“Educate Texas’ public-private model accelerates student success across the state. Collaboration and thought-leadership among a broad stakeholder base is what makes this possible. Together, we are excited to move the needle forward.”

– John Fitzpatrick,
Executive Director
Educate Texas
FROM THE ORGANIZATION

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We are thrilled to present our inaugural Educate Texas Impact Report. Through our portfolio of strategic initiatives in public and higher education, Educate Texas is focused on strengthening the public and higher education system so that every Texas student is prepared for educational and workforce success. The following report serves as a brief overview of our efforts during the 2014-2015 school year and illustrates the impact of our programs across the state of Texas.

Within this report, you will see how we have advanced evidence-based strategies with practitioners, established new partnerships that are leading groundbreaking efforts, launched new innovations with philanthropic support, and deepened policymakers’ understanding of key policy issues that accelerate student achievement. We share our learning through case studies and highlights in each of our four core areas of focus, including:

- **College and Career Readiness** – Expanding Early College High School strategies in Clint ISD
- **Teacher Effectiveness** – Utilizing a Principal Evaluation System in Dallas ISD to Support Teachers
- **Higher Education** – Identifying New Strategies to Increase Student Access and Success
- **Regional Collaboration** – Increasing Regional Alignment in the Rio Grande Valley

While we are pleased with the gains we are making on behalf of Texas students, teachers, and leaders, we recognize the urgent need to ensure our educational systems are prepared to support the shifting dynamics of our state:

- **Low Postsecondary Attainment Rates**: Only one out of five Texas 8th graders earn any postsecondary credential. For economically disadvantaged, historically underserved students, only one out of ten Texas 8th graders earn any postsecondary credential
- **High Concentration of Economically Disadvantaged K-12 Students**: 60% of our state’s public students qualify for free or reduced priced meals
- **Labor Market Needs**: Workforce projections suggest that 60% of all jobs will require a postsecondary credential

To accelerate the changes required in our educational systems, Educate Texas is setting our targets on an ambitious 20 by 2020 Student Success Plan where we aim to serve over 20% of our students, teachers, and communities. Please join us as we seek to ensure that every Texas student has a solid educational foundation to achieve their own dreams and pursuits.

Sincerely,

John Fitzpatrick  
Executive Director  

George Tang  
Chief Operating Officer
EDUCATE TEXAS

TILLING THE EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS

Educate Texas uses philanthropic resources and ideas to fuel innovation within the educational system; evaluates the efficacy and outcomes of those investments; and works with local practitioners, state leaders, policymakers, and national partners to ensure effective practices and policies achieve broader adoption and scale. It is through this unique public-private partnership that Educate Texas pursues its vision and mission.

During its 10 years of existence, Educate Texas has established a remarkable track record working in collaboration with a broad stakeholder base of the following public and private leaders: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), Texas Legislature, Governor’s Office, The Meadows Foundation, Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, Ford Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Greater Texas Foundation, Helmsley Charitable Trust, Houston Endowment, National Instruments Foundation, and Texas Instruments Foundation. The organization’s public-private partnership has directed more than $400 million towards piloting, proving, and replicating innovative strategies. Within our college ready portfolio alone, the estimated economic impact of this investment is $5.8 billion, generated by the increased lifetime earnings potential of more than 20,000 high school graduates.

With each initiative, our organization begins by working with the partners listed above to identify high potential innovations, pilot these efforts, and determine the necessary strategies that may benefit the entire education system. After evaluating the outcomes and efficacy of these innovations, Educate Texas continues to work with our partners to ensure these effective strategies achieve broader adoption and scale.

Through this robust portfolio of work, Educate Texas continues to garner strong engagement from both state and national partners to explore new ways to enhance the education system, develop powerful alliances, and frame key issues for advancing student success.

OVERVIEW

MOVING THE NEEDLE OF COLLEGE READINESS, ACCESS AND SUCCESS FOR TEXAS STUDENTS

Educate Texas’ work is about the future.

Consider the data: In the next 20 years, 95 percent of the state’s student growth will come from Central Texas, the Dallas-Fort Worth area, El Paso, the Gulf Coast, and the Rio Grande Valley. Each of the five regions has a high concentration of low-income and underserved K-12 student populations. Furthermore, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board data shows that 20 percent of the state’s students earn a degree 11 years after beginning the eighth grade. The number drops to less than 10 percent for low-income and underserved students who make up a large number of the state’s student population, as 60 percent of Texas students are considered economically disadvantaged.

Yet, the growth and development of our nation indicates that a postsecondary education won’t be optional for students who reach adulthood in the 21st century. The Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce projects that 65 percent of the nation’s workforce will need a postsecondary credential to be gainfully employed in 2020. Texas faces an urgent need for districts to employ high-impact strategies that accelerate the number of students who will earn postsecondary credentials, such as a two-year, four-year, or technical degree or workforce certificate, so that students are ready for high demand, regional, and global workforce opportunities.
EDUCATE TEXAS’ FOUR STRATEGIC AREAS OF ACTION

Five regions of Texas - Central Texas, the Dallas-Fort Worth area, El Paso, the Gulf Coast, and the Rio Grande Valley—will represent 95 percent of student growth over the next 20 years. The Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce projects 65 percent adults will require a postsecondary credential to be gainfully employed. With this in mind, Educate Texas sees a sense of urgency to establishing high-impact strategies that will enable all Texas students to successfully move from high school to postsecondary degree attainment, and ultimately, to the workforce.

- **College and Career Readiness**: Create rigorous educational pathways to help students successfully transition from high school into the workforce or some form of postsecondary education.
- **Regional Collaboration**: Create regional collaboration that leverages data-driven outcomes to define investment and programmatic engagement.
- **Innovation Areas**: Ensure all high school students have the tools and resources necessary to apply to, enter, and succeed in college, and promote proven practices that will increase the number of students who complete a technical, two-year, or four-year degree.
- **Effective Teaching**: Advance effective teaching by promoting recruitment, evaluation support, and retention of high performing teachers; and ensure there is a pipeline of high quality superintendents and principals to lead our districts and schools.
With this sense of urgency in mind, Educate Texas’ focus has been to improve opportunities for every Texas student by increasing each one’s postsecondary readiness, access and success. The organization is targeting the following four key strategic areas to fulfill its vision, mission and strategy:

- College Readiness: Create rigorous educational pathways to help students successfully transition from high school into postsecondary education and/or the workforce.
- Effective Teaching: Promote recruitment, evaluation, support, and retention of high performing teachers and ensure there is a pipeline of high-quality superintendents and principals.
- Higher Education: Ensure that all high school students have the resources necessary to enter and succeed in technical, two-year, or four-year colleges and universities.
- Regional Collaboration: Create collaborative opportunities for our K-12, higher education, and workforce sectors that leverages data-driven outcomes to define investment and programmatic engagement.

**AREA OF ACTION**

**FOCUS ON COLLEGE READINESS BLAZES PATHWAYS TO A 21ST CENTURY WORKFORCE**

Educate Texas believes all students deserve and need a quality education to prepare them for the opportunities and challenges that are ahead of them. That means each student must build a solid foundation at the elementary and secondary levels of their educational experience, so that the idea of attending college or attaining a postsecondary credential is a sought-after dream that can be realized with success.

**GROWING THE NETWORK OF SCHOOLS IN TEXAS**

- 81% are from historically underrepresented ethnicities
- 67% are Hispanic
- 70% are considered economically disadvantaged
Before this can happen, there are hurdles to clear. Millions of the nation’s students graduate from high school unprepared for the rigors of college and the demands of careers in a global economy. Jobs for the Future, a nonprofit that supports economic mobility initiatives for low-income youth, reports that a third of students who enter postsecondary education require remedial education before they earn college credit and less than half of all college students graduate within six years.

For the last decade, Educate Texas has partnered with state practitioners to create rigorous educational pathways to help students transition from high school to postsecondary education or the workforce. Educate Texas works closely with districts, community colleges, technical schools and regional universities to align its goals with those of the state that are aimed at postsecondary access and success.

Educate Texas applies this public-private teamwork approach by supporting the creation of Texas Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (T-STEM) Academies and early college high schools throughout the state. Educate Texas also promotes the district-wide adoption of key instructional strategies used in these highly successful, specialized schools to provide more students with the advantages of being exposed to postsecondary experiences.

Last year, Educate Texas turned its attention to finishing and evaluating the second year of an early college high school expansion program in El Paso County. While Educate Texas has piloted or supported 191 early college high schools and T-STEM academies, the Clint ISD project marked the first time the organization took a district-wide approach.

In 2010, Educate Texas partnered with the Clint Independent School District and El Paso Community College (EPCC) to develop an innovative, systemic early college high school program with funding from the Greater Texas Foundation and The Meadows Foundation. The goals of the initiative were to launch the Clint ISD Early College Academy (CECA); to implement comprehensive professional development that focused on deepening student learning; and to enable the district to sustain the early college high school and college-readiness practices.

Building off of the larger goals described above, Clint ISD officials wanted to provide more dual credit opportunities for students, increase student scholarships and financial aid, hire teachers with graduate degrees so they could be credentialed at EPCC, instill early college professional development strategies district-wide and expand career and technical offerings for students.

“**You get to save a lot of money and yes, you get to go to college, but it’s not just that. For me, it’s that my personal life has changed. I’ve learned to mature, to grow, to become more responsible. I’ve learned things that are going to prepare me for my future life.**”

— Sthefania Gallegos-Perez, speaking about her experiences as a student at Clint ISD Early College Academy, a school supported by Educate Texas college and career readiness efforts.
CASE STUDY

COLLABORATION STEERS COLLEGE-FOR-ALL CULTURE

Hector Belmontes fondly remembers his first day of college, even though he hasn’t graduated from high school yet.

“I remember most the smile of our professor when she asked, ‘I’m sorry to be rude, but what is your age?’” said Belmontes, 16 and a high school junior in the Clint Independent School District, 25 miles east of El Paso.

His age at the time: 14.

Now, a year before he finishes high school, Hector has earned 66 credits and is on track to receive an associate’s degree from El Paso Community College. He is one of 294 students enrolled in Clint ISD Early College Academy (CECA). He is a member of the inaugural cohort of 99 students that launched the program in 2012. And, he is one of 28 students in the program that will earn a college degree in May.

Texas is home to 108 early college high schools and eight blended early college high schools that focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics, which offer students a chance to save two years of college costs and earn credits that are transferable to a four-year college as they work towards a bachelor’s degree. Educate Texas has piloted and led 65 of the schools since 2005. Students who are targeted for the early college programs are typically economically disadvantaged students, first-generation college-goers, English language learners and other students who are underrepresented in colleges.

With Educate Texas as a thought-partner, Clint ISD and El Paso Community College set out to create a “college for all” culture, beginning with the formation of CECA. As the school district worked to make college the norm for all students, it began to transform. Now, teachers’ college degrees hang on every classroom wall. Faculty and staff wear t-shirts from their alma maters each Friday. And all students, even kindergartners, talk about going to college – not as an “if,” but a “when” in the rural district 25 miles east of El Paso.

“All of the campuses have college readiness activities. The elementary schools. The middle schools. Everyone,” said James Littlejohn, Chief Academic Officer for the district. “It’s standard operating procedure.”

CECA is also an incubator of college readiness strategies that will empower all district students to graduate college and career ready.

“We set out to answer the question of how can we make this a lab that can be a place for the dissemination of ideas to the rest of the district,” said Tonie Badillo, Instructional Dean at EPCC.

Although CECA is one of seven early college high schools supported by EPCC in El Paso County, the initiative is unique for two reasons: the district’s rural location and distance from the community college, and the plan to open the school while also implementing early college practices, instruction and professional development across the district.

The district serves a stretch of nearly 380 square miles that includes the town of Clint, Horizon City and the unincorporated area of Montana Vista. It is one of the fastest growing areas in El Paso County. Due to its geography, Clint ISD buses students more than a million miles annually to and from school.

CECA is not co-located with EPCC. It is 18 miles from the Valley Verde campus where its students take some classes. This required the school district to manage transportation to EPCC and develop course scheduling that served the students’ needs.

It also meant students barely in their teens who are usually within an arm’s reach of district teachers and staff were spending time in an environment more conducive to older, experienced learners. To cope with the circumstance, the district created the position of college transition officer. This staffer made sure the students attended classes, learned how to navigate the college campus and helped them adjust to college culture.
MILESTONES

A new path to college for students in Clint ISD started in 2010, when Educate Texas partnered with the district and El Paso Community College (EPCC) to develop an innovative, systemic early college high school program with funding provided by the Greater Texas Foundation and The Meadows Foundation.

2010

• Signed the Clint ISD grant agreement
• Launched Steering Committee
• Selected early college high school site
• Hired college readiness facilitators for each campus
• Implemented the Super Scholars Program

2011

• Hired early college high school Principal
• Developed professional development plan with Educate Texas
• Recruited first cohort of students
• Hired curriculum coaches
• Developed districtwide College/Career for All Plan

2012

• Opened Clint ISD Early College Academy
• Implemented the Clint ISD Early College Academy Common Instructional Framework professional development districtwide with coaches
• Implemented districtwide College/Career for All Plan
• Trained 60 percent of district’s teachers to use the Common Instructional Framework
• Aligned district advanced placement/career and technical education/dual credit offerings

2013

• Designed a transportation plan for students to travel to college campus
• Implemented community awareness events
• Evaluated Year 1
• Implemented districtwide standardized college preparatory exam process for all students

2014-15

• Evaluated Year 2
• Ended grant, with the following outcomes: more than a third of the juniors on target to graduate with an associate’s degree in 2015; one junior will graduate with both an associate’s degree and high school diploma; Clint high school designated as T-STEM Academy.
These innovative adaptations serve as a model for how to successfully implement a rural early college high school,” said Kristin Kuhne, Director of Insights and Analytics with Educate Texas.

The partnership of Educate Texas, Clint ISD and EPCC drove the initiative beyond its challenges. Here’s how it worked:

• Educate Texas provided professional development support, technical assistance and evaluation while also serving as an agent of thought, information and networking.
• EPCC waived tuition and fees for students, shared data with the triad and offered support for college placement exams, facilities and student support services.
• Clint ISD pushed college and career readiness districtwide. It introduced more rigor in classes at every grade level, invested in additional staff and coaches and allocated resources through a commitment from the school board and superintendent.

“Strong partnerships accelerate districtwide change, even when there are obstacles to move out of the way in the process,” said Denise Davis, Associate Program Officer at Educate Texas.

The partnership worked because everyone put the student first, the stakeholders agreed.

“We came across challenges, but we were able to work through them, because we all want the best solution for the students,” said Edmond Martinez, CECA principal.

AREA OF ACTION

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP, CAPACITY BUILDING AND TEACHER VOICES LEAD TO EFFECTIVE TEACHING

Nationally, and in Texas, there is a robust discussion about teacher effectiveness. While there are many interpretations of teacher effectiveness, the different definitions share common elements: they highlight the connection between the science and art of teaching and the reciprocal act of learning, and express a desire for all teachers to educate students to the highest level possible.

The Texas Teaching Commission report, a 2011 study that draws on national expertise and models, provided recommendations for the legislature, state education agencies, and local districts. The Teaching Commission not only demonstrated how critical teachers are to education, but also reinforced the value of highlighting promising ideas for improving teacher quality.

National research tells us what we know from experience: teacher quality is the most important school-based variable in

EDIUOATE TEXAS

IN SUMMARY

TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

Key Challenge

Teacher quality is the most important school-based variable in student achievement, but school systems lack the models and research to guide the development of support for educators to help students achieve.

Creative Approach

Define and implement a common understanding of the full spectrum for strengthening the teacher pipeline. Improve data use and management. Provide quality professional development and teacher feedback; share innovative human capital best practices; disseminate promising practices to state agencies and policy makers.

Results

Developed case studies in order to provide a tool that offers practical examples of high quality teacher effectiveness and human capital efforts already underway across the state the Texas Teaching Commission, which spent a year examining the teacher continuum and made legislative, state agency and district level recommendations for the next generation of teachers.

Lasting Impact

The case studies examining the Austin, Dallas and Houston school districts and the Texas Teaching Commission have provided research and lessons learned from Texas and across the country that continue to inform Educate Texas’ efforts to support teachers and students. These findings have been shared with Educate Texas’ Urban Council of Superintendents, a forum for 10 urban school district leaders whose districts served nearly 60 percent of all Texas students and with a cohort freshman Texas legislators.
In Texas, there are more than 327,000 teachers working in over 1,200 school districts. As the national and state-level conversation about teacher effectiveness continues to develop, Educate Texas believes it is important to highlight promising models. Three of our districts – Austin, Dallas, and Houston – have taken bold steps to develop innovative, new systems of support and training for teachers and principals, with the goal of improving instructional practice. The remainder of this section will be dedicated to looking at the work done in Dallas ISD. The following is an excerpt from the case study on the Dallas district that provides a practical example of high-quality teacher effectiveness and human capital efforts being undertaken and, thus, demonstrates tremendous impact. To read the full case study, visit www.edtx.org and read “Innovations to Increase Teacher Effectiveness in Texas” under Research and Reports in the navigation bar.

As you read about the work in the Dallas district, you will learn that the key takeaways were that engaging educators in efforts to improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement is critical, and, to ensure that teacher effectiveness practices are used regularly in the classroom, districts should also provide incentives, feedback, and support. Through the Dallas, Austin and Houston case studies, Educate Texas learned the following are needed to develop a comprehensive system of support for teachers:

- **Strategic Leadership is Integral** – Research and experience demonstrate that the largest portion of a school's budget is allocated to salaries and benefits; in fact, recent data indicates that is often as high as 89 percent of the budget. While we know that the majority of a school's budget is allocated to staffing, we often do not coordinate our organizational infrastructure in a way that reflects the value and importance of human capital. Leaders (including superintendents, administrators, and principals) can take actions that not only send a clear message about the value of human capital, but also lead to increased organizational effectiveness and efficiency.

- **Capacity Building is Critical** – There is not one agreed upon starting point for developing a comprehensive system of support for teachers. As evidenced by the case studies, there are many strategic decisions that differ based on the context of each individual district and school. For example, districts may start their work with teachers, principals, or both. Similarly, a district may include or exclude incentive pay from its system. From the very beginning of developing a system of teacher effectiveness system, the following question must remain central: “what supports need to be put in place in order to incentivize and facilitate our desired outcomes?”

- **Teacher Voice is the Foundation of Teacher Effectiveness** – A major lesson from the study is the importance of engaging educators in the discussion and development of systems to support them. To ensure that the programs and policies that we create positively influence teachers, we emphasize that decision-makers approach the development of teacher effectiveness systems in a way that is collaborative, collegial, and inclusive. All three districts in this case study demonstrate both the opportunities and the challenges associated with this work. By making teacher voice the foundation of this work we not only ensure that we are positively influencing their work, we also give teachers a vested interest in their teacher effectiveness systems.

Education cannot happen without teachers. Therefore, as we develop teacher effectiveness systems, it is in everyone’s best interest to align the practices that help teachers build their repertoire of practice. We continue to share the findings of this report with school districts, legislators and the state education agency. Our goal is provide a resource that informs conversations and promotes knowledge-sharing among educators and policymakers.

**CASE STUDY**

**DALLAS ISD: THE ROLE OF A PRINCIPAL EVALUATION SYSTEM IN TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS**

The The Dallas Independent School District has identified the position of principal as a critical role that will help schools become more focused on instructional improvement and teacher effectiveness, with the ultimate goal being the improvement of student achievement.

Since 2012, the district has invested substantially in a long-term action plan to help transform Dallas ISD into a more instructionally-focused district. The plan features making principals the key to reform, placing an effective teacher before every child, and expanding “leadership density,” a term that refers to the development of strong, accountable leaders throughout the system.

To bring these priorities to fruition, Dallas ISD developed and implemented its principal evaluation system as part of an overall effort to develop a culture centered on instructional improvement, and to build leadership capacity toward that end. Interviewees at the district and in Dallas schools said that the district’s overall approach is based on having principals in every school who are effective instructional leaders. “Having leadership focused on instructional quality and academic achievement needs
to permeate the entire organization,” said Charles Glover, former chief of human capital management at Dallas ISD from 2012 to 2013, when the evaluation system was developed. “We believe that the most impactful manager is the school principal.”

Glover also said that Dallas ISD has used its evaluation system to identify the professional performance and student achievement that the district expects from principals, and then to align all principal recruitment, professional development, retention, and compensation systems to support those priorities. Many districts, he said, hire principals based on one set of criteria, train them based on a second set of criteria, and compensate them based on a third set. The district’s goal is to accurately and fairly assess principal effectiveness in order to do the following:

- Send clear signals to principals about what the district values.
- Provide feedback and professional development to support their leadership capacity for instructional improvement.
- Assist the district in making decisions related to who will lead schools.
- Raise student achievement.

**Key Components of Principal Evaluation**

The district’s principal evaluation system consists of two sets of measures that total 100 possible points:

- Principal performance (60 points) is based on the principal’s scores in areas such as leadership, teacher effectiveness, and staff development.
- Student achievement (40 points) is based on student results on state and district assessments.

Principals receive evaluation results twice. They receive an interim evaluation that includes principal-performance scores (item 1 above) near the end of the school year. They receive their final evaluation during the fall of the next year, after student achievement results (item 2 above) are available. In addition, the district provides principals with progress monitoring during the year. The progress-monitoring component is aligned with measures in the principal performance and student achievement categories. Progress-monitoring serves as a feedback tool for principals to gauge their growth during the school year.

**Component One: Principal Performance**

The principal performance component is comprised of six overall measures that add to 60 points. The first measure, the performance evaluation rubric, accounts for 30 points. This rubric provides a detailed description of the district’s standards for principals in five categories: (a) leadership, (b) the instructional program, (c) staff development, (d) effective management, and (e) professional responsibilities. Of these areas, the most important, in terms of points, are leadership and the instructional program, but the rubric is comprehensive and complex. All five categories include multiple sub-categories, so that there are 31 areas of assessment.

In each of the 31 sub-categories, principals are scored either as unsatisfactory, progressing, proficient, or exemplary. Also in each sub-category, the rubric identifies the criteria used, offers sources of evidence for assessment, and provides specific examples of principal behaviors.

Silvia Reyna, former chief of school leadership for the district, said that the high level of detail in the performance evaluation rubric has been essential in identifying what the district values for principals. “It provides the detailed behaviors,” she said, “the descriptions of what we’re looking for exactly, so that principals know what’s involved. It’s fully described and modeled, so there are clear expectations.”

In addition to the performance evaluation rubric, the district also scores principal performance based on five other measures: 1) systems review, 2) improvement in teacher effectiveness, 3) congruence between teacher performance and student achievement, 4) student attendance and 5) parent climate survey.

**Component Two: Student Achievement**

The student achievement component is based primarily on student results on state and district assessments. It includes six measures that together account for 40 points for the principal evaluation. The measures include state assessment, such as STAAR test results overall and for feeder groups; district common assessments in reading, writing, math and science; achievement gap data; college- and career-ready rates for high schools; and other achievement measures. Most achievement data are available after the end of the year, except for the district common assessments, which provide results after the first semester.

A principal in Dallas emphasized the importance of the STAAR results associated with the feeder group of schools in the district. The district organizes its coaching support for principals through feeder groups, which are comprised of elementary and middle schools that feed into a single high school. The principal said that even though the three points allotted to STAAR results for each feeder group are “minimal,” they provide each principal with “stock in the game, to say ‘If I’m doing some things that are working on my campus, I need to share those things with my colleagues.’ It has made us all share our best practices with each other...If one campus fails, that impacts your evaluation, too.”

**Progress Monitoring**

The district provides mid-year feedback to help principals assess their performance and improvement, based on progress...
monitoring metrics and mid-year reviews. During the mid-year reviews, for example, each principal discusses with district leaders (executive directors assigned to their school) the results of their curriculum alignment rubric, their instructional feedback rubric, their spot observation patterns in classrooms, and data about teacher effectiveness. Other examples of progress-monitoring metrics include: a school action plan rubric, systems reviews, data reviews, climate surveys, quality-of-instruction coaching sessions and metrics (including progress on the principal’s goals), and student achievement results to date.

**How the District Gets There: Professional Development and Coaching Support**

After Superintendent Mike Miles joined the district in 2012, the district eliminated the centralized professional development department and replaced it with (1) a department of school leadership, with new priorities to support principal leadership; and (2) a revamped and decentralized instructional support services department, to facilitate teacher needs in schools, as determined by the school sites. In effect, the district shifted existing resources to enhance support for principals as instructional leaders and to provide school sites with more control of professional development.

For principals, the district focused its professional development and training in two main areas, through the creation of the following, both of which are aligned explicitly with the district’s principal evaluation system:

- **Leadership Development Fellows Academy:** Created in Fall 2012 to develop a pipeline of potential principal leaders. Distinguished teachers, assistant principals, or other aspiring leaders with at least three years of teaching experience, at Dallas ISD or elsewhere, can apply each spring to participate in the Fellows Academy during the following year. The district prefers candidates with a master’s degree, at least two years’ administrative experience, a desire to change the world, fearless of a challenge, and a belief that they can make a huge difference for our students.” The academy begins each fall with intensive professional development. By late fall, fellows are assigned to school campuses to work with an existing principal leader. During the academy’s inaugural school year (2012-13), 57 fellows participated in the program and 56 completed it or withdrew early to take principal or other leadership positions in the district. As of July 2013, 86 percent were placed in principal or assistant principal positions, with another 10 percent in other positions such as coordinator, instructional coach, or program specialist. Two fellows (4 percent) left the district.

- **Robust coaching and training network for principals:** The district’s 223 campuses are organized under five divisions, each headed by an assistant superintendent. Within each division, the schools are further organized into four or five feeder patterns, each headed by an executive director who works with the district’s school leadership department. Each feeder pattern includes one high school and the middle and elementary schools that lead into it. The executive directors work full-time as leadership and instructional coaches for the principals in their feeder pattern. For these positions, the district seeks to hire high-level administrators who understand quality instruction, have excellent communications and management skills, and have experience with practical issues that principals manage daily. Since each executive director works with only 10 to 14 principals, they get to know them well. They are on campus often—from weekly for principals and schools with high needs to every two or three weeks otherwise. They observe principal visits to classrooms and other duties regularly, so they can provide principals with direct and immediate feedback about their instructional coaching of teachers. Typically, executive directors start the year by helping principals examine campus data, develop an action plan for the campus, and set their own goals as principal. After that, the role focuses on coaching principals one-on-one to improve instructional excellence. During the year, executive directors use the evaluation rubrics for progress monitoring, ensuring that principals receive consistent coaching and feedback, so that they are not surprised by their evaluation at year end. In turn, principals have multiple opportunities provide input about their evaluation.

**The Role of Principal Evaluation in Teacher Effectiveness: Spot Observations and Coaching Practice**

Interviewees provided a range of examples that suggest links between the district’s principal evaluation and support on the one hand, and teacher effectiveness on the other. For example, Dallas
ISD emphasizes four key elements of instructional delivery. For every lesson, each teacher must:

- Post a clearly stated learning objective;
- Include a “demonstration of learning” (DOL)—an activity or product through which students demonstrate that they have learned the objective;
- Use “multiple response strategies” (MRSs) for engaging students; and
- Be purposeful in connecting activities to the objective and adjusting instruction based on classroom responses.

Executive directors coach principals in how to identify and discuss these elements, while principals work with teachers on expanding and deepening their use. The tool that executive directors, principals, and teachers employ to examine these issues is the spot observation, also known as classroom walkthroughs. Principles perform spot observations of each teacher six times each semester—and provide feedback to the teachers within 48 hours. The observations last about 10 minutes and are based on a form that identifies various aspects of the four elements above. According to Deputy Superintendent Ann Smisko, the spot observation system clarifies for teachers and principals “what the district is looking for in instructional quality, so that everyone is on the same page.”

**Conclusion: Why Consider a Principal Evaluation System?**

For other districts interested in developing a principal evaluation system, district administrators and principals emphasized the importance of identifying the district’s overall values for principal leadership and creating an aligned system of recruitment, training, evaluation, retention, and compensation that puts those values into effect. The evaluation metrics help identify the district’s priorities for principals, but it’s the alignment of all the components that builds capacity over time. Interviewees also had the following recommendation for other districts:

- Be transparent in the metrics used to gauge principal performance. When using rubrics to describe standards of performance: provide clear examples of principal behaviors ranging from unsatisfactory to exemplary, and identify sources of evidence for evaluation.
- Professional development and training are integral to an effective evaluation system. Realign the district’s professional development infrastructure, if needed, to provide the coaching and support that will enable principals to reach the desired standards of achievement.
- Use the tools of the evaluation—the rubrics, observation forms, etc.—frequently in coaching and professional development, to demonstrate how the expectations on paper are connected to the work on the ground. This can also expose areas where the rubrics and other evaluation tools need to be improved.
- Emphasize data use and self-reflection frequently and consistently. For coaches working with principals, and for principals working with teachers: point to evidence for your own statements and ask for evidence for others’ statements constantly.
- Consider developing new templates (spot observation forms) that principals can use to provide feedback about classroom instruction by teachers. The forms clarify district priorities for instructional quality.

In developing new systems for principal evaluation, interviewees said that districts need to be proactive in providing information to and getting feedback from principals, teachers, and other key stakeholders, such as parents and families. In addition, communities should be involved integrally—through community forums, business networks, and other means—to assure broad support for the district’s vision and direction.

**AREA OF ACTION**

**POSTSECONDARY ACCESS EFFORTS LEAD TO INCREASED ENROLLMENT AND PERSISTANCE**

After reviewing longitudinal research of our Texas students, Educate Texas found that only 20 percent of Texas students earn a postsecondary degree 11 years after beginning 8th grade, with this number dropping to less than 10 percent of our state’s low-income and underserved students.

Educate Texas partners with state agencies and higher education institutions to design and implement high-impact programs that increase the number of students who enroll in, persist in, and complete two-year, four-year or technical degrees. Educate Texas also builds networks of key stakeholders that can inform policies that improve postsecondary completion rates. The highlights in Educate Texas’ work in higher education access and success are as follows:
The Texas College Access Network: TxCAN is part of the National College Access Network (NCAN) and operates as a sustainable network of agencies and organizations working collaboratively to increase student access and success in postsecondary education. Through TxCAN, organizations such as the institutions of higher education, school districts, school counselors, non-profit and for-profit college access service providers, and state agencies will have greater opportunities to work together in furthering a common mission of greater student postsecondary access and success.

Key initiatives will focus on building awareness of existing college access activities and resources; aligning the strategic efforts of various stakeholders; and providing tools to measure the impact of college support efforts. To accomplish these goals, Educate Texas, in partnership with regional organizations, launched a concerted plan of action to bring together multiple stakeholders in six areas in Texas – El Paso, Houston, Dallas, Rio Grande Valley, San Antonio, Tyler - to address the most critical local and regional college access and success needs.

TxCAN is working to build a network that will empower students, their parents and other school community stakeholders to navigate the college going process and provide the resources that counselors, advisors, and schools need to more comprehensively support their students.

Persistence and Completion Strategies: To improve college success rates, Educate Texas has been working to identify additional opportunities for programmatic investments. One example is a new project that allows colleges to use predictive analytics in higher education to better understand the needs of their student populations.

Student Segmentation: Institutions have collected vast amounts of student-level data, but few have effectively used data systems to target and personalize support and resources. Over the past year, Educate Texas has worked with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation on an actionable research initiative that allows a college to segment its student population based on their underlying needs, motivations, and behaviors. This practice of segmenting a population has proven to be highly effective in improving customer retention in the private sector and it has been adapted for students in higher education. Given his previous experience in this work, Educate Texas’ Chief Operating Officer George Tang was invited to serve on a national advisory council to shape the development of the segmentation structure and to provide ideas for developing programs and more student-centric interventions. After completing this research, Educate Texas has worked with the Gates Foundation, El Paso Community College and the University of Texas at El Paso to use these insights to better support students during their postsecondary experience.

IN SUMMARY

HIGHER EDUCATION

Key Challenge

Research projects that 65 percent adults will require a postsecondary credential to be gainfully employed in the next 20 years. In Texas, only 20 percent of all 8th graders will go on to earn some postsecondary credential. For economically disadvantaged students, the rate drops to 10 percent.

Creative Approach

Partner with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and higher education institutions to design and implement high-impact strategies that increase the number of students who enroll in, persist in, and complete two-year, four-year or technical degrees. Build networks of key stakeholders that can inform policies that improve postsecondary access and completion rates.

Results

Educate Texas has launched and developed efforts to increase postsecondary access; cultivate a receptive environment for postsecondary success policy reform; and improve college success rates.

Lasting Impact

Educate Texas’ efforts to ensure all high school students have the tools and resources necessary to apply to, enter and succeed in college have the potential reach 320,000 students. The Texas Student Success Council convened 32 cross-sector leaders to address key postsecondary policy issues; the Texas College Access Network expanded their reach by supporting students in the Rio Grande Valley. With this addition of the Rio Grande Valley, the Texas College Access Network now supports 80,000 students in four communities and seven counties across the state.
Texas Student Success Council: The Texas Student Success Council has become a crucial part of a statewide effort to increase postsecondary completion and serves to cultivate a receptive environment for postsecondary success policy reform. With community colleges serving an increasing percentage of Texas students—particularly those who are low-income and first-generation—the council’s focus is on policies affecting student-success efforts at these institutions. To assess the opportunities for improvement, members include national experts on student success, statewide leaders representing K-12, higher education, philanthropy, and community leaders representing a variety of organizations and businesses. The Chairs of the House and Senate Higher Education committees, Commissioner Raymund Paredes of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and Commissioner Andres Alcantar of the Texas Workforce Commission have also served as ex-officio members. Over the last three years, the Council has built consensus and adopted recommendations that have informed policy around four priority areas: workforce, transfer and articulation, outcomes based funding and other barriers identified as a hindrance to student success. Through working closely and collaboratively with a diverse group of stakeholders, the Council has contributed to the dialogue surrounding these critical issues for Texas students and institutions and is positively affecting student success. It has been highlighted by Jobs for the Future as a national best practice for this work.

AREA OF ACTION
REGIONAL COLLABORATION DEMONSTRATES COLLECTIVE IMPACT

With research of Texas showing nearly 65 to 80 percent of K-12 students staying within their local communities after high school graduation, Educate Texas seeks to create greater levels of alignment between K-12, higher education and workforce pipelines to improve students’ college and career success.

As a result, Educate Texas works with communities across the state to measure progress against key milestones to postsecondary readiness and success, identify effective strategies for improving student outcomes, and ensure resources are directed toward scaling evidence-based practices or developing new innovations to address key community needs. Through this continued focus on improving regional outcomes, Education Texas will accelerate student success and drive systemic change.

In 2012, Educate Texas launched the Rio Grande Valley Collective Impact initiative, now RGV FOCUS. The goal was to transform college readiness, access, and success across the four-county region made up of Hidalgo, Cameron, Starr and Willacy. Initially founded by a group of district superintendents and higher education presidents, the collaborative has grown to include a cross-sector group made up of educators, nonprofits, community groups, funders, and business and civic leaders dedicated to making major, systemic improvements to educational and career attainment in the Rio Grande Valley. The group meets regularly to identify assets and needs in the region, adopt a common vision, and identify shared goals, strategies, and metrics to help drive the following vision: All Rio Grande Valley learners will achieve a degree or credential that leads to a meaningful career.

The Rio Grande Valley was selected for this initiative because the area trails the state and nation in educational attainment. According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau 2008-2012 American Community Survey, 25 percent of the region’s residents who are 25 or older have less than a ninth grade education, compared to 10 percent of the state’s residents and 6 percent of the country’s residents in this same age range.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Attainment: Adults 25 and Older</th>
<th>RGV</th>
<th>Texas</th>
<th>US</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 9th grade</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th to 12th Grade, No Diploma</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Graduate</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College, No Diploma</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s Degree</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate or Professional Degree</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 – 2012 American Community Survey
While some might see the demographics of the area as bleak, Educate Texas sees opportunities for cultivating a brighter educational future. The Rio Grande Valley is located in the southernmost part of Texas and shares a border with Mexico. The expansive region covers 43,000 square miles and is home to a growing population of 1.3 million people with a median age of 30 across the four counties. Despite its vast size, the Rio Grande Valley is also a close-knit community. Many of its residents have similar backgrounds, with about 90 percent of them having Mexican or other Latino heritage. The region is largely rural, and agriculture and manufacturing have historically been its top industries. Many of the region’s families are economically disadvantaged: 33 percent live in poverty, compared to 14 percent of Texas as a whole. The region’s median income is $40,000, trailing the state by $12,000.

The Rio Grande Valley’s economy, which has also been a growing one, is changing. A new medical school opening this year as part of The University of Texas system will bring more jobs in education and health services. California-based SpaceX wants to build a space port in Brownsville, a city in Cameron County, and is predicted to create 500 jobs over the next 10 years and generate $51 million in annual salaries, according to the Brownsville Economic Development Council.

With these types of positive changes, the Rio Grande Valley has to close its educational gap and produce more postsecondary credentialed residents who will continue to live and work in the area. Despite the area’s growth, it continues to lag in many areas. Recent unemployment data shows a rate of 9.3 percent, higher than the national average. RGV FOCUS works to strengthen each step of the educational pipeline and align community resources to provide the support learners need to succeed throughout high school and postsecondary in order to pursue a meaningful career in the RGV and beyond.

Last year, a big accomplishment of RGV Focus was the development of a regional college prep course in response to Texas House Bill 5. The bill required school districts to partner with at least one institution of higher education. RGV Focus took this mandate a step further and created a Memorandum of Understanding with all of the school public school districts in the four-county region and five higher education institutions to collaboratively develop and provide one math and one English college preparatory course that will be accepted as evidence of college readiness by all five of the higher education institutions. Two thirds of all school districts in the four-county area have already executed this MOU. As a result, eligible high school seniors will be exposed to the same learning outcomes, textbooks and final exam to ensure they are prepared to enroll in college credit courses upon graduation. The courses were added to the schools’ curriculums this school year.

Regional Collaboration

**Key Challenge**

Nearly 80 percent of K-12 students stay within their local communities after high school graduation.

**Creative Approach**

Create greater levels of alignment between K-12, higher education and workforce pipelines to improve students’ college and career attendance and success, by working with communities to measure postsecondary success, identifying strategies for improving student outcomes, and ensuring resources are directed toward scaling evidence-based practices of addressing community needs.

**Results**

Educate Texas launched the Rio Grande Valley Collective Impact initiative, now RGV FOCUS, to transform college readiness, access, and success across the four-county region made up of Hidalgo, Cameron, Starr and Willacy. Our efforts have the potential to reach more than 343,000 K-12 students in 39 school districts and 67,900 college students enrolled in two universities, two community colleges and one technical college.

**Lasting Impact**

The RGV Focus initiative led to a regional college prep course in response to Texas House Bill 5, which requires school districts to partner with at least one institution of higher education. RGV Focus created a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with all of the school public school districts in the four-county region and five higher education institutions to develop college preparatory courses that will be accepted as evidence of college readiness by all five of the higher education institutions. Twenty six school districts, representing two thirds of all districts in the four county area, have already executed this MOU.