



Gates Foundation grant targets 8th-grade math proficiency in North Texas

Learning Forward, in partnership with Educate Texas, a public-private initiative of Communities Foundation of Texas, and the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin, has been selected by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as an inaugural recipient of a Networks for School Improvement grant.

The team will establish the first-ever Texas Network for School Improvement Collaborative (TXNSI Collaborative) with the one-year, \$500,000 grant, which aims to increase 8th-grade math proficiency — a key indicator in college success — among low-income and minority students at 10 North Texas schools.

The TXNSI Collaborative is one of 19 networks in 13 states using continuous improvement methods to change middle school and high school outcomes, funded by a total of \$92 million in grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

As part of the effort, the collaborative will recruit 10 campuses from several North Texas districts to equip and implement targeted interventions and improvements using a structured continuous improvement process.

Educate Texas, Learning Forward, and the Dana Center will each serve specific roles to ensure the initiative's success.

Educate Texas will serve as the lead network developer, identifying the network of schools, coordinating network communication and convenings, and providing data analysis.

Learning Forward will support the network and participating school teams to implement improvement science concepts to advance schools' progress toward identified goals.

The Dana Center will support the network with subject matter expertise in math education and student success.

"The TXNSI Collaborative is a wonderful opportunity for us to work hand-in-hand with committed partners," said Stephanie Hirsh, executive director of Learning Forward. "We're eager to serve the educators who participate in this initiative. We know they want to create meaningful mathematics learning opportunities for all the students who walk through their doors."

To learn more, visit edtx.org.

STATE COALITIONS TACKLE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING CHALLENGES

The What Matters Now Network is underway, with coalitions in three states — Maryland, Ohio, and Rhode Island — testing the school-based change strategies they have developed over the past several months through research, data analysis, and defining a contextualized problem of practice.

Each state is addressing the network's overarching question: How do we put in place job-embedded professional learning grounded in the use of high-quality curriculum and instructional materials that leads to improved and equitable student outcomes?

While addressing this question as a network, each state is taking on its own particularly relevant or pressing challenge, such as supporting teachers to prepare for a new science assessment, building capacity around job-embedded professional learning design and implementation, or increasing educators' access to strategies to improve English language arts instruction.

Each state's work is led by a cross-system coalition of stakeholders that includes state and district policymakers, teachers, principals, university faculty, and nonprofit leaders. The groups use improvement strategies such as rapid-cycle testing that will lead to sustainable practice-based solutions that have implications for improving policy.

Learning Forward is collaborating closely with the coalitions, providing management support, resources, tools, and content expertise.