its products relevant to more customers. As the Head of Inclusion & Diversity at the visual social network Pinterest, Candice Morgan has moved her organization toward that reality. She studied which managers team members rated most inclusive and found that they “tended to empower their employees with ownership of their roles while also encouraging risk-taking” (Morgan, 2017).

**Diversity and inclusion at Teach Plus.** When I entered Teach Plus, the organization was beginning a process like the one I initiated at the Listening Ear, so I knew ensuring the most vulnerable students voices were represented would take intentional effort. My supervisor was particularly passionate about this issue. She talked

about diversity often, organized a diversity book club, and tutored in a local school. She and some other Teach Plus staff were recruiting more diverse groups of teachers for their fellowships. This in turn was providing Teach Plus with opportunities to improve and make their programs more inclusive.

I knew that recruiting more teachers of color would be necessary to understand our students' policy needs, but not sufficient to create better policy that meets them. Those teachers would need to be set up to engage authentically and equitably in order to make recommendations for the most vulnerable students in the state. They would need to design and lead processes to improve the organization itself, and they would need adult development experiences to prepare them to meet the increased demands inherent in those more complex processes.

### **Research Question Three: Adult Development**

*How can we support our teachers' development as they advocate for policies that meet the needs of the most vulnerable students?*

**Increased developmental demands.** The education sector had been rapidly changing in the years prior to my residency. Teach Plus and my supervisor were already expert at brokering key policy changes that funders, teachers, and communities could agree on, finding the sweet spot between a variety of perspectives on contentious policy issues. They called this core value and skill *solutions-orientation*.

For example, when public backlash against standardized testing was loud, Teach Plus Massachusetts creatively transcended the false dichotomy of whether or not students should be tested, re-defined the problem, and channeled energy into solving it by framing it as a new question: *Which of two possible tests would be most helpful to teachers and*

*students?* They held a conference in which teachers compared both tests against a rubric, and ultimately decided to support the higher-quality test (Residency Supervisor, personal communication, April 14, 2017).

A more diverse group of teachers could define and tackle more adaptive policy challenges like these. Ronald Heifetz (1994) defined adaptive challenges as those that require fundamental changes in values, beliefs, roles, relationships, and approaches to work. The core problems that address the real demand of students are adaptive in nature. Bringing in more diverse voices can highlight the nuances, challenges, or pitfalls in policy issues that may have previously seemed straightforward.

Tina Grotzer (2004) outlined nine false assumptions students often make about causality and demonstrated that students can deconstruct their thinking and understand more complex causal relationships. Complex causality is just as important to consider as we ask teachers to find policy solutions. Policy problems may seem simple at first glance, but a diverse group of teachers could uncover multiple, non-linear, or non-obvious causes, or reveal mutual, relational, or cyclic patterns to address in effective policy. Tackling complex policy issues would require a diverse group of teachers who work together across difference and remain open to new perspectives while clearly communicating the unique needs of the communities they represent.

In the book *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life*, Robert Kegan (1995) highlighted that adults only grow into the mental complexity required of the demands they face in their lives. Most never develop the mental complexity that leaders need to respond to the increasing complexity of the world.

Kegan and Lisa Lahey (2009) described a phenomenon they called *Immunity to Change*. They suggested to create change, one must carefully examine and overcome one's *psychological immune system*—one's often unconscious drive to resist change and maintain the status quo. Kegan and Lahey encouraged adults to construct a *self-authoring* system for making sense of the world, making more explicit their sometimes-conflicting motivations, and intentionally challenging the assumptions upon which they are based. As adults become more self-authoring, they identify false dichotomies more readily, enabling them to create new options that may not otherwise be immediately apparent, a capability that could help teachers solve some of the most intractable policy issues.

**Providing support.** Kegan (1995) contended that “people grow best where they continuously experience an ingenious blend of support and challenge.” Further, he described environments with too much challenge and not enough support as “toxic; they promote defensiveness and constriction.” He concluded, “[T]he balance of support and challenge leads to vital engagement” (p. 42). The work Teach Plus would ask teachers to do would provide more than enough challenge. Teachers would need support to make sense of those challenges and to take steps toward the personal and collective growth necessary to create transformative policy solutions that transcend the false dichotomies and ingrained positions of individuals and stakeholder groups.

In *Immunity to Change*, Kegan and Lahey (2009) described how leaders can provide appropriate support. They proposed that “To foster real change and development, both the leader and the organizational culture *must take a developmental stance*, that is, they must send the message that they expect adults can grow” (p. 308). They went on to outline seven crucial attributes of a genuine developmental stance (pp. 308–322),

including committing to ongoing development, honoring adaptive learning goals, recognizing intrinsic motivation, and building psychological safety for risk-taking.

Minds at Work (n.d.), an organization based on Kegan and Lahey’s work, provided a practical guide for how leaders could apply these concepts. One example is to provide “opportunities for [those you lead] to assume responsibilities and make decisions in complex situations without predefined pathways to solutions.”

**Self-authoring and Teach Plus.** Teach Plus had developed a strong set of rubrics and tools to ensure they found the best teachers with the most potential for success in leadership roles for their programs, but they had not fully addressed those selected teachers’ need for developmental experiences to ensure they were effective in the new leadership roles Teach Plus partnered to put them in. Though most of the time the rigorous selection process was sufficient to prevent problems, early in my residency my supervisor and other Teach Plus staff members shared examples of a few times teachers had made critical errors at key moments that demonstrated that they were not fully prepared for certain conversations with funders and policymakers, especially when centered on topics like diversity and inclusion.

A few staff members also reported to me early on that teacher engagement dropped off over the course of a year in most fellowship programs, and the first Advisory Board survey results after I joined Teach Plus Texas alerted me to the fact that its members were not maximally engaged either. This told me the organization was not tapping into the full potential of the stellar teachers we selected into our programs.

### **My Initial Theory of Action**

The experiences and research I outlined in the preceding pages taught me that

engagement reflects inclusion. There were likely barriers to access that could be solved. Diverse teachers needed inclusive adult development experiences to bring their experiences to bear to solve adaptive policy challenges. I felt the most helpful thing my Strategic Project could do for Teach Plus was to demonstrate and offer concrete strategies for how to lead inclusive adult development for Teach Plus Texas teachers. This understanding informed the Theory of Action I had going into the Strategic Project, outlined below. I also included an adult development-informed step for myself as a leader to reinforce my practice of reflecting throughout the work to inform decision-making.

#### **Initial Theory of Action**

***If I...***

- 1) recruit an excellent and racially and ethnically diverse group of Teach Plus teachers,*
- 2) lead Teach Plus teachers in inclusive adult development,*
- 3) reflect on evidence and continually evolve my strategy, and*
- 4) share my strategic decisions with Teach Plus,*

***Then...***

- A) our racially and ethnically diverse group of Teach Plus Texas teachers will bring their experiences to bear to advocate for, and positively impact, policies that meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable students in the state,*
- B) I will optimize my strategy, results, and leadership development for impact,*
- C) Teach Plus will begin to provide teachers with more inclusive adult development experiences, and*
- D) Teach Plus teachers will bring lived experiences to bear that more accurately reflect the diverse experiences of our student body and will advocate for policy changes that meet the needs of all of our nation's students.*



## Research Question Four: Interest-Based Negotiation

*How can I as a leader go about engaging multiple parties in an interest-based negotiation that results in better education policy for kids?*

My initial approach was valuable in generating results with Teach Plus—in identifying the imperative to address student needs, in recruiting and retaining a diverse and representative cohort of teachers, and in developing them to bring their experiences to bear to build solutions to complex policy challenges. However, as I reflected on my Strategic Project I realized that those results were an incomplete picture of what I hoped to accomplish as a *systems-level* leader in that work.

### **A New Framework: Principles from the Interest-Based Negotiation Literature.**

I realized that my most practical masters and doctoral coursework in interest-based negotiation offered even more prescient insights than the research I had on my mind going into the residency. This reflection brought about a shift in how I saw the work, my role, my goals, and the leadership moves I needed to take. Below, I define interest-based negotiation and briefly share three principles synthesized and paraphrased from the body of knowledge of interest-based negotiation as taught by members of the Harvard Program on Negotiation that influenced my thinking in this Strategic Project: (1) we are always negotiating, (2) get in as soon as possible, (3) stay in for round nine and beyond.

**We are always negotiating.** In *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In* (2011), Roger Fisher, William Ury, & Bruce Patton introduced the reader to negotiation in the following way:

Like it or not, you are a negotiator. Negotiation is a fact of life...Everyone negotiates something every day...people negotiate even when they don't think of themselves as doing so. You negotiate with your spouse about where to go for dinner and with your child about when the lights go out. Negotiation is a basic

means of getting what you want from others. It's a back-and-forth communication designed to reach an agreement when you and the other side have some interests that are shared and others that are opposed (as well as some that may simply be different). More and more occasions require negotiation...Everyone wants to participate in decisions that affect them; fewer and fewer people will accept decisions dictated by someone else...Although negotiation takes place every day, it is not easy to do well. Standard strategies for negotiation often leave people dissatisfied, worn out, or alienated—and frequently all three (pp. xxvii-xxviii).

Fisher et al. (2011) described a new paradigm for negotiation in which participants work together to solve a problem and co-create a wise outcome amicably and efficiently. This approach is more effective than bargaining over positions to try to either convince each other to agree to a pre-determined position or to win a zero-sum game. This new paradigm of negotiation suggests a more open-minded and longer-term approach. Based on this definition, the teachers and I could solve problems by co-creating wise outcomes with everyone from my supervisor to our partners at the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

Fisher et al. (2011) also outlined four guidelines for successful negotiations: (1) separate the people from the problem—be soft on people but hard on the problem, (2) focus on interests, not positions—explore a range of interests even when they may not be apparent and avoid having a bottom line to leave room for creative problem-solving, (3) invent options for mutual gains—develop multiple options to choose from that could benefit all parties, but defer deciding right away, (4) insist on using objective criteria—try to reach a result that meets external standards of some kind, and use reason and principles rather than pressure to exert influence and govern decision-making.

**Get in as soon as possible.** Fisher et al. (2011) also outline three stages of negotiation: analysis, planning, and discussion (p. 14). This principle highlights the importance of engaging in the first two stages far before you find yourself in the third.

In Harvard's *Negotiation Workshop*, A501 (G. Todd & D. Goldstein, personal

communication, August 31–November 28, 2016), students practiced preparation that exponentially increased the likelihood of reaching an agreement. Before each class period, students prepared for the negotiation simulation they would face using a document that walked them through principles from the literature. Each class, students came ready with a brainstormed list of their and their negotiating partners' likely interests, some potential options to consider that might be mutually beneficial, ideas for how to create value with an emphasis on “making the pie bigger,” questions to ask, ideas to make sure to share, and an honest assessment of their current and preferred relationships with negotiating partners.

In *Have You Negotiated How You'll Negotiate*, Robert Bordone and Gillien Todd (2005) emphasized the importance of explicitly negotiating a process for negotiations in advance, all the way down to building an agenda for the conversation. They contrasted the *process* with the *substance* of negotiation issues in this way:

[N]egotiation-process issues concern how parties go about resolving the various points that have brought them together in the first place. How do you set an agenda for the negotiation and decide whom to invite? How should parties exchange information? How should they reach decisions and make commitments? (p. 3)

**Stay in it for round nine and beyond.** During the first class session of Harvard's Negotiation Workshop (G. Todd & D. Goldstein, personal communication, August 31, 2016), students participated in a classic large-scale group negotiation as members of oil pricing boards of countries setting oil prices. They were told the Oil Pricing 'game' would last eight rounds. At the end of the eighth round, students were unexpectedly thrust into a ninth round in which they suddenly faced the consequences of whatever short-sighted tactics they may have used in the previous eight. This exercise promoted a more ethical, longer-term, and relational approach to negotiation since students learned that

they could never know when a negotiation had truly ended. This exercise has served as a reminder to always consider that 'round nine' in any negotiation is just around the corner.

All four of these research questions informed the decisions I made as I designed, led, and analyzed the Strategic Project, which I describe in the next section.

## **Description of the Strategic Project**

As I entered Teach Plus I had three goals: (1) clarify the impact my supervisor and Teach Plus were driving toward, (2) set us up strategically to launch the Official Fellowship and maximize our impact on education in Texas, (3) build relationships with partners in the work. I read widely, asked questions, pilot tested ideas, and took notes while conducting informal interviews with staff members and community leaders.

Originally, my Strategic Project was to design and coordinate a leadership development plan for the Teach Plus Texas State Policy Fellowship that would prepare Official Fellows to make meaningful impact on teacher effectiveness policies in Texas by providing feedback to key policy makers like superintendents, legislators, and TEA officials. Before the funding for the Official Fellowship materialized, opportunities arose to add value by supporting Advisory Board Members and recruiting Official Fellows, which ultimately supported professional development for the Official Fellowship and became the focus of my Strategic Project.

### **How I Organize This Section**

To help practitioners find lessons relevant to their work, I organize this section into three interconnected work streams, outlined below and illustrated in Figure 2 on page 37. Then I describe the definition of success I co-created with my supervisor, detail how each work stream progressed, and highlight leadership moves I made along the way.

- 1) Engaging the Advisory Board Members to write a policy memo advising state leaders on how best to implement a federal law.
- 2) Leading the cultivation, recruitment, and selection of Official Fellows (which would include both New Fellows, and any Advisory Board Members who would apply and be accepted into the group of Official Fellows).
- 3) Coordinating the preparation for Advisory Board Members and Official Fellows to meet with the Texas Commissioner of Education.

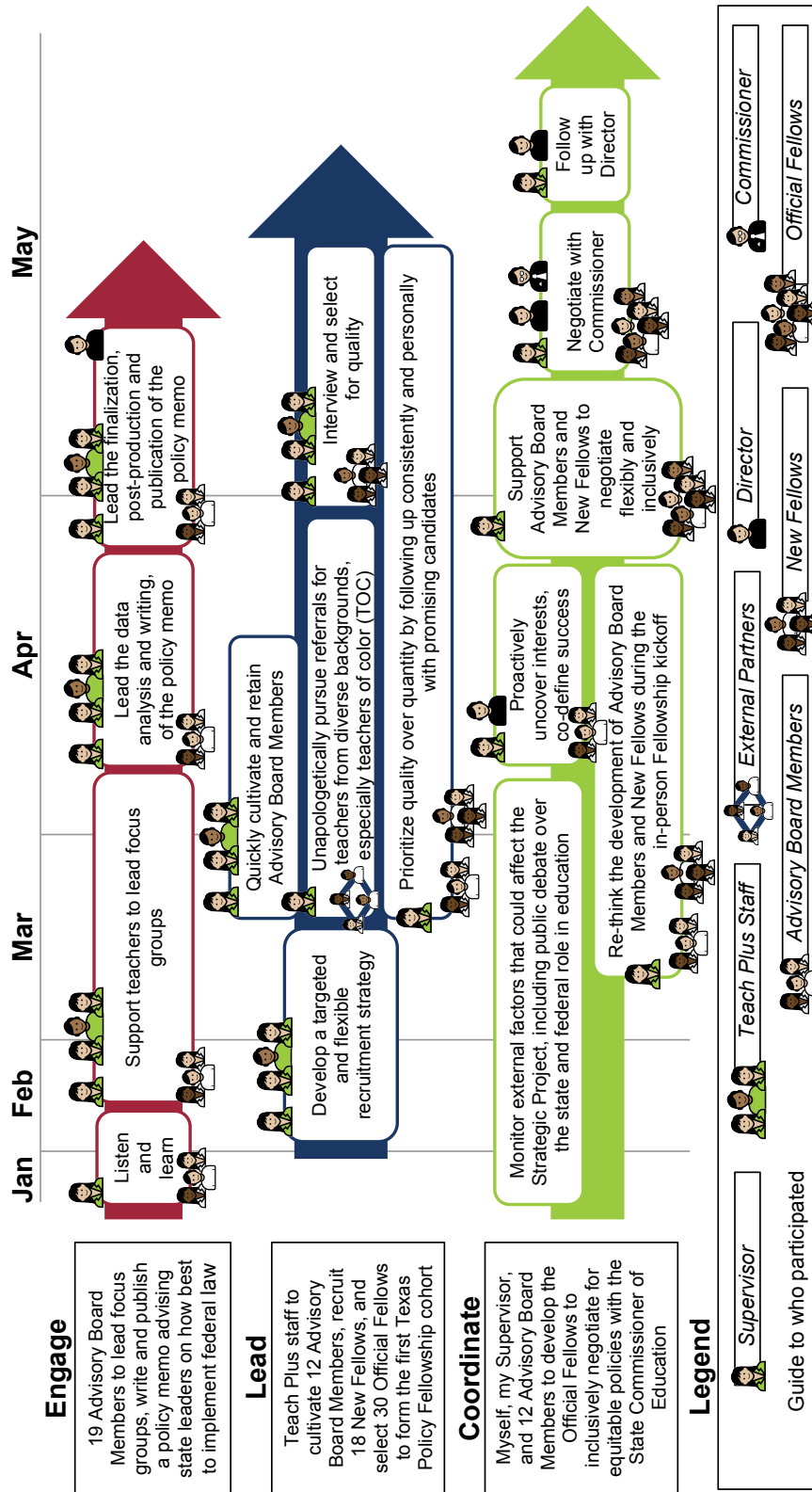


Figure 2. Strategic Project Timeline. This figure illustrates the progression of the Strategic Project, organized by the three work streams and key actions that took place within each, with icons to represent the partners I collaborated with, engaged, led, and coordinated in each action.

## **Definition of Success and Goals for the Strategic Project**

I worked with my supervisor to co-define success on the Strategic Project as a whole, and we agreed to the following: robust attendance of at least 50 total teachers at Advisory Board Member-led *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* focus groups, a policy memo, and a strong presentation by a diverse group of teachers at the TEA in May. We determined that a strong presentation would be (1) solutions-oriented, (2) well-communicated and smooth, (3) use good Teach Plus-generated data and stories that make that data real and bring real teacher voice, (4) ultimately would influence the thinking of senior leaders to include at least one solutions-oriented, pro-teacher effectiveness idea in the Texas *Every Student Succeeds Act* State Implementation Plan (ESSA Plan).

As I dug deeper to understand my supervisor's interests, we also determined that ideally this project would help establish even more emphatically for the Commissioner and an official who works closely with him—the Director of School Improvement and Support (The Director)—that Teach Plus teachers are a great resource, which would build our credibility and visibility in Texas and facilitate more opportunities for the Official Fellows to impact policy at TEA and throughout the state.

To create the 2017-2018 cohort of Teach Plus Texas Policy Fellows, our goal was to recruit and select 25 to 35 (funding dependent, measured by signed commitment letters) highly effective teacher leaders to advocate on pro-student issues that included teacher effectiveness, access, accountability, and equity.

In the spirit of balancing support and challenge for Teach Plus, we focused on racial and ethnic diversity as a first step. Our formal goal was to select eight teachers of color, but with 30 teachers, those eight would only comprise 27% of our group. In a state

as large and diverse as Texas, I challenged us to set a stretch goal to reflect the teacher *and student* populations: 16 teachers of color, which would come out to 53% of the cohort, including 3-4 African Americans, 6-13 Latinos/as, and 14 or more from schools serving a high prevalence of students with free or reduced lunch. We also set informal diversity sub-goals for targets like geography and teaching assignment experiences.

**Work Stream 1: Engaging the Advisory Board Members to Publish a Policy Memo, January to May**

**Overview of this work stream.** I developed a process and used it to engage our Advisory Board Members to lead focus groups with other teachers across the state, and then to write and publish a formal policy memo on their findings for the Commissioner. I designed and modified processes for how to conduct focus groups, collect and analyze data from them, and then write and publish a Teach Plus-style policy memo featuring that data and teacher experiences with and interpretations of it. I leaned on Teach Plus staff to figure out how to do each of those steps, and then quickly planned and led development experiences for busy teachers to learn and implement each one, ensuring inclusive participation and a high-quality finished product. I also coordinated the efforts of ten Teach Plus staff members and 19 Advisory Board members across four time zones to complete this project in a much quicker time frame than is typical.

**January and Early February: Listening and learning.** As I entered Teach Plus and sought to learn from my supervisor, I supported her, listened, and learned while she led the first two Advisory Board Meetings of the calendar year, and then I created the follow up survey for the second.



In January, the Director presented a 14-slide ESSA Plan overview. Teachers were to lead focus groups with groups of peers who would discuss 20 questions about the ESSA Plan, including 13 open-ended, and seven multiple choice. My supervisor reviewed that and led a workshop to discuss the questions in February. Unfortunately, by the March meeting, we were not aware of a single teacher who had scheduled or led a focus group.

**February through April: Supporting teachers to lead focus groups.** After the February meeting, I followed up with teachers to find out why focus groups were not happening. They expressed that they did not feel they had mastered the ESSA Plan policy well enough to present it to their peers or lead focus groups about it, and that their peers would not be able to find enough time to master that many policy issues and discuss their implications. I asked my supervisor for time in the next meeting to prepare the teachers more thoroughly for what we were asking them to do, and she agreed. I anticipated that the teachers would continue to need training, so I asked and was approved to proactively set aside time during the April and May meetings to lead professional development on how to analyze their focus group data and write a policy memo, and then to prepare them to present it to the Commissioner.

I dove in and learned about the ESSA Plan and how to conduct and collect data in focus groups. I created a lesson plan for the teachers showing step by step how to lead a focus group and how to respond to difficult questions and comments from participants, including a list of phrases teachers could read verbatim if they got stuck. I then created a development experience for them to participate in on our online platform during the next meeting and collaborated with my supervisor before the training to get on the same page.

During the March meeting, I modeled how to lead a focus group with the Advisory Board Members playing in the role of focus group participants and then asked them to brainstorm how to overcome challenges they might encounter and modifications they could make for their contexts. I also asked Advisory Board Members to pay attention if anything bubbled up from their focus groups that they felt should end up in the formal policy memo that was not on the list of specific questions they were presented with.

Afterward, I sent a follow up email to the whole group with the materials. The post-survey I created confirmed that no focus groups had yet taken place, but all five respondents declared an intention to lead one. I built a participation tracker and emailed each teacher individually to ask what they needed to ensure they were included.

One of our main reasons for holding the focus groups was to impact the ESSA Plan, so to streamline, I asked my supervisor which two or three questions would be most likely to accomplish that goal and she helped me sort out a few key priorities. I sent a follow up email to the teachers with a revised version of the focus group lesson plan I had led them through, including how to narrow the focus and a list of specific suggestions they had given during the training for how to respond to challenges and modify it for various contexts. I worked with my supervisor to develop an informal focus group format option so teachers with very limited time could stay engaged. I also met and coordinated Teach Plus staff members involved in writing and publishing policy memos and modified a project plan template to manage the shortened memo writing and publishing process.

**April and May: Leading the data analysis, writing, and publication of the policy memo.** I learned how to analyze focus group data and write policy memos about it, then planned a training. During the April meeting, I placed teachers into small groups,

invited them to sign up for roles, and then taught them how to work together successfully, how to analyze the data they had collected, and how to write sections of the memo.

After that meeting, I attended their online small group meetings, answered questions, and encouraged and appreciated each of their individual contributions. I continued to follow up with the group facilitators and individual teachers to ensure they could access this step of the policy memo work. I also led the national Teach Plus staff through the post-production process and provided teachers opportunities to revise, sign off on, or veto drafts to ensure we published a high-quality memo in which our teachers were invested, in time to send it to the Commissioner prior to our meeting with him.

## **Work Stream 2: Leading the cultivation, recruitment, and selection of New Fellows, February to May**

**Overview of this work stream.** I created and led Teach Plus staff on execution of a Strategic Plan for the cultivation, recruitment, and selection of 30 Official Fellows in under two months by developing a targeted and flexible recruitment strategy to meet all of our recruitment goals and sub-goals, and then leading execution on that strategy. Key steps included quickly cultivating and retaining Advisory Board Members, unapologetically pursuing referrals for excellent teachers from diverse backgrounds, especially teachers of color, and prioritizing quality over quantity by following up consistently and personally with promising candidates rather than seeking more applications from candidates with easier-to-find backgrounds.

### **February and March: Developing a targeted and flexible recruitment strategy.**

This work stream pushed the limits of my time and that of my partners in it. Without knowing when funding for the Official Fellowship would come through, I created a draft

strategy, timeline, explicit goals, progress measures, and a list of our most crucial tactics to find a diverse, excellent group of teachers who met our rigorous selection criteria as efficiently as possible.

Then I met with my supervisor and a national staff member to check some assumptions I had made, refined the plan to incorporate their insights, and ensured we were all on the same page to execute on it. I also met with other national staff members to learn how to use multiple technology platforms to manage the logistics of recruitment, cultivation, and selection. The timeline and number of funded teachers for the plan changed several times, but the strategy and most tactics remained constant, so we were ready to begin recruitment the day we received formal funding approval.

As I led the first stream of work, we received word in March that we had been approved for funding for a formal fellowship. Based on the schedule of the Legislature, the Official Fellowship would launch in Austin from May 13th to 15th. That gave us under two months to cultivate, recruit, select, and prepare to lead a kickoff weekend for 25 to 35 Official Fellows.

The national staff member who provides recruitment and selection technical assistance to sites expressed concerns about the short timeline, particularly in a new state. He said that other sites who had attempted timelines shorter than three months had received fewer, lower quality applications, and had suffered high attrition of selected teachers during the fellowship year. When asked if the organization had ever met such an aggressive deadline, he replied that Teach Plus had never done that before. To address this concern, we made sure to clearly communicate the dates of the kickoff weekend throughout the recruitment process, moved candidates through the process as quickly as

possible so they felt committed sooner, and asked candidates to hold that date on their calendars with the hope that they would be selected.

### **March and April: Quickly cultivating and retaining Advisory Board**

**Members.** My strategy started with an aggressive focus on retaining Advisory Board members, especially teachers of color, by streamlining and customizing the interview process for them. Instead of asking Advisory Board Members to complete the entire application and interview process designed for new applicants, I focused on cultivating and convincing them to apply to and join the Official Fellowship, and on getting them on board with signed commitment letters within two weeks of when we announced the Official Fellowship.

My supervisor emailed the Advisory Board inviting them to apply and told them they were guaranteed an interview as long as they completed a shortened application by the first deadline. I then personally reached out to any members who had not completed an application at one week before the early deadline, focusing especially on those who represented high-priority demographic groups. I interviewed each applicant for 30 minutes, asking them to reflect and give feedback on their experience on the Advisory Board and to discuss their student data—the only typical interview question my supervisor had not asked when she had appointed them to the Advisory Board.

We had set loose retention goals but learned that more teachers than we had hoped were not able to continue as Official Fellows for the next year. By April seventh, 16 days after recruitment launch, 12 Advisory Board members had interviewed and been offered a spot in the Official Fellowship, including four of the teachers of color, so I knew I had to find a few more New Fellows, and especially teachers of color.

**March and April: Unapologetically pursuing referrals for teachers from diverse backgrounds, especially teachers of color.** My second most important strategy in this work stream, which drew from both my and my supervisor's prior diversity recruitment strategies, was designed to increase the overall diversity and percentage of teachers of color selected into the group of Official Fellows.

I designed an approach that used relationships—specifically personal referrals—and unambiguous language about our value for diversity. I led the process of adding to the recruitment website more photos of teachers of color and language outlining our value for diversity, so any teacher could envision her or himself in the program. I spoke with our Advisory Board members, and my supervisor and I spoke with and emailed our networks and shared the opportunity on social media.

We asked our contacts to introduce us to excellent teachers from groups whose voices are traditionally not represented in policy discussions, especially teachers of color, and explained our rationale that they brought rich life and work experiences that would enable them to deeply understand and advocate for all students across Texas.

**March through May: Prioritizing quality over quantity by following up consistently and personally with promising candidates.** We deprioritized recruiting as many applicants as possible, and instead focused on intentionally cultivating an excellent and diverse group of applicants. We employed several tactics to create an engaging experience for potential applicants. We directly contacted leaders who interacted with teachers, from principals to other education intermediary staffers, who forwarded our announcement and invitation to apply and then referred us to specific teachers.

Once I had their contact information, I followed up with short, personal emails, contacted each recruit regularly until they decided to join us, or until those who were already committed for the coming school year promised to apply next year or forwarded the opportunity to other great teachers in their networks. We also called a few candidates who had not completed their applications and extended the deadline twice to enable a few teachers who heard about the program late in our short application cycle to still apply.

**April and May: Interviewing and selecting for quality.** To ensure the selection committee had a high percentage of teachers of color to interview and select the final Fellowship cohort from, we erred on the side of generosity during application review and asked follow-up questions right away about any concerns in interviews. I invited Advisory Board members of color to interview events to help candidates feel comfortable sharing their best selves. I also continued to follow up with selected candidates until I had answered all their questions, and until they had turned in their signed commitment letters and made plans to attend the kickoff event.

### **Work Stream 3: Coordinating the preparation for Advisory Board Members and New Fellows to meet with the Texas Commissioner of Education, April to May**

**Overview of this work stream.** To support the two groups of teachers to equitably engage with the Commissioner and influence policy, I led the last online meeting before the kickoff event. I created a strategy for deeper adult development and then led a short practice during the kickoff. My shift toward interest-based negotiation became much more prominent in this work stream. I began to see myself as a facilitator in negotiation with all parties creating value on behalf of kids across the state, and I led the teachers to construct their own learning and negotiate more intentionally with all parties.

**January through April: Monitoring external factors that could affect the Strategic Project, including public debate over the state and federal role in education.** As I ticked off each action to implement each tactic in the *If* part of the Theory of Action, a public disagreement was taking place between the new Republican presidential administration and Democrats and civil rights groups about the appropriate federal and state roles in education. On March 27th, President Trump put the debate to rest for a time, signing two bills, including one that overturned rules from *ESSA* such as “requirements for how states...measure achievement (Camera, 2017),” and the new Education Secretary signaled that she would not be strictly enforcing *ESSA*.

I asked my supervisor to set up a meeting with the Director, so we could “get crystal clear about what success looks like on and after May 15th for each party, and ask for first blush reactions on the teachers' recs,” essentially to negotiate *how* the teachers would negotiate with the Commissioner. We met with the Director the next day.

**April: Proactively uncovering interests and co-defining success.** During the April meeting, we clarified what each group hoped to gain from the meeting (our interests), identified opportunities to create value, co-created clear criteria for a successful outcome for the May 15th meeting and beyond, and set an agenda for that meeting. My supervisor walked the Director through the draft teacher recommendations and we heard initial responses from him. I sought to identify any important nuances for us to be aware of.

I asked a lot of questions, including how he would define his vision for how the meeting would flow. The Director shared that the Commissioner would not want a formal presentation like what we had been preparing for, but that he would want an informal



discussion about policy. We also learned that we would be in a small conference room which would barely accommodate the size of our group. This would naturally position our Advisory Board members, of whom only 36% were teachers of color, at the conference table to present their memo, and our New Fellows, who were 78% teachers of color, in seats around the outside of the room. We also discovered the Commissioner had less interest in the federal ESSA Plan since the new presidential administration had de-emphasized it—his main interest was to receive teacher input on his draft of the Texas Strategic Plan (the Strategic Plan).

**March and April: Re-thinking the development of Advisory Board Members and New Fellows during the in-person Fellowship kickoff.** I built on content my supervisor had already found successful in prior years in Massachusetts. Based on teacher requests for the Fellowship to tap into their expertise more, I recommended re-conceptualizing the content sessions using inclusive adult development. Instead of Teach Plus supplying knowledge, I encouraged my supervisor to invite the teachers to co-create knowledge by designing and leading sessions for their peers with her.

Returning Advisory Board Members co-planned and co-facilitated learning sessions with my supervisor for the whole Official Fellows group in their areas of expertise on topics from race and equity to influencing policymakers, and we encouraged all teachers to share their knowledge and experiences with the group throughout the kickoff. Two returning Advisory Board Members briefed the New Fellows on policy issues raised in the ESSA Plan memo, while I practiced and led a final run through with the rest of the Advisory Board to ensure they felt prepared to present the ideas from the policy memo to the Commissioner.

**April and May: Supporting Advisory Board Members and New Fellows to negotiate flexibly and inclusively.** At the May meeting, I prepared Advisory Board Members for their in-person meeting with the Commissioner, which I treated as an entry point into an ongoing interest-based negotiation with him. I sent biographical material such as video clips and news articles as optional pre-work and invited them to identify which of the Commissioner's interests aligned with theirs. Two who had interacted with him described for the group his passion for data and tendency to ask detailed follow up questions.

I explained that their seemingly different interests (the Strategic Plan and the ESSA Plan) were simply two different vehicles for realizing their shared interest of good policy for all kids. I reiterated that the Commissioner cared about the policy issues contained within their brief and acknowledged differences in terms he might use to describe them. We did not have access to a draft of the Strategic Plan, so I prepared the teachers to be flexible and listen carefully to the Commissioner's overview during the first part of the meeting, and then to try to find where their ESSA Plan interests aligned with or addressed interests revealed in his Strategic Plan draft and presentation.

I also challenged the Advisory Board Members to ensure the more diverse group of New Fellows were included even though they hadn't had the benefit of leading focus groups and writing the policy memo. I explicitly stated that the new group had more racial and ethnic diversity that reflected the student body across Texas which would enable the group to deeply understand and advocate for a broader group of students. I pointed out that the New Fellows would bring rich work and life experiences that could punctuate the work the Advisory Board had done with the focus groups and policy brief.

I organized them into breakout groups to problem-solve how to flexibly respond to the Commissioner's interests rather than his positions in a variety of challenging scenarios such as interruptions, distractions, and detailed follow-up questions, and to ensure the New Fellows' valuable life experiences and perspectives were included in ways that would move the negotiation forward. The Advisory Board Members came up with several solutions, including inviting New Fellows to sit at the conference table, and getting to know them during the kickoff to make it easier to bring them into the discussion. To keep preparation manageable, each teacher signed up to be an expert on and present one recommendation from the memo.

**Mid-May: Negotiating with the Commissioner.** My supervisor introduced the teachers and I described our rigorous selection process. The teachers listened and took notes as the Commissioner presented his Strategic Plan, and then they presented their policy memo to him in ways that demonstrated that their recommendations met his interests. Throughout the meeting, they asked and answered numerous questions and engaged authentically, sharing both solid data and rich life and work experiences.

Many teachers also shared poignant personal examples from their lives and work to highlight the importance of the policies they were discussing, including one who had grown up as a migrant worker with undocumented parents and another who emphasized the importance of never giving up on students with disabilities. One teacher created and brought two signs with pictures drawn on them—one with a carrot and the other with a stick. She held them up multiple times in the meeting to drive home the unifying theme the teachers had chosen, that they wanted more carrots and fewer sticks—meaning more policy that rewarded and encouraged schools rather than punishing them.

At one point, the Commissioner asked an introverted Latino male teacher who worked in an untested subject how he measured his effectiveness for the purposes of our rigorous selection process. That teacher paused and looked at me. I shared an overview of how we discussed data with applicants and reminded the teacher of the data he had shared with me for his interview. Then the teacher jumped back in and discussed with the Commissioner the nuances of student data collection in teaching assignments like his.

At a second point, the conversation stalled out when the Commissioner forgot the teachers' policy memo was based on the ESSA Plan and some of the items the teachers wanted to discuss were not included in his Strategic Plan. I jumped in and clarified for the Commissioner and the whole group that the teachers had prepared their memo based on elements of the ESSA Plan, and so some elements of it, particularly the Equity Section, may not fully correlate with his Strategic Plan. This reminded both parties of the different preparation they had done for the meeting and their common goal of creating more equitable policy. The Commissioner nodded and stopped asking follow-up questions about that recommendation as the teacher finished presenting it.

**Late May: Following up with the Director.** I initiated a follow up phone call with my supervisor and the Director to debrief the experience and request feedback and an update on the teachers' impact on the Commissioner's thinking and policy plans.

That meeting provided us with many benefits, including that (1) we learned the Director felt it went "really, really well" because the teachers were knowledgeable, responded flexibly, and had influenced the Commissioner's thinking; (2) we received valuable feedback for our young site; (3) we reinforced the adoption of key policies in the ESSA Plan and the Strategic Plan that our teachers felt would positively impact the most

vulnerable students; (4) the Director invited our teachers to return regularly to inform the state's Strategic Plan; (5) we solidified an ongoing relationship between the Official Fellows and the Commissioner that impressed our funders, and likely contributed to subsequent donations for the Fellowship.

## **Evidence and Analysis**

I collected and used a wide variety of data throughout my Strategic Project to inform decisions and continuously improve myself as a leader, the organization my supervisor and I were creating, and the experiences our teachers were having. In this section, I use that formative data along with additional summative data to assess the degree to which the goals of the Strategic Project have been realized thus far. I attempt to uncover root causes for why I have seen the evidence of progress I have seen, before I suggest some ways forward in the later Implications sections.

In an examination of practice such as this Capstone, it is impossible to draw definite, direct, unidirectional causation or to guarantee that similar actions will yield comparable results in new contexts. To move practice forward for myself as a leader, as well as for Teach Plus and the education sector, I endeavor to uncover the most plausible and actionable explanations for what transpired by examining a wide array of evidence, using analytical tools, examining my biases, and seeking out disconfirming evidence to refute underlying assumptions. This section contains highlights from that analysis.

### **Types of Evidence I Analyze**

During the residency, I co-created with my supervisor several project goals and objectives, or *outputs*, and then collected evidence to assess whether I did what I set out to do as stated in the *If* part of my Theory of Action. These outputs were straightforward to measure precisely through multiple discrete indicators such as cohort composition, teacher participation in the memo writing process, surveys, and meeting notes. For that reason, the degree to which I took the actions I set out to take is relatively clear.

I also worked with my supervisor to define *outcomes*, or change and progress that we hoped would result from the direct actions exemplified in our outputs, and then collected evidence to assess whether or what change or progress, if any, resulted from those actions as hypothesized in the *Then* part of my Theory of Action. Outcomes were more open-ended, and thus harder to quantify and measure. I gathered a variety of data that when taken together demonstrates somewhat clearly the degree to which the change or progress we were hoping for has yet materialized.

Because of the shift I experienced in how I saw my role as a leader, and in how I began to approach the work as an ongoing interest-based negotiation among many parties, the outcomes are particularly important to consider. When thinking about the long-term view of interest-based negotiation, outputs are simply a means to the end of the outcomes—our best hypothesis about what we need to do to reach those outcomes. Despite being harder to measure, outcomes are infinitely more important when considering the long-term, systems-level impact of the Strategic Project on kids and teachers in Texas and across the country. In fact, some of our difficulty measuring outcomes stems from the complexity implicit in the breadth and depth of long-term change we seek in those outcomes.

### **How I Organize This Section**

Below, I list three questions I have generated to frame the analysis of the Strategic Project and my leadership throughout this section. I first discuss questions one and two with regards to my Strategic Project in general, and I then discuss each of those questions in more detail with respect to each component of my Theory of Action. In question three, I propose a revised Theory of Action that reflects what I have learned from the

Strategic Project, which I can use in future work and offer to other practitioners endeavoring to lead similar change in the future. Finally, I highlight evidence that supports analysis from this section in Appendices D through I.

### **Analysis Questions**

1. *Did I do what I set out to do?*
2. *Which actions contributed to my results?*
3. *How might I revise or update my Theory of Action?*

### **Self-rating System**

After examining all that evidence, I designed a rating system to express the degree to which I have realized my Theory of Action, and each of the goals represented by the results (outputs and outcomes) of each component of it. In my system, a 0 means I did not make any progress toward that component or achieve any of the goals; a 3 means I realized that component and achieved precisely the goals; and a 5 means I far exceeded the planned level of realization of that component and achieved far more than the goals.

### **General Analysis**

**Did I do what I set out to do?** Yes, I did everything I set out to do in my initial Theory of Action, and in most cases far more, earning one 4 and three 5's for the four *If* components of my Theory of Action. For this reason, I assign myself a 4.75 on my rating scale for doing what I set out to do and creating my planned outputs. I recruited an excellent and diverse group of Teach Plus teachers, lead them in inclusive adult development, reflected on evidence and continually evolved my strategy which led to employing interest-based negotiation as a course adjustment to ensure greater success, and shared my strategic decisions with Teach Plus along the way.



**Which actions contributed to my results?** My actions and outputs as laid out in my Theory of Action, along with the shift toward negotiation based on my reflection on evidence, seem to have already produced, and in most cases far surpassed, their intended effects. For this reason, I would also rate the outcomes of this Strategic Project a 4.75 on my scale.

My initial Theory of Action came close to describing what I needed to do to achieve the outcomes I had in mind, but I needed to employ interest-based negotiation to fully realize them. At the highest level, I achieved the results I did because I adopted a Theory of Action to describe my approach to the work, followed through on implementing it, and reflected on evidence to adjust it and to begin using interest-based negotiation. The strategies which I summarized in my RKA and which comprised that Theory of Action seem to have been effective in influencing the outcomes, along with interest-based negotiation. Below is a list of those strategies:

- 1) **Reflected students' experiences** (recruited an excellent and racially and ethnically diverse group of Teach Plus teachers): Finding teachers that intimately understood our students' life experiences mattered—the diverse group saw nuances and made convincing arguments for better policy for all kids. Members of Teach Plus seemed to respond well to starting with a focus on racial and ethnic diversity.
- 2) **Developed adults inclusively** (led Teach Plus teachers in inclusive adult development): Inclusive adult development experiences ensured members of our diverse group had the support and psychological safety to use their rich life and work experiences to co-develop good policies for all kids.
- 3) **Reflected and evolved** (reflected on evidence and continually evolved my strategy): Reflecting on my evidence alone in my journal and with colleagues helped me realize my strategy was falling short of what was required and so I needed to evolve to employ interest-based negotiation and more proactively engage my negotiating partners to fully realize my goals.
- 4) **Negotiated on behalf of students:** Adopting a mindset that I was negotiating with a variety of parties on behalf of students enabled me to partner with my supervisor, the Director, the teachers, and the Commissioner to ensure the first two strategies above could have their intended effects and opened up opportunities to create value I had not previously envisioned on my own.

## **Detailed Analysis of the *If* Components of My Theory of Action**

I realized all four of the *If* components of my Theory of Action and met, and in most cases far exceeded, all the expected outputs. Below, I use my self-rating system, and share the outputs that explain why I gave each component the rating I did (see Appendix D for a summary of the analysis discussed in this section).

### **Component 1: Recruit an excellent and racially and ethnically diverse group of Teach Plus teachers.**

*Did I do what I set out to do?* Yes, I far exceeded and rated myself a 5 for the first goal. I retained 12 Advisory Board Members (four of whom, or 33%, are teachers of color), and recruited 18 New Fellows (14 of whom, or 78%, are teachers of color), to form an excellent cohort of 30 teachers (18 of whom, or 60% are teachers of color), exceeding all 12 sub-goals, including stretch goals, by between 19% and 367%. This is the most racially and ethnically diverse Fellowship cohort, and the first majority-minority cohort, in the history of the organization.

*Which actions contributed to my results?* My focus on developing a targeted and flexible recruitment strategy showed up in teacher survey response data (see Appendix E). When asked to rate five factors that influenced them to apply, all 30 teachers rated on average 9.2 factors. My supervisor and I unapologetically pursued referrals from a variety of organizations for teachers with diverse backgrounds and sent them anonymous nominations. These nominations/referrals were reported as responsible for 45% of total influence that led teachers to apply and was the most influential reported factor.

My aggressive focus on cultivating and retaining Advisory Board Members helped us retain 12 in just 16 days, in time to adjust overall strategy. Two Advisory Board

Members of color specifically cited my encouragement and follow up as a key factor in their decision to apply. My reminders used primarily with promising candidates of color were reported as accounting for 17% of total influence to apply, and since some teachers may have labeled my follow up emails as nominations in the survey, this factor may have been even more influential than reported.

**Component 2: Lead Teach Plus teachers in inclusive adult development.**

*Did I do what I set out to do?* Yes, I also far exceeded the goals and rated myself a 5 for the second output. Teacher participation was much higher once I began to lead the writing of the policy memo than it had been prior. I engaged 18 of 19 Advisory Board Members (up from zero who had acted prior to my involvement, with one who reported she was unable to participate for personal reasons) to lead focus groups with 148 teachers, exceeding the target of 50 focus group participants by 196%.

All 18 of our teachers participated and did so more fully than is typical in Teach Plus policy memo writing, so instead of following the usual practice of highlighting the names of those teachers who contributed significantly to the writing process as lead authors of the memo, we listed all 18 teachers' names as equal contributors. My supervisor felt the policy memo was high-quality. I also prepared teachers to negotiate with the Commissioner, and they reported they felt those trainings met their objectives and prepared them to meet with the Commissioner and advocate for policy.

*Which actions contributed to my results?* I provided support in equal measure to the challenge of each task—explicit training, modeling, and a lesson plan for leading a focus group, trouble-shooting challenges together, and clear objectives and purpose. I asked Advisory Board Members to pay attention if anything bubbled up from their focus

groups that they felt should end up in the formal policy memo that was not on the list of specific questions they were presented. I then followed up with each teacher to ensure they were able to participate in each step of the process, even if that meant modifying it.

Advisory Board Members and Official Fellows both reported that trainings I led met adult development objectives (see Table F1 of Appendix F for the former), and both groups cited adult development strategies as helpful in surveys (see Table F2 of Appendix F for survey results for Advisory Board Members and Appendix G for survey results for Official Fellows).

**Component 3: Reflect on evidence and continually evolve my strategy.**

*Did I do what I set out to do?* Yes, I also exceeded the third goal, so for that component I also rated myself a 5. I reflected regularly alone and with my supervisor and other staff. My reflection on that evidence led to new understandings to the point that it changed my orientation toward the project and my conception of my role leading it in a way that drastically improved the outcomes.

For example, I used Advisory Board cultivation interviews to ask teachers what they would recommend that we keep the same, change, or add for the Official Fellowship. They reported that they felt they could be called upon more to share their expertise with their peers (see Appendix H), which led to a more self-authoring strategy for adult development in the kickoff involving them leading sessions, which better prepared all teachers to meet with the Commissioner.

*Which actions contributed to my results?* I had a pre-existing commitment to practicing data-driven decision-making, so I collected vast amounts of evidence as discussed in this analysis section. I created structures to ensure I would reflect on that

data regularly despite the tight timelines. I wrote in my leadership journal frequently and held recurring coaching sessions with Ed.L.D. colleagues and loved ones who invited me to examine the data and challenged my assumptions about it.

I also paid attention to external factors that might affect the negotiation, including public discussion about the state and federal roles in education. Reduced federal accountability seemed likely to lower motivation to implement the federal ESSA Plan in Texas, a state that has a long history of pushing back against or downright ignoring anything that remotely looks like federal regulation. For example, Texas was one of only four states that refused to ever adopt the Common Core State Standards, which were developed by the Governors Association but supported by the Obama Administration and so perceived as federal. I could see that the de-emphasis on holding states accountable for provisions of the ESSA Plan was likely to impact the Commissioner's interest in discussing that plan, about which our teachers were busy holding focus groups.

I realized I was not connecting with my negotiating partner, the Commissioner, to deeply understand his true interests. Preparing for a meeting without discussing with my negotiating partner our goals for the meeting or how we would negotiate ran counter to how I had practiced interest-based negotiation in the past. I felt compelled at the very least to minimize the possibility of any major misunderstandings that could lead to a negative experience for the teachers, and at the best to maximize their chances of reaching an agreement that created as much value as possible for all parties, especially students across Texas. Insights I uncovered through reflection with peer coaches convinced me to evolve my strategy to see myself as an interest-based negotiator with the Commissioner and others.

By digging further with the Director, my supervisor and I learned several important pieces of information about the Commissioner's interests and were able to plan how the teachers would negotiate with him, as mentioned in the Description of the Strategic Project. This made it clear to me that I needed to completely shift my approach to prepare the teachers for an interest-based rather than an advocacy-oriented meeting with the Commissioner.

**Component 4: Share my strategic decisions with Teach Plus.**

*Did I do what I set out to do?* Yes, I also exceeded the fourth goal, but not by as much as the first three, so for that component I rated myself a 4. My supervisor acknowledged that I shared my inclusive adult development decisions. I also have emails and notes from meetings in which I discussed my strategic decisions with other staff members and documents like my recruitment strategy that are still shared with my supervisor and national staff for future reference.

*Which actions contributed to my results?* I created strategy and design documents in a sharable online format for easy sharing on short timelines (see Appendix I for one example). Once I shifted to thinking of myself as a negotiator with multiple parties on behalf of kids, I began to more proactively co-create options with my supervisor for how to design development for teachers and negotiate with the Director.

**Detailed Analysis of the *Then* Components of My Theory of Action**

I have also realized all three of the *Then* components of my Theory of Action and produced all the expected outcomes. I use the same self-rating system and outline the outcomes that explain how I arrived at the ratings (see Appendix J for a summary of the evidence that supports this analysis).

**Component A: Our racially and ethnically diverse group of Teach Plus Texas teachers will bring their experiences to bear to advocate for, and positively impact, policies that meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable students in the state.**

*Did I do what I set out to do?* Yes, I far exceeded, and thus rated myself a 5 for the first goal. Our teachers advocated for and impacted important policy that meets student needs, and far exceeded all relevant outcomes including stretch goals.

Specifically, the TEA presentation was strong and by a diverse group of teachers (as outlined in component 1 in the previous table): (1) solutions-oriented, (2) well communicated and smooth, (3) brought real teacher voice with data and stories. The Commissioner even chose to stay an extra half hour beyond the 90 minutes we had planned with him, and asked to keep the carrot and stick signs our teacher had created. Our teachers influenced the thinking of senior leaders such that three full and four partial ideas were included in the ESSA Plan, outperforming the target of one or more by between 200% and 600%. They also generated and made a case for a three-tiered six-year graduation rate idea the Commissioner had not considered previously, which is now included in the ESSA Plan and the Strategic Plan.

My initial Theory of Action focused on the short-term policy impacts of the meeting with the Commissioner, but once I began to think of myself and the teachers as interest-based negotiators, I also created more extended outcomes related to building a relationship with the Commissioner and the long-term impact of policy through continued engagement (e.g. the Strategic Plan).

This engagement built a strong relationship with the Commissioner and Director, established emphatically for them that Teach Plus teachers are a great resource, built our

credibility and visibility in Texas, and facilitated additional opportunities for the Official Fellows to impact policy at TEA and throughout the state by returning to further inform the Strategic Plan as an informal Teachers' Cabinet, which impressed our funders, and likely contributed to subsequent donations for the Fellowship.

*Which actions contributed to my results?* The actions embedded in components 1-4 of my Theory of Action worked. I created a strategy, implemented the actions in it, and evolved it along the way: (1) recruited an excellent, diverse group of Teach Plus teachers, led them in inclusive adult development, (2) reflected on evidence and continually evolved my strategy, (3) shared my strategic decisions with Teach Plus. I also began to see myself and operate as an interest-based negotiator (see Component B for details) and developed the teachers to do the same.

Modifying the memo-writing process ensured each teacher was included in, and able to contribute to, each step so they could fully access the next. For example, the informal focus group option for teachers who felt particularly pressed for time enabled all 18 teachers to conduct focus groups, which prepared them to cite the experiences of their colleagues in addition to their own when writing and discussing the memo.

Much like the dynamic I saw in the recruitment component, these modifications were particularly important for teachers whose voices were most missing from the larger policy debate—those who had significant responsibilities at school or home due to the greater needs of their families and/or their students, especially teachers of color. The barrier of time falls unequally on teachers of color and those in schools serving the neediest students, and so those teachers especially needed and most benefited from tailored opportunities to participate. Had I not provided a modified focus group option,



we were on track for our focus groups to be conducted almost exclusively by white teachers, which reflects a pattern I have seen throughout the education sector.

When asked what most enabled Official Fellows to authentically advocate for policy during the kickoff, they cited psychological safety factors that seemed to grow out of the elements of diversity, inclusion, and adult development I used. These factors are summarized below (see Appendix G for more detail).

- 1) I would have no matter what (10.0%).
- 2) Seeing the cohort was made up of teachers from diverse backgrounds (9.5%).
- 3) Seeing other members taking risks to advocate authentically (9.1%).
- 4) Seeing other members of the group not seem to suffer any negative consequences for advocating authentically (6.9%).
- 5) Seeing Advisory Board Members lead a session or being invited to lead one (6.6%).
- 6) My supervisor and I discussing race and equity directly, making ourselves vulnerable and available, expressing our commitment to educational equity, and projecting encouraging or non-judgmental nonverbal cues (all accounted for more than 5%).

In the open response for the Post-Kickoff Survey, the Official Fellows listed many elements of the negotiation framework as positively influencing their ability to prepare for their meeting with the Commissioner, including:

- 1) Discussing the process for the presentation.
- 2) Viewing the discussion as a negotiation and thus co-defining success and focusing on proactively uncovering interests (rather than advocating positions).
- 3) Negotiating how to negotiate, including enlisting the Advisory Board members to intentionally include the New Fellows and preparing Advisory Board Members and New Fellows to negotiate flexibly and inclusively.
- 4) Re-thinking preparation for Advisory Board Members and New Fellows during the in-person Fellowship kickoff so that it embodied inclusive adult development.

Of course, teachers did not report in their surveys the absence of a disaster scenario occurring, such as a mostly white group of Advisory Board members attempting to formally present their memo on the ESSA Plan to the Commissioner, who was more interested in telling them about, and hearing all the teachers' informal input on, his

Strategic Plan. Still, the fact that none of that happened suggests that my shift toward interest-based negotiation was crucial. Operating from a more fluid framework of interest-based negotiation enabled the teachers to create more transformative outcomes than they might have achieved if they had gone in simply seeking to persuade the Commissioner of their positions.

Adopting a negotiation mindset, preparing for the meeting as a negotiation, and focusing on interests rather than positions, enabled me to jump into the discussion between the Commissioner and the teachers at the two pivotal points previously described in the Description of Project section. I knew the Commissioner, the teachers, and the rest of the group, shared a common interest in creating good policy for all kids. All I had to do was step in to help them see that they could both meet their somewhat different interests (the ESSA Plan and the Strategic Plan) by focusing on and meeting their common interest of creating equitable policy. With the help of that small intervention, they easily found a way forward together.

The teacher I mentioned in the Description section, who worked in an untested subject, later shared with me that he was impressed by the Commissioner's depth with which he understood the nuances of his job as a teacher in an uncommon subject area, but was caught off guard by the level of detail requested in his question about his students' data. The extra time mattered to him because it "defused the situation" and helped him "catch his breath" so he could remember which data he had submitted.

Lastly, my ongoing negotiations with my supervisor, chronicled in my 60-page meeting notes document, comprised a negotiation that was critical to the success of this project. Had I taken her default positions or usual approach at face value and not entered

that ongoing negotiation with her, I would not have dug deeper to understand the interests underlying her positions or advocated for the changes I made to help us reach them. Once I took a more proactive role, I was able to uncover her interests more clearly and demonstrate that approaching our work with teachers as I outlined in my Theory of Action would meet those interests.

**Component B: I will optimize my strategy, results, and leadership development for impact.**

*Did I do what I set out to do?* Yes, I far exceeded, and thus rated myself a 5 for the second goal. Based on my reflection and coaching, I began to see myself and operate as an interest-based negotiator. This led me to far exceed expectations in all of the short-term measured outcomes of the Strategic Project (see Component A above). A few of my peer coaches and loved ones have also stated that I have become a more consistent systems-level thinker and leader, and I agree with their assessments of my growth.

*Which actions contributed to my results?* The actions in Component B of my Theory of Action contributed to the results outlined in Component A above. I negotiated with my supervisor to uncover her interests more clearly and co-create value with her through my Strategic Project. With her, I discussed the process for the presentation, set the agenda, and co-defined success for the meeting with the Commissioner and beyond.

I then focused my development for teachers on proactively uncovering interests rather than advocating for positions and enlisted the mostly white Advisory Board Members to intentionally include the New Fellows who were mostly teachers of color and prepared both groups to negotiate flexibly and inclusively. During the meeting, I helped teachers and the Commissioner see they could meet their different interests (the

ESSA Plan and Strategic Plan) by meeting their common interest of equitable policy for all kids across the state of Texas.

**Component C: Teach Plus will begin to provide teachers with more inclusive adult development experiences.**

*Did I do what I set out to do?* Yes, I rated myself a 4 for component C because I have met and exceeded this outcome but cannot yet see the full long-term impact. In the months since my residency ended, it has become clear that my supervisor and some other members of Teach Plus are leading more inclusive adult development.

My supervisor has transformed how she leads learning with teachers and is more intentionally leading inclusive adult development. She is shifting to develop teachers to solve problems and lead learning for their peers. She sends meeting agendas with the underlying goals and interests of various parties explicitly outlined, which pose questions rather than advocate solutions. The Advisory Board Members recently led their peers in training on how to lead the next round of TEA focus groups. I am aware of a few examples of members of the national organization I collaborated with beginning to make this shift so far, though much less extensively. It is possible that with more time the practices my supervisor now uses regularly will spread throughout the organization more.

*Which actions contributed to my results?* As I began to think of myself as a negotiator with multiple parties on behalf of kids, I began to explain more intentionally to my supervisor the underpinnings of my design ideas and to share what was working more widely with other Teach Plus staff members. I shared strategies with and modeled inclusive adult development for my supervisor and some members of Teach Plus. I generated options with my supervisor to add inclusive adult development into Advisory

Board meetings and the kickoff. My supervisor has explained that her attention to adult development was informed by a combination of our discussions and her first-hand experience of seeing how teachers responded to my methods.

**Component D: Teach Plus teachers will bring lived experiences to bear that more accurately reflect the diverse experiences of our student body and will advocate for policy changes that meet the needs of all of our nation’s students.**

*Did I do what I set out to do?* I exceeded the fourth goal and rated myself a 4 for this component because I cannot yet see the full long-term impact. The Official Fellows cohort is a group of far more racially and ethnically diverse teachers who are leading change more tailored to positively impact our most vulnerable students in Texas.

The national organization is also beginning to shift its perspective. According to my supervisor, I “built [a] belief at Teach Plus that building a cohort that reflects the demographic diversity of the state's student body is possible, leading to at least one other region setting that as a goal this year.” I will see soon whether new cohorts of fellows reflect that change in mindset, at which point I could change my rating to a 5.

*Which actions contributed to my results?* My actions that led to the results of components A through C all contributed to this outcome. I involved Teach Plus in firsthand experiences that transformed their beliefs of what is possible.

For example, a number of Teach Plus staff members participated in virtual interviews with us in which the majority, and in one case the entirety, of candidates we interviewed were excellent teachers of color who met or surpassed our selection standards for fellows. It is likely that the small group of staff members who experienced

our selection process with us and saw the recruitment strategy document I shared have relayed their experiences to other staff members, and my supervisor certainly has.

### **A Note About External Factors and Intrinsic Motivation**

This analysis focused on factors Teach Plus staff or leaders in other intermediaries could use to inform their strategy. It is also worth noting that an intermediary may not be able to influence every causal factor, and it is worth considering the role intrinsic motivation played in my ability to implement my Theory of Action, and in the teachers' decisions to join me in this work. For example, my success in enacting components 2-4 of my Theory of Action was influenced almost entirely by my own intrinsic motivation to reflect and share my work.

One hypothesis worth considering is that the teachers' desire to impact policy would have led them to apply and join the Fellowship and advocate authentically regardless of our actions. I failed to include a question to this effect in my surveys, but a few teachers wrote into my Other category with intrinsic reasons on each survey, and conversations with teachers confirm that intrinsic motivation played a strong role for at least some of them.

The teachers who added intrinsic motivation factors on surveys also listed other factors that influenced their decision, so it seems reasonable to assume that either their awareness of the opportunity, or their decision to follow through on pursuing it, was influenced by our efforts. It is also true that those who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to exercise the self-authoring we need them to exercise to create policy solutions for complex problems, and so are particularly strong candidates for this work.

The fact that our tactics influenced even the obviously intrinsically motivated teachers makes an even stronger case for my analysis that overall my strategy worked.

### **How Might I Revise or Update My Theory of Action**

My Theory of Action turned out to be too myopic for systems-level leadership in a complicated and changing education reform landscape. Though the *Then* part of the TOA listed changes I wanted to create in policy and in Teach Plus, the *If* part was almost exclusively focused on actions I would take with teachers. This ignored my agency and role as a partner and negotiator in the work. I planned carefully for executing the work of recruiting, selecting, cultivating, and training teachers, but I did not initially plan for the steps needed to negotiate or partner with any other stakeholders such as my supervisor, Teach Plus, or the Commissioner except to share my ideas in one direction, which left no room for co-creation of value with them. I also did not account for my own needs for development to lead processes that were new to me in an unfamiliar and complex environment.

**How I shifted my approach.** My first change was to look up from my work with the teachers to negotiate with my supervisor and the Director. My second was to change how I prepared the teachers. Though they could not re-write the policy memo in the language of the Strategic Plan, they were able to plan to intentionally tailor their comments to the Commissioner about the ESSA Plan based on what he shared about the State Strategic Plan at the beginning of the meeting, making their common interest in equitable policy as explicit as possible. I prepared them to do exactly that. Rather than over-emphasizing presentation skills in their preparation, I focused instead on ensuring

they understood the Commissioner's interests and values and prepared them to interact with him no matter where the conversation or his follow up questions took them.

I also devoted an entire section of the Advisory Board Member's training to problem-solving around how to intentionally include the New Fellows who comprised a much more diverse group than the Advisory Board. I directly described the possibility of visual and actual exclusion inherent in the size of the conference table and the fact that the mostly white group of teachers conducted the focus groups and wrote the memo, and contrasted that with the importance of including the voices of the New Fellows because of the richness their experiences would add to the discussion.

**Outcomes.** What I initially hoped would happen mostly has happened or is now beginning to happen. The cohort of fellows were able to draw upon their diverse life and work experiences to engage with the Commissioner because they had the adult development support they needed.

However, as my mindset shifted from one of a trainer or designer of trainings, to one of a facilitator and partner in interest-based negotiation with all parties, my ideal outcomes also shifted. Instead of expecting the teachers to *advocate for*, or convince, the Commissioner to adopt certain policies based on their positions, I hoped they would become partners with him, and negotiate to *co-create* policy *with* him based on their shared interests on behalf of kids. They did that to some extent in the conversation with him, but their ability to do so was limited by their preparation for the meeting. They invested months leading focus groups and writing a policy memo about the ESSA Plan, which he had deprioritized in favor of his more pressing Strategic Plan.



A few weeks before the kickoff I pivoted: I prepared the teachers to consider the Commissioner's interests and advised them to listen carefully to his overview of the State Strategic Plan during the meeting. This certainly helped, and it was essential to them having any impact on policy at all. But without seeing a draft copy of his plan, or at least understanding some of its key provisions that he was mulling over, they could not prepare to discuss it at the level necessary to fully partner to co-create policy with him. My hope is that as the teachers' relationship with the Commissioner develops, they will move toward a partner role and based on my supervisor's reports, it seems that is beginning to happen.

**Outputs.** My first version of my Theory of Action captured the actions I needed to take and what I expected would happen. I did the actions I said I would do, but my pivot toward being a more active partner in interest-based negotiation demanded new actions. I needed to intentionally enter negotiations sooner and stay in them longer. I had to reach out to the Director to negotiate how to negotiate to set the teachers and the Commissioner up to come to agreements for all kids. Ideally, I also would have involved my supervisor Teach Plus more proactively as well, sharing my strategic *decision-making process* as a negotiation partner more than my pre-made decisions.

**Revised Theory of Action.** This leads me to the revised Theory of Action outlined on page 73, which reflects the shift that occurred as I more intentionally employed interest-based negotiation. This shift in approach prompted me to add a fifth output component to the beginning of my Theory of Action. This enabled me to far exceed my initial conception of the outcomes I was pursuing and magnified the impact of the Strategic Project.

## Revised Theory of Action

### ***If I...***

- 1) ***Think of myself and Teach Plus teachers as always negotiating with multiple parties on behalf of all students, and remember to***
  - a. ***get in as soon as possible,***
  - b. ***stay in as long as possible,***
  - c. ***and lead our teachers to do the same,***
- 2) *recruit an excellent and racially and ethnically diverse group of Teach Plus teachers,*
- 3) *lead Teach Plus teachers in inclusive adult development,*
- 4) *reflect on evidence and continually evolve my strategy,*
- 5) *share my strategic decisions with Teach Plus, and*

### ***Then...***

- A) *our racially and ethnically diverse group of Teach Plus Texas teachers will bring their experiences to bear to **advocate for, and positively impact, negotiate to co-create** policies that meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable students in the state,*
- B) *I will optimize my strategy, results, and leadership development for impact,*
- C) *Teach Plus will begin to provide teachers with more inclusive adult development experiences, and*
- D) *Teach Plus teachers will bring lived experiences to bear that more accurately reflect the diverse experiences of our student body and will **advocate for negotiate to co-create** policy changes that meet the interests of all of our nation's students.*

## Implications for Self

The implications sections build upon the Analysis section, describing the *so what* of my analysis for myself, Teach Plus, and the education sector. In this section, I reflect upon what I learned about myself as an educational leader from the Strategic Project.

There are many ways I would change my design and leadership approach to this Strategic Project if I could go back in time for that purpose. However, the more useful questions relate to how I will design and lead future projects now that I have learned all that I have, and how other leaders can learn from the ways I grew and developed during this Strategic Project. Below, I explore one practice I plan to keep doing, one practice to change, and one to add in the future.

### Questions: Implications for Self

1. *What should I keep doing?*
2. *What should I change?*
3. *What should I add?*

### What should I keep doing?

**Keep thinking strategically.** The environment around our schools is becoming more complex every day. Now more than ever, our students need systems-level leaders to be strategic and intentional as they decide how to best align and create new resources to meet their needs. Starting with a Theory of Action that includes the most important steps including diversity, inclusion, adult development, and reflecting on data to evolve, will better ensure that I am able to adapt to a leadership approach that will work for any problem I seek to solve in the future.

### **What should I change?**

**Instead of sharing my *decisions* with partners, invite more of them into my *decision-making process* earlier so we can co-create those decisions and learn from each other in the process.** To meet student needs, I have to take more time to define the goals and interests of my partners earlier on and create explicit strategies with them for how to accomplish those goals. This will require me to ask thoughtful questions and listen deeply to uncover non-obvious interests and opportunities to co-create value for all kids. This will also require me to be more explicit about what my decision-making process looks like currently, and to invite feedback on how to improve it.

### **What should I add?**

**Firmly adopt the mindset that the teachers and I are always negotiating with a variety of partners on behalf of all kids. Dig deep to uncover the interests underlying the positions of my many diverse negotiating partners. Get in it and stay in it for round nine and beyond.** I need to engage and negotiate in all directions, rather than just focusing on teachers or those I directly lead or manage. Since my work is rooted in social justice, I tend to invest a lot of energy in ensuring that people at the lower end of the power structures, such as students, teachers, and people of color, have what they need to succeed.

However, the authorizing environment surrounding our schools is more complex than that (Moore & Khagram, 2004). To ensure that teachers and students have what they need, I must engage as a negotiating partner each person and entity around them who might be able to co-create value for them with me. I now realize that I do not have a gap in the mysterious policy and advocacy realm—I was failing to identify negotiation as a

similar skill set to advocacy, but one that is more nuanced and can be more helpful. Using my negotiation skillset right off the bat in future projects will enable me to optimize my impact and learning as it did in this Strategic Project.

## Implications for Site

This section contains implications of what was learned from the Strategic Project for the residency site. In any endeavor, much can be learned, and certainly this residency and Strategic Project have produced many useful insights. I prioritized the most important things Teach Plus and Teach Plus Texas can take away from this residency. Below, I list one thing I recommend they keep doing, one practice to change, and one to add, along with a question about how these changes might be reflected in their mission statement. The rest of this section explores these four questions in more detail.

### Questions: Implications for Teach Plus

1. *What should Teach Plus keep doing?*
2. *What should Teach Plus change?*
3. *What should Teach Plus add?*
4. *How might Teach Plus modify their mission statement to reflect the changes I am proposing?*

### What should Teach Plus keep doing?

**Keep recruiting more diverse teachers and staff members to ensure you continue to meet the needs of all students.** Students and communities across the country have been calling upon leaders at all levels to provide a more inclusive approach to education, and to its reform process. Teach Plus, and especially my supervisor, know that teachers from communities we aim to serve, especially teachers of color, bring important perspectives to the table that policymakers may not hear from if we fail to make the effort to include them. Teach Plus has already begun to ensure that their programs consist of diverse groups of teachers to make recommendations that represent all students from the community they serve, and to ensure that Teach Plus champions education reforms which meet those students' real needs.

Recruiting more diverse teachers is necessary to ensure Teach Plus continues meeting student needs. By intentionally including teachers who can accurately represent the needs of our most vulnerable students, especially students of color, Teach Plus is positioning itself to become the best at empowering teachers of all backgrounds to identify and lead policy changes that meet the unmet needs of their communities.

My supervisor understood the importance of diversity before I arrived in Texas. She made it top priority in word and in deed. She stated clearly that diversity mattered to her, enabling me to fully utilize my expertise to build an even more inclusive experience for a more diverse group of Teach Plus Texas teachers, which in turn enabled their resounding success. She listened deeply to learn what promoted or hindered diversity and inclusion in our small startup, rapidly adapting and improving her approach. She modeled openness and risk-taking, and actively pursued diversity in all she did, energizing and inspiring everyone around her to support that goal.

What we learned in Texas has ultimately helped Teach Plus to become a more diverse and inclusive organization, and to subtly redefine its value proposition by intentionally including more diverse teachers across the organization. My supervisor and Teach Plus Texas continue to lead the way for the national organization by hiring a diverse group of full time teacher coaching staff members for another project they are leading in the state, by leading conversations about race and equity with colleagues across the organization, and by speaking to other stakeholders about the value and possibility of diversity, such as foundation leaders and the organization's Board of Directors.

The recruitment and cultivation strategy we used as we established Teach Plus Texas, outlined below, can be refined and used again each year for the Teacher Policy Fellowship, in other programs and sites, and across the organization.

- 1) Develop a targeted and flexible recruitment strategy.
- 2) Aggressively focus on cultivating and retaining Advisory Board Members or any other excellent, diverse, teachers with whom we have connections.
- 3) Unapologetically pursue referrals for teachers with diverse backgrounds and nominate them anonymously.
- 4) Prioritize quality over quantity and spend the majority of time following up with excellent, diverse candidates rather than exclusively generating leads to more candidates with similar backgrounds who may be easier to find.

### **What should Teach Plus change?**

**Provide diverse teachers and staff members with inclusive adult development to ensure they can use their rich life and work experiences to co-develop policy on complex issues.** Diversity in recruitment is not sufficient. Those diverse teachers and staff members need inclusive adult development to ensure they are able to use their rich life and work experiences to co-develop policy on complex issues.

The organization has a rich infrastructure for recruitment, from tools and rubrics to technology platforms and even a dedicated national staff member to provide technical assistance for recruitment planning and interviewing. This same effort could be applied to the inclusive adult development needs of the teachers the organization brings in.

I was honored to have the opportunity to participate in the professional learning community among Executive Directors of statewide sites, which is already tackling some of these questions, and to speak with a number of Policy Managers across the organization who are grappling with these issues directly as well. There was also a staff member who left before I arrived who also did a lot to define some of these tools and



processes, though I do not know how informed they were by inclusive adult development.

The change to provide more intentional inclusive adult development could come in many possible ways. A few options include elevating this issue more regularly during the State Executive Director collaborative time, creating a professional learning community for Policy Managers to share how they are developing teachers, hiring a staff member entirely focused on developing other staff members and teachers (such as a Chief Learning Officer), or even hiring a short-term consultant who could help to create and codify some of the best practices that currently exist but are scattered across the organization and its various sites.

Regardless of which strategy for change Teach Plus chooses to adopt, inclusive adult development efforts will be most effective if they embody the same principles we found effective as we established Teach Plus Texas, outlined below.

- 1) Provide support in equal measure to the challenge of each task we asked teachers or staff members to perform.
- 2) Follow up with each teacher or staff member to ensure they are able to participate in each step of the process, even if that means modifying the process to address any barriers they encounter along the way.

### **What should Teach Plus add?**

**Consider adopting the mindset that the teachers, and you, are always negotiating with a variety of parties on behalf of all kids.**

*Teachers as negotiators.* I would recommend that Teach Plus Texas and the national organization move toward empowering teachers to play a more proactive, self-authoring role, as partners in the co-creation of, and negotiation about, policy with policymakers on behalf of all kids. This requires implementing adult development

principles, including investing time up front to clarify processes and build development experiences for each step whenever asking teachers to do anything new and ensuring every teacher has a chance to succeed in one step before moving onto the next.

This would also move Teach Plus Texas and the national organization toward even more of a facilitation role than they already play. Some of the teachers' feedback on the Post-Kickoff Survey stated that they wanted to take a more active role in defining which policy issues they pursue. That change is already taking place as well, but I explore the idea below to provide some insight into what it could look like going forward.

***One model to consider as an example.*** Ganz (2002) offered one self-authoring organizing model that Teach Plus could consider. He stated, "Organizers identify, recruit, and develop leadership; build community around leadership; and build power out of community...interweave relationships, understanding and action so that each contributes to the other...work with people to interpret *why they should act* to change their world—motivation, and *how they can act* to change it—strategy" (p. 16).

Teach Plus could shift from primarily *organizing teachers* to primarily *training teachers to be organizers* themselves. Ganz (2010) suggested, "Social movements are organized by identifying, recruiting and developing leadership at all levels." Teach Plus could train teachers as Ganz does his organizers, to identify neglected, urgent problems that uncover student needs and to work across all the groups Teach Plus is skilled at working with to co-construct solutions that meet those needs.

***What might a Ganz-style Teach Plus policy Fellowship look like?*** Teach Plus would support teachers to dig deep and find the most crucial barriers to their students'

success that policy can impact. The organization would then use their policy expertise to help teachers break down problems to individual components and root causes.

One way to do this would be to use the Five Whys Protocol outlined in the book *Strategy in Action: How School Systems Can Support Powerful Learning and Teaching* (Curtis & City, 2009, p. 80-91) and taught by Ed.L.D. program Director, Elizabeth City (L. City & J. Mehta, *Thinking Strategically About Education Reform and Sectoral Change*, personal communication, October 28, 2014). Teach Plus could start by asking teachers to use evidence to identify symptoms and hypotheses for why those symptoms exist. Then, in small groups, teachers could each select a hypothesis to explore based on what would maximize the potential for policy impact and ask “why” five times about that hypothesis. This would help teachers uncover a number of potential root causes to address, and empower them to raise policy issues that might not yet even be on the agenda.

Then Teach Plus could help teachers identify creative solutions and use the organization’s well-oiled machinery to connect teachers with policymakers who have the power to ensure those solutions are implemented. This would place the most critical issues at the forefront of education policy discussions. It would also set Teach Plus policy fellowships apart and solidify the organization as the policy fellowship provider that consistently creates the most crucial value by making powerful impact on cutting-edge issues with solutions that meet student needs.

***What would Teach Plus risk by shifting further in the direction of a Ganz model?***

It is worth considering the hypothesis that teachers might not be up for the charge.

Organizing is demanding work, the teachers Teach Plus recruits have multiple demands on their time, and Teach Plus might feel unequipped to train them.

It is possible that teachers would identify and pursue change on dead-end policy issues and make no discernable impact, or that impact would not show for many years after the typical one-year Fellowship cycle. Perhaps policymakers or funders would not be interested in issues teachers raise, risking the position of Teach Plus in the competitive education reform funding marketplace.

Certainly, our Advisory Board Members struggled with time constraints and needed training to prepare them for each task. However, some of the Advisory Board members who led smaller informal focus groups provided some of the most powerful insights that informed the most innovative policy recommendations our teachers provided to the Commissioner. Their rich life experiences, paired with inclusive adult development, equipped them with all they needed—as Ganz might say, they already knew their *why* and simply needed our *how*.

***Invite the teachers to negotiate for the Fellowship program they know they need.***

These teachers know instinctively how Teach Plus Texas can continue to improve by moving toward a more self-authoring model. Even as recruitment begins for a new Fellowship cycle, take the time to ask deep questions and reflect on the outgoing teachers' feedback for how to improve the experience Teach Plus Texas offers in future years—and then invite a few of the outgoing fellows to lead those changes for the next group. The realistic concerns outlined above necessitate a gradual shift. Sites like Teach Plus Texas must act as proof points of what is possible when we dig deep and enable our teachers to negotiate based on interests for policy that meets the real needs of all students,

and to negotiate for what they need to do that work. They must also gather data and best practices to share with other sites as they move forward in similar ways.

***Think of Teach Plus as a negotiator.*** There is a lot of power in thinking of ourselves as being in negotiation with others. Teach Plus is in negotiation with a wide variety of parties throughout the education sector, including policymakers like the Director and the Commissioner, funders at the site or organization level, and external partners who refer teachers to the organization, to name just a few.

One unique element of interest-based negotiation in the education reform sector is that though at some points various parties may seem stuck in their positions, many of these parties, and often all of them, have a shared interest in meeting the needs of all students, especially the most vulnerable. Often various parties who seek to influence education simply disagree on how to go about reaching that goal.

Conversely, the depth of concern for the outcomes of our negotiations, which threaten to impact whole generations of children and communities, can generate strong emotional responses and positional thinking from various parties seeking to impact education. Teach Plus can make a crucial contribution toward progress by recognizing when this is occurring, and “getting in it” with skilled teachers who re-focus the conversation on interests rather than positions.

***Teach Plus already has a lot of skill in this area.*** Teach Plus, and particularly my supervisor, are already highly skilled at reframing questions to focus on interests instead of positions. One example of this was the public testing reframe that was pivotal to the success of that crucial policy contribution my supervisor made with Teach Plus Massachusetts.

Another example of Teach Plus using negotiation skillfully is the way we proactively and explicitly requested referrals and nominations for “teachers with diverse life experiences whose voices may typically be left out of policy conversations.” Clearly stating our interests and the objective criteria (the rationale) they were grounded in enabled our networks to see that they shared our interest in ensuring a diverse group of teachers engage in policy, and thus they helped us find the teachers we were looking for.

***Negotiate more intentionally.*** The key awareness I would suggest adding is simply to be more intentional about Teach Plus’ role as a negotiator on behalf of kids. The organization could choose to reframe their thinking in terms of negotiation in many arenas. Below are three examples of ways they could begin to make that shift.

- 1) As mentioned in the previous section, Teach Plus could intentionally negotiate the terms of programs with teachers and invite teachers to further shape those programs for the benefit of kids. Teach Plus could do this by inviting teacher participants of their Fellowship or other programs to hold internal focus groups about their experience, collect evidence, and make policy recommendations for how the next iteration of the program could be even better, and then inviting some of them to lead those changes in the next round.
- 2) Teach Plus could also negotiate more intentionally with policy makers. In this Strategic Project, the meetings with the Director just prior to and right after the teacher’s meeting with the Commissioner deeply influenced how the teachers approached their negotiation with the Commissioner and how that relationship, and the funding that followed from it, continued beyond that first meeting. When Teach Plus finds an opportunity for teachers to engage, it is reasonable for the organization to also state to policymakers their interests in that engagement and to propose options that might meet both parties’ interests on behalf of kids. Those options may include regular meeting times during the engagement to respond to changing priorities, or funding to pay to bring more diverse teachers into the group, or for program staff like a Policy Manager.
- 3) Teach Plus could use interest-based negotiation in high-stakes conversations with funders. Sometimes a funder shows interest in a program but falls short in the options they present to Teach Plus to implement that program, whether in the dollar amount they offer or in the timeline for delivering that funding. Though it may not be widespread practice, it is reasonable for Teach Plus to approach those conversations as negotiations as well. This might include asking deep questions to understand the funder’s unique interests, reminding funders of the shared interest of both parties to influence policy on behalf of kids,

sharing honestly the impact various options would have on that shared interest, and proposing other options for funders to consider.

Regardless of which strategy for change Teach Plus chooses to adopt, efforts to be more intentional about negotiating would be most effective if they embodied the same principles we found effective as we established Teach Plus Texas, outlined below.

- 1) Dig deep to uncover the interests of your negotiating partners so you can create value with them.
- 2) Get in it as quickly as possible, by co-defining success and negotiating how you will negotiate before you even begin.
- 3) Stay in it for round nine and beyond.

**How might Teach Plus modify their mission statement to reflect the changes I am proposing?**

I found my supervisor and the organization to be committed in practice to working to empower not just an *excellent* but also a *diverse* groups of teachers. The mission statement does not yet reflect that commitment. If the organization moves to include more diverse groups of teachers in its programs, then it should also move to provide support in equal measure to the complex challenge of the task of sorting through the needs of diverse communities. It would be even more powerful if those diverse groups of teachers were supported to lead those changes as negotiators with many stakeholders on behalf of all kids, especially our most vulnerable. A modified mission statement might look something like the following:

**Modified Teach Plus Mission Statement**

*The mission of Teach Plus is to empower **and support** excellent, **diverse**, experienced teachers to take leadership over, **and negotiate for**, key policy and practice issues that affect their students' success.*

My supervisor has reported that it looks very likely that Teach Plus will add valuing diversity as an organizational value, so the idea of adding it to the mission statement is not far-fetched. In addition, it would make sense to consider the importance of adult development to support more diverse groups of teachers in bringing their experience to bear.



## Implications for Sector

Below I discuss implications of what was learned from the Strategic Project for the American preK-12 education sector, specifically focusing on intermediaries seeking to impact education policy. In this section, I consider how what I learned affects the way leaders could or should think and act about the issue as a whole.

### Questions: Implications for Intermediaries Seeking to Impact Education Policy

1. *What should intermediaries keep doing?*
2. *What should intermediaries change?*
3. *What should intermediaries add?*

### What should intermediaries keep doing?

**Keep recruiting more diverse teachers and staff members to ensure you continue to meet the needs of all students.** The education reform funding landscape is at best uncertain. Federal stimulus money replaced some education funding that was cut from state budgets during the recession but has been drying up. The current presidential administration is unlikely to replenish that funding source.

School districts and states are trying to deliver the same results with fewer resources and more students. School staff members face layoffs, so non-essential services from organizations adjacent to schools and governments may seem less appealing than they did a few years ago. Public opinion about education reform is less supportive, and the new presidential administration is seeking to minimize the federal role in our schools. Even known champions of reform are stepping back and questioning whether our reforms have had their intended impacts, since inequality remains prominent in our society.

Education intermediaries of all types are feeling the pressure. Many savvy organizations have already begun to rethink their business models, what they hope to

accomplish, for whom, and how. Many have begun diversity initiatives to increase the percentage of teachers or staff members who are people of color with the hope that their reforms are more grounded in the lived experiences of the students and communities who the reforms are intended to serve. This is a crucial step, and hopefully this trend will continue.

### **What should intermediaries change?**

**Consider more dimensions of diversity to bring to bear the widely varying life experiences of all students.** The political split between red and blue is the most jarring it has been in our lifetimes. Residents of politically liberal, urban-dominated states where many education reform efforts have thrived, and those of mostly politically conservative, rural-dominated states, seem most interested in avoiding or destroying one another.

In red localities, white working-class residents have seen a decline in their standard of living within a generation and their righteous anger has been channeled into the belief that liberals in blue cities are the cause of their economic troubles. Blatant public displays of racism, misogyny, and hate embody their powerlessness and rage. This anger fueled the election of a new president, voted for by many people I know in both Michigan and Texas.

In blue cities, the educated, white, middle (and above) class liberals have demonized the white working-class, blamed all racial inequity on them, and ignored their legitimate economic concerns. While fighting for groups of our historically marginalized friends and neighbors, my city liberal friends and loved ones failed to see how connected we all are. In our struggle to eschew the chains of oppression, we failed to define or create a society in which every human being could thrive.

Both groups have largely accepted a false dichotomy: that people and ideas are either right or wrong, and that members of the other group are bad. Many of us have fallen prey to the illusion that we ourselves are good, because we are so much better than *them*. In fact, society is only as good as our weakest members, and by projecting all negative qualities onto another group, we have prevented our own individual and collective growth. We must reject this false dichotomy and embrace our own development as adults and as a society to find a more nuanced way forward.

We cannot progress as a society by scapegoating our neighbors. We can no longer be satisfied by declaring ourselves better than *them* for an achievement as benign as not making a statement that could be perceived as racist. Full and public commitment to diversity and inclusion, *that actually includes everyone, and embraces those on both ends of the political spectrum*, is the only option during these uncertain times. That commitment must be made with skill and grace, and it must truly include everyone.

At this time in history, intermediary organizations must clarify exactly what role they hope to play in the education sector. More than ever, reformers are called upon to engage deeply and authentically with *all* those we intend to serve. We must uncover the needs of *all* of the most vulnerable students, teachers, and communities which went unmet during the previous education reform boom. Only then can we create social justice as partners with them; only then can we meet the needs of *all students*.

What will this look like for education intermediaries? They must go beyond simply setting goals for the general category of “teachers of color.” Teachers of color are not interchangeable because they do not all share the same life experiences. Set goals for at least demographic subgroups like Latino/Hispanic, which is the second largest

demographic group in this country despite the diversity even within it, and which is underrepresented in almost every intermediary organization's leadership.

Intermediaries must remember to include other dimensions of diversity in their goals. We can't serve *all* students unless we have people at the table who intimately understand their diverse experiences—that includes white teachers from low income rural communities, teachers with disabilities, teachers from a diversity of teaching assignments, and those who bring a wide variety of other experiences that could contribute to more equitable policy for students.

### **What should intermediaries add?**

**Redefine the role of an intermediary, especially a multi-site intermediary seeking to influence education policy.** Assuming the current presidential administration moves forward on its proposals to reduce the federal role in education, organizations seeking to influence education policy across the country in a multi-site model face an additional challenge. The implementation of federal law may not be at the top of every state's agenda and may not be the most meaningful or coherent path to broader impact.

To influence the country as a whole from multiple sites will require finding interests that all states share, independent of federal policy. It may require a change from looking at a federal law that impacts everyone to *issues* that affect everyone, or that everyone has interest in. In that paradigm, the challenge is finding issues that impact and resonate with all stakeholders with diverse life experiences across the country. This might call for more bottom-up than top-down processes and may require states (and even cities) to take a more central role in shaping the policy agenda.

Diverse groups of teachers can be the solution to that challenge. Intermediaries will

need diverse groups of teachers who bring to bear the widely varying life experiences of *all* students to define the policy they want to impact. Instead of asking teachers to weigh in on how to implement policies that have already been decided upon, the question to teachers will need to be, “What are you experiencing in schools that is preventing students from learning?” inviting diverse groups of teachers to set the policy agenda themselves based on common struggles in their lived experiences.

As teachers who intimately understand our students’ diverse life experiences begin to set the policy agenda, the role of intermediaries seeking to impact education policy must be to assemble those teachers, develop them inclusively, and negotiate with all partners that can help them negotiate the reforms that will meet all students’ needs. When teachers have clearly defined the interests of all students, negotiations between intermediaries and their funders, policymakers, and external partners will be more productive as all parties seek to develop options that will meet those interests.

## **Conclusion**

Below I seek to integrate the arguments from the preceding pages by outlining the ways in which this Strategic Project was successful. I close by briefly suggesting possible next steps for the sector, given the learnings laid out in this document.

### **Far Exceeded Strategic Project Outputs and Outcomes**

This residency was successful on three levels. The first and most obvious level of success is that I practiced leadership to accomplish, and in most cases far exceed, the stated objectives of all three of the work streams included in this Capstone. This is critically important because of the impact my work has already had, and will continue to have, on students and teachers across Texas. My contributions were also foundational to the establishment of Teach Plus Texas, which will continue to serve many of the most vulnerable students across Texas in a variety of ways for years to come, and will provide a model for other sites across the national organization to engage in similar work. My analysis has also contributed to an understanding of some ways that I and others can continue to improve the outcomes of similar work in the future.

### **Met My Own Learning Goals**

The second level of success is that I also met the learning goals I had for myself. I feel more confident in my understanding of how the preK-12 education system works and my ability to influence it than I did prior to this residency. My results validated my human capital expertise and gave me a chance to realize that my perceived gaps in policy and advocacy were not as significant as I previously thought. I now see that I in fact have developed a strength in interest-based negotiation that helps me navigate relationships with multiple parties on behalf of kids, and that I am able to make sense of and respond

to the interplay between state and federal policy when tensions arise.

The broad range of experiences my supervisor shared with me, from meetings at the Capitol to conversations about relationships with funders, raised my awareness and filled in some pieces of the picture more clearly. Thanks to my interactions with our excellent and diverse group of teachers, I also feel more in tune with the needs of diverse groups of students across Texas.

### **Shifted my Leadership Paradigm**

The third level of success was somewhat unexpected, and most important of all. I experienced a paradigm shift midway through my project which has continued to take hold more thoroughly throughout the creation of this Capstone document, thanks to insightful feedback from my committee and others who have challenged my thinking. My deep expertise in creating inclusive adult development was necessary but not sufficient for reaching the stated objectives of the project. It did not ensure that I would think or act as a *systems-level leader* in that work as I have at times in the past. In fact, those technical skills in adult development became a liability, enabling me to perform early on more like an individual contributor completing familiar program management tasks, rather than as a true partner with the many parties involved in the adaptive work of helping my supervisor found Teach Plus Texas.

### **Became More Skilled in Interest-based Negotiation**

Thankfully, I had a framework to make sense of the complex environment I was operating in: interest-based negotiation. I was able to grow into more consistent systems-level thinking and leadership during both the later part of the residency and the creation of this document by extending coursework in negotiation, grounded in research-based

theory and practice, into my practice and reflection.

The most important takeaway from this Capstone is the idea that leadership is not something I do *to* a group of people I'm leading, but something I do *with* many individuals and groups *on behalf of* our students. Rather than simply trying to achieve the discrete goals I set at the beginning of a project, I can dig deeper to understand the interests of all actors with whom I am collaborating. Together, we can find and create opportunities to create value and together improve the entire preK-12 system for all kids.

This requires a shift away from a static model in which I deliver leadership to others at various points in time (e.g. the teachers I trained), and into a model in which I am in ongoing and reciprocal relationships with many parties (e.g. the teachers, but also the Commissioner and the Director, Teach Plus national staff members, and even my supervisor), all of whom have a shared interest in the success of our students in addition to their own unique interests. This shift in my role, in relation to others in this work, is more responsive to the complex systems around the students in our schools and empowers me to more proactively broker value-creating agreements among many parties for kids.

### **Next Steps for the Sector**

How might our students experience an education system led by interest-based negotiators? What might happen if other leaders in the education sector began to think of themselves as interest-based negotiators with a wide variety of partners on behalf of all kids? What if, instead seeing leadership as something they need to do *to* groups of people they lead, leaders reconceptualized it as a process they continually participate in *with* many individuals and groups *on behalf of* all students?



An education system of negotiators could be more flexible and dynamic. Instead of narrowing in and dictating discrete standards and prescriptions for what all students, teachers, and schools must accomplish, our education system could expand to welcome the wide diversity of children it is meant to serve. Students could co-create learning with those closest to them—teachers. Intermediaries could facilitate and develop those teachers into better interest-based negotiators. Leaders at all levels would need to dig deeper to understand the varied interests of many parties, prioritize the interests of students, and collaborate to find and create opportunities to together improve the entire system for kids.

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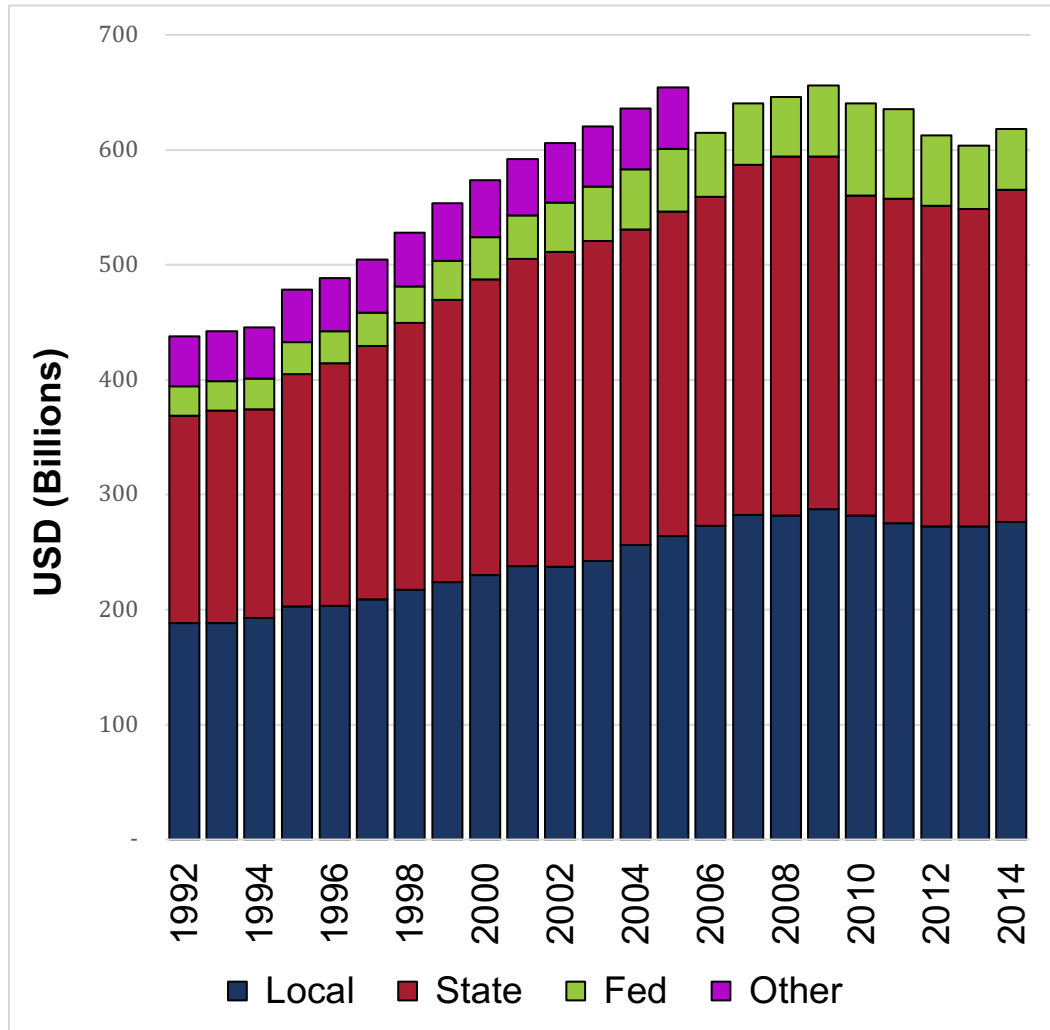
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## Appendices

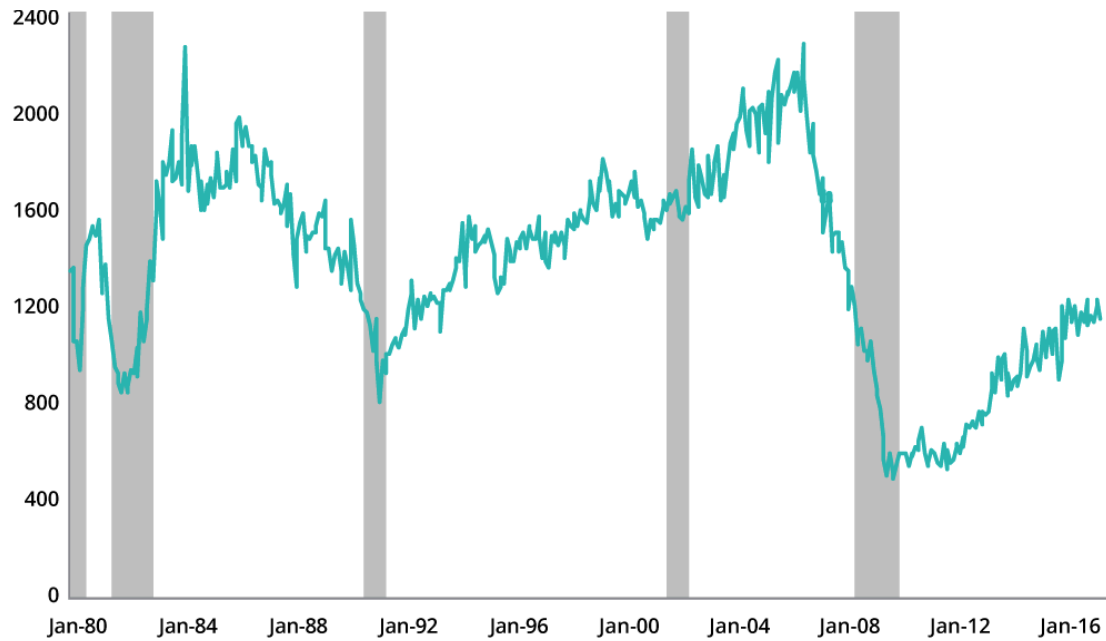
### Appendix A Total U.S. Expenditures for preK-12 Education (1992-2014)

I recreated the Figure 1 chart through 2014 by synthesizing census data for expenditures from the three categories for which data was available for the whole period from 1990 through 2014 (Federal, State, and Local), with an estimation of the Other expenditures data from 1990 through 2005 represented in Figure 1.



## Appendix B Housing Booms and Busts (Jan 1980-Jan 2016)

This graphic uses housing starts to illustrate the housing boom leading up to the 2006-2008 housing bust and contextualizes that bust within the boom and bust cycles from 1980 to 2016 (Buckley & Barua, 2016, p. 3).



Note: The gray bars indicate recessions.

Source: US Census Bureau (extracted using Haver Analytics), Deloitte Services LP economic analysis.

Graphic: Deloitte University Press | DUPress.com

### Appendix C Education Employment in Millions (Dec 2007-June 2014)

This graphic demonstrates the measurable education spending cuts in terms of actual jobs lost in schools between December 2007 and June 2014 (Leachman & Mai, 2014, p. 8).



**Appendix D**  
**Summary of Analysis of The *If* Components of my Theory of Action**

This table summarizes my self-rating, outputs, actions that contributed, and evidence that those actions contributed from the If components of my Theory of Action.

Whether I did it Rating: 0-5	How I know I did it Summary of results (Outputs)	Actions that contributed to my results	Evidence that suggests those actions contributed
<p><b>1) Recruit an excellent and racially and ethnically diverse group of Teach Plus teachers</b></p> <p><b>Rating: 5</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retained 12 Advisory Board Members (ABM) (33% TOC) + Recruited 18 New Fellows (78% TOC) = Total 30 Official Fellows (64% TOC)</li> <li>• First majority-minority cohort in the history of the organization</li> <li>• Exceeded all 12 demographic sub-goals, including stretch goals</li> <li>• Had more teachers we wanted to select than we could accept (my supervisor found a way to accept a few from the wait list)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listened and learned then developed a targeted and flexible recruitment strategy</li> <li>• Aggressively focused on cultivating and retaining ABM</li> <li>• Unapologetically pursued referrals for teachers from diverse backgrounds and sent them anonymous nominations</li> <li>• Prioritized quality over quantity (invested time to follow up with promising TOC candidates, invited TOC ABM to interviews)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When asked to rate 5 factors that influenced them to apply, all 30 teachers rated, on average 9.2 factors</li> <li>• Retained 12 ABM in time (16 days) to adjust overall strategy, two TOC from AB in a conversation cited my encouragement and follow up as a key factor in applying</li> <li>• Nominations most influential factor (45%); Teach Plus (TP) staff most influential party (24.3%), with the rest from a wide array of parties</li> <li>• Reminders used primarily with TOC = 17% of total influence to apply (teachers may have perceived my reminders as nominations, so could be higher)</li> </ul>



<p><b>2) Lead Teach Plus teachers in inclusive adult development</b></p> <p><b>Rating: 5</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trainings took place with adult development objectives</li> <li>• Engaged 18 of 19 AB members (up from 0) to lead focus groups with 148 teachers, exceeding target of 50 by 196%</li> <li>• Teachers demonstrated deep understanding of policy in May after reporting feeling unprepared to discuss it in Feb</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided support in equal measure to the challenge of each task—explicit training, modeling, lesson plan for leading a focus group, troubleshooting challenges together, clear objectives &amp; purpose</li> <li>• Asked ABM if anything bubbled up from their focus groups that should end up in the formal policy memo that was not on the list of specific questions they were presented with</li> <li>• Followed up with each teacher to ensure they were able to participate in each step of the process, modifying it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ABM reported trainings met adult development objectives (93%)</li> <li>• Teachers cited adult development strategies as helpful in surveys</li> <li>• Focus group participants reported focus group goals were met (88.7%)</li> <li>• Focus group participants listed teacher-generated strategies</li> <li>• Smaller group modification enabled busiest teachers (large proportion TOC) to participate, focus groups conducted by a more diverse group of teachers and all 18 were able to participate in next step</li> </ul>
<p><b>3) Reflect on evidence and continually evolve my strategy</b></p> <p><b>Rating: 5</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regularly reflected alone, with supervisor with other staff members, and with colleagues</li> <li>• Evolved TOA to employ interest-based negotiation</li> <li>• Used AB interviews to solicit feedback for OF kickoff, which informed more self-authoring adult development strategy of teachers co-facilitating kickoff sessions and better preparation for meeting with Commissioner</li> </ul>	<p>Contributing factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collected data</li> <li>• Monitored external factors that could affect the Strategic Project, including public debate over the state and federal roles in education.</li> <li>• Wrote in leadership journal</li> <li>• Created structures for reflection despite timelines, recurring coaching sessions with Ed.L.D. colleagues and loved ones</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notes in my leadership journal, meeting notes, calendar entries, and the reports of those with whom I reflected all suggesting that data collection, writing and coaching helped me realize I needed to and how to change my TOA</li> </ul>

<p><b>4) Share my strategic decisions with Teach Plus</b></p> <p><b>Rating: 4</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervisor acknowledged that I had shared my inclusive adult development decisions</li> <li>• Meetings, emails, and shared documents such as recruitment strategy and memo process and training documents shared with supervisor and staff members from national and other sites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created strategy and design documents in sharable online format for easy sharing on short timelines</li> <li>• Shifted to thinking of myself as a negotiator with multiple parties, I began to co-create options with my supervisor for how to design development and negotiate with the Director</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The documents are saved on an online shared format</li> <li>• My 160 pages of ongoing meeting notes demonstrating my conversations with my supervisor and other staff members about my strategies</li> </ul>
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**Appendix E**  
**Factors That Influenced Official Fellows to Apply to the Fellowship**

This Appendix details the Official Fellows’ responses to the question: “We want to understand why you decided to apply to this Fellowship, and what convinced you to finish your application. Please rate up to five factors that influenced your decision, with 1 being the most important factor.” Table E1 organizes those responses by total weight assigned by Fellows, Table E2 organizes them by which action was taken, and Table E3 organizes them by who took action.

Table E1  
Responses Ranked by Percent of Total Weight Assigned by Official Fellows

<b>Response #</b>	<b>What</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Total #</b>	<b>Weighted Sum</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
18	Nomination	Teach Plus	15	51	8%
21	Email reminders	Teach Plus	17	45	7%
20	Nomination	Other	16	41	6%
4	Nomination	Admin	13	37	6%
2	Nomination	District/CMO	13	35	5%
6	Nomination	Advisory Board	11	34	5%
3	News Blast	Admin	11	32	5%
17	News Blast	Teach Plus	10	30	5%
8	Nomination	TFA/LEE	11	27	4%
11	News Blast	Grad school	11	26	4%
22	Phone reminders	Teach Plus	12	25	4%
13	News Blast	Social Media	13	24	4%
5	News Blast	Advisory Board	10	22	3%
19	News Blast	Other	10	22	3%
1	News Blast	District/CMO	10	18	3%
9	News Blast	Teachers association	10	18	3%
12	Nomination	Grad school	9	18	3%
23	Email reminders	Other	11	18	3%
7	News Blast	TFA/LEE	9	16	3%
24	Phone reminders	Other	11	16	3%
14	Nomination	Social Media	10	15	2%
10	Nomination	Teachers association	9	14	2%
16	Nomination	Teacher applying	9	13	2%
15	News Blast	Teacher applying	9	12	2%
25	Advisory Board Exp		1	5	1%
26	Advisory Board Exp		1	5	1%
27	Intrinsic (Write in)		1	5	1%
28	News Blast	Teach Plus national org	1	5	1%
29	Intrinsic (Write in)		1	4	1%
30	Reminder	Teach Plus	1	4	1%
<b>Sum of all Weighted Sums</b>			<b>276</b>	<b>637</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table E2

Responses Ranked by Percent of Total Weight Assigned by Official Fellows, Grouped by Which Action Was Taken

<b>Which Action Was Taken</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
Nominations	45%
News Blasts	35%
Email/Phone Reminders	17%
<i>Email Reminders</i>	10%
<i>Phone Reminders</i>	6%
Advisory Board Experience	2%
Write in intrinsic reason	1%

Table E3

Responses Ranked by Percent of Total Weight Assigned by Official Fellows, Grouped by Who Took the Action

<b>Who Took Action</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
Teach Plus	24.3%
Other	15.2%
Admin	10.8%
Advisory Board	8.8%
District/CMO	8.3%
Grad School	6.9%
TFA/LEE	6.8%
Social Media	6.1%
Teacher Assoc	5.0%
Teacher Applying	3.9%
T+ National	0.8%

**Appendix F**  
**Summary of Feedback From Advisory Board Meetings**

Table F1 and F2 detail quantitative and qualitative survey results from Advisory Board Meetings from February through May.

Table F1

Quantitative Results

<b>How satisfied were you with the following aspects of the Texas Teacher Advisory Board meeting?</b>		<b>(#) % of teachers responding</b>	<b>Very satisfied</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>Neutral</b>
<b>February</b>	ESSA focus group training and discussion	<b>(4) 21%</b>	<b>(2) 50%</b>	(2) 50%	
<b>March</b>	ESSA focus group PowerPoint, group lesson plan, modeling, modification discussion (average)	<b>(5) 26%</b>	<b>(3.75) 75%</b>	(1) 25%	
<b>April</b>	How to write a policy brief training, writing groups setup, initial recommendations discussion (average)	<b>(12) 63%</b>	(4.7) 42%	<b>(5.7) 52%</b>	(.7) 6%
<b>May</b>	Leadership and advocacy in the midst of uncertainty training, preparing for meeting with Commissioner and TEA officials on the ESSA paper	<b>(9) 47%</b>	<b>(4.5) 50%</b>	(2.5) 28%	(1.5) 7.9%

Table F2  
Qualitative Results

Month	Question	Selected responses
Feb	<p>What did you like and/or what could be improved about the content of the meeting?</p> <p>What remaining questions or concerns do you have about leading a focus group on ESSSA Implementation?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would have liked more time to hear from the TEA rep about the focus group - wish we could review questions before hand so that we could ask more informed questions. I usually need time to process and write questions before I am able to articulate concerns.</li> <li>• Are there other states we could look to as examples of how they are implementing? I think...it could be difficult to say [what we need to do] without some examples.</li> <li>• I'm not sure that I'm fully prepared to answer the questions that may arise from the teachers. I think I could answer some but don't feel confident that I could answer all questions.</li> <li>• It would be great to see a video sample!</li> </ul>
Mar	<p>What did you like and/or what could be improved about the content of the meeting?</p> <p>What remaining questions or concerns do you have about leading a focus group?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I liked how Madonna modeled how our focus group meeting should look. That was tremendously helpful!</li> <li>• Practicing the survey questions in small groups/pairs.</li> <li>• The focus group modeling was a bit tiresome for me after a long day of teaching. It was hard for me to focus though the information was very important!</li> <li>• Should our groups be solely teachers or administrators as well?</li> </ul>
Apr	<p>What did you like and/or what could be improved about the content of the meeting?</p> <p>How can we support you to ensure that your recommendations, writing, and presentation will impact policy for students?</p> <p>What did you like about the content of the meeting?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I really liked that we were able to work in small groups, I wish we had a choice of which questions were passionate about. I think the work could've been divided more evenly (more drafters than revisers). The document that laid out the information was overwhelming for me - I need more streamlined layout.</li> <li>• I really liked the detailed meeting outlines so I felt prepared to discuss and contribute.</li> <li>• Just sending out the pre-work further in advance</li> <li>• The pre-designated roles for the discussion (time-keeper, etc.) were handy.</li> <li>• I still feel overwhelmed since this is my first time being involved with policy implementation. It's a lot harder than I would have imagined. I have learned so much, and appreciate the support.</li> <li>• I like getting in groups and for the first time, I was with new people and so I am excited to continue to meet with them this weekend</li> <li>• I like how this meeting was very beneficial towards preparing for the meeting with [Commissioner]...that we had so much input. I appreciate the ability to research and prepare for the meeting ahead...</li> <li>• I liked the breakout discussion and sharing back.</li> <li>• The structure and breakouts are great. Thanks for incorporating feedback</li> <li>• Diversity in thought from fellows</li> </ul>

**Appendix G**  
**Factors Enabling Official Fellows' Authentic Engagement**

This Appendix details the Official Fellows' responses to the question: "You advocated for policy changes using your own authentic stories relating to race and equity (in your Leadership Stories and/or with policymakers). What most enabled you to do this? Please rate up to five factors that enabled you to do this, with 1 being the most important factor."

<b>Factors</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
I would have no matter what	<b>10.0%</b>
Seeing the Fellow cohort was made up of teachers from diverse backgrounds	<b>9.5%</b>
Seeing other members of the group taking risks to advocate authentically during the kickoff	<b>9.1%</b>
Seeing other members of the group seem not to suffer any negative consequences for advocating authentically during the kickoff	<b>6.9%</b>
Seeing Advisory Board members lead a session, or being invited to help lead a session	<b>6.6%</b>
Practicing advocating during sessions	<b>6.6%</b>
Learning about policy during sessions	<b>6.1%</b>
Hearing Madonna make herself vulnerable and ask us to dig deeper and try to understand our peers in her remarks (mentioning a personal struggle she was wrestling with that might not show on the surface)	<b>5.6%</b>
Feeling like I could have informal conversations with Teach Plus staff during the kickoff	<b>5.4%</b>
Seeing Teach Plus staff members express commitment to educational equity orally or in writing	<b>5.4%</b>
Seeing encouraging or non-judgmental nonverbal cues from Teach Plus staff	<b>5.2%</b>
Participating in the session on Race and Equity in the Fellowship	<b>4.7%</b>
Hearing [supervisor] raise issues of race and gender in her remarks (pointing out the demographics of leaders in Texas education)	<b>4.4%</b>
I would have unless I observed reasons to think there would be negative consequences for it	<b>4.2%</b>
Seeing a session on Race and Equity in the Fellowship on the agenda	<b>4.1%</b>
Carpooling to Austin with a small group from the cohort	<b>3.4%</b>
Having an advisory board member answer questions during my interview	<b>1.9%</b>
Wrote in: My own passion and urgency to see policy changes in schools as it relates to race, culture, identity, and equity.	<b>0.8%</b>

**Appendix H**  
**Summary of Relevant Feedback from Advisory Board Interviews**

This table details the Advisory Board Members’ responses to the question: “What should we keep, change, and/or add when we launch the formal Fellowship?”

<b>Keep</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Add</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sending meeting handouts and agenda in advance</li> <li>• Madonna’s help and follow up on how to lead a focus group</li> <li>• Talking about the importance of diversity and encouraging us to recruit diverse candidates</li> <li>• Diversity of teachers – racial, elementary/secondary, gender, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let the teachers present, especially in their strength areas (i.e. two teachers could present on federal policy since they helped shape Title II as fellows with the US Education Department), ask teachers who has expertise in which area, or each teacher shares about whatever they did that month.</li> <li>• Send pre-work 2-4 days ahead of meetings so we can fly through the information part and spend more time engaged in breakout sessions</li> <li>• Offer more choice in what issues to focus on</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send the pre-work with a more detailed agenda with objectives, so we know what we’ll be doing during the meeting and can look at documents with an eye toward how we’ll participate in the meeting and what we’re trying to accomplish big picture</li> <li>• Share PPTs from zoom meetings so we can share them with my school and district community like we did the focus group</li> </ul>



## Appendix I

### Example Strategy Document–Recruitment Strategy Overview

Below is an image of the first page of my online Recruitment Strategy Overview document, which I created, shared with my Supervisor and Teach Plus, and tracked progress on.

Teaching Policy Fellowship				
Recruitment Strategy Overview				
<p><b>Goal: Recruit and select 25 (or maybe 35, with 8 from DISD) highly effective teacher leaders to advocate on pro-student issues that include teacher effectiveness, access, accountability, and equity (at least 8 from Houston, 8 from San Antonio, 10 from charter schools, 8 teachers of color), to create the 2017-18 cohort of Teach Plus Texas Policy Fellows (measured by signed commitment letters). Keep in mind that there is also a pending possibility of a Dallas cluster funded by a different organization.</b></p>		<p><b>Returning AB Fellows:</b>                      - 12 (19) people                      - 1 (2) SA                      - 1 (2) Houston                      - 10 (16) non-SA/Houston                      - 2 AA, 2 (4) H, 1 Asian, 8 (12) W                      - 8 (12) district, 4 (7) charter</p>		<p><b>Need to select:</b>                      - 15 people                      - 6 SA                      - 6 Houston                      - 3 non-SA/Houston                      - 2+ AA, 5-12+? H, 1 Asian, up to 7 W                      - up to 12 district, 3+ charter</p>
Criteria	Measure [1]	Tactics	Status	Results
<b>Applications</b>	30 completed (non-advisory board) applications (40 started) = 45 completed apps (55 started)	Retain 15+ of the current advisory board members (Expedited interview process as long as they fill out the interest form by X early date).	<p>28 Completed + 33 partially completed = 61 applicants <b>(get 12 more completed)</b>                      12 ab + 49 non-ab</p> <p><b>We will not meet the goal of 15 ab, we will likely have 11 (12 if we're lucky)!</b></p> <p>Reasons for not continuing in the Fellowship:                      1 (Melissa) Not active (time?)                      2 (Ali &amp; Liz) Leaving classroom                      1 (Dixie) Awful year (time?)                      2 (Chrischelle &amp; Mireya) Protecting their time                      1 (Arielle) Unknown (probably time)</p>	<p>Invited 30 (then 33) to interviews:                      - 26 people                      - 3 SA                      - 11 Houston                      - 12 non-SA/Houston                      - 11 H, 9 AA, 2 Asian, 8 W                      - 11 district, 11 charter</p>
<b>School Type</b>	At least 10 Fellows will be from charter schools.	Monitor application report in Salesforce and modify recruitment strategy as needed.	46 district, 15-17 charter 2 definite charter teachers identified as district (in-district charter?)	
<b>Diversity (secondary focus)</b>	At least 8 Fellows will be teacher leaders of color. We want to see more like 16 to reflect the students of the state so 3-4+ AA, 6-13 L, 14+ from schools w/free/reduced lunch.	Connect with other networks and utilize Madonna's and Lindsay's and Advisory Board Members' relationships. Keep at least 6 of the 7 teachers of color from the advisory board. To find 2 more, must have at least 6 completed applications from new candidates of color. 5 Demos: 13% AA, 52% L, 28.5% W, 4% A, 59% EcDis, 19% ELL, 9% Sped T Demos: 10% AA, 26% L, 61% W Goals: 3-4+ AA, 6-13 L, 14+ from schools w/free/reduced lunch.	39XPoC = 64% (13XH, 14XAA, 4APA, 8X2+ other most of which include AA or H) 22 Xwhite	<p>26 signed up for interviews:                      - 5 SAISD + 1 SA charter                      - 2HISD + 6 Houston charter (KIPP/Yes)                      - 12 non-SA/Houston                      - 11 H, 9 AA, 2 Asian, 8 W                      - 11 district, 11 charter</p>
<b>District enrollment (primary focus)</b>	At least 8 teachers from Houston and 8 from San Antonio (and possibly 8 more from Dallas as well, pending Meadows Foundation funding).	These should come from the city ISD's or charter networks in the city, not from districts surrounding the city. Retain as many of these from current advisory board members and warm contacts as possible. Keep: Amy & Mireya (San Antonio ISD); Liz & Shontoria (KIPP Houston)	5 SAISD + 1 SA Charter (new frontiers)= <b>6 San Antonio</b> 8 Houston Charter KIPP/Yes (1 labeled herself district?) + 4 HISD = 12 Houston 16 DISD 9 Greater Austin	
<b>Other diversity</b>	Ideally a reasonable mix of TFA/non TFA and a variety of ages and years of experience.	Lindsay has recruited a lot from TFA and LEE. Madonna's networks will be key for recruiting from non-TFA communities as well.	26 TFA, 35 non-TFA (16 Undergrad, 7 other alt cert, 3 masters, 8 other, 1 t residency) Years of experience: 39X3-5, 6X6-8, 13X10-29 42 F, 15 M, 4 ? 51 over 75% Free/reduced lunch, 4 25-50%, 6 <25% 23 involved in union, 38 not Valley 1, White Rural 1, Large Urban 26, Mid Urban 3, Suburban 7 High School 8, Middle 7, Elementary 24 (2-3 pre-k)	<p>We made offers to:                      - 15 non-AB people                      - 5 SAISD + 1 SA charter                      - 2HISD + 4 Houston charter (3KIPP/1Yes)                      - 3 non-SA/Houston (1 Round Rock, 2 DISD)                      - 4 Hispanic/Latino, 9 African American/Black, 3 White                      - 10 district, 5 charter                      - 9 elem (3PK), 5ms, 3hs                      - 2 math, 6 english, 1 science, 2 social studies, 4 generalists, 1 sped, 1 specials, 2 dual language/bilingual                      (We should add a category for dual language in Salesforce - this one may not be accurate)                      + 13 75%+ free/reduced lunch, 1 &lt;25%, 1 50-75%</p>
<b>Legislative districts</b>	Ideally at least 1 teacher from the district of each key legislator.	This is not crucial this year because the program will launch after the end of the 2017 legislative session ends, but is still worth tracking to build the program's presence in those areas for the sake of future cohorts. (Print out a map of legislative districts - 2 color pins for applications and advanced apps.)	<p>FINAL DISTRICTS REPRESENTED</p> <p>L. Taylor 1 (Kendra Hart),                      Lucio 2 (Placido),                      Bettencourt 0,                      Campbell 2 (Nathan DuPont, Dana Wrann),                      Hall 0,                      Huffines 3 (Anthony Castro, Stefan Berthelsen, Laura Laywell);                      Hughes 0,                      Uresti 2 (Dora Leija, Monica White),                      Seliger 1 (Mary Malone),                      V. Taylor 0,                      West 5 (Brittany Jones, Stefan Berthelsen, Anthony Castro, Angela Burke, Shareefah Mason)                      Huberty 0,                      Bernal 2 (Nathan DuPont, Dana Wrann),                      Alma Allen 2 (Amber Neal, Morgan Latin),                      Bohac 1 (Kristian Lenderman),                      Deshotel 0,                      Dutton 1 (LaFredrick Smith),                      Gooden 0, King 0, Koop 0,                      Meyer 0,                      VanDeaver 0,                      Jane Nelson 0</p>	
Activity [2]	Measure	Tactics	Status	
<b>Advisory Board Member cultivation</b>	At least 15 applications from current advisory board members.	Guarantee them interviews as long as they complete a shortened application by the 1st deadline. Personally reach out to any Advisory Board Member who doesn't start an application by a week before their deadline, especially those in key districts and those from diverse backgrounds.	Need 4 more, Lindsay calling, they gave good general reasons for not applying, but I want to follow up to do exit interviews with them	
<b>Email blasts through partner orgs and connectors from our networks</b>	Partner orgs or other connectors from our networks forward an email blast from us to 200 current teachers.	Compose this and send at launch, possibly send a reminder before the first deadline (Can we get anyone from TEA to send it out? ESCs? Other key orgs? Definitely connectors, TOY, TFA, etc., can send it out). We can reciprocate.	<p>Sent</p> <p>Adding SAISD principals, associations, try to get HEB teachers, LS - SA charters (consultant for charters, choose to succeed)</p>	

**Appendix J**  
**Summary of Analysis of the *Then* Components of My Theory of Action**

This table summarizes my self-rating, outcomes, actions that contributed, and evidence that those actions contributed from the Then components of my Theory of Action.

Whether I did it Rating: 0-5	How I know I did it Summary of results (Outcomes)	Actions that contributed to my results	Evidence that suggests those actions contributed
<p><b>A) Our racially and ethnically diverse group of Teach Plus Texas teachers will bring their experiences to bear to advocate for, and positively impact, policies that meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable students in the state</b></p> <p><b>Rating: 5</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong TEA presentation by a diverse group: solutions-oriented, well communicated, smooth, teacher voice, data and stories</li> <li>• Teachers influenced thinking of senior leaders: 3 full and 4 partial ideas included in the ESSA Plan, outperforming the target of one or more by between 200% and 600%</li> <li>• Teachers generated and made a case for a 3-tiered 6-year graduation rate idea the Commissioner had not considered, which would help some of the most vulnerable kids, now included in the ESSA Plan, and framed the whole memo and presentation in their own terms (carrots vs sticks)</li> <li>• Built strong relationship with Commissioner and Director, established emphatically TP teachers are a great resource</li> <li>• Built credibility and visibility</li> <li>• Facilitated additional opportunities for Official Fellows to impact policy at TEA and throughout the state by returning to further inform the Strategic Plan as an informal Teachers' Cabinet, which impressed our funders, and likely contributed to subsequent donations for the Fellowship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Components 1-4 of my Theory of Action: I created a strategy, implemented the actions in it, and evolved it along the way: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ recruited an excellent diverse group of TP teachers,</li> <li>○ led TP teachers in inclusive adult development</li> <li>○ reflected on evidence and continually evolved my strategy</li> <li>○ shared my strategic decisions with TP</li> <li>○ Began to see myself and operate as an interest-based negotiator (see Component B below) and developed the teachers to do the same</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Table 1</li> <li>• The diverse group saw nuances and made convincing arguments for better policy for all kids</li> <li>• TP seemed to respond well to starting with a focus on racial and ethnic diversity</li> <li>• Inclusive adult development experiences ensured members of our diverse group could bring their rich life and work experiences to bear to co-develop good policies for all kids</li> <li>• In the Post-Kickoff Survey, Official Fellows listed both inclusive adult development and many elements of the negotiation framework as positively influencing their preparation for the Commissioner meeting</li> <li>• The Director specifically cited that he was impressed with the teachers' responses to the Commissioner's questions</li> </ul>

<p><b>B) I will optimize my strategy, results, and leadership development for impact</b></p> <p><b>Rating: 5</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Began to see myself and operate as a negotiator</li> <li>• Far exceeded expectations in all short-term measured outcomes of the Strategic Project (See Component A above)</li> <li>• Peer coaches and loved ones have stated that I have become a more consistent systems-level thinker and leader, and I agree with their assessment</li> </ul>	<p>Actions that contributed to Component A results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negotiated with supervisor to uncover her interests more clearly and demonstrate that approaching our work with teachers as I outlined in my Theory of Action would meet them</li> <li>• Discussed presentation process, set agenda for Commissioner meeting</li> <li>• Focused development on proactively uncovering interests (rather than positions) and co-defining success</li> <li>• Enlisted ABM to intentionally include NF and prepared both groups to negotiate flexibly and inclusively</li> <li>• Helped teachers and Commissioner see they could meet their different interests (ESSA Plan and State Strategic Plan) by meeting their common interest of good policy for kids</li> </ul>	<p>Evidence that optimizing contributed to Component A results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflecting on my evidence alone in my journal and with colleagues helped me realize my strategy was falling short of what was required and that I needed to employ interest-based negotiation and more proactively engage my negotiating partners to fully realize my goals</li> <li>• This enabled me to partner with my supervisor, the Director, the teachers, and the Commissioner so the <i>If</i> components of my Theory of Action could align to the <i>Then</i> components and open up opportunities to create value I had not envisioned on my own</li> <li>• The main feedback teachers listed in their Post-Kickoff Survey for how they could have been better prepared for the meeting was that they wished they better understood which policy issues were within the Commissioner's power and purview, so they could have only raised policy issues that he could impact</li> <li>• Absence of a disaster scenario, such as a mostly white group formally presenting in meeting with Commissioner</li> </ul>
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<p><b>C) Teach Plus will begin to provide teachers with more inclusive adult development experiences</b></p> <p><b>Rating: 4</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervisor and some members of TP are leading more inclusive adult development</li> <li>• Supervisor is more intentional about developing teachers to solve problems and lead learning for their peers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Sends meeting agendas in advance with underlying goals and interests of various parties explicitly outlined and which pose questions rather than solutions</li> <li>○ ABM led their peers in how to lead the next round of TEA focus groups</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared strategies with and modeled inclusive adult development for my supervisor and some members of TP</li> <li>• Generated options with supervisor to add inclusive adult development into AB meetings and kickoff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My supervisor stated that sharing strategies and modeling contributed to her thinking and using more inclusive adult development</li> <li>• At least one other member of the organization located in a different state used or adapted my materials for their focus groups and memo after we met to discuss them</li> </ul>
<p><b>D) Teach Plus teachers will bring lived experiences to bear that more accurately reflect the diverse experiences of our student body and will advocate for policy changes that meet the needs of all of our nation's students</b></p> <p><b>Rating: 4</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Official Fellows cohort is a group of far more racially and ethnically diverse teachers who are leading change more tailored to positively impact our most vulnerable students in Texas</li> <li>• TP beginning to shift their perspective. According to my supervisor, I "Built [a] belief at TP that building a cohort that reflects the demographic diversity of the state's <i>student body</i> is possible, leading to at least one other region setting that as a goal this year"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Components A-C</li> <li>• Involved TP in firsthand experiences that transformed their beliefs of what is possible: virtual interviews in which majority/entirety of candidates were teachers of color who surpassed selection standards and shared strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correlation, logic, and reasoning</li> </ul>