



**July
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**Texas Consortium on School Research
Inaugural Steering Committee Meeting Input**



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Main Objective.....	3
Executive Summary	3
Q1: If TCSR could help you accomplish 1 thing in your district, what would it be?...	4
Q2: What are the 1-3 most pressing problems with respect to college readiness in your district?.....	4
Q3: Where do you see TCSR adding greatest value to your district?.....	5
Q4: How effective are the On-Track to Graduate Indicator presentations, analyses, and results we provided at the February meeting and May/June webinar? What might you like to see next with regard to Indicator work?	5
Q5: Would you consider working in a TCSR sub-group?.....	5
Q6: What is the optimal duration of an in-person <i>Steering Committee</i> meeting?	5
Q7: What is the optimal duration of an in-person <i>TCSR general</i> meeting?.....	6
Q8: Considering potential travel, what time of day would be ideal for in-person TCSR general/Steering Committee meetings?.....	6
Q9: What location(s) would be ideal for the in-person meetings?.....	6
Q10: What would you like to see more of/less of during the in-person meetings/webinars?.....	6
Q11: Would you be willing to have your involvement in this important TCSR Steering Committee highlighted on the TCSR website and in press releases?.....	7
Feedback on 5 Elements of TCSR	7
Feedback on conducting studies of consequence/general conversation	7

Introduction

The Texas Consortium on School Research (TCSR) held an inaugural meeting of its Steering Committee. Twelve districts and associated representatives participated in the combination of Live Meeting/conference call on July 13, 2010. Committee members were asked a series of questions, some of which were discussed during the 2-hour meeting, while other questions were sent following the meeting. Committee members answered some or all of the questions, and their responses to each is contained in this report.

Main Objective

To gather the thoughts and experiences of the Steering Committee participants in order to assist in the development of a TCSR research agenda and to provide input on TCSR logistical information (such as meeting locations, time, duration, etc.).

Executive Summary

- When asked what *1 thing* TCSR could help districts accomplish, the responses were varied. However, the main theme that emerged was the **need for postsecondary data and to have more detail about what happens when students leave high school after graduating or dropping out—in other words, to have a more complete picture.**
- Steering Committee members **responded positively to the idea of having TCSR sub-groups** to conduct an analysis of a particular program, research a topic with a district and share with the larger groups, or work with other districts.
- Overall, the committee recommended the optimal time for in-person **Steering Committee meetings to be 3.5 hours**, while in-person **General TCSR meetings should be 5 approximately hours.**
- Ideally, **in-person meetings would take place in the morning—with mid-late morning** as the specific preference.
- Ideal locations for in-person meetings would be in **Houston, Austin, or San Antonio.**
- What committee members would like to see more/less of during in-person meetings and webinars varied.
- Steering Committee members **agreed to have their involvement in the TCSR Steering Committee highlighted on the website and in press releases**, with some saying that this type of recognition was positive exposure for the districts.
- Other general comments were made by Steering Committee members throughout the meeting and varied.



Question 1: If TCSR could help you accomplish 1 thing in your district, what would it be?

- Remedial course information, comparison with districts, and postsecondary enrollment data. District is concerned with missing information after students leave the district and would like to know about students who enter military or prison system.
- Interested in postsecondary data. Need specific and strategic data to inform K-12 practices and to make changes.
- Request better postsecondary data access, better postsecondary outcomes, and comparisons across districts to learn what is working where. Moreover, would like to have access to data and information on remedial classes from community colleges. Currently working on data sharing agreement with local community colleges.
- Interested in getting more information from colleges. Wants to know about remedial coursework and retention rates. College success—some students require 6-7 years to graduate. Per the district's data, some students categorized as dropouts, appear on National Clearinghouse with degrees. Moreover, some students don't show on college readiness track and workforce data.
- Best practices for African American students struggling in mathematics.
- Reliable data on where students are going and would like to establish relationships with colleges to understand requirements. Want to better understand how colleges are defining college readiness. At a campus level, staff is primarily required to focus on TAKS accountability and that makes it hard to focus on college readiness.
- Want to connect the robust dataset of NSC and THECB data. Want to combine the two for a more complete picture. They also want to continue learning about best practices for career/college readiness indicators, tracking, and program implementation.
- Articulate early grades through high school and how we are providing interventions and impacting students.
- Information on college standards and aligning grade 3-8 to degree programs at Tier I, II, and III universities. District is interested in standards required for different degree programs and tier levels so that district staff is aware of requirements to enter different programs.
- Would like to reduce dropout in their district and have data and research to assist the district. Districts would like to know the type of degree students are receiving and if they are addressing work force needs and primarily concerned with college readiness. Would also like to have access to postsecondary data for students 4-5 years after graduation.
- Data sharing piece would be beneficial to compare with other districts. They don't have relative information. They are also interested in the completion of college. They can get kids there but they are not graduating.

Question 2: What are the 1-3 most pressing problems with respect to college readiness in your district?

- Linking students to detailed post-secondary outcomes. No agreed definition of what actually constitutes college readiness.
- 1) Early identification of "at-risk" (not college ready) students (8th grade cohort, that will be taking the EOC assessments). 2) Programming to turn around at-risk students. 3) Professional development for teachers for EOC assessments and college entrance exams.



Question 3: Where do you see TCSR adding greatest value to your district? How and in what ways?

- Networking and sharing of ideas, information, and findings. While it's difficult to have the travel time away, the face-to-face is good to build relationships and have time to concentrate on discussion without being pulled away, which can often happen if you're in the district and want to participate in a conference call or webinar.
- Just in time research that will help the district to address our unique issues. How and in what ways. Current literature, survey instruments (college ready, school diagnostics); college and career readiness evaluations; data dashboards; college and career ready institute; measuring students on target for graduation; programming (pre and post effectiveness).

Question 4: How effective are the On-Track to Graduate Indicator presentations, analyses, and results we provided at the February meeting and May/June webinar? What might you like to see next with regard to Indicator work?

- ***TCSR will replicate for each district the On-Track analysis that included a disaggregation of data. This request was initiated by Houston ISD and presented during the May/June webinars.***
- Analysis of students with same characteristics who are not on-track and analyses of differences.
- What percentage of our students by grade level/sub-pop are college ready? Course completion is one thing, but how do we know they are college ready?

Question 5: Would you consider working in a TCSR sub-group (such as conducting analysis on a particular program, researching a topic within your district and sharing with the larger group, working with other districts on sub-topics in need of investigation)?

- Participants overwhelmingly said yes to participating in sub-groups.
- Would like to establish common definitions.
- Keep it smaller and focused and have the option to choose sub-groups on which to work.
- Interested in including defining on-track to graduate, graduating and what standard we are graduating at, and looking at on-track for different levels as students are closer to graduating.
- Working in TCSR subgroups, districts do have common problems that can be approached from different direction. Strength of working in TCSR is having multiplicity of perspectives. we can look at school environment measures, have better ideas in collaboration and take the divide and conquer approach.

Question 6: What is the optimal duration of an in-person Steering Committee meeting?

- 2-3 hours
- 3-4 hours
- 2 -4 hours
- 4-6 hours
- 4 hours

Question 7: What is the optimal duration of an in-person TCSR general meeting?

- 6 hours with a break for lunch ending by 3:30 or 4:00 to allow better travel time. Or, begin with an afternoon session 2:00-5:00 then people can network in the evening and continue the meeting the following day wrapping up about 3:00.
- 1 day
- 3-6 hours
- 4 hours
- 6 hours

Question 8: Considering potential travel, what time of day (morning, mid-morning, afternoon, etc.), would be ideal for in-person TCSR general/Steering Committee meetings?

- Late morning or early afternoon
- Mid-morning
- I prefer mornings.
- Morning
- Mid-morning
- Open

Question 9: What location(s) would be ideal for the in-person meetings?

- Anywhere with good air and driving access—Houston, San Antonio, Dallas-Fort Worth, Austin
- Houston
- I can easily do same day for Austin or San Antonio, but Houston or Dallas would mean leaving the night before or have an afternoon meeting.
- Central Texas
- Houston, Austin, San Antonio

Question 10: What would you like to see more of/less of during the in-person meetings/webinars?

- Like the sharing of findings and best practices
- About twice a year
- Research, data. Opportunities to engage in conversation with the community of practices.
- More sharing activities/research (e.g. best practices). High school redesign, school organization, master scheduling for high school success; effective professional development for teachers (especially in math/science); teacher evaluation; curricular reform in lieu of the new STAAR tests, EOC tests, and college readiness standards; policies and practices affecting dropouts, preparing students for college, etc.; student mobility issues; principal and instructional leadership; effective surveys; effect of AP programming; Algebra interventions/acceleration; how programming is evaluated and modified if needed; SAT and ACT preparation; AVID



programming and student results in Texas; School Improvement Initiatives and successful correlates; learning communities and school improvement.

- More
- As needed—no more than 4 per year
- Current set-up was very useful
- 1) More visuals (e.g. videos) showing districts that have had success in reducing dropouts and having students graduate and pursue college degrees. 2) More examples of analyses done by Chicago for their schools/district and how the data is used for effective intervention, policy, etc. 3) More information on how the following “data flows” will be used by districts and how they will be used by TCSR (if at all) (who has access, why, when, how, etc.): ERC data warehouse, District connections database.

Question 11: Would you be willing to have your involvement in this important TCSR Steering Committee highlighted on the TCSR website and in press releases (identifying your name, title, and district)?

- Overwhelming yes by districts

The following is feedback from districts after being presented with the 5 Elements of TCSR, which include 1) understand and use quality research; 2) use longitudinal data sets; 3) build a community of practice; 4) develop capacity to conduct research; 5) drive effective use of solutions to improve college success.

- One district is interested in development of “softer” indicators of college readiness
- Another stated that just agreeing on a definition of college readiness is a challenge. If the district says they are college ready, that doesn’t mean they are college ready in other districts. Participant requested that TCSR and members define college readiness.
- One district stated that element 5 is paramount. Researchers provide data so policy makers can make policy, but said it doesn’t always happen this way.
- One district stated interest in learning TEA’s understanding behind the 8th and 10th grade college readiness testing initiative. Would also like to perform linking studies and correlate TAKS and EOC to college readiness outcomes.
- Another district said that elements 1 and 5 resonate with them. They also need “just in time” research and believe longitudinal data sets are after the fact. They need data earlier for students. They are concerned about Algebra and English. They would also like to identify and track cohorts over time to track college readiness.

The following is feedback from districts after presented with the idea of conducting studies of consequence/during general conversation.

- One district is interested in information about dropout and understanding why they are losing students in Texas. The district does not have a very clear picture of why they are losing so many students.



- One district noted that the statewide data does not always contain all data and does not include a large enough range. The district also mentioned that information process studies are more actionable. They would like to implement tiers and review plans once the district understands requirements from students to be college ready.
- Another stated that data set up is not always conducive to evaluation process and gathering data after the fact. There is no system in place to analyze data. Data is always after the fact. That is the way data is reported. If the district does not have data sets configured to see results, one has a problem. A data warehouse is important to have a system on how much money was spent in the district.
- Aligned professional development based on item analysis needs. Certain objectives/TEKS are necessary in order for our students to be college ready.

