A nationwide debate about education and its relationship to a high-skill, high-wage workforce has begun. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce projects that 65 percent of the nation’s workforce will need a college degree or postsecondary credential to be gainfully employed in 2020. Here in Texas, thanks to Governor Greg Abbott’s 60x30TX plan, the state’s goal is for at least 60 percent of Texans ages 25–34 to earn a college degree or workforce certificate by 2030. That means a college degree or postsecondary certification is now mandatory for students to have a middle-class lifestyle and for our state to thrive economically.

Yet, we know simply attending college will not guarantee these students’ future success. Preparing for college and a career must begin early and be a focus throughout elementary, middle and high school. Students must also navigate the critical transition from high school to higher education or technical training, which many are failing to do today.

Educate Texas exists to serve these students and the swelling tide of those to come. In this inaugural edition of our annual report, we proudly provide a snapshot of our work. We highlight our partnership with the Texas Education Agency that creates and maintains initiatives that get students college- and career-ready, such as Early College High Schools and T-STEM academies that focus on science, technology, engineering and math, and pave pathways to the workforce. You will read about our work that engages pre-K–12, higher education, nonprofits and employers, and has led to a rise in student achievement in several Texas regions. We show you how we are improving the teaching profession through the Texas Teacher Preparation Collaborative and Best in Class, a joint venture with the Dallas-based Commit Partnership, which focuses on equity in education. Finally, we highlight new and innovative initiatives in higher education, from policy work through the Texas Student Success Council, and support for community colleges and regional universities.

I hope this report will demonstrate what I’m most proud of: the hearts of our Texas educators, our partners and our Educate Texas team, who work tirelessly so that pre-K–12 and higher education students will have bright futures. Our partners and team inspire me. I share a Texas-sized THANK YOU to our funders, partner organizations, legislators, leaders in education and workforce development, teachers and faculty members who stand side by side with us each day to make Texas a place of possibilities for everyone who lives, works and raises a family here.

Regards,

JOHN FITZPATRICK
Executive Director
ABOUT EDUCATE TEXAS

A LEGACY of GIVING, IMPACT and MEANINGFUL CHANGE

EDUCATE TEXAS IS A PUBLIC-PRIVATE INITIATIVE OF COMMUNITIES FOUNDATION OF TEXAS DEDICATED TO STIMULATING CREATIVE SOLUTIONS TO KEY EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES TO ACHIEVE LARGE-SCALE TRANSFORMATION OF THE TEXAS PUBLIC AND HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS.

OUR VISION
Strengthen the public and higher education system, so that every Texas student is prepared for educational and workforce success.

OUR MISSION
Increase postsecondary readiness, access and success for all Texas students by building partnerships, leading innovation and scaling best practices and policies.

OUR VALUES
Learning
Impact
Integrity
Collaboration

OUR FOUR IMPACT AREAS

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS
By redesigning public school experiences through innovative approaches, we can transform Texas learning to meet the workforce demands of the 21st century.

HIGHER EDUCATION
By enabling more students to complete two- or four-year degrees or technical certificates, we can create an educated workforce that supports Texas’ business and industry growth.

COLLECTIVE IMPACT
By bringing together community, education and workforce leaders in a region, we can identify and advance a common vision that leads to stronger educational systems.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING
By finding ways to attract, prepare, develop and retain the most effective teachers, principals and superintendents, we can enhance the quality of classroom instruction.

EDUCATE TEXAS MAJOR MILESTONES

2003
Launched as the Texas High School Project through an alliance that included Communities Foundation of Texas (CFT), Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Texas Education Agency (TEA) and other partners to increase high school graduation and college attendance rates, particularly among underserved students

2005
Partnersed with TEA to introduce the Early College High School (ECHS) model to Texas

2006
Partnersed with TEA to establish Texas-STEM academies

2010
Relaunched as Educate Texas to represent the broader scope of work being done to educate students, but also support teachers and leaders responsible for the education systems’ ultimate success

2011
Established Texas Student Success Council — Formed Texas Teaching Commission

2012
Launched Lancaster ISD districtwide STEM effort in partnership with Texas Instruments Foundation — Scaled ECHS model in Brownsville and Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISDs with an Investing in Innovation (I3) grant from Jobs for the Future and U.S. Department of Education

In addition to reading this report, please visit edtx.org for more information on these milestones.
HOW WE WORK: STRATEGY, INNOVATION and COLLABORATION

EDUCATE TEXAS PARTNERS WITH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ENTITIES TO LEVERAGE THEIR COMBINED STRENGTHS AND RESOURCES TO TRANSFORM THE TEXAS PUBLIC AND HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS SO EVERY STUDENT CAN BE SUCCESSFUL IN SCHOOL, THE WORKFORCE AND LIFE. WE ACCOMPLISH THIS IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

BUILDING NETWORKS
We have the broadest reach of any organization devoted to education reform in Texas, because we bring together a wide base of voices and perspectives across key access points within the education system, including policymakers, higher education and public school leaders, and philanthropic and community-based organizations. Within our networks, we advocate for change based on research, data, shared beliefs and local practice; drive conversation through thought partnership and common goals; and scale individual successes to systems throughout Texas.

SPARKING INNOVATION
Our philanthropic partners see us as a credible, objective and effective partner that can create large-scale, student-focused, outcomes and improvements in education. Their trust in us allows us to harness catalytic, game-changing resources to explore ideas that can lead to breakthroughs at critical points in the education system. Examples of our efforts include investing our resources and energy in inventive pilot programs that leverage ideas from school districts and state agencies, or rethinking ways to serve specific student populations and communities.

ACCELERATING BEST PRACTICES
We have the capacity and expertise to collect, analyze and activate data that improves schools, state agencies, communities and the workforce. We work to help these partners understand current situations, see opportunities for change, set targeted goals and support implementation against those goals. We frequently bring experts and leaders together to foster dialogue, gather perspectives and identify solutions. If those conversations identify policy barriers, we inform policymakers, advocate for change and broaden the circle to include community leaders and decision-makers.

2013
Formed Rio Grande Valley FOCUS (RGV FOCUS) collective impact initiative

2014
Initiated Texas Regional STEM Degree Accelerator program

2015
Introduced 20x2020 Student Success Plan

2016
- Invested in Raising Blended Learners initiative
- Launched Texas Teacher Preparation Collaborative

2017
- Raised and awarded $2.6 million in disaster relief for pre-K-12 schools, colleges and students impacted by Hurricane Harvey
- Launched Industry Cluster Innovative Academies (ICIA) in partnership with TEA
- Launched College and Career Readiness School Models network in partnership with TEA (combining ECHS, Texas-STEM and ICIA)

2018
Established Best in Class initiative with Commit Partnership
Texas is a leader in business and industry. To remain in this position, the state must address the gap between our rapidly changing market demands and the skills and experiences of our students by increasing the number of them who earn college degrees or postsecondary certifications. To support Texas Governor Greg Abbott and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board’s goal for at least 60 percent of Texans ages 25-34 to earn a college degree or workforce certificate by 2030, Educate Texas created the 20x2020 Student Success Plan. Our goal is to positively impact 20 percent of the nearly 7 million public school and higher education students and the 350,000 public education teachers in Texas by 2020. Reaching this goal will create a tipping point that will accelerate change for all of the state’s students and teachers. We seek to demonstrate how reaching a critical mass of success can tip the scales so all can fulfill their potential. Here’s a look at our progress in our four impact areas in 2018 and how each area ties to the 20x2020 Student Success Plan.
COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

College and Career Readiness is the anchor of our work. We want students to be prepared for postsecondary success, so we work in partnership with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to transform public school experiences for students. We have supported the development and expansion of multiple education models that operate in more than 300 schools. They are Early College High Schools; Texas Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics academies; Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools; Industry Cluster Innovative Academies; and Blended Learning.

20X2020 GOAL
275,000 SECONDARY STUDENTS
2018 PROGRESS
85% TO GOAL

20X2020 GOAL
64,000 TEACHERS
2018 PROGRESS
86% TO GOAL

20X2020 GOAL
320,000 POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS
2018 PROGRESS
>100% TO GOAL

20X2020 GOAL
1,500,000 STUDENTS
2018 PROGRESS
97% TO GOAL

EFFECTIVE TEACHING

Educate Texas is an advocate for state policies and programs that improve the quality of classroom instruction. Examples of our work in this space include the convening of the Texas Teacher Preparation Collaborative, which created a statewide platform for educators and policymakers to develop improved preparation standards and promote best practices; and the Best in Class initiative, a collaboration between Educate Texas and the Commit Partnership that focuses on attracting, preparing, developing and retaining a highly effective and diverse pool of North Texas educators.

20X2020 GOAL
64,000 TEACHERS
2018 PROGRESS
86% TO GOAL

HIGHER EDUCATION

We work to create an educated workforce by helping students complete a postsecondary education. Our initiatives include the Texas Student Success Council, which helps students enter and complete college with fewer barriers; Texas Regional STEM Degree Accelerator, which creates a greater link between pre-K–12, community colleges, higher education and the workforce, to prepare students for careers in regional high demand fields; Bridge to College and Career Success, which we launched on the Gulf Coast to help 16- to 24-year-olds who have dropped out of school or are unemployed complete their education or get on a path to a better job; and Texas College Access Network, which we are reintroducing with a more comprehensive plan for supporting students in the transition from high school to higher education.

20X2020 GOAL
320,000 POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS
2018 PROGRESS
>100% TO GOAL

COLLECTIVE IMPACT

We want to identify and advance a common vision that leads to stronger educational systems. We use the Collective Impact approach to align leaders in education, business, nonprofit organizations and the community to collaborate on the best ways to ensure student success from early childhood to the workforce. Examples of our efforts include our work in the Rio Grande Valley, where we are seeing significant improvement in college readiness, access and success, and in El Paso, where a cross-section of leaders has expanded the vision of the region from college achievement to workforce readiness.

20X2020 GOAL
1,500,000 STUDENTS
2018 PROGRESS
97% TO GOAL
COMPLETING the PATHWAY:
PRE-K–12 to HIGHER EDUCATION to CAREER

THE JOB MARKET CONTINUES TO CHANGE RAPIDLY AS TEXAS BECOMES HOME TO A WIDER RANGE OF INDUSTRIES AND CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS. A ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL APPROACH TO EDUCATION NO LONGER PREPARES STUDENTS FOR A MEANINGFUL CAREER PATH.

Educate Texas supports the state in developing and implementing a portfolio of innovative models that empower individual school systems to adapt their instruction, curriculum and learning experiences to regional workforce needs, increasing the likelihood that students will be equipped to serve in meaningful high-growth fields.

EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS
The first step is enabling more students to pursue essential and relevant higher education. To meet this need, we work in partnership with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) as technical assistance providers for the Early College High School (ECHS) model, which is designed to give students a head start by making it possible to earn up to 60 college credit hours toward an associate’s degree before graduating high school.

TEXAS SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS ACADEMIES
We recognize the growing demand for talent in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, known collectively as STEM. Over the next decade, Texas is expected to represent 10 percent of the nation’s future STEM jobs. Educate Texas works with the TEA to close the gap between education and STEM opportunities through T-STEM (Texas Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) academies, which serve as labs for math and science learning and provide exposure to STEM innovation, design and real-world contexts.

INDUSTRY CLUSTER INNOVATIVE ACADEMIES AND PATHWAYS TO TECHNOLOGY EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS
In 2017, state leadership called for greater focus on education that prepares students to succeed in key state industries: Petroleum Refining and Chemical Products, Biotechnology and Life Sciences, Advanced Technologies and Manufacturing, and Information and Computer Technology. As a result, Educate Texas partnered with the TEA to support the Industry Cluster Innovative Academies (ICIA) initiative, which ensures that a high school’s curriculum paves the way for students to earn credentials, degrees and certificates in these industries in the regions where they live. Grants were awarded to 18 schools for the 2017-2018 school year. In addition, Educate Texas is partnering with the TEA to support Pathways to Technology Early College High Schools, known as P-TECH academies, which target workforce-ready partnerships between pre-K–12, higher education and industry.

BLENDED LEARNING
Educate Texas provided funding to Raising Blended Learners, an initiative of Raise Your Hand Texas that showcases strategies for combining traditional classroom teaching and online learning components that give students a degree of control over the time, place, path or pace of their learning. The goal is to personalize instruction and improve pre-K–12 student achievement across diverse student demographics and geographic regions in Texas, specifically in schools and districts with persistent achievement gaps. The funding from Educate Texas supported the selection of five demonstration sites to receive three-year grants and technical assistance to implement a blended learning program. The sites selected were the Birdville, Cisco, Pasadena and Point Isabel independent school districts, and KIPP Houston. Grantees were given the flexibility to define their own goals and priorities according to the needs of their student population—from raising overall scores on state standardized tests to lowering high school dropout rates or accelerating literacy among English language learners. Participants were required to demonstrate the long-term sustainability of their models and present a plan to expand early successes across their entire systems.

“Educate Texas is a trusted entity, thought partner and catalyst for new ideas and energy in the Dallas ISD.”

Dr. Michael Hinojosa
Dallas ISD Superintendent
WHEN A COMMUNITY BECOMES A CLASSROOM

IN 2010, THE LANCASTER INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT WAS AT A CROSSROADS. THE DISTRICT LACKED A PERMANENT SUPERINTENDENT, FACED FINANCIAL WOES AND STRUGGLED WITH LOW PERFORMANCE.

In May of that year, Dr. Michael McFarland became superintendent, bringing new energy and confidence to the school district’s effort to rebuild. Since the district was also one of the city of Lancaster’s largest employers, the district’s new vision needed to include a plan to revitalize its home city, which was attempting to stabilize after years of economic decline. District and community leaders came to a consensus: they wanted students to have real choices for the future tied to the disciplines of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

At the same time, research began to show that Texas high school students rank significantly higher for college and career readiness when they receive STEM-focused education beginning in sixth grade. This prompted Educate Texas to consider whether further gains could be made by beginning this work in kindergarten. Lancaster ISD was selected through a competitive process to participate in piloting this districtwide approach.

With a $4.8 million grant from the Texas Instruments (TI) Foundation, Lancaster ISD and Educate Texas launched the STEM Vision plan in March 2012 with a multi-faceted approach, that included emphasizing STEM awareness for students at the elementary level, exposure and engagement at the middle school level, and exploration and articulation of STEM knowledge at the high school level. The plan also included providing professional development for teachers through the STEM master’s degree program at University of North Texas at Dallas (UNTD). Lancaster ISD now requires all math and science secondary teachers to have a master’s degree and attend the 18-month UNTD program.

The grant concluded in 2017 and has been viewed as a great success for Lancaster ISD and the city of Lancaster on many levels. One bright spot has been the improved performance of African-American students in the district, who outperformed their peers across the state in math. The districtwide STEM collaboration with the TI Foundation and Educate Texas achieved positive systemic change and set in motion progress that Lancaster ISD and the city of Lancaster continue to experience.

Lancaster ISD African American students outperform African American students across Texas in Math STAAR exams.

Source: Commit Partnership Analysis of TEA Math STAAR Report for Grades 3-8 plus End-of-Course Exams, Meets Standard

“People can’t perform in a way that is inconsistent with how they see themselves. When I came to the school district, I’m not sure the parents, students or community saw themselves like they see themselves today. Now, they see themselves as something special, unique and capable of performing at high levels, and I think that is the first step to performing that way.”

Dr. Michael McFarland
Former Lancaster ISD Superintendent
STRENGTHENING the FRONT LINES

NATIONAL AND STATE RESEARCH SHOWS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT SCHOOL-RELATED FACTOR IN STUDENT SUCCESS IS THE QUALITY OF CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION.

This factor is magnified in Texas, where 350,000 teachers serve one of the largest student populations in the country. More than 30,000 new teachers join them each year. The consistent increase in the number of teachers entering the field has driven tremendous growth in the number of teacher preparation providers, while presenting challenges in maintaining quality control and consistency. The state’s focus has been on increasing the number of teachers, with the only real measure of quality existing in the passing of the teacher certification exam, which lacks rigor. Teaching candidates’ classroom experience is largely a matter of chance and can vary significantly, impacting their ability to succeed and creating disparity across the education system.

Educate Texas convened the Texas Teacher Preparation Collaborative in 2016 to analyze the challenges around preparation standards and identify best practices for teacher training. The Collaborative gathered Texas college and university deans of education, alternative certification leaders, teachers, principals, superintendents and advocacy leaders, and identified three areas for advancing a shared agenda: building a model for licensing and performance-based certification, developing an accountability system for teacher preparation providers and continuing professional development for teachers. The Collaborative members also served as a respected resource during the 2017 legislative session both to share best practices and to emphasize the importance of high standards in teaching preparation.

One of the first steps toward realizing these goals was using data to understand what works and where improvements can be made. In the fall of 2017, Educate Texas convened, in partnership with the Texas Education Agency, five statewide meetings to share existing data and to look for gaps in the data to better understand what to measure and how to measure it. For example, data helped uncover that many teachers were not taking jobs in the districts where they were mentored, moving to other places instead. Now, the district can turn its efforts to addressing retention strategies to keep trained teachers closer to home.

The most underperforming and economically disadvantaged pre-K–12 schools within a district do not attract top talent to teaching and leadership positions. As a result, students on these campuses often experience an uneven learning experience due to higher teacher turnover and a lack of well-trained teachers and quality instruction, particularly when compared to the learning experiences of students in other schools across the district.

To create equitable educational opportunities for all students, Educate Texas partnered with the Commit Partnership in 2018 to establish the Best in Class initiative, a North Texas effort focused on increasing the number of effective and diverse school teachers and leaders. A specific effort is to support the Accelerating Campus Excellence (ACE) program in Dallas. ACE was developed by the Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) in 2015 to identify the strongest teachers and principals across the district based on its multiple measure evaluation system. The district then incentivized these teachers and leaders to move to schools that needed the most leadership and student support.

In just two years, the Dallas ISD has achieved academic improvement in core content areas and reported higher student attendance and fewer disciplinary issues at ACE campuses. To support other districts in replicating this initiative, Best in Class convened district leaders in Dallas-Fort Worth to share best practices. In the fall of 2018, the Richardson Independent School District will embrace the ACE model at four campuses with a poverty rate of 90 percent, and the Garland Independent School District will deploy ACE at two of its highest-need campuses.
EDUCATION and THE WORKFORCE

NEXT GENERATION SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

Across the state, employers continue to face challenges with finding local job candidates who are prepared for the demands of the modern workplace. As part of an ongoing effort to create a qualified labor force in Texas, Educate Texas seeks to improve the way higher education and the workforce collaborate by putting employers at the center.

To do this, Educate Texas uses a business model called Next Generation Sector (Next Gen) Partnerships. This model creates collaboration between businesses of the same industry in a shared labor market region and education, workforce development, economic development and community organizations to address the workforce and other competitive needs of the targeted industry.

The greater level of collaboration and understanding fostered by the approach has opened the door for students and teachers to tour companies and spend time in real-world environments. In addition, employers are visiting school campuses to engage with students earlier and more often. In some instances, the success of these regions has even turned employers into advocates, who actively recruit others in their industries to engage with education.

FACULTY EXTERNSHIPS

In Houston, about 1.6 million available middle-skills jobs require higher education credentials. As of 2014, there were 26,555 petrochemical job postings in the region with a projected additional 11,000 jobs being added per year, according to a report from Burning Glass Technologies, a labor statistics analytical firm. On average, 25 percent of petrochemical employees are 55 or older, which means even if 100 percent of students currently entering petrochemical pathways join the workforce, there are not enough of them to fill both new positions and posts left open through the aging-out process.

To close the gap between educated candidates and job opportunity, Educate Texas partnered with the Houston STEM Degree Accelerator team to increase the number of students pursuing petrochemical postsecondary credentials and entering the industry in the Gulf Coast region. Early in the process, it became clear that not only was there a shortage of occupational instructors overall, but instructors needed support in keeping their technical knowledge and skills current, as they must integrate both theoretical and hands-on knowledge in the classroom.

To address the need for cutting-edge classroom instruction, the Houston STEM Degree Accelerator team piloted a faculty externship program that allowed instructors to spend a full 40-hour paid week working on-site at petrochemical companies. Faculty members said they benefited from the externships even if they had recently worked in the industry, because they experienced new technologies and learned about different sizes and types of companies across the country. Faculty externs were also able to identify gaps between college curricula and on-the-job training. In addition, they could directly observe individuals on the job, and network with individuals from all levels and departments to gain different perspectives as to how students perform once they enter the workplace. These lessons translate to the classroom, informing teaching and learning practices that play an important role in increasing student retention in STEM pathways.

WEST TEXAS AND MANUFACTURING

With the support of Educate Texas and assistance from Workforce Solutions of West Central Texas, a diverse group of manufacturing executives in West Texas met in early 2017 and formed a Next Gen Partnership. Their goal is to support the stability and growth of the manufacturing industry in West Texas by focusing on worker retention strategies, identifying training needs, increasing partnerships with schools, recruitment strategies and soft skills development.

The Next Gen model has already been impactful for employers in West Texas. “We appreciate the generosity and support of Educate Texas, which have been essential in launching our partnership and helping us move forward... I really enjoyed participating in the Texas Next Generation Sector Partnership Academy in Austin in early November,” says Steve Dye, Manager of Information Services at R.E. Dye Manufacturing Corporation and a participant-turned-advocate of Next Gen Partnerships who now actively recruits other companies to join. “I learned a tremendous amount hearing from employers and leaders from other partnerships who have engaged in this work for many years. This was a truly valuable experience for me and the rest of our team.”

“We appreciate the generosity and support of Educate Texas, which have been essential in launching our partnership and helping us move forward.”

Steve Dye
Manager of Information Services at R.E. Dye Manufacturing Corp.
Now, imagine enrolling at that college and discovering that your community college social science course, for instance, is not a qualifying course for your major. In fact, while many of your credits may transfer, they may not count toward your degree. Your time and money have been wasted. For many students who are already at an economic disadvantage, this can be a serious impediment to earning a college degree.

As it turns out, those essential classes — commonly referred to as “the basics” — are not universally agreed upon among institutions of higher education. Addressing obstacles like this one has been the work of the Texas Student Success Council (TSSC), convened quarterly by Educate Texas since 2012. The Council members include education and business leaders, philanthropists and state agencies who work together to develop legislative policy recommendations with a significant focus on students’ ability to transfer credits and credentials between Texas institutions of higher education. Educate Texas shares these recommendations with legislators and their staff members to inform them of the barriers faced by students and potential solutions to the obstacles.

Prior to 2017, community college students who were undecided as to their majors were not required to file a degree plan until they had finished 45 credit hours, or about a year and a half of school for those attending full-time. The TSSC determined that a simple approach could reduce hardship and inefficiency through a policy that required students to file a degree plan earlier. This one step could diminish the amount of excess credit earned and save students and their families’ money.

In 2017, House Bill 655 by Texas State Rep. Travis Clardy and Sen. Judith Zaffirini became law—requiring that community college students declare a major at 30 hours. This change applies to community college students statewide and will affect about 110,000 students in its first year.

“Ensuring students are on a clear pathway early on will help them save time and money in their pursuit of a degree, and will help us all in our efforts to meet the goals of 60x30TX.”

Richard Rhodes
President/Chief Executive Officer, Austin Community College

Educate Texas strives to increase college access and graduation rates among historically underserved and economically disadvantaged students through Texas College Access Network (TxCAN). The mission of TxCAN, funded by Greater Texas Foundation, is to increase postsecondary access for all students by building statewide partnerships, strengthening Local College Access Networks (LCANs) and scaling best practices.

Following a strategic assessment, TxCAN revised its approach to align with the 60x30TX plan from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), which recognizes that by 2030, 60 percent of Texans ages 25-34 will need a higher education credential to be gainfully employed. TxCAN supports its partners throughout the state by providing critical data, convening leaders and advisors, developing blueprints for LCANs and providing professional development. In the future, TxCAN hopes to offer matching grants for local programs and work with its partners to identify sound policies to create greater access to postsecondary education for many first-generation college students.

“Counselors, advisors, mentors and other practitioners across the state are working hard to help students achieve their higher education goals,” said Sue McMillin, president and CEO of Greater Texas Foundation. “TxCAN will connect these professionals with each other in an ongoing, highly structured way ultimately strengthening efforts to increase college access and completion in the state.”
A PLACE of PROMISE

COLLEGE HAS NOT ALWAYS BEEN AS ACCESSIBLE AS IT IS TODAY FOR STUDENTS IN THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY. THE STUDENTS ARE PART OF A MOSTLY HISPANIC POPULATION IN THE STATE’S FOUR SOUTHERNMOST COUNTIES THAT IS 86 PERCENT ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED.

What is changing this story for the better is RGV FOCUS, an initiative of Educate Texas that supports college readiness, access and completion in the region by aligning systems and processes between four public institutions of higher education and 37 school districts. The initiative also works to identify and remove barriers students face when applying for, entering, attending and completing college, with the goal of increasing educational attainment in the region.

As part of this alignment, RGV FOCUS and its partners activated the Culture of Attending College Action Network in 2013 to develop a regional strategy that would help college access professionals provide early college awareness information, pre-college advising on admissions and financial aid application completion. The Network is made up of financial aid professionals, counselors and community organizers. Because a completed FAFSA is a strong indicator of likely college attendance, the Network activated a strategy to encourage more high school seniors to complete a financial aid application, either the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA) for DREAMers and other undocumented students. They did this in three significant ways:

First, partners developed a single process for state aid applicants to submit financial aid applications at local institutions of higher education and built a counselor toolkit for this process, which resulted in an 18 percent increase in FAFSA completions in the Rio Grande Valley.

Second, partners facilitated a federal policy change to include 19-year-olds in the formula for calculating FAFSA completions. Previously, the Department of Education only included students in the FAFSA completion calculations if they were 18 years old or younger. Some students in the region were not being counted as having completed the FAFSA simply due to turning 19 years old before the beginning of their first year in college. With this new age consideration, virtually all eligible seniors in the Rio Grande Valley are completing FAFSA applications.

Third, in a collective response to the new federal financial aid application calendar and “Prior-Prior Year” tax return policy, Educate Texas and RGV FOCUS convened the leaders from the four state colleges in the region to discuss aligning their financial aid calendars. As a result, financial aid packages began being distributed in November, directly following the new FAFSA application window.

With these roadblocks out of the way, the focus turned to supporting students in completing FAFSA applications. One approach adopted by the Network is called “Super Saturday.” At these events, held on the same day at each of the four institutions of higher education, the respective financial aid, admissions and enrollment professionals provide assistance to students in filling out the FAFSA to complete their college applications.

The financial aid application process has posed a significant hurdle to postsecondary access, but by implementing the above strategies and providing monthly FAFSA completion progress reports to school districts, the region has reported increased FAFSA completions.

FAFSA COMPLETION IN RIO GRANDE VALLEY

- **18%** Increase in FAFSA applications
- **74%** September 2016
- **56%** September 2017

The statewide average as of September 2017 was 62%.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Educate Texas
COLLECTIVE IMPACT
Supporting students in earning college credits while in high school has also been a primary focus of educational leaders through the Collaborative for Academic Excellence, housed at the University of Texas in El Paso, for 25 years.

Now, El Paso sees the potential for something bigger with a vision of strengthening education and the workforce for the entire area. Educate Texas is partnering with the Collaborative to develop a unified regional mindset toward education and its direct connection to the quality of the workforce and the prosperity of the community.

This partnership is aimed at preparing students for higher education from their earliest school days to better equip them for thriving careers within the region. The effort employs a Collective Impact model to bring together the entire education system, from pre-K–12 to college, as well as local nonprofits and workforce leaders. A local community scorecard will be published next year to reveal the progress and commitment toward a stronger El Paso.

“Educate Texas has changed the landscape of education in our state. In El Paso, we were the first to adopt the Early College High School model introduced by Educate Texas. Now, 74 percent of our students receive an associate’s degree while still in high school, versus the national average of 24 percent.”

Dr. William Serrata
President of El Paso Community College and leader of the Collaborative for Academic Excellence
IN AUGUST 2017, HURRICANE HARVEY DEVASTATED THE GULF COAST JUST AS A NEW SCHOOL YEAR WAS STARTING.

The storm is estimated to have disrupted the lives of more than 1.4 million public school students. Educate Texas’ wide-ranging network of public agencies and private philanthropists and our credible and trusted reputation for delivering impact put us in the unique position to establish two funds to help students affected by the storm in expedited ways.

The first fund, Harvey KIDS (Keeping Impacted Districts Supported), provided support to K–12 districts and schools that served more than 76,000 students affected by the storm. The fund raised $1.6 million and was distributed to 25 districts across the region to address a range of needs, from transportation to mental health counseling associated with the trauma of the storm, and many things in between. In Aransas County ISD, for example, a Harvey KIDS grant enabled the replacement of equipment for special needs students.

The second fund, Harvey HELP (Higher Education Learning Pathways), was established for college and university students affected by the hurricane. Many students’ studies were interrupted by challenges including loss of income, property, transportation and school materials, making it difficult or impossible for them to continue their education. Harvey HELP raised more than $1 million to provide emergency aid to 50 community colleges and universities. In one instance, the funding helped pay for textbooks and provided financial support for a Texas State University student, Charlie Grisson.

IN AUGUST 2017, HURRICANE HARVEY DEVASTATED THE GULF COAST JUST AS A NEW SCHOOL YEAR WAS STARTING.

“Without the fund, I would have been late on repaying my loan and I would have had to go an entire semester without half my textbooks.”

Charlie Grisson
Texas State University Student, who received financial assistance through Harvey HELP

**1.4M**

Public school students’ lives disrupted by Hurricane Harvey

**$2.6M**

Funds raised to support the Harvey KIDS and HELP Education Funds

**GULF COAST DISTRICTS FUNDED BY HARVEY KIDS**

Size of bubble indicates the relative number of students impacted within the school/ISD
Educate Texas knows that it will take a highly coordinated and intentional effort to reach our state’s 60x30TX plan, which seeks to address the connection between higher education credentials and the potential for career success in a rapidly evolving marketplace. That is why Educate Texas collaborates with the three state agencies, Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), to identify effective strategies, policies and support that ensure Texas students gain the knowledge, skills and experiences to be successful in school, the workforce and life. Educate Texas partners with these agencies by building networks that identify opportunities to create clear paths across the pre-K–12, higher education and workforce systems, sharing data and evidence of effective practices, and providing on-the-ground technical assistance to help make these practices come to life.

As an example, Educate Texas has worked closely with the TEA to support their mission and work in several ways. With the state’s strategic planning process in 2017, Educate Texas supported the TEA by engaging a wide array of stakeholders who could offer ideas on key areas that would benefit students, and ensuring that a broad range of perspectives were heard on these issues. In one of the state’s priority areas around effective teaching, Educate Texas laid the groundwork through our Texas Teaching Commission and Texas Teacher Preparation Collaborative reports, which provided data and research around important improvements in the preparation, development and retention of teachers. These insights helped to inform recommendations for enhancing the practices of teacher preparation programs across the state, which impact more than 30,000 newly certified teachers every year.
Educate Texas convenes the Texas Philanthropy Leadership Circle (TPLC) – with state and national philanthropic investors – twice a year to highlight critical Texas education issues, emerging research and funding opportunities. Our intent is to bring our philanthropic partners together to build a network that will accelerate the learning achieved through individual investments, coordinate support to fuel new ideas and expand successful practices, and support a more effective deployment of philanthropic resources to address the needs of our students and systems. An example of this in 2017 was the development of the Harvey KIDS and HELP funds to address the needs that arose from the devastating hurricane.

CONNECTING for GREATER IMPACT

IN A STATE THE SIZE OF TEXAS, EFFECTING CHANGE ACROSS THE ENTIRE EDUCATION SYSTEM REQUIRES ALIGNED PRIORITIES, SHARED PRACTICES AND OPTIMIZATION OF RESOURCES.

HELP US REACH the 2020 TIPPING POINT

A donation to Educate Texas is an investment in momentum, and the more people who participate, the greater the momentum. Please connect with us at edtxdevelopment@cftexas.org for more information on how you can support our cause.
OUR TEAM

THE EDUCATE TEXAS TEAM

Meet the team of dedicated professionals who put their time and talents to work every day for the students of Texas.

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OUR COMMITTEE and TRUSTEES

THE EDUCATE TEXAS COMMITTEE AND TRUSTEES
Our thanks to those who provide leadership and vision in building an educational system that serves all Texas students.

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Committee Chair/Former Texas State Senator
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A SPECIAL THANKS
Educate Texas is proud to recognize and honor our donors and philanthropic partners who share our vision for a future where every student’s potential is maximized and, thus, creates a stronger workforce and a prosperous state where all Texans have a path to success.

We are pleased to acknowledge the following major donors and supporters:

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Educate Texas is proud to be an initiative of Communities Foundation of Texas, which enhances the experience and impact of giving by stimulating creative solutions to key challenges in communities across the state and beyond.