

2014

REDEFINING EDUCATION THROUGH
INNOVATIVE PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS



EDUCATE TEXAS

a public-private initiative of Communities Foundation of Texas



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VISION

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

Executive Summary

With the nation's shifting demographics and the urgent call for a higher-skilled, higher-educated population, Texas serves as a bellwether for developing and deploying innovations that better address workforce needs.

Over the past 10 years, Educate Texas, a public-private initiative of Communities Foundation of Texas (CFT), has emerged as an influential, education reform leader by aligning strategic, collaborative relationships and resources among diverse groups seeking meaningful change for Texas students.

The early support and key leadership from public partners including the Texas Legislature, Office of the Governor and the Texas Education Agency set the foundation for the growth and success of Educate Texas and continues to play a major role in its evolution as an organization. Support and funding contributed by private partners including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Greater Texas Foundation, the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, The Meadows Foundation and the W.W. Caruth, Jr. Foundation allowed Educate Texas to embrace new and innovative initiatives that have become national models for success.

Among Educate Texas' many significant public-private accomplishments, its success with two signature models, Early College High Schools (ECHS) and Texas Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (T-STEM) Academies, stands out. In 2004, Educate Texas served 400 students through T-STEM and ECHS. A decade later and with an average annual growth of 95 percent, these programs now boast an estimated enrollment of 63,000 students for the 2013-2014 school year.





OUR PROGRAMS GRADUATE
FIFTEEN PERCENT MORE
college-ready students than
the state average

TWICE AS MANY

of our students are
completing AP or
dual credit courses
than Texas students

Our graduates

are going to
college at a

rate **16%** higher

than Texas students



Our graduates are persisting in college
at a rate **21%** higher than Texas students



An ECHS or T-STEM student is projected
to earn **\$250,000** more over their
lifetime than a Texas high school student

IMPACT SNAPSHOT

135 ECHS AND T-STEM
ACADEMIES 



NINETY-FOUR
SCHOOL DISTRICTS

63,000+

STUDENTS

CURRENTLY ENROLLED

75% HISTORICALLY

UNDERREPRESENTED

AND ECONOMICALLY

DISADVANTAGED



Several key factors provide momentum for the development of this robust initiative and accelerate the successful rise of T-STEM and ECHS Academies across Texas:

- **Increase Student Engagement within a College-Going Culture** – These school models use rigorous instructional strategies that allow students to take ownership of their education, grapple with complex academic content, and move from passive listener to active participant and highly engaged problem-solver, all within a supportive, college-going school culture.
- **Create a Dynamic Network for Learning and Exploration** – Educate Texas builds a network of practitioners and leaders committed to pioneering and scaling innovation across the state, and continues to refine and improve instructional models and methods. Convening school leaders, providing robust technical assistance, and focusing on continuous improvement establishes the ideal platform for success.
- **Build and Maintain an Innovative Cross-Sector Platform** – Educate Texas serves as a powerful platform for bringing together a wide variety of influential leaders from the public, private, and philanthropic sectors and investing resources to pilot and scale promising, evidence-based practices. Public partners remain impressed by the availability of private dollars and commitment to these strategies, and private funders are reassured that there is an innovative public partner committed to statewide scaling.

This report, which was written after conducting a thorough review of Educate Texas’ implementation strategy, highlights the historical context, resources, and practices that helped launch the initiative. It summarizes the lessons learned, which were identified through stakeholder interviews with individuals who participated in developing Educate Texas. As a result, pertinent information was gathered about a number of important topics including: developing and supporting ECHS and T-STEM Academies; building a statewide network of high performing schools; and enhancing the public-private initiative.

While launching and managing a public-private initiative in a dynamic ecosystem can be daunting and challenging, the past decade of innovation and impact has provided a glimpse into the potential benefit of strategic and intentional collaboration among a broad group of stakeholders. Educate Texas has demonstrated how this commitment to the public-private model can align institutions toward a shared vision for student success and can translate ideas and resources into remarkable achievements for leaders, teachers, and most importantly students.

Looking to the future, if economic and workforce projections are accurate, the majority of the workforce in Texas will require a postsecondary credential by 2020. To ensure the educational pipeline is primed to support our students in their postsecondary pursuits, business as usual will not be sufficient; new programmatic and policy changes in public and higher education systems will be required. Harnessing the power of the Educate Texas public-private initiative will be critical to strengthening our educational system and building a prosperous and vibrant Texas.

What ARE Early College High School(s) and T-STEM Academie(s)?

Early College High School

Early College High Schools (ECHS) blend high school and college curricula into a simultaneous educational experience that gives traditionally underserved students the opportunity to graduate with both a high school diploma and an Associate's degree, or up to 60 college credits. All ECHS have a higher education partner (either a two- or four-year college) that collaborates closely with the school district to ensure that students experience all aspects of college culture while in high school. ECHS are usually located on or near a college campus, which exposes students to the collegiate experience and helps students become comfortable in a higher education environment. While dual credit serves as the foundation upon which this program is built, the core of the school model is student engagement. In addition, the schools develop a comprehensive system of supports that are specifically designed to help the ECHS target population develop college-ready skills. ECHS students receive free college tuition, transportation from high school to college, laptops, testing, and textbooks, and are provided with extensive academic counseling and support to ease the transition to college. ECHS helps equip students to overcome the financial, academic, emotional, and social hurdles that historically prevent many students from entering and succeeding in college.

T-STEM Academy and T-STEM Centers

Texas Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (T-STEM) offers a fundamental approach to empowering teachers, inspiring students, and advancing studies in these four disciplines. T-STEM Academies serve as demonstration schools and learning labs where students are exposed to STEM subjects in an integrated manner through project-based learning. This unique learning environment increases student engagement by providing relevant real-world experiences in the classroom. Further, these applied learning opportunities present students with contemporary challenges in design and innovation, while simultaneously offering dual credit and Advanced Placement courses to prepare them for the rigors of college. The T-STEM Centers, created to serve the needs of the Academies (located at universities and regional education service centers), coordinate with business and industry partners and offer high quality, professional development and instructional materials to build content knowledge in mathematics and science.

This report was commissioned by Educate Texas, who engaged Safal Partners to conduct and synthesize in-depth interviews with 9 internal and 13 external stakeholders, as well as reviews of secondary sources such as past program evaluations and program documentation. It is not a formal program evaluation, but rather an institutional history and an attempt to answer and document knowledge from those who have designed, scaled, funded, and implemented ECHS and T-STEM across Texas.



I. Launch and Evolution of Educate Texas

Educate Texas, which began as the Texas High School Project, was launched in 2003 in response to a growing crisis of declining completion rates for Texas high school students, a low percentage of minority, low-income, and first-generation students obtaining post-secondary credentials, and an increasing awareness of the social and economic consequences of Texas not graduating enough career-ready students, especially in STEM fields. Over the course of its evolution, Educate Texas has understood the problem to be not only one of low high school graduation, but also the need for students to earn postsecondary credentials, either a (four-year, two-year, technical degree, or workforce certificate) in order to fully participate in the workforce.

From the start, there were several influential political and social forces that accelerated the work led by Educate Texas (see Graphic 1: Key Events in Educate Texas History). With the passage of the “No Child Left Behind” Act in 2001, championed by Texas’ former governor, President George W. Bush, many looked to Texas to lead the charge in school reform and redesign. In addition, there was a growing awareness of the shifting demographics in the state. The student population was increasingly Latino and economically disadvantaged, and required a statewide education strategy to support all Texas students.

Both Texas business and political leaders were committed to addressing the education and workforce needs of the state, and as a result, the Texas Legislature passed a series of laws that established the starting point for Early College High Schools (ECHS) in

*Brent Christopher,
President and CEO of
CFT, recalls, “at that
point no one envisioned
the full scale and scope of
what Educate Texas has
become today.”*

Texas. In 2003, Senate Bill 976 (SB 976), created a pilot program known as Middle College High School, which allowed students to attend high school on a college campus and earn both a high school diploma and an associate's degree simultaneously. House Bill 415 (HB 415), which also passed in 2003, expanded on SB 976 and allowed both a high school and its higher education partner to receive state funding for each student enrolled in dual credit courses. This legislation not only mitigated the potential conflict of interest between public and higher education, but provided an incentive for both institutions to work together. The first ECHS in Texas opened in 2004 independent from Educate Texas, but was quickly integrated into its network.

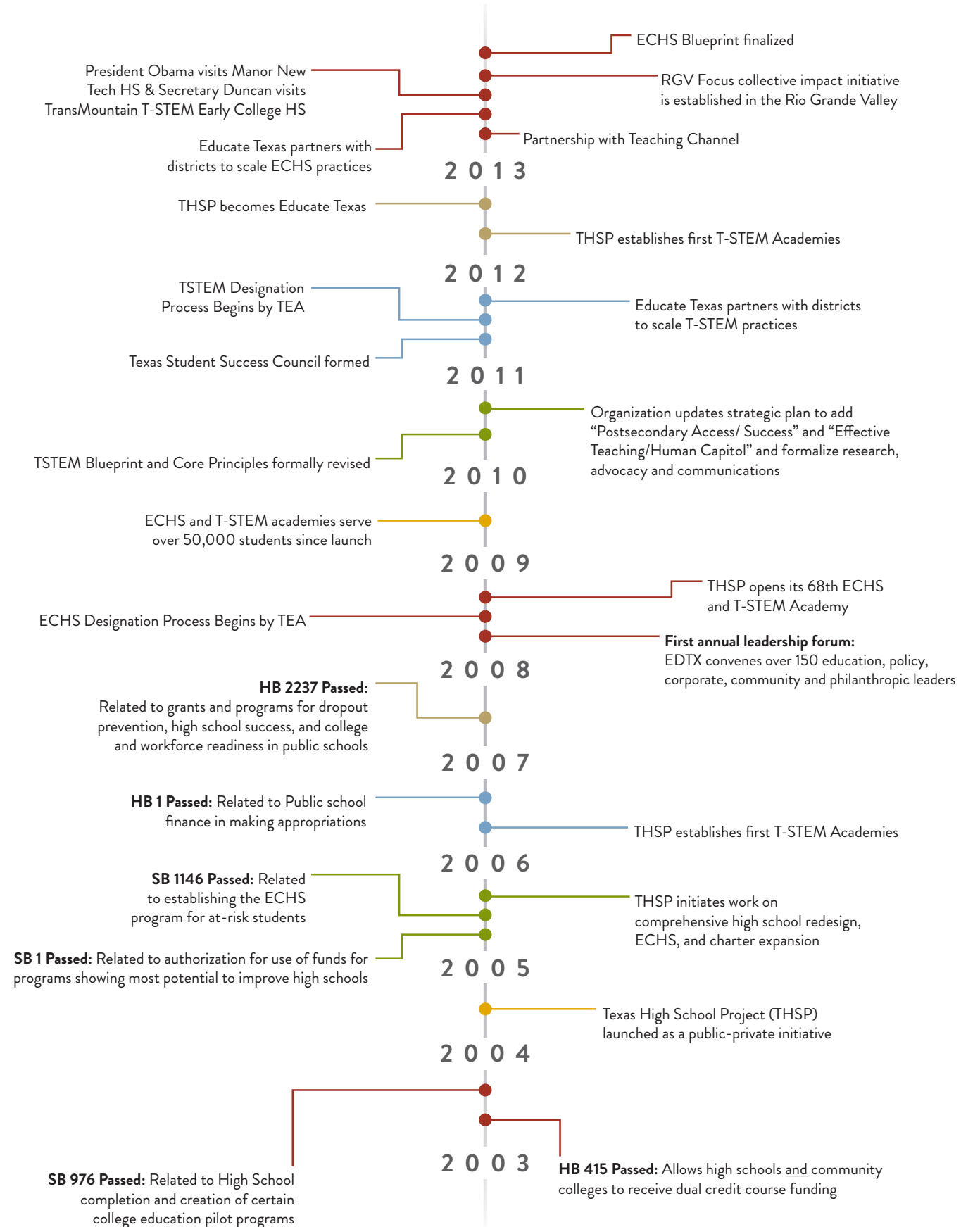
Conversations to build a public-private initiative began between leaders at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (who at the time also were developing similar initiatives in North Carolina and Ohio), the Governor's Office, Texas Legislature, Texas Education Agency (TEA), and the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation. In 2003, As a result, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation presented initial ideas to key Texas foundations, and encouraged major investment in the statewide education reform initiative.

Communities Foundation of Texas (CFT) offered to serve as the fiscal intermediary and program manager for private philanthropic funds and launched the Texas High School Project (now Educate Texas). Soon thereafter, Governor Rick Perry broadened the portfolio by announcing the creation of the statewide Texas Science Technology Education and Math (T-STEM) initiative along with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, CFT, the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, and National Instruments. As part of the original operating structure, philanthropic funds flowed largely through CFT and public funds appropriated by the Texas Legislature remained under the oversight of TEA.

In 2005, T-STEM and ECHS were expanded further through two more important pieces of legislation. Senate Bill 1146 (SB 1146) sponsored by Senator Florence Shapiro expanded the Middle College pilot and enabled Early College High Schools to flourish. Senator Shapiro commented, "In 2005, the legislation for Early College High Schools set Texas apart from other states. This opportunity gave students a greater incentive to not only finish the last two years of high school, but the first two years of college in tandem. It was a transformational model then and now."

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Graphic 1: Key Events in Educate Texas History



Source: Policy documents provided by Priscilla Aquino-Garza, Educate Texas; Interview with Jan Lindsey, TEA

now.” and tasked TEA and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to develop a process for reviewing and approving the program.

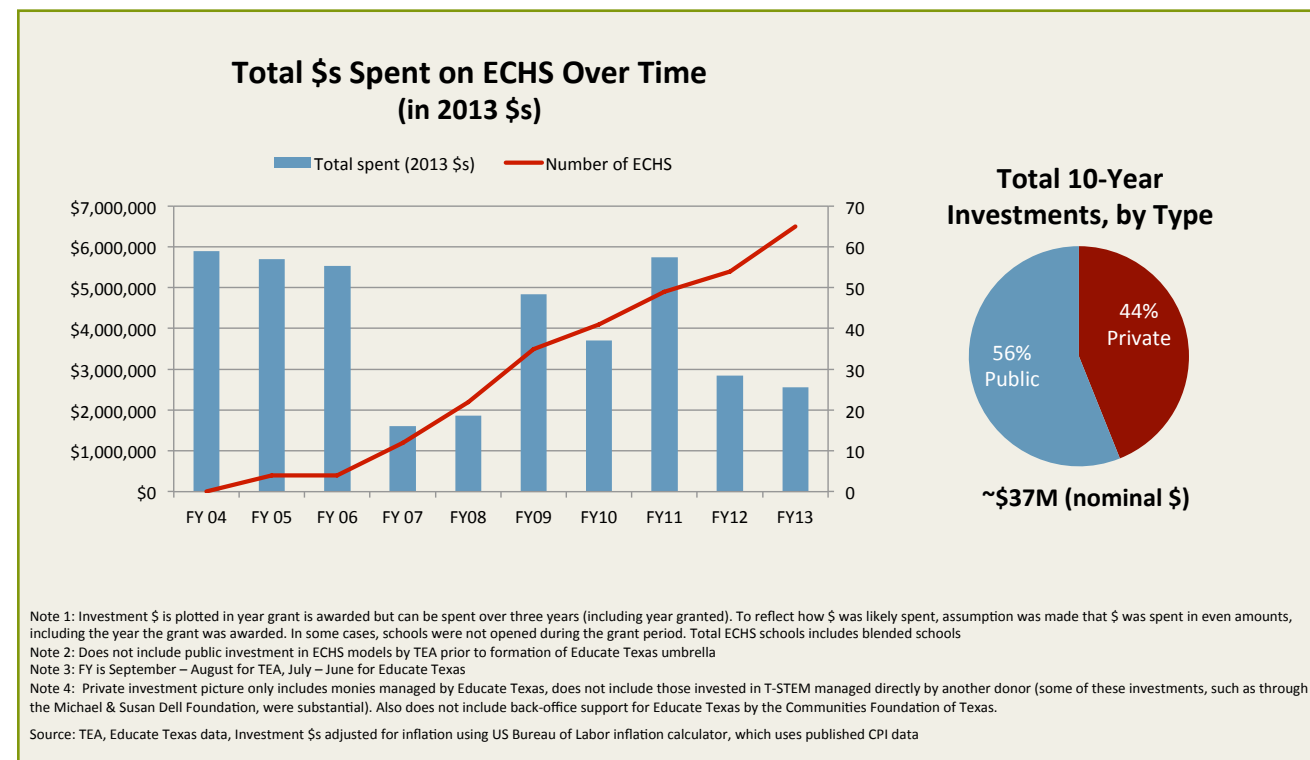
The Texas Legislature also adopted House Bill 1 (HB 1) in 2005 that increased state graduation requirements and focused increased attention on college and career readiness. Additionally, with the passage HB1, approximately \$9.3M in FY2006 was appropriated to ECHS and T-STEM programs. TEA administered the funds through a competitive grant process that provided seed money for school districts to implement T-STEM and ECHS at designated schools. It also provided funds for ongoing technical assistance to these schools (including coaching for leaders and teachers) and the development of statewide networks of support, which was competitively contracted to Educate Texas. Because of its investments over the past decade, TEA has been the single largest funder of T-STEM Academies and ECHS in the state (See Graphic 2: Funding for ECHS over Time and By Type and Graphic 3: Funding for T-STEM over Time and By Type).

The involvement of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation added credibility to the effort and furthered the interest and commitment of public agencies and policymakers. In turn, private foundations were attracted by the opportunity to gain new insights into the vision and decision-making process of state policymakers, and align their investments with the direction of the state. Prior to this, many of the partners had not previously engaged in collective grantmaking and Educate Texas provided an opportunity to coordinate their efforts.

Educate Texas continues to operate under the umbrella of Communities Foundation of Texas. The organization’s staff members are employees of CFT, and it is governed by a committee of CFT Board of Trustees, currently chaired by former state Senator Florence Shapiro. CFT supports Educate Texas by providing infrastructure funding and key operating and coordination roles. Concurrently, Educate Texas convenes all public and private partners, leads strategy and implementation initiatives, and plays an important role in influencing the priorities and strategy of CFT.

Educate Texas staff believe that being part of CFT was “mission critical” for Educate Texas. According to John Fitzpatrick, Executive Director of Educate Texas, “being housed at CFT fostered trust and confidence on the philanthropic and public sides, and allowed Educate Texas to work with quality and fidelity while also learning the ropes and making mistakes.” Moreover, Educate Texas has played an important role in influencing the priorities and

Graphic 2: Funding for ECHS over Time and By Type



strategy of the Communities Foundation of Texas, which has leveraged the expertise of Educate Texas staff to “move the needle” on education in Texas.

The Texas Education Agency played a critical role in the success of the work throughout its history, starting with the initial groundwork for the collaborative.

“The partnership with TEA was critical since they funded nearly two-thirds of our effort, which allowed school districts to have trust and confidence in Educate Texas, through our affiliation with TEA. The alliance between Educate Texas and TEA has successfully leveraged the strengths of both sides [public and private] and helped strongly facilitate the successes of the T-STEM and ECHS network,.” Fitzpatrick continued.

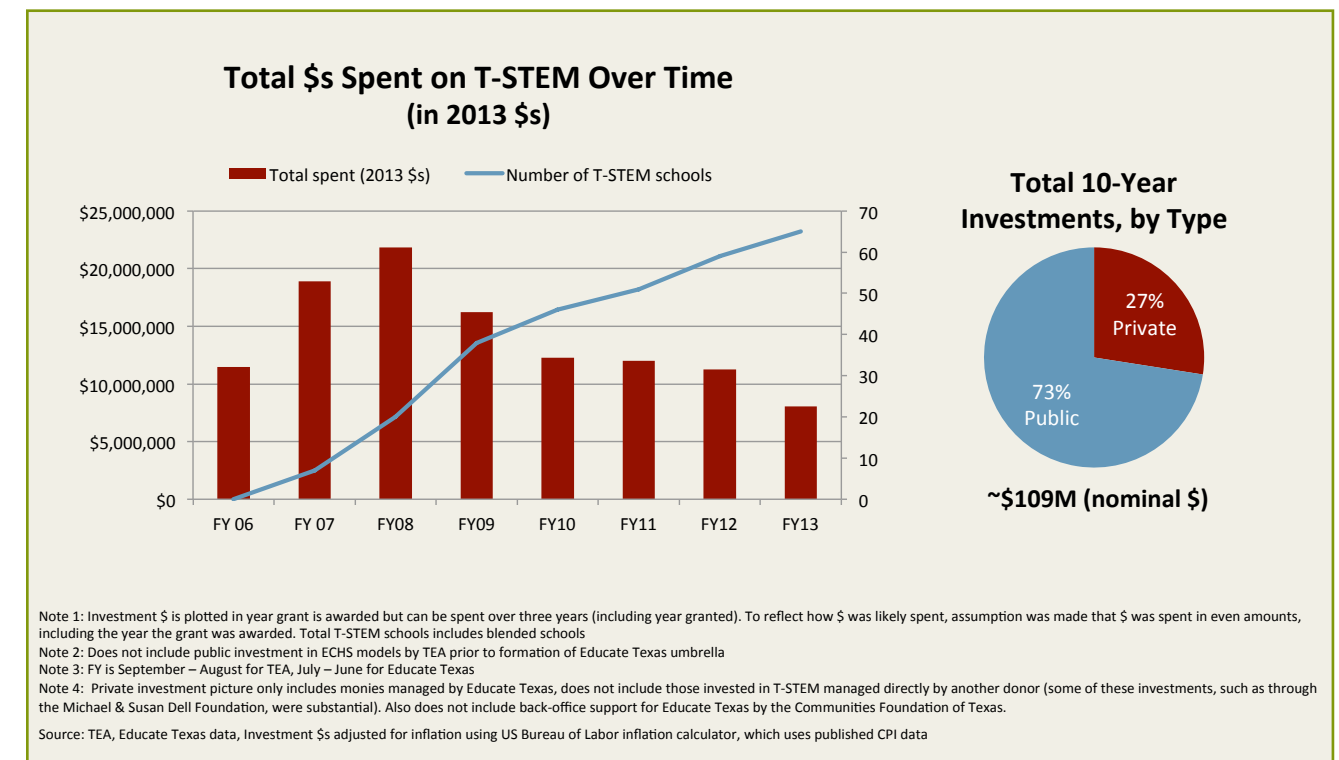
Educate Texas is responsible for raising, managing, and distributing private philanthropic funding, while TEA manages all public funds in support of ECHS and T-STEM, including: seed funding for schools, technical assistance, professional development, and coaching. TEA also directly funds the operations of T-STEM centers, while Educate Texas is responsible for planning and coordination of the programs.

Although the private and public philanthropic seed funding provided an incentive for opening new schools, it supplied only a small fraction necessary to operate a T-STEM Academy or ECHS. Partners were keenly aware that schools would need to develop sustainable operating models and build infrastructure crucial to continuing the programs past the initial grant period. One such strategy was to develop a formal application and designation process for ECHS and T-STEM to ensure quality and fidelity in replication.

“The Texas Education Agency, like our private partner Educate Texas, has learned a great deal over the past decade about how to provide a rigorous STEM and ECHS education to low-income, first-generation students,” said Jan Lindsey, Director for Dropout Prevention and College and Career Readiness Initiative, Texas Education Agency. “The student achievement data, increased college-going rates and national recognition are all affirmations of the initial strategy of a public-private initiative.”

In 2008, TEA enacted the ECHS designation process, which was purposefully designed to help define the essential components of a quality ECHS. Under the terms of the process, schools designated by TEA as Early Colleges

Graphic 3: Funding For T-Stem Over Time and by Type



receive a waiver from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) that allows their students, starting from the ninth grade (compared to eleventh grade at traditional schools), to take dual credit courses so they can graduate high school with an associate's degree or up to 60 college credits.

In 2011, TEA developed a designation process for T-STEM Academies. The purpose of the T-STEM and ECHS processes is to ensure high-quality implementation of the programs by defining "non-negotiable" components required of every school eligible to receive support from Educate Texas and to join the network (e.g. that "all schools offer a system of supports which develop academic and social skills as well as the behaviors and conditions necessary for college completion").

To be considered an ECHS or T-STEM Academy today, a school must go through an annual designation process – regardless of how they are funded – to ensure that they are operating to the highest standards of quality. Participating schools are not automatically guaranteed to receive designation and must re-apply each year; a small number of schools have lost designation. The designation process has played an important role in codifying the T-STEM and ECHS models, as well as in maintaining quality across the state.

In 2011, a national recession led to a decrease in funding across many areas of the state budget, including a \$5.4 billion reduction in public education funding. This reduction resulted in an 85 percent decrease in public funding for the T-STEM and ECHS programs. Consequently, TEA focused its efforts on ensuring the quality of the models through the designation process and on providing technical assistance to school districts and colleges that wanted to implement the programs without providing initial seed funding – resulting in 90 percent of the campuses in the network maintaining active programs. Today, TEA continues to support professional development and technical assistance through Educate Texas and the T-STEM Centers for all designated T-STEM Academies and ECHS.

On the philanthropic side, over the last decade there has been both an expansion and shift in support by national and Texas-based foundations supporting the growth and expansion of Early College High Schools and T-STEM Academies. Both the BMGF and the MSDF fulfilled their collective commitment of \$50 million for supporting the development and creation of Early College High Schools and T-STEM Academies from 2004-2011. Since 2011, both BMGF and MSDF shifted priorities to support Texas schools in areas such as data-driven decision making, effective teaching, performance management and advocacy. Both organizations have remained strategic thought partners and advisors with Educate Texas. National Instruments, an early T-STEM funder and partner, has remained a statewide leader on STEM education and continues to be an active partner with Educate Texas.

Since 2009, four Texas-based foundations, Greater Texas Foundation, Meadows Foundation, Texas Instruments Foundation and W.W. Caruth Jr. Foundation of CFT have become strategic partners and funders in the expansion of Early College High Schools and T-STEM Academies. The Greater Texas Foundation has focused on Early College expansion on the Texas-Mexico border from El Paso to Brownsville while Texas Instruments Foundation has focused on T-STEM in North Texas school district of Lancaster ISD. The Meadows Foundation and W.W. Caruth Jr. Foundation have both supported expansion of both Early College and T-STEM statewide. All four Texas foundations are valuable thought partners and key participants in the public-private initiatives led by Educate Texas.

Throughout these changes in funding and focus, Educate Texas, in collaboration with TEA, has played a leading role in maintaining fidelity of the program models and driving efforts to expand the T-STEM and ECHS networks across Texas. Interestingly, despite the elimination of start-up funding, community and school district interest in these ECHS and T-STEM models continues to grow. In fact, the models and their accompanying student outcomes have proven so compelling that many more local leaders are applying to open these schools despite the lack of initial seed funding.

Over time, the Educate Texas public-private initiative has grown to become the largest of its size and scale in the nation. Together, the private and public partners that have worked together to create this network have fulfilled several key roles throughout the years including:

- Convening, research and idea generation;
- Grantmaking;
- Program development and execution;
- Public engagement;
- Policy recommendations; and
- Advocacy.

Who Were the Founding Partners?

Communities Foundation of Texas

Communities Foundation of Texas (CFT) is a public charity established in 1953 whose mission is to stimulate creative solutions to key challenges in Texas communities. During the 2012 fiscal year, CFT disbursed \$66 million to communities across Texas in the areas of education (33 percent), health and scientific research, religious activities, housing and human services, community improvement, arts & culture, and youth & recreation. According to the Foundation Center, CFT is among the top 25 largest community foundations in the nation. CFT supports Educate Texas by serving as the parent organization, as well as providing funding to support its strategy and organization.

Texas Education Agency

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is the state agency whose mission is to provide leadership, guidance and resources to help K-12 districts and schools meet the educational needs of all Texas students. TEA has allocated and managed all public monies designated to fund T-STEM Centers, T-STEM Academies, and ECHS in the state. In addition, TEA has developed and implemented programmatic and statewide policies designed to scale these programs while maintaining the integrity of the T-STEM and ECHS models through its designation processes for both programs.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) provides leadership and coordination for the Texas higher education system. Created by the Texas Legislature in 1965, the Board has worked to achieve excellence in higher education by increasing postsecondary completions, making college affordable and accessible for all Texas students, and aligning higher education outcomes with current and future workforce needs. THECB was instrumental in developing policies which supported the ECHS and T-STEM programs, including allowing high schools and community colleges to receive state funding for dual credit courses, and overseeing the requirements for dual credit.

Office of the Governor and Texas Legislature

The Texas Legislature and the Office of the Governor provided invaluable support for the creation and implementation of Educate Texas through legislation that allowed for the creation of ECHS, to the launch of T-STEM by Governor Rick Perry.

Philanthropic Partners

Communities Foundation of Texas served as a convener and grant manager for seed funding from an array of national and state philanthropic partners including: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (which initiated the first major investment in Educate Texas), Ford Foundation, Greater Texas Foundation, Houston Endowment, The Meadows Foundation, Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, National Instruments, Texas Guaranteed, Texas Instruments Foundation, and The Wallace Foundation. Throughout the past 10 years, philanthropic partners have provided far more than financial support for these models – they have also served as “thought partners” who have worked together to identify promising practices, research outcomes, and garner support for the practices that prove to be most effective.

Technical Assistance Partners

Educate Texas staff and partners implementing T-STEM and ECHS for the first time in Texas benefited from several enabling partnerships with national technical assistance providers and consultants. For ECHS, Jobs for the Future (JFF), a national not-for profit organization, provided support and technical assistance, and served as a resource on education and career pathways. Together, JFF, TEA, and Educate Texas worked to define non-negotiable expectations for ECHS expansion, such as maintaining focus on students underrepresented in higher education. Similarly, T-STEM implementers in Texas had non-profit collaborators and technical assistance providers such as the National Math and Science Initiative, New Tech Network, UTeach, as well as the support of national consultants.

School Districts and Higher Education Partners

Educate Texas and its programs would not have been possible without the sustained enthusiasm and support of school districts, both traditional and charter, across Texas. To date, the T-STEM and ECHS models have been implemented by forward-thinking school leaders and teachers across 94 independent school districts throughout the state. ECHS owes its success to its higher education partners, including community colleges, technical colleges, and regional four-year institutions that have played a crucial role in its development and implementation.

Parents, Teachers, and Students

Special recognition goes to the parents, teachers, and students across Texas who participated in the pilot programs. Their involvement, feedback and enormous contributions added to the growth and development of T-STEM Academies and Early College High Schools. It is through their perseverance and hard work that districts across the state have succeeded in building supportive school cultures with college-going expectations for every student.

II. Program Impact

After more than a decade experimenting and capturing information from the ever-growing network of ECHS and T-STEM Academies, Educate Texas can convincingly demonstrate that these schools have had a material, positive impact on students, families, and communities across the state, and should serve as a model for national educational policy and practice.

Across the Educate Texas portfolio of school district partners, the economic and social impact on underserved families in Texas is evident, both for families and communities.

Paul Covey, Principal of Valle Verde ECHS in Ysleta ISD, shared that, “Over 80 percent of the families in the Ysleta ISD schools are economically disadvantaged. Most understand that education is the key to break out of that group, but feel discouraged because they can’t afford to pay for higher education. For the families whose children attend an ECHS, the goal of a four- year college degree seems much more attainable. With costs reduced by 50 percent [due to ECHS participation] without going into debt of any kind, families have renewed hope to break the cycle of poverty that has existed for years. Additionally, the pressure of getting a job to help the family immediately – instead of waiting for four years – is reduced. Many believe four years is just too long to wait to contribute. But just two years? It seems more manageable and worth the 24-month wait. In this way, ECHS change the lives of families in communities like El Paso.”

At the community level, T-STEM and ECHS leaders have consistently made efforts to proactively engage their communities by inviting policymakers, parents, and local business and industry influencers to see firsthand these models in action and assist in identifying ways to advance the school’s success.

“We see T-STEM as an opportunity for students to participate in and design their future in terms of academic achievement, college, and career, as well as an opportunity for businesses to look at what they will need in 1, 3, or 5 years to participate in building those skills in the workforce,” said Reo Pruiett, Program Officer at Educate Texas.



“TEA has learned a great deal from the implementation and success of Early College High Schools and T-STEM Academies. These programs have influenced the Agency’s overall strategy for how to prepare first generation, underserved students for postsecondary education, as well as what is an achievable, realistic path.”

– LIZZETTE GONZALEZ REYNOLDS, Chief Deputy
Commissioner for the Texas Education Agency,

“Educate Texas, has been one of the most successful and enduring initiatives of the College Ready strategy of the Gates Foundation. First envisioned as start-up intermediary to help lead and leverage our investments to scale high school reform throughout one of the largest states in the nation, it quickly learned to adapt to a changing education landscape, new research, and an ever dynamic political environment...And, most importantly, it has never taken its eyes off the main thing – get every student in Texas ready for college and post-secondary success – whatever it takes. This discipline to its core beliefs and mission has sustained it for 10 years, and I suspect Educate Texas will continue to evolve successfully well into the future.”

– STEVE SELEZNOW, Former Deputy
Director at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

“We thought a coordinated, statewide approach was needed to give every district across Texas – big or small – the opportunity to leverage similar approaches and tools to improve student outcomes.”

– LORI FEY, former Director of Policy Initiatives
at the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, now
President of the Ed-Fi Alliance

As the number of students who graduated, matriculated to college, and became active members of the workforce increased, these schools become intensive points of local pride.

The success of ECHS and T-STEM has also contributed to both the statewide and national education policy discussions.

STATE: Says Lizzette Gonzalez Reynolds, Chief Deputy Commissioner for the Texas Education Agency, “TEA has learned a great deal from the implementation and success of Early College High Schools and T-STEM Academies. These programs have influenced the Agency’s overall strategy for how to prepare first generation, underserved students for postsecondary education, as well as what is an achievable, realistic path.”

NATIONAL: As described by Joel Vargas, “Educate Texas has advanced some of the leading examples in the country of early college strategies in a district context. We use their understanding of the Texas context to tailor the story and our recommendations across the nation.”

Without a doubt, the impact of ECHS and T-STEM was maximized after much trial-and-error, as well as deliberate efforts to experiment and capture best practices, made possible through the convening and network opportunities led by Educate Texas. In the next section, the most important lessons learned about effective school practices, scaling the network, and building and maintaining an alliance between public and private partners have been synthesized to inform future efforts.

Effective School Practices: Increasing Student Engagement within a College-Going Culture

The Early College High Schools and the T-STEM Academies were designed to provide minority, low income, first-generation students with rigorous coursework and exceptional learning opportunities, ultimately leading to increased high school graduation rates and postsecondary success. Today, they continue to serve the targeted population: Currently 78 percent of students at ECHS and T-STEM Academies throughout Texas are from historically underrepresented ethnicities (compared to 64 percent for the state) and 73 percent are classified as economically disadvantaged (compared to 60 percent for the state).

ECHS and T-STEM Academies are small school models, with the majority of schools serving only 100 students per grade level to foster an intimate school environment and provide increased attention to the student-teacher relationship. In most school districts, students must apply to ECHS and T-STEM Academies.

The core of the instructional model for T-STEM is project-based learning, an inquiry-based instructional approach where students learn to engage in problem-solving that addresses real-world questions and challenges. For ECHS, the approach is the Common Instructional Framework, a set of high-level instructional strategies that allow students to successfully engage in college-level work. Fundamentally, both models are designed to provide a learning environment that allows students to prepare for the complex, multifaceted academic, social, and emotional challenges faced during their postsecondary education and in the workforce.

Effective T-STEM Academies and ECHS enable students to take ownership of their education within a supportive, college-going school culture

T-STEM Academies and ECHS are purposefully designed to use instructional strategies that allow students to take ownership of their education and move from passive listener to active participant and highly-engaged problem solver. This transformation takes place within an environment of high expectations for student achievement, strong student-teacher relationships, and a supportive, college-going school culture.

Steven Zipkes, Principal of Manor New Technology High School (a T-STEM Academy), sums up the philosophy: “The three Rs: 1. Relationships FIRST – if you develop those relationships first, then students will do anything for you, 2. Relevance – they will be engaged, 3. Rigor is there.”

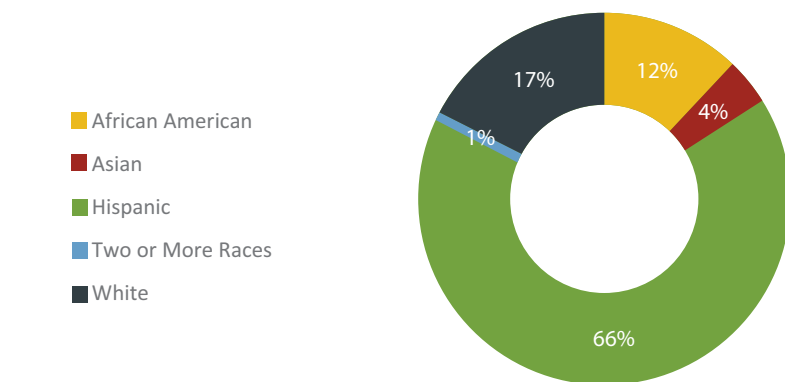
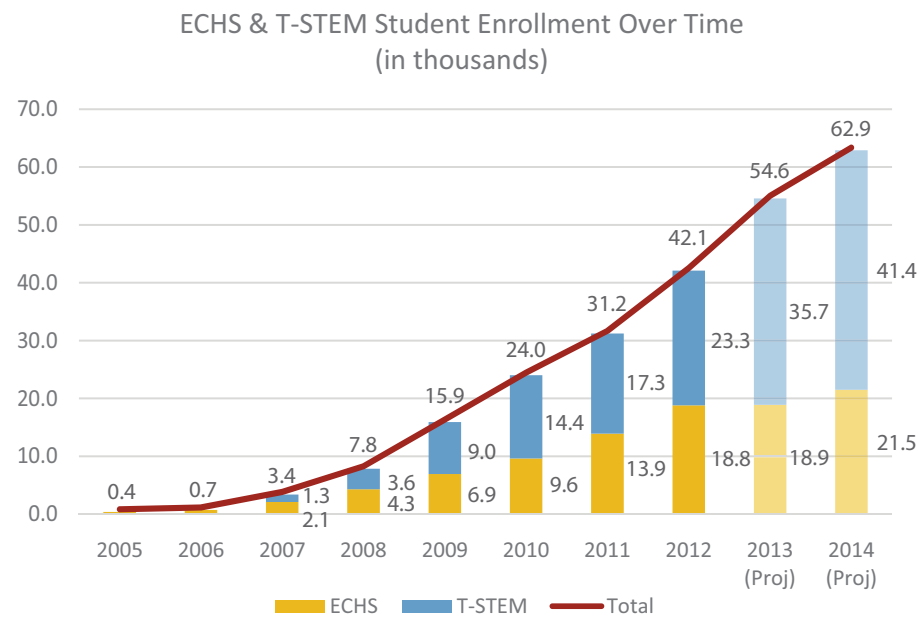
Successful schools embody a culture of rigor

Best practices have consistently shown that schools which have implemented a culture of rigor prove more successful. As a result, Educate Texas through face-to-face interviews and readiness assessments determines feasibility before partnering with new districts. Once schools are in the network, the shift in culture is achieved through several Educate Texas programs. In particular, Educate Texas coaches and school leaders, through “leadership coaching,” work collaboratively to ensure buy-in and investment at the district and school level. Additionally, Educate Texas provides technical assistance that includes succession planning which helps ensure sustainability in the event of turnover.

Critical success-factors in the ECHS and T-STEM models are strong, empowered leaders, effective teachers, and collaborative partnerships

Through years of operating experience, observation, and formal evaluation, Educate Texas staff recognize that the key to an effective T-STEM Academy or ECHS is a result of strong leaders empowered to make important decisions about school design, including hiring and training teachers who can deliver college-level content through non-traditional instructional methods, and form partnerships with higher education institutions, businesses, and non-profits in the community.

Who does Educate Texas Serve?



Notes: Ethnicity & risk factors estimated based on total campus, AEIS 2012. T-STEM student enrollments in 2013 and 2014 are based on the applications submitted to TEA for designation.

- Educate Texas serves ~63,000 students in 2013-14
- 95% average annual growth rate for student enrollment
- 78% are from historically under-represented ethnicities
 - 66% Hispanic
 - 12% African American
- 73% are considered economically disadvantaged
- 10% are ELL

Notes: Ethnicity & risk factors estimated based on total campus, AEIS 2012. T-STEM student enrollments in 2013 and 2014 are based on the applications submitted to TEA for designation.

Leaders: Although these models are often initiated by individual school leaders who champion the cause, it is critical that these leaders obtain the buy-in and investment of all stakeholders. These participants include the school board, district and school leadership teams, teachers, parents, students, leaders from the partnering higher education institution consisting of the college board of trustees and faculty, as well as business and community members. It is important that all possess a common vision that each student can and should have the opportunity to receive a postsecondary education.

Teachers: One important aspect of school design is faculty selection. Given the emphasis of these schools on personalized models of instruction and college and career readiness, one of the key challenges has been, in the words of one principal, to hire or develop “passionate, committed, data-driven, reform-minded teachers,” and to ensure that they are adequately prepared to teach college-level coursework to high school students.

In some cases, this means hiring faculty new to the teaching profession, while in others it means selecting experienced teachers who are particularly adept at working with underserved student populations. Either way, the ideal candidates are individuals who are comfortable teaching in a less traditional environment that is focused on providing more personalized forms of instruction.

For ECHS, this challenge was addressed, in part, by focusing on the Common Instructional Framework which helps faculty strike a balance between conducting an engaging class and delivering college-level material. Elizabeth Melson, Educate Texas ECHS Coach, shares, “The Common Instructional Framework allows for higher yield of engagement, [the] ability for all teachers to connect over a common language in school, and helps teachers stay focused, since everything instructionally revolves around six principles.” Early Colleges also use a process called Instructional Rounds that allows ECHS teachers to receive constructive feedback from their principals, coaches, and external visitors. For T-STEM, faculty are trained through Project-Based Learning to deliver content as facilitators instead of lecturers, allowing students to have a more hands-on learning experience in the classroom.

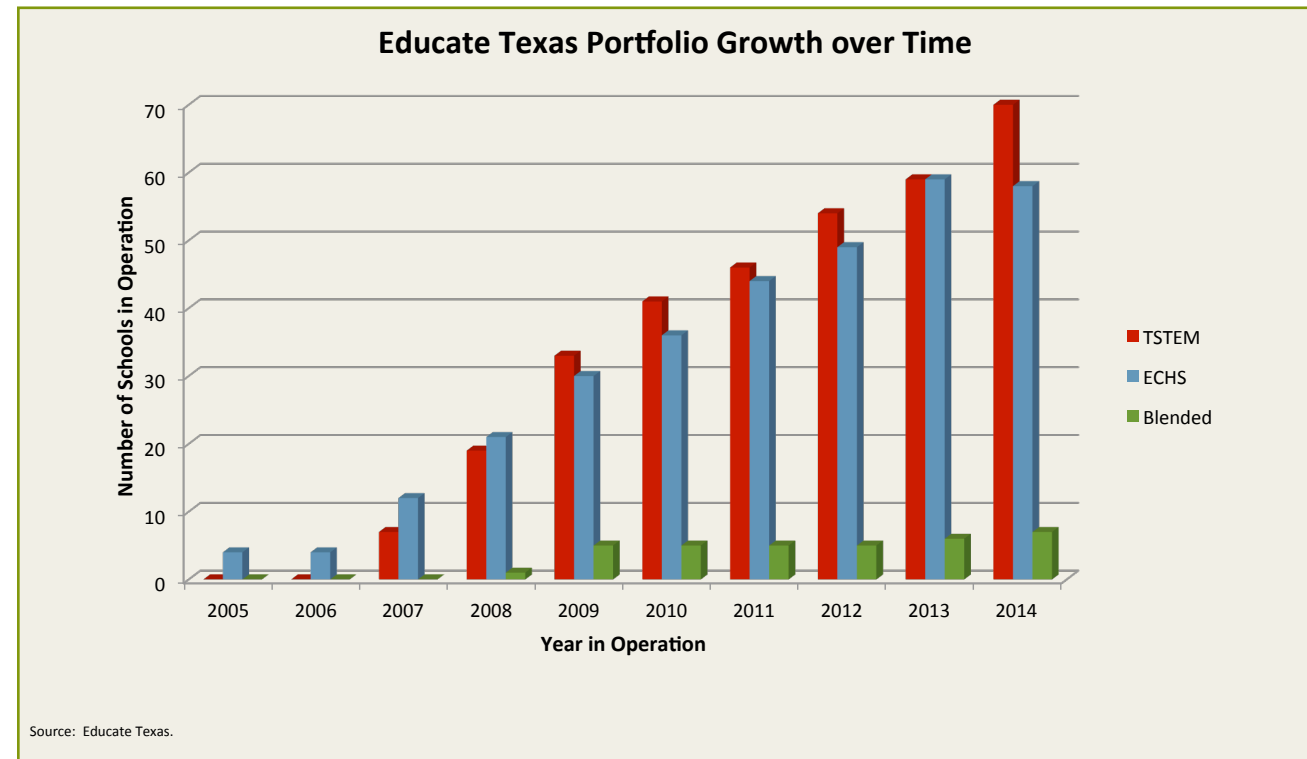
Partners: Although both T-STEM and ECHS principals must develop supportive partnerships with stakeholders in their communities, ECHS principals, in particular, must build a strong relationship and collaboration with their higher education partner. This partnership may not happen overnight – many schools initially face resistance from their higher education partner about high school students “filling their seats” or pushback from college faculty about teaching high school students. Over time, faculty’s concerns are generally mitigated once they see the performance and contributions of high school students enrolled in ECHS. In order to facilitate open communication and ease any tensions that may arise, ECHS principals meet regularly (at least once per month) with their higher education liaisons to discuss administrative and operations issues. In addition, a written Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) helps define the opportunities for collaboration. This document, while unique to each partnership, has evolved through years of development and best practices shared by Educate Texas staff.

Students who attend these schools need in-depth support to prepare for college and careers

A primary focus of the ECHS and T-STEM models is helping students achieve college and career-readiness. Because these schools are designed to serve students who might not otherwise attend a two- or four-year college or university – many of whom will be the first in their families to attend college – administrators have found it necessary to provide additional support than is traditionally provided to Texas high school students. For example, these students often need help understanding the expectations of being in classes and on campus with college students. Administrators have found that a strong counseling department that coordinates regularly with the higher education partner, is crucial. A key aspect of the support provided by counselors includes assistance to students to manage their schedules and coursework while developing independence and self-reliance.

Elizabeth Melson, Educate Texas ECHS Coach, shares, “The Common Instructional Framework allows for higher yield of engagement, [the] ability for all teachers to connect over a common language in school, and helps teachers stay focused, since everything instructionally revolves around six principles.”

Graphic 4: Educate Texas School Portfolio Growth over Time



Scaling the Network and its Impact: Creation of a Dynamic Network for Learning and Exploration

To address early implementation challenges, Educate Texas made it a priority to gather feedback and to open up opportunities for networking and dialogue among principals and other stakeholders through professional learning circles. Paul Covey, Principal of Valle Verde ECHS in Ysleta ISD said, “bringing us principals together was very valuable; Educate Texas was great at making us feel like we were joining a movement ... we had convocations and meetings which brought people all across the state that were taking on the same issues, so we could see we weren’t doing this on our own.” Today, Educate Texas continues to support peer-learning opportunities through regional convenings and annual best practices conferences.

The type of support and delivery methods exercised by Educate Texas, whether leadership coaching, professional development for teachers focused on instructional practices, or design training for principals and counselors, varies by program. Over the past 10 years, a great deal of effort has been put into developing the instrumental platforms for technical assistance to schools including, how to fund it, the best way for schools in the network to access it, and how to scale it as the network has grown.

Staying true to the original “college for all” vision is the most important piece of the success story

Since the beginning, Educate Texas has stayed true to the vision of “college for all.” One of the main “non-negotiables” for all participating ECHS and T-STEM schools is a majority of low-income, at-risk, first generation students – attracting and retaining these students is a priority.

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Defining such non-negotiables has helped Educate Texas stay true to its vision, despite natural pressures to stray.

Says Steve Seleznow, Former Deputy Director at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, “Educate Texas, has been one of the most successful and enduring initiatives of the College Ready strategy of the Gates Foundation. First envisioned as start-up intermediary to help lead and leverage our investments to scale high school reform throughout one of the largest states in the nation, it quickly learned to adapt to a changing education landscape, new research, and an ever dynamic political environment...And, most importantly, it has never taken its eyes off the main thing – get every student in Texas ready for college and post-secondary success – whatever it takes. This discipline to its core beliefs and mission has sustained it for 10 years, and I suspect Educate Texas will continue to evolve successfully well into the future.”

Having a long-term plan for sustainability from the beginning is critical

When seed funding was available, many Texas school districts were provided an incentive to experiment with the new, unproven, school models. In some districts, seed funding provided the necessary autonomy to tailor and implement the model (e.g. hiring new teachers, providing high quality professional development) in a way that suited the local context. For others, these funds provided for some of the basics such as buying expensive college textbooks, paying tuition for college courses, or purchasing equipment and materials to build out labs and classrooms.

However, the start-up funds did not begin to cover the long-term operating costs of these models. Therefore, from the beginning, it was critical for districts and schools to develop plans to sustain locally. This type of foresight proved critical. Even without the incentive of seed funding grants, many districts continue to show interest in T-STEM and ECHS models, and are able to find existing sources of funding to start and sustain these schools locally. For example, schools generally have a budget for extracurricular activities. When Challenge ECHS in Houston opened, the community college had a library that was much more extensive than a traditional high school library. However, Challenge ECHS received funding from the school district for a library. The partners allocated the library money toward renovations in the college library, thereby enhancing resources for all students attending classes on this campus.

Technical support and network infrastructure has to be sustainable too

As ECHS and T-STEM networks have grown, Educate Texas, in collaboration with TEA, has had to figure out how to allocate support, which requires balancing quantity with quality. In addition, schools have matured and require less coaching. For example, in T-STEM, initially there were seven to nine coaches for 15 schools. Now, the program has grown to 77 schools served by 11 coaches. Similarly, the Early College High network started with nine coaches for 39 schools, and now is served by six coaches for 65 schools.

Thus, program officers at Educate Texas have started to shift their training resources to offer coaching and training both face-to-face and virtually, as well as differentiating support based on the level of maturity of the campus and its leadership. Educate Texas has developed formal mentoring and peer relationships for new campus leaders and has introduced innovative new platforms for delivering content. For example, through a partnership with the Teaching Channel, teachers in the Educate Texas network of schools may film themselves and receive feedback from peers and coaches across the state, without leaving their classrooms.

Having an explicit model of local control and adaptation was important in Texas

The school models that Educate Texas supports have developed under a philosophy of “local control” and adaptation. In a state as large and diverse as Texas, this philosophy was deemed not only the most practical option, but also the best fit for the state culture and preferences. Kelty Garbee, Associate Program Officer at Educate Texas explains it, “What they need to have in place is prescribed, but how they do it is local.”

More broadly, because local philosophy and adaptation was occasionally at odds with national funders’ scaling practices, individual districts or grantees sometimes had to push and redefine boundaries in order to meet the needs of their students. Hidalgo Independent School District presents an interesting example. When the district was designing its ECHS, school leaders were concerned about the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s requirement to limit each grade level to 100 students, given that there were more than 200 per grade level enrolled at the

time. Rather than serving only half of their high school population of approximately 800 students, administrators requested to increase the number of students per grade level, organizing them into small learning academies. Ultimately, even though Hidalgo had to push and redefine these boundaries, their students benefitted, as did students across the state through their example of local adaptation.

In practice, network schools have a good deal of flexibility in how they operate their schools and choice in terms of their areas of specialty and focus. For example, T-STEM schools near the Gulf of Mexico offer maritime-focused career development and rural T-STEM schools may provide agriculture-related career development. Meredith Wedin, T-STEM Leadership Coach for 7 years describes the strength of the T-STEM model as follows: “although it is very structured in its framework, it allows a lot of creativity and flexibility in its implementation, allowing for schools to respond to the needs of the community.”

Replicating the core components of “what works” – especially in a state as big as Texas – is difficult, and you need to develop tools

Early on, Educate Texas leaders recognized the need to codify best practices and create a fully-developed set of tools to help new schools implement ECHS and T-STEM models based on what was working. Says George Tang, Chief Operating Officer for Educate Texas, “Over time the growth of this project could not have happened if we didn’t have a focus on rigor, structure, and discipline in implementation.”

For ECHS, the program managers had the benefit of a nationally-developed “Core Principles,” document, which spells out overarching non-negotiable principles that must be adhered to in every ECHS (e.g. “Early College High Schools are committed to serving students underrepresented in higher education”). The Core Principles were adapted for use in Texas and aligned with the Educate Texas’ vision for impact; they were used to develop grant requirements and, eventually, the designation process developed by TEA.

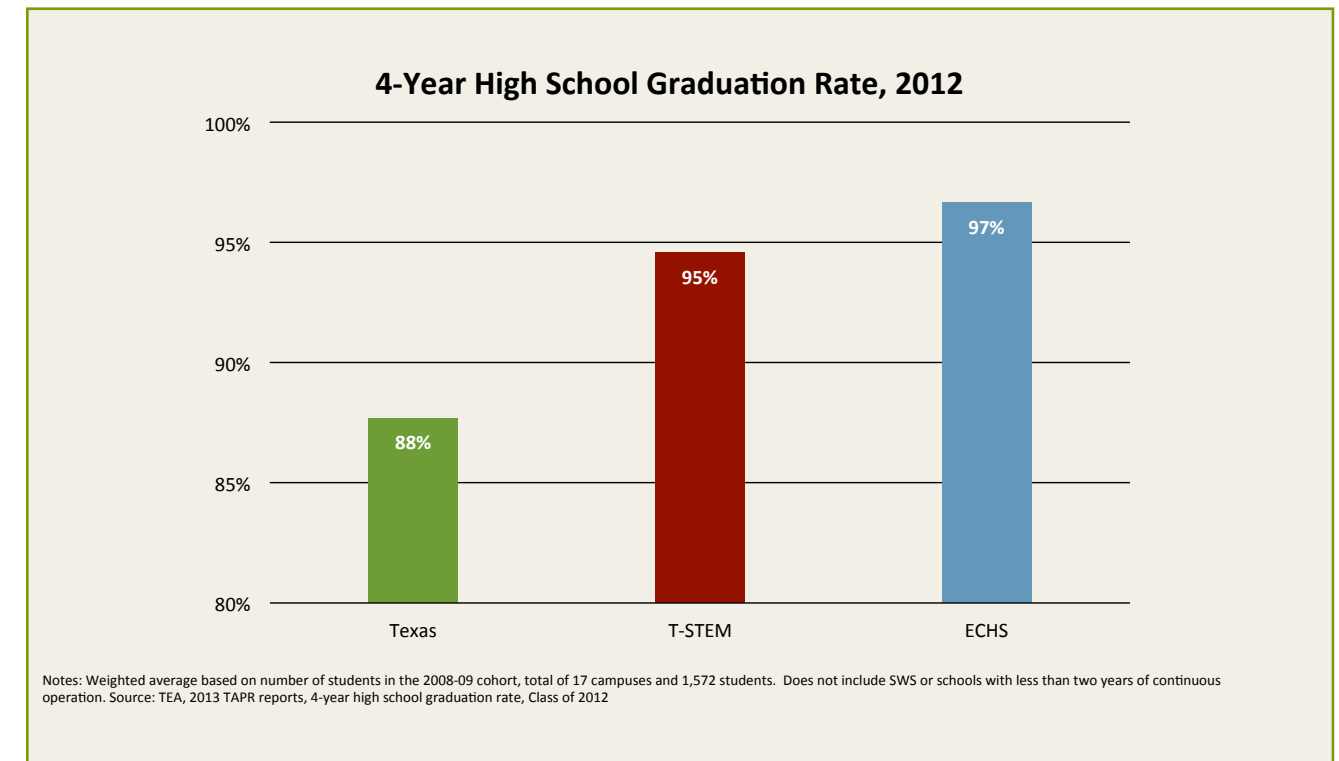
In T-STEM, Educate Texas and TEA gathered lessons learned from working with schools and documented the core values, best practices, and guidelines for implementation and successful scaling. These lessons were used to develop what is known as the T-STEM “Blueprint.” The Blueprint spells out specific benchmarks for each T-STEM Academy, products that must be in place, as well as requirements for implementation. Following the creation of the T-STEM Blueprint, TEA designed and implemented the T-STEM’s designation process.

As the T-STEM and ECHS models were developed and codified, frameworks were adapted between the programs. For example, after the T-STEM Blueprint was created, a collaborative effort was undertaken to develop one for ECHS, which was adopted officially in the fall of 2013. Meanwhile, both programs have developed Self-Assessment Tools that principals and coaches use to gauge progress toward the milestones outlined in the T-STEM and ECHS blueprints. Thus, development of tools that define the parameters and milestones for each model has played an important role in scaling the ECHS and T-STEM models with integrity. All the while, there is still significant room for local adaptation.

Scaling lessons learned from the ECHS and T-STEM models requires districts to push the unit of change from the school-level to the district-level

In theory, ECHS and T-STEM could serve as exemplary models for their district, and shift the community’s expectations around what is possible for students to achieve. However, Educate Texas staff did not see districts identifying or replicating best practices from T-STEM or ECHS across other schools in their district. Instead, districts tended to treat T-STEM Academies or ECHS as boutique schools. Thus, Educate Texas decided to deliberately select, encourage, and coach districts to adopt and scale these models (or best practices tested in the schools) district-wide. To enact this strategy, Educate Texas began making sure that school districts include both district and campus representatives in the district-level design teams that develop these schools. In addition, Educate Texas was able to leverage private funds to demonstrate how to embed T-STEM and ECHS practices across entire districts. As a result, Educate Texas has been able to advance some of the leading examples in the country of comprehensive college readiness strategies in a district context.

Graphic 5: Models Produce more Graduates than other Texas High Schools



Impact of the Network

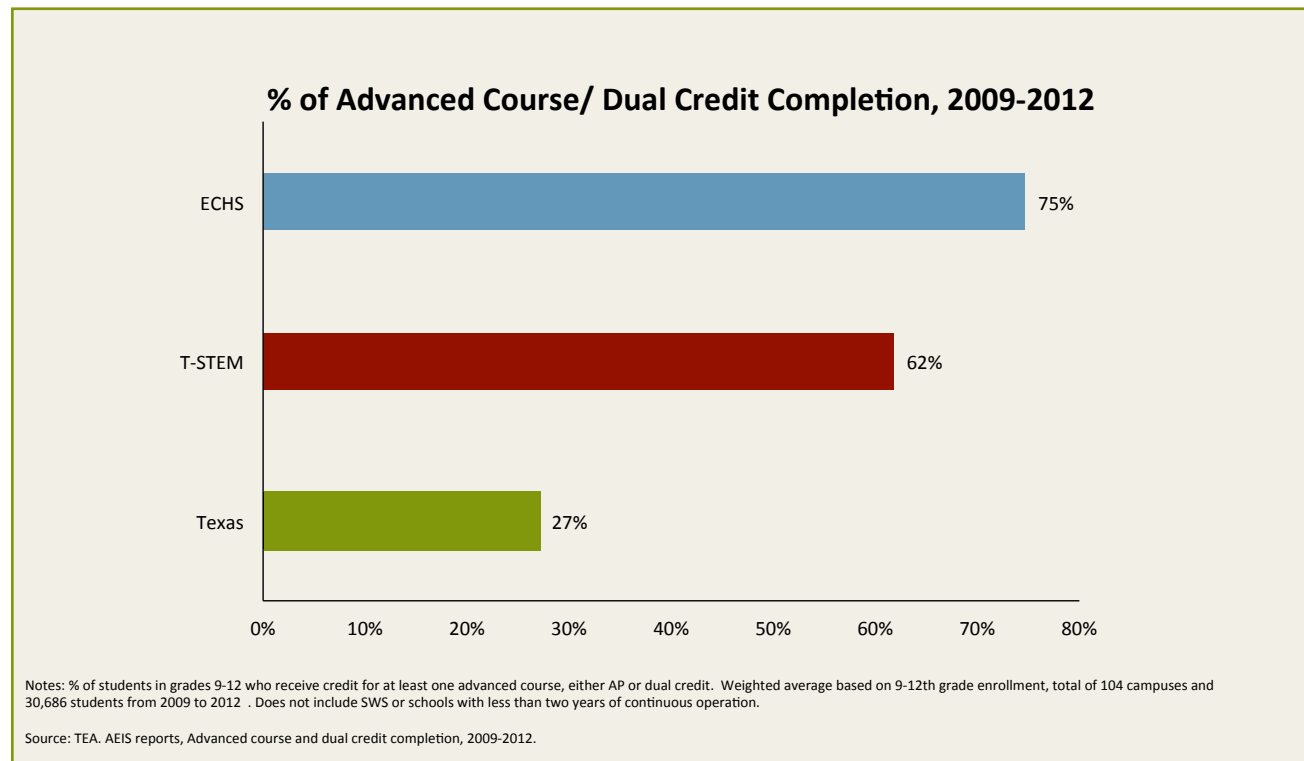
ECHS and T-STEM programs were initially formed with the goal of addressing a crisis of high school drop-out rates in Texas, and, 10 years later, have shown enormous progress toward this ambition. To put it simply, T-STEM and ECHS students in Texas graduate from high school at higher rates than their peers (See Graphic 5: Models Produce More Graduates Than Other Texas High Schools). In addition, they are completing advanced coursework, including dual credit and/or Advanced Placement, at much higher rates than other Texas high school students (See Graphic 6: More T-STEM and ECHS Students Complete Advance Course/Dual Credit than Other Texas Students).

Further, African American and Hispanic students at ECHS and T-STEM schools outperform the state’s average for white students on standardized tests. Similarly, the African American and Hispanic students complete advanced courses or dual credit courses at nearly twice the rate of the state’s average for white students (See Graphic 7: Non-white Students enrolled in ECHS and T-STEM Achieve more than their Peers; Ethnic Gap is Narrower). It must be emphasized that the nature and scale of these results within this timeframe is highly unusual for any social program.

While college readiness was the initial goal for ECHS and T-STEM graduates, Educate Texas collected data on these graduates to track their postsecondary success. By following these students into their postsecondary pursuits, Educate Texas found that ECHS and T-STEM graduates have higher postsecondary enrollment rates than the state average (Graphic 8: More ECHS and T-STEM Graduates Immediately Pursue College Than other Texas Graduates). Meanwhile, early indications suggest that ECHS and T-STEM graduates are persisting from their freshman to sophomore years at higher rates than the state average (See Graphic 9: ECHS and T-STEM Graduates Persist Longer in College).

Recent studies have shown that high school graduates who complete college level courses in high school enroll and complete college at higher rates. These studies were used to estimate the economic impact of Texas ECHS and T-STEM programs. Since ECHS and T-STEM students complete AP and/or dual credit courses at nearly twice the

Graphic 6: More ECHS and T-STEM Students Complete Advance Course/Dual Credit than other Texas Students



rate of other Texas students and enroll in four-year universities at a higher rate, their probability of completing a bachelor's degree is higher than other Texas students. Given the relationship between educational attainment and wages, this equates to higher earnings over their lifetime. When compared to the average Texas high school graduate, that difference amounts to approximately \$250,000 more per ECHS or T-STEM graduate, based on work-life earnings data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Taking into account higher probabilities of high school and college graduation for students enrolled in ECHS and T-STEM, and extrapolating from the 10,000 students who have already graduated from these programs over the last ten years, these students are projected to generate \$2.5 billion more in lifetime earnings. Based on 2013-14 student enrollment, 50,000 more students will graduate from ECHS and T-STEM programs over the next five years, increasing the total potential economic impact to more than \$15 billion of incremental earnings.

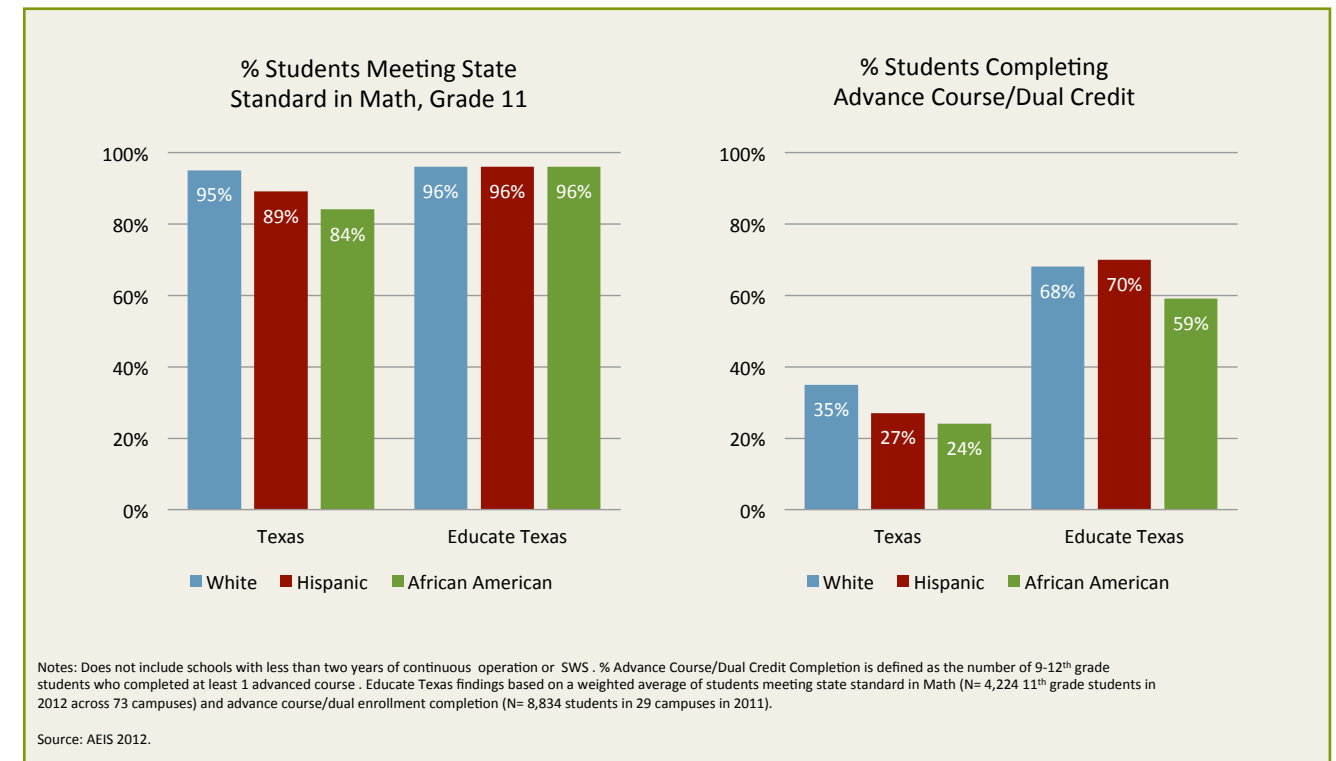
Convening the Partners: Building and Maintaining an Innovative Cross-Sector Platform

According to Joel Vargas, Vice President High School through College, Jobs for the Future, "Educate Texas has this dual personality of being entrepreneurial and also having a partnership with the public sector – the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval."

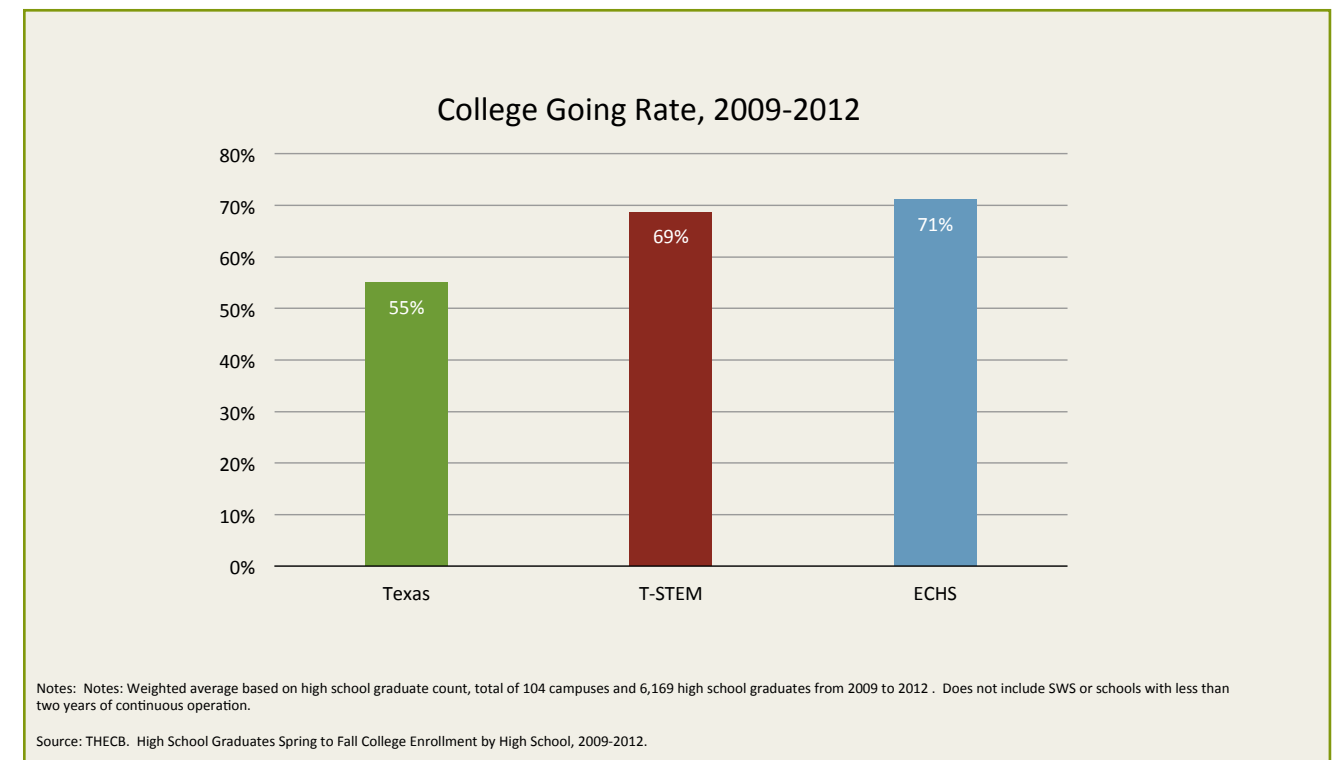
The combined, sustained support of public and private philanthropic partners has contributed to building these programs and changing the academic trajectories of hundreds of thousands of students in Texas over the past decade. Each type of partner has brought unique areas of focus and interest that have helped advance Educate Texas across the different stages of innovation, scaling, and sustainability.

- Private funders were able to support these programs through an important incubation and demonstration period through nimbly dispersing "kick starter" funds, and by providing research and evaluation to quickly leverage practices that were working and to discontinue those that were not.

Graphic 7: Non-White Students Enrolled in ECHS and T-STEM Achieve more than Peers; Ethnic Gap is Narrower



Graphic 8: More ECHS and T-STEM Graduates Immediately Pursue College than other Texas Graduates



- The public sector was uniquely able to scale ECHS and T-STEM and disseminate “lessons learned” from these programs across the state of Texas. TEA’s decision and plan to use flexible funding to scale these models was highly innovative.

However, it was not just convening of collective resources that powered Educate Texas, but rather the synergistic relationship that came from having a platform for active collaboration between public and private partners. For example, TEA could interpret state policy and provide implementation assistance and funding, but they had neither the private partners’ capacity to provide “on the ground” technical assistance, nor the ability to advocate directly for these models. By working together, each partner could anticipate and quickly learn about the current challenges other partners might face. For example, the private sector was able to sustain political cycles and fill in when there were gaps in public funding.

In summary, the role of each partner has shifted and evolved over time. Looking back, with the benefit of hindsight, several partners suggested that it would have been helpful to explicitly spell out the initial roles and responsibilities of each partner and to develop a plan for how those roles might change over time. The partners also believe that they could have worked together sooner than they did to develop a long-term plan for funding and sustainability and infrastructure for internal capacity building and knowledge management. Because Educate Texas was so unique, it was, above all, important that each partner stayed flexible and willing to contribute to its somewhat unpredictable and changing needs.

The very existence of the public-private initiative was enough to attract the time and attention of diverse supporters and funders for ECHS and T-STEM

Initially, the very existence of this unique public-private initiative was enough to attract the attention of major philanthropic and public partners. Having TEA and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation at the table at the outset helped attract the interest and buy-in of other philanthropic partners and to further the initial commitment of state policymakers. For private funders, having a partnership with the state government to scale major initiatives was a substantial benefit – many recognized what Lori Fey, former Director of Policy Initiatives at the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, now President of the Ed-Fi Alliance, acknowledged:

“We thought a coordinated, statewide approach was needed to give every district across Texas – big or small – the opportunity to leverage similar approaches and tools to improve student outcomes.” In addition, Educate Texas allowed private philanthropic organizations to engage with public funders in an appropriate and more collaborative, solutions-oriented manner than with past approaches.

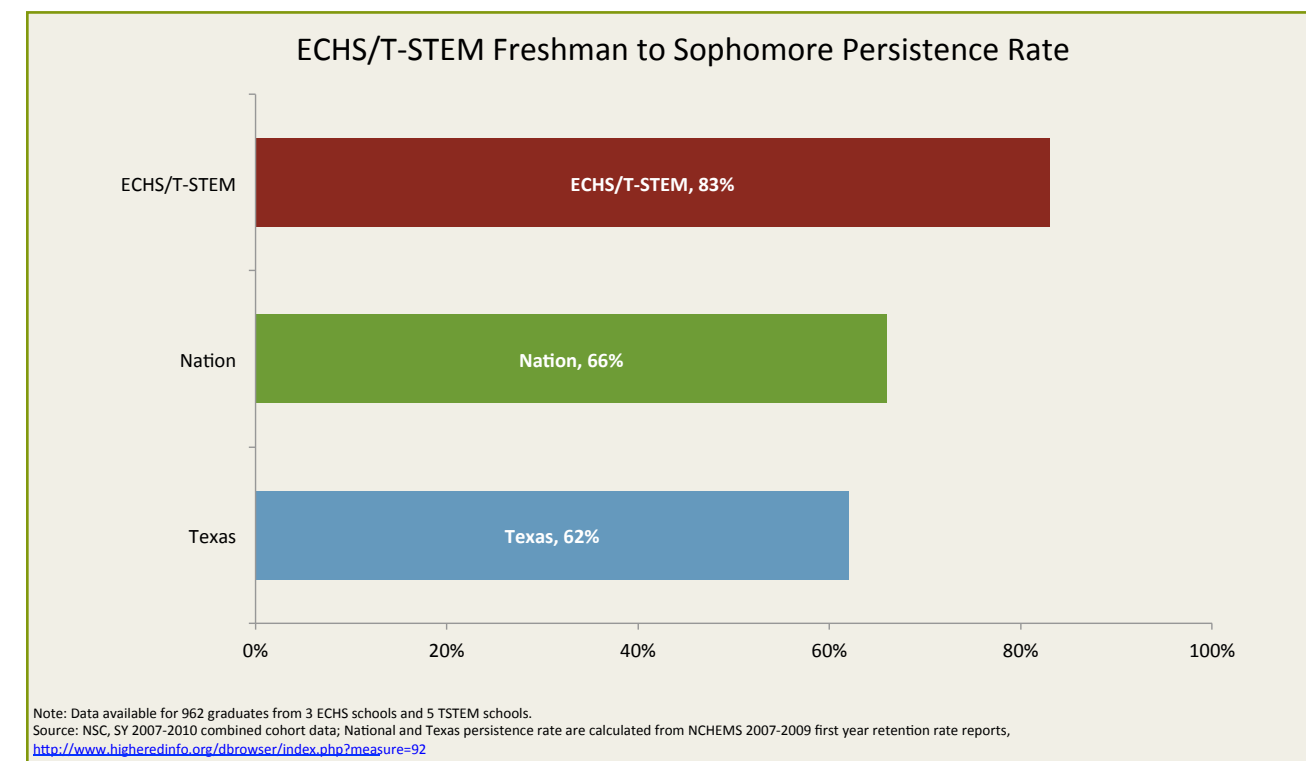
At the same time, for private funders, having convening and management support provided by a like-minded private philanthropic foundation, and, in particular, a community foundation was ideal. As one partner puts it, “Communities Foundation of Texas was the right initial convening partner because of their size, reputation, caliber of leadership, and their neutrality. And the fact that it was a community foundation was a benefit because that implies a broader perspective.”

Growing and maintaining this type of multi-stakeholder initiative is complex, requires flexibility, trust, and commitment

Given the differing interests and needs of each partner, maintaining relationships took proactive work. Educate Texas has served a critical role as convener by helping different partners – who all have different constituencies with substantively different interests – to find common ground.

For example, many foundations and private funders tend to want fast movement and quick results, which would be more likely to be achieved within a narrow, geographic strategy and footprint. Meanwhile, TEA had to assure its constituents that they would achieve statewide impact, and demonstrate progress within the timeframe between legislative sessions.

Graphic 9: ECHS and T-STEM Graduates Persist Longer in College



Even among private funders, communication between partners could be challenging in the context of competing views and reporting needs. In order to reconcile one such challenge, Educate Texas did not require funds to be pooled. Some partners, who wanted or needed to maintain direct control of their investments, administered their own funds rather than pooling them through Educate Texas. This policy was critically important for some funders – and indeed, a condition of their participation.

At times, this flexible structure could lead to complications. For example, in the early days, it was difficult to identify and agree on the total number of participating schools. This occurred because different funders did not always agree on the criteria for what made a T-STEM school, and had different requirements for reporting, collecting, and sharing data, based on these differing definitions. Over time, as each program established tools such as the “blueprints” and common data templates, Educate Texas was able to better inform progress and outcomes across partners.

Finally, a partnership of this nature can lead to misunderstandings about each partner’s individual role and contribution; handling these group dynamics required sensitivity and open communication. Because Educate Texas served as the primary convener and administrative body for the multiple efforts, there was sometimes a misperception that Educate Texas was synonymous with CFT. In addition, because of the early influence of large national funders, some statewide funders felt a power imbalance.

Ultimately, Educate Texas had to be creative about aligning strategies, coordinating multiple funding streams and, sometimes, finding different ways for partners to “get on or off the bus.” The model for sustainability that happened, in practice, was that large national funders tended to move on after proving the demonstration project, leaving room for regional private funders to participate more actively.

Each partner must adjust to fluctuations in leadership, priorities, politics, and resources

Although the original emphasis of Educate Texas was to coordinate grant-making and leverage resources, the lasting impact has been in supporting innovation by bringing public and private partners together and providing a productive space for sharing ideas and perspectives. Says Wynn Rosser, President and CEO of the Greater Texas Foundation, “It’s great to attend an Educate Texas quarterly meeting with a range of grant-makers and funders...that’s interesting and different in-and-of-itself, but I don’t think that it’s the most important part of Educate Texas any more... now it’s more about bringing people together, harnessing the influence of a thoughtful group, and structuring the conversations that lead to alignment of public and private resources and ultimately achieve impact.”

Thus, as Educate Texas has implemented different strategies and adjusted to changing conditions in the partnership, it has had to adjust to fill the following roles: think tank, idea generator, implementation support, funding catalyst, research partner, strategic assistance provider, and consultant. While Educate Texas has shifted and evolved over the years, it has managed to be effective. According to Steve Seleznow, “Few intermediaries have been able to achieve this kind of operational efficiency. Educate Texas has enhanced its effectiveness, advocacy and impact in Texas because its leadership is nimble, data driven, collaborative, and consistently open to new thinking.”

III. Looking Ahead

The Future of the Initiative: What Changes and What Stays the Same through 2024?

Over the past 10 years, Educate Texas has effectively utilized public and private resources to identify innovative school models and delivered transformational results for hundreds of thousands of underserved, low-income students. While these outcomes are noteworthy and should be celebrated, Educate Texas recognizes these practices are not the silver bullet, but can serve as part of a larger solution.

Texas still has to quickly address the needs of its changing demographics to ensure that the state’s five million students are prepared for a dynamic, global marketplace. Educate Texas believes this public-private framework can be used to more effectively identify and establish policies and practices that can generate the systems change required across our education to workforce pipeline.

While maintaining the alignment and engagement of multiple partners is challenging, Educate Texas remains committed to working collaboratively with its public and private partners to strengthen the public and higher education systems. Looking forward, Educate Texas will advance the following:



Move the finish line for all Texas students to a four-year, two-year, technical degree or workforce certificate

In 2004, Educate Texas' finish line was making sure students graduated prepared for college level work. We did not focus on access to postsecondary education, the transition to college, or what postsecondary graduation and completion rates were for our first generation, low income students. Through research on state postsecondary completion rates and the student populations within our ECHS and T-STEM Academies, Educate Texas now knows that college and career readiness, rigorous curriculum and relevance is mandatory – but not sufficient. Without also focusing on creating more concrete “on-ramps” to all levels of postsecondary education and valuing them equally, our efforts will not deliver the end results we want for our students and the future of our state. The finish line must be moved so that Texas K-12 students are completing either a four-year, two-year, technical degree or workforce certificate. Together, we must elevate this message and ensure all stakeholders clearly understand and agree on the finish line for our students.

Accelerate the scaling of ECHS and T-STEM practices across Texas districts

With over 135 public-private campuses serving over 63,000 students, the evidence and data is clear that the decade-old experiment of educating low income, first-generation students differently and better through ECHS and T-STEM practices works at scale. As efforts to take these campus strategies are expanding in comprehensive high schools and across districts in diverse Texas communities like Austin, Brownsville, Clint, Lancaster, and Pharr-San Juan-Alamo, Educate Texas seeks to leverage public-private resources, policies, and leadership to replicate these practices for another 1,000,000 Texas students. Together, we must find ways to scale these practices across the state and leverage our network to continue to enhance these effective practices.

Focus PK-12, higher education, workforce and philanthropy on addressing and investing in other critical needs across the system

Neither the public or private sectors alone will be able to ensure student success. Texas leaders from PreK-12, higher education, workforce development, and philanthropy must work together as stakeholders and partners, both at the state and regional levels. Together these stakeholders must elevate education and talent development as our highest state priority and identify key areas that will help strengthen our state and local systems. One area for collaboration is improving how our Texas teachers are recruited, developed, compensated, evaluated, and supported. Another opportunity could be to identify new and innovative school models and strategies that could be piloted. Within our college access and higher education systems, policies and practices are beginning to emerge that need to be tested and proven out. Together, we must invest in these high-impact areas that will support our students in crossing the finish line.

After measuring the student outcomes and quantifying the initial impact from this first decade of investments, Educate Texas is confident this public-private model can be leveraged to accelerate student success across the state. While the road ahead may be rife with bumps and unexpected turns, the upside may only be limited by the level of ambition and commitment of its partners. As we move into this next chapter of our work, we are confident that together we can “Educate Texas.”

Appendix

Appendix 1: Purpose and Methodology

This report was commissioned by Educate Texas, who engaged Safal Partners to conduct and synthesize in-depth interviews with 9 internal and 13 external stakeholders, as well as scans of secondary sources such as past program evaluations and program documentation. It is not a formal program evaluation, but rather an institutional history and an attempt to answer and document knowledge from those who have designed, scaled, funded, and implemented ECHS and T-STEM across Texas. Their experience on-the-ground helps us to answer the following questions:

1. What do we know today about the most effective practices at ECHS/T-STEM schools?
2. What resources were critical to starting ECHS/T-STEM networks?
3. What were the most important policies and context that supported the start of ECHS/T-STEM networks?
4. What specific practices, resources, or context enabled and supported innovation and scaling amongst ECHS/T-STEM networks over the past 10 years?
5. Why should other states be interested in replicating these networks?
6. What does Educate Texas wish they had done differently or advice would they offer?
7. How has the partnership and structure of Educate Texas and the Community Foundation of Texas helped promote the success of these networks? Challenges along the way?

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About Safal Partners

<http://www.safalpartners.com>

Safal, meaning “good outcomes” in Sanskrit, is a mission-driven education consulting firm that provides strategy and project management expertise to bridge the gap between ideas and outcomes. We bring deep domain knowledge in the charter sector, human capital management systems, and next generation learning. Founded in 2010, Safal Partners has grown in scale and scope and developed a track record of success in engagements with some of the most influential organizations in education reform. Safal’s founder and President, Mukta Pandit, brings prior experiences from the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation and McKinsey and Co. Safal is currently managing the National Charter School Resource Center and providing content expertise for the Center for Educator Effectiveness, both funded by the federal Department of Education. Other recent clients include the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Rhode Island Department of Education, Houston Independent School District, Trenton Public Schools, Teach for America Houston, Education Pioneers, and America Achieves.

Endnotes

to come

List of Acronyms

AP.....	Advanced Placement
BMGF.....	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
CFT.....	Communities Foundation of Texas
ECHS.....	Early College High School
HB.....	House Bill
JFF.....	Jobs for the Future
MSDF.....	Michael & Susan Dell Foundation
TEA.....	Texas Education Agency
THECB.....	Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
TSTEM.....	Texas Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics
SB.....	Senate Bill
THSP.....	Texas High School Project



VISION

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



EDUCATE TEXAS

a public-private initiative of Communities Foundation of Texas

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