



EDUCATE TEXAS  
at COMMUNITIES FOUNDATION of TEXAS

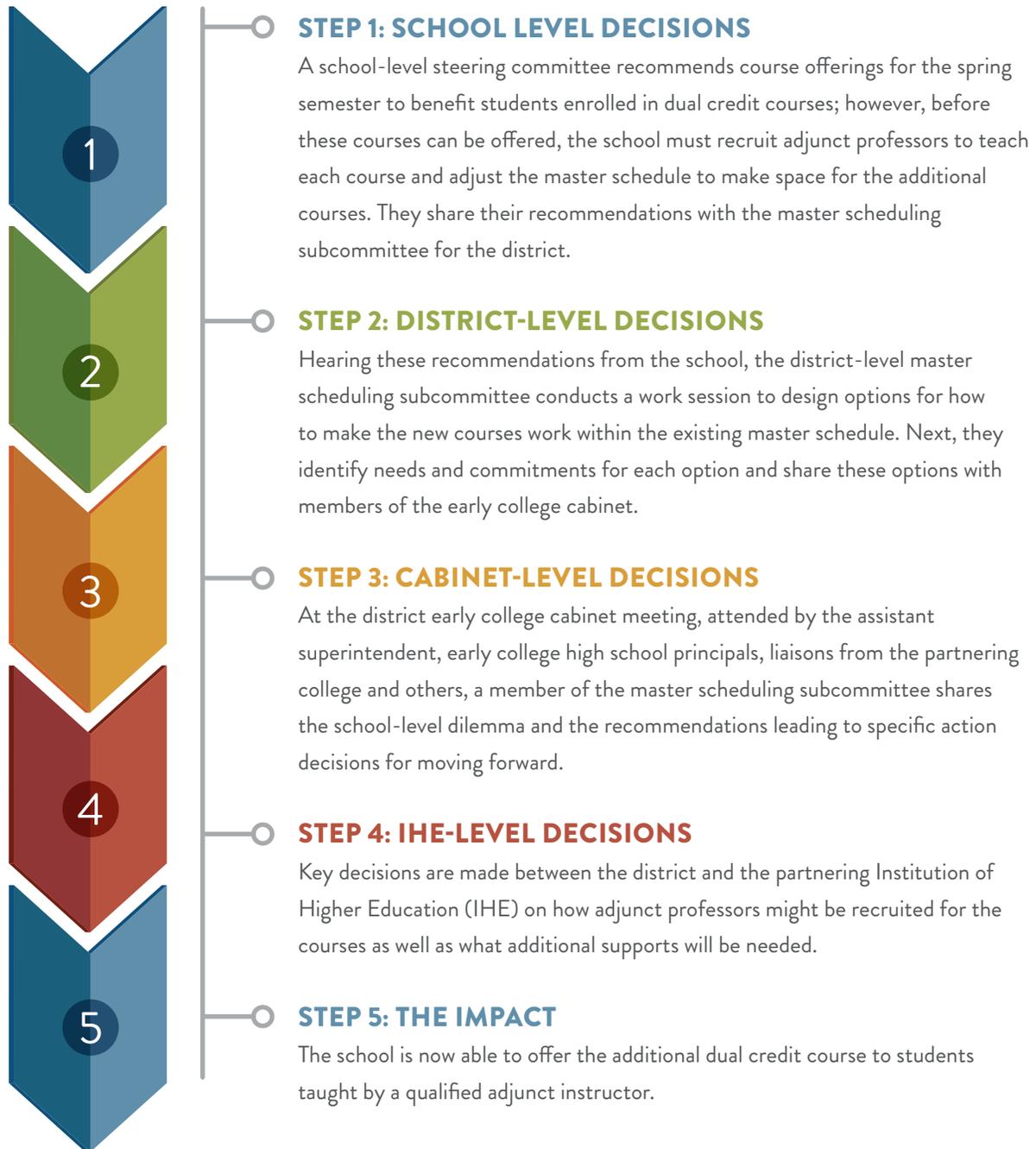
# ONE POWERFUL VOICE

TRANSFORMING GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES *to* SHARE  
RESPONSIBILITY *for* STUDENT SUCCESS



*When colleges and public high schools partner to provide educational opportunities for students, collaborative strategic planning ensures alignment to district goals that lead to student success.*

*Consider the following example:*



*A streamlined process of decision making, supported through clear governance structures, ongoing communication and shared accountability, benefits students as they seek to engage in college opportunities during high school.*



**HOW DOES *the* TRANSFORMATION *of* GOVERNANCE  
STRUCTURES *to* CREATE A SHARED VISION *and*  
INCREASE COLLABORATION SUPPORT A GOAL WHERE  
*at* LEAST 90% *of* STUDENTS COMPLETE  
*at* LEAST ONE ADVANCED COURSE?**

## THE CHALLENGE

In 2012, Educate Texas, in partnership with Jobs for the Future (JFF), committed in earnest to a five-year, multi-district Investing in Innovation Early College Expansion Partnership (i3 ECEP) grant. This effort strove to increase the number of students in participating early college high schools who successfully completed at least one advanced course to a lofty 90%. Increasing this number would not only enhance the high school experience for students, but it would also impact college readiness, graduation rates, college success and student lifetime earning potential.

This lofty goal, which drastically increased the number of high school students engaged with Institutions of Higher Education, required a new vision. Existing governance structures that worked for traditional public schools and early college “school within a school” models were now insufficient. New governance structures, capable of attending to new and increased amounts of data followed, along with additional discussions about the data and collaborative problem-solving.

For example,

Although districts had systems in place for tracking the subset of students who were in an early college, such as those who participated in “school within a school” programs, they now had additional tracking responsibility and data needs for an increased number of students.

Student-level data such as, TSI pass rates and earned college credits, were only available to campus-level administrators and IHE partners; additional stakeholders needed to attend cabinet-level meetings to gain access to new data for all responsible parties.

With more data and more stakeholders involved, a high-functioning network of partnerships needed to develop. This network, which included districts, schools, and IHEs, required a shared vision, transparent communication and effective and collaborative problem-solving.

# SOLUTIONS

*Educate Texas was instrumental in facilitating the shift in governance structure to a more networked approach by strategically supporting districts in*

building consensus around a shared vision

establishing and refocusing subcommittee meetings

facilitating discussion-based meetings that demonstrated the collaborative and meaningful partnerships among stakeholders

co-designing meeting agendas so that improved problem-solving processes led to intended outcomes



## SHARED VISION

Changes in attendance at cabinet-level meetings required development of a shared vision. Senior leadership, high school administrators, college administrators and liaisons, curriculum and instruction leadership and middle school principals needed to come together for a shared vision of “college-connected” students. In addition, it was important that all of these stakeholders understood the scope of the i3ECEP, existing data and key action steps for moving the work forward.

*Early college cabinet meetings became places to share and measure data against outcomes. Principals brought data from their schools, and assistant superintendents supported implementation of structures to support student success while at the same time holding principals accountable.*



## COLLABORATIVE AND MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIPS

School districts leveraged the partnership with their IHE so that meetings became more of a collaborative and mutually beneficial experience. Early college governance meetings provided college partners with opportunities to discuss deadlines for registration, course rosters, dual credit offerings, communicating with parents and the memorandum of understanding (MOU).

*IHE partners brought to cabinet meetings information on enrollment data, key registration deadlines, course request data, questions regarding the MOU and current issues. This was important for the districts to hear so that they could plan and prepare accordingly for students to enroll.*



## SUBCOMMITTEE MEETINGS

Subcommittees became important for context-based conversations and addressed issues including

- investigating the impact of increased students in dual credit courses on school structures
- budgeting for testing larger numbers of students
- identifying all students who were eligible for enrollment in dual credit courses
- establishing interventions necessary to increase student pass rates on the Texas Success Initiative

Subcommittee groups reported back to the cabinet to ensure that all cabinet members stayed informed.

*Early college high school principal subcommittee meetings focused on data. Principals brought data on Advanced Placement/Dual credit enrollment and earned credits, TSI data and progress and applications for Texas early college designation. These principals knew their data so well that they would identify discrepancies in the data that would improve the collection and understanding of the metrics. Additionally, these discussion-based meetings centered on the current performance of each school and what needed to happen to reach the next benchmarks. Principals brought this information back to the cabinet for discussions on relevant interventions and next steps.*



## FOCUSED AGENDAS

Educate Texas supported districts in

- co-designing and facilitating meeting agendas with emphasis on sharing information about early college, scaling the early college model and goals of the i3 ECEP grant
- reviewing and analyzing student-level data to identify and prioritize areas in need of progress
- setting action steps to prepare for meeting campus and district-level benchmarks

Educate Texas understood that district context served an important role in agenda design. While one district needed to be supported in their understanding of the early college model and begin implementation, another district needed support around scaling the early college model to include all high school students. Co-designed agendas had a standard framework to guide discussions that included a focus question, data analysis and discussion, strengths and opportunities for growth and next steps. With this structure, new and veteran members of the

cabinet meetings better understood the current state and goals for the next quarter. Additionally, Educate Texas used a gradual release model of facilitation. Over time, districts began leading the design of the agenda and the facilitation of the meetings while Educate Texas served as a participant and coach.

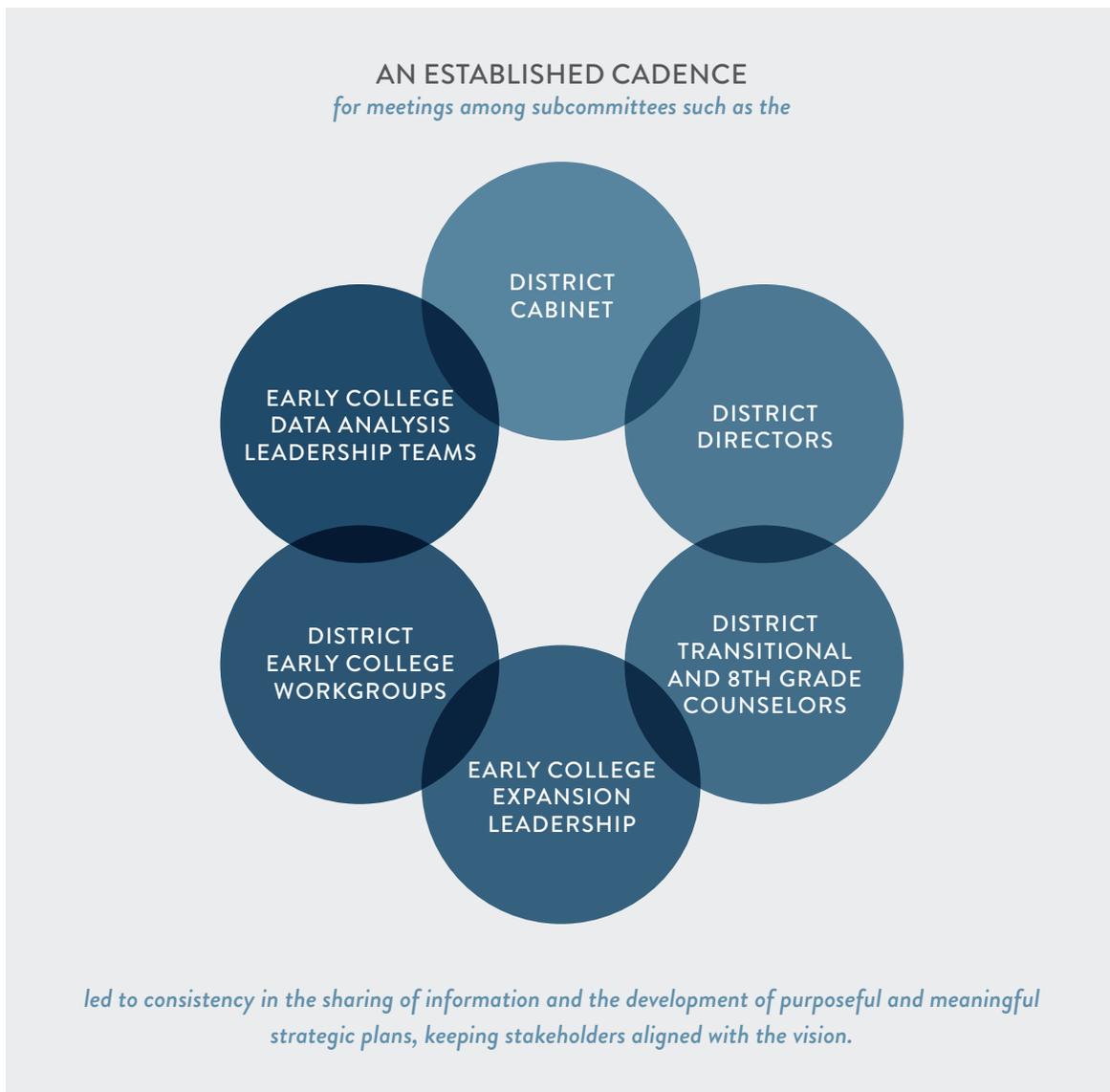
---

***Educate Texas supported districts in considering such questions as: who to invite to meetings based on agenda outcomes, stakeholder roles in information sharing, data sharing, decision-making or problem-solving processes. Norms for every meeting included presenting data decks. For example, a data deck might include information about TSI success rates, dual credit enrollment and dual credits earned. With an administrator from the partnering college in the room, discussions could take place and strategies could be planned for how to support each other with increasing student success.***

# IMPACT

*The steps outlined in the opening example did not come about easily. It took considerable work and a shared vision to bring high school campus-level conversations to cabinet-level meetings. Recognition of the importance of a shared vision and increased layers of governance allowed for stakeholders at all levels to contribute to the goal of scaling the early college model.*

Heightened communication structures and increased visibility from all stakeholders promoted shared decision-making and shared ownership within districts and between partners.



## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER



*Who are the key administrators required at meetings regarding early college decisions?*



*Does the cadence of meetings within the layers of governance align with the shared vision?*



*How are meeting discussion-based agendas designed to include data and progress analysis along outcome-based measures?*



*What processes are in place to maintain clear and transparent communication?*



*What is the process for shared decision making among stakeholders within each layer of the governance structure?*



# EDUCATE TEXAS

at COMMUNITIES FOUNDATION of TEXAS

Educate Texas is a public-private initiative of Communities Foundation of Texas that works to strengthen the public and higher education system in Texas so that every student is prepared for and succeeds in school, in the workforce and in life. For over a decade, Educate Texas has helped guide schools, districts and higher education institutions through the process of designing early college schools, implementing effective governance structures and strengthening instruction and student support. Educate Texas has supported the districtwide implementation of early college in Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District (PSJA ISD) since 2008. As part of the Early College Expansion Partnership, Educate Texas has played a central role in technical assistance and instructional coaching in PSJA ISD and Brownsville ISD.



Jobs for the Future (JFF) has played a leading role in launching and shaping early colleges nationwide since 2002, when it became coordinator of the Early College High School Initiative, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. More recently, JFF and partners have focused on adapting early college designs to new contexts and on informing state and federal policies to bring high-quality dual enrollment and early college opportunities to more students. In the ECEP districts, JFF has provided strategic advising to central office staff along with leadership coaching for principals and instructional coaching for teachers.

This topic briefing is the second of a four-part series created by Educate Texas to disseminate lessons learned from the Early College Expansion Partnership. For more information, visit [edtx.org](http://edtx.org).

#### DALLAS

5500 CARUTH HAVEN LANE  
DALLAS, TX 75225-8146  
214.750.4222

#### AUSTIN

1303 SAN ANTONIO STREET  
SUITE 830  
AUSTIN, TX 78701  
737.708.8150

#### RIO GRANDE VALLEY

407 N. 77 SUNSHINE STRIP  
HARLINGEN, TX 78550