

PARADIGM SHIFT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SUMMER 2020 PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK: SURVEY RESULTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes data collected through an online survey of past and current Paradigm Shift (PS) participants. The survey was administered between July 30 and August 21, 2020. The purposes were to 1) solicit feedback on the resources PS provides to support participants’ journey toward licensure, and 2) identify participants’ challenges and supports, related to their pursuit of licensure, the COVID-19 pandemic and more broadly. Participants were offered a \$50 incentive to complete the survey. Thirty-two of 47 invitees completed the survey, for a response rate of 68%.

I. CHALLENGES RELATED TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS

To reflect the overall context within which the survey was administered, participants were asked to identify challenges and supports related to the COVID-19 public health crisis. Comments reflect challenges and struggles for students, families and educators.

THEME	ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTES
Overwhelm, disruption, and barriers to engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Everything has been overwhelming.” • “It’s been seriously impacted and difficult.” • “Not being able to reach out to all students via Zoom or phone calls. Many parents did not participate in Zoom with their children.” • “As a special education teacher, it was very difficult to provide students with what they need and deserve during this time.” • “I feel like through remote learning my English learners are not getting enough support because of lack of engagement.”
Missing students and face to face interactions among adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I miss my students very much. I hope to see them soon. It was sad we weren’t able to finish the school year in person. Their education and safety is very important to me.” • “Everything has been affected because we can’t meet face to face and share on a more personal level like we used to. This includes co-workers, friends, family members, students and this has impacted us negatively because for our mental health we do need to be in contact with others.”
Personal and professional challenges: loss, concern for one’s own safety and well-being, and struggles to balance home responsibilities, online teaching and online learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I’m scared to go back to work. I have started looking into life insurance policies.” • “I am on the computer for 7 hours for my work and then I must be on for [graduate] school. So this causes me eye strains and exhaustion.” • “Being at home has been very hard considering I’m also taking care of my child and his needs. I cannot balance work and home under the same roof.”

THEME	ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTES
Postponed MTEL tests and safety concerns related to taking the tests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “MTEL- I have 3 tests to take and they have been postponed 3 times.” • “One of the biggest challenges currently is me being able to take my MTEL. I have a hard time wearing my mask and having to wear it for 4 hours will bring great anxiety to me. I already have severe testing anxiety.”

A few respondents noted that the switch to remote learning offered students a break from social conflicts, leading in some cases to increased learning. Others cited benefits such as a slower pace and the value of teamwork and technology in reaching families.

II. SUPPORTS RELATED TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS

Supports include communication with students, families and colleagues; online resources and training in how to use them; the provision of supplies to students and families; and flexibility and understanding from families, colleagues, administrators and professors.

THEME	ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTES
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “[One of the] biggest benefits for me and my students was having our open communication that has been consistent and clear.” • “The ability to make contact with peers. Check-ins via phone or video chat”
Online resources and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Supports like online tutorials for the MTEL tests and district-wide training from home has helped a lot.” • “Getting Comcast reduced [cost] internet service for families”
Supplies for families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “[My district has been] providing families with Chromebooks, free internet, meals, and packets of paper assignments.”
Flexibility and understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “My professor was very supportive and understanding, as well as my principal and family.” • “My 5/6 grade team was awesome!” • “Their parents have been the biggest supports. Without their parents helping from the students' end, a lot of virtual learning would not have been as successful.”

III. WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN DONE DIFFERENTLY, RELATED TO COVID-19

Some participants found that the response to the crisis was adequate, given that it was new and unexpected. Participants also cited a need for:

- better planning; a preparedness plan and more timely response
- more training for families and students in the use of technology
- a more streamlined approach to resources
- additional efforts to engage families
- more and better training and professional development
- increased distribution of resources to families.

IV. CHALLENGES IN OBTAINING LICENSURE, NOT RELATED TO COVID-19

Taking and passing the MTEL tests constitutes the greatest challenge:

- “I’m still trying to pass my MTEL’s. I just wish I could get licensed without having to pass the tests.”
- “I’m glad that since I graduated with my Master's last year I finally got an emergency license. I'm very proud because thanks to this I will be able to teach in the fall. On a side note, I'm worried after the year passes, [that I] would ... have to go back to taking all the MTEL required tests.”

V. RESOURCES CONTRIBUTING TO PROGRESS

Overall, the data suggest that participants value personal contact and find that support from various individuals contributes substantially to their progress. Supports including professors, college staff, participants’ families, outreach from Paradigm Shift, individual meetings with the Program Coordinator (Danielle) and the Outreach Specialist (Desiree), and support from school staff are rated most highly. About half of the participants who used MTEL vouchers and who were reimbursed for MTEL tests find that those supports contribute substantially to their progress.

Principals: Supports from principals include creating opportunities for professional growth, showing an interest in individuals’ goals, and sharing relevant information, tools and resources.

- “My principal has been amazing. Financial help, professional connections, interest in my professional goals etc. I can't say enough about my principal.”
- “My principal has supported me in helping me find the tools needed to pass the MTEls.”
- “My principal definitely supports my progress. She allows me to observe other classrooms and she gives me time with my supervisor during my own observations.”

Districts: District support ranges from practical resources such as financial reimbursement and professional development to attention and effort on the part of individual administrators. These individuals share information; encourage participants, track their progress and publicly acknowledge their work; and guide participants to appropriate teaching positions.

- “My District Administrators talked to me about the program and insisted I participate.”
- “My district had a PD in November that was focused on Social Justice and made a huge difference in my year. I was struggling a lot (as I did all year) but that PD helped re-frame my work and regenerated my purpose and spirit.”
- “Mary McAndrew was AMAZING, meeting with me, tracking my progress, contacting key players to make sure my path was clear and everyone was doing what they were supposed to be doing. Dr. Zrike was also very supportive, always publicly acknowledging my efforts.”

Other Supports: Colleagues and peers, educator preparation programs, DESE and Paradigm Shifts’ resources contribute as well to participants’ progress:

- “[T]he majority of my colleagues and peers in the program [have been] very supportive. Their support means a lot.”
- “Springfield College has offered a multitude of support from tuition vouchers, to countless calls to correct issues in the business office.”
- “DESE allowed for an Emergency License to be applied for, for the upcoming school year.”
- “The Paradigm Shift program has helped with a plethora of resources to aid in the process of getting licensed.”

Utilization of Supports: Most respondents have not accessed all forms of support that the initiative makes available. A majority of respondents have not accessed MTEL test reimbursements (17, 53%), MTEL vouchers (19, 59%), virtual office hours (19, 59%) and child care stipends (25, 78%). As in previous years, data suggest somewhat limited awareness of MTEL supports, although the pandemic may have affected awareness of resources in 2020:

- More than one-quarter (27%) of those who did not use MTEL prep courses stated they were not aware of them.
- More than one-third (37%) of those who did not use MTEL vouchers stated they were not aware of them.
- One-quarter (25%) of those who did not use mentors stated they were not aware of them.

Additionally, half of those who did not use tutors (50%) felt a tutor was not necessary for them.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The survey asked, “What, if anything, should be different in terms of the program, communication with faculty and coordinators, your school situation, logistical issues, other?” Respondents most commonly expressed appreciation for the initiative and commented that no changes are needed. A few respondents indicated the need for more sharing of information and communication.

- “I believe the current model works and needs nothing different so far.”
- “Everything you have provided has been amazing.”
- “Paradigm is a great program! It should always be funded.”
- “I believe Paradigm Shift has done everything in their power to help me reach my goal.”
- “Letting Administrators in the Building [know] we are in this program.”
- “Communication with the participants”

VII. ADVICE

The survey asked, “What advice would you give to others who strive to diversify the teacher workforce by supporting paraeducators and other educators of color to become teachers (e.g., policies, practices, knowledge and understanding)?” Some responses could apply to multiple constituencies (e.g., advice to programs such as Paradigm Shift may also apply to policy-makers).

THEME	ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTES
To Paradigm Shift and districts: Spread awareness of opportunities and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Paraeducators are aware of this program in my district but teachers are not aware of this program. I am a teacher who was not aware of this program when I was looking into master's programs. Once I learned about it, I shared this information with another colleague of color who was looking to get her masters. She was not aware of this program either. Once she learned of it, she became part of it as well. I think my district needs to reach everyone of color in all different positions by sharing information about this program to provide equal opportunities for everyone.” • “Help promote services to available districts.”
To teacher candidates: Use all resources, persist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Utilize all resources that are given to you. Take advantage of all of the support, keep open lines of communication.” • “Pay attention to all of the help that is constantly being offered. There is no shame in accepting help.” • “Keep going.” • “Note that although every day is a new challenge ..., the current situation is temporary and then know that you are going to come out on top. You can achieve anything.”
To administrators: Get to know staff, appreciate them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I would advise [administrators] to get to know their staff and value them as important resources in need of support.”

THEME	ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I would say show them you care, tell them how important they are to the school culture and the students. Sometimes it’s easy to be prideful and be all about oneself [but] we ignore that some of our staff needs to be reminded of their value and importance.”
To policy-makers: teaching career ladder and pay scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I could not believe it when Puerto Rican teachers told me their previous experience was not taken into account when HPS decided their pay scale.... In many professions where language is desired, people get paid more if they demonstrate proficiency, but apparently not in teaching.”
To everyone: Prioritize, listen and understand, advocate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I believe that students of color benefit when they see adult role models who are people of color in positions of authority. All students can benefit from teachers with diverse knowledge and experiences; therefore, districts should make it their priority to hire teachers.” “Listen!!! Everyone's situation is unique and it's not one size fits all. Be willing to bend just never break!” “[Welcome] mistakes, [show] patience and understanding as well as supporting them in everything .., specifically with self-esteem and confidence. Most of us have a pretty bad self-image.” “Keep fighting, keep on us. We want diversity as much as you all do. We understand the importance of it.”

VIII. LOOKING AHEAD

A majority of respondents express optimism about ultimately acquiring their teaching license.

Estimated Likelihood of Acquiring License (Q17)		
	Number	Percentage
I will <u>probably not</u> complete the process of acquiring my license.	2	6
I will <u>possibly</u> complete the process of acquiring my license.	1	3
I will <u>probably</u> complete the process of acquiring my license.	4	13
I will <u>very likely</u> complete the process of acquiring my license.	3	9
I will <u>definitely</u> complete the process of acquiring my license.	19	59
I <u>have completed</u> the process of acquiring my license.	3	9
Total	32	99

It is notable that this is the first year that any Paradigm Shift participants indicate through the survey that they will probably not complete the process. The COVID-19 crisis may account, in part, for participants' lack of certainty; the two respondents who estimate that they will probably not complete the process cite MTELS as their greatest challenge, however. This theme has predominated over the past few years of data collection. The testing postponements and other stresses associated with the MTELS *during the pandemic* may exacerbate participants' anxiety about the tests.

IX. EVALUATOR'S REFLECTIONS

As prior surveys have demonstrated, the Paradigm Shift initiative plays a key role in championing Black and Latinx paraeducators and their colleagues in their transition to teaching roles. Participants' gratitude and appreciation for the individuals who lead the work and for the resources and mechanisms provided by the initiative are expressed throughout the report.

It is interesting that data related to a key challenge – MTEL testing – continue to signal not only the initiative's effectiveness but also areas for continued growth. Those who access MTEL vouchers and MTEL reimbursements find that those resources contribute substantially to their progress. Fewer than half of those who took advantage of Paradigm Shift mentors, MTEL prep courses and MTEL tutors find, however, that those resources contribute to progress to a great or very great extent, so further refinement of those resources may be warranted, although the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic may account in part for lower ratings of perceived contributions to progress.

In terms of participants' awareness of resources, data suggest somewhat limited awareness of MTEL prep courses, vouchers and mentors. Comparisons of the current survey results with 2019 survey results suggest that awareness of MTEL vouchers, in particular, appears to be a consistent challenge: about 29% of respondents who did not access MTEL vouchers in 2019 indicated they were not aware of the vouchers, and the percentage of similar respondents who were not aware of vouchers rose to 37% in 2020. Importantly, however, data show some improvement in participants' awareness of MTEL prep courses and mentors. About 38% of respondents who did not access MTEL prep courses in 2019 indicated they were not aware of the courses, compared with 27% of the 2020 respondents. Similarly, about 29% of respondents who did not utilize a mentor in 2019 indicated they were not aware of the resource, compared with 25% of the 2020 respondents. Strategies to "spread the word" about resources and opportunities appear to be making a dent in the challenge to raise awareness, and continued and increasing efforts may still well be warranted.

Additionally, the data suggest that the initiative's recent efforts to reach out directly to participants have been well received. Specifically, individual meetings with the Program Coordinator (Danielle) and the Outreach Specialist (Desiree) and overall outreach from the Paradigm Shift team contribute to progress to a great or very great extent for more than 60% of respondents.