

The Meadows Foundation

Strategic Plan for Education: 2010 – 2015

The Foundation recognizes there is a growing awareness among educators and policymakers that the academic standards associated with college readiness are necessary to prepare students to take advantage of opportunities in the workplace. Because of the connection between a strong education and lifelong opportunities, college readiness standards may be couched as “opportunity readiness standards” for students who have no immediate desire to attend college.

We also recognize that a large gap exists among racial and ethnic groups in both enrollment and graduation from the state’s colleges and universities. The state’s Hispanic and African American populations have enrolled in higher education at rates well below that of the White population. If this gap is not closed, Texas will have proportionately fewer college graduates as the minority population continues to grow. By 2015, projections show a combined African American and Hispanic population accounting for over 51% of the Texas population.

We further recognize that with fewer college graduates in our future, Texas will gradually become less educated, less prosperous and less economically competitive. **If we continue on the same path for several more decades, by 2040 the annual loss in household income would exceed \$80 billion. But if we close the educational gaps within Texas, the gain would be more than \$110 million annually.** Only by reversing Texas’ declining enrollment and graduation rates, and building excellence in education, can the state compete successfully with other states and nations. This reversal will allow Texas to generate, attract and retain state-of-the-art, high-wage businesses and employment opportunities for all of its people.

Strategic Plan: The Next Six Years

The Foundation’s ambitious and overarching goal is the same goal as the one set by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) in 2000: **to close the education gap by 2015.**

Only 5% of the Texas population was enrolled in higher education in recent years compared to a national average of 5.4%. California and Illinois enroll 6% of their state population, while Michigan enrolls 5.7% and New York enrolls 5.6%. To achieve the 5.7% enrollment goal set by the Higher Education Coordinating Board, Texas will have to enroll an additional 630,000 students in some form of higher education by 2015. To get these kinds of numbers, we will have to:

1. Raise the bar on what students must learn – a rigorous college readiness curriculum.
2. Help struggling students succeed in the early grades and throughout K-12.
3. Improve poor performing schools.

4. Ensure fewer kids dropout of school.
5. Focus on closing the achievement gap between White and minority students by focusing more on Hispanic students.
6. Develop the teachers and administrators necessary for the task.

Meadows Foundation Goals

Goal 1: Close the education gaps in Texas by enrolling 630,000 more students (a 60% increase) in some form of higher education by 2015. The goal is to enroll in Texas colleges and universities an additional **430,000** academically prepared people beyond the **200,000** natural enrollment growth projected for 2015, and to maintain the rate of enrollment at **5.7%** of the total population. This would bring the total higher education enrollment to 1,650,000 students annually by 2015.

Goal 2: Maintain the college enrollment rate at 5.7% for each of the major ethnic groups and for the total population by 2015 and beyond.

Goal 3: By 2015, increase by 50% the number of degrees, certificates and other identifiable student successes from high quality programs. Increase the overall number of students completing bachelor's and associate's degrees and certificates (BACs) to 210,000 by 2015.

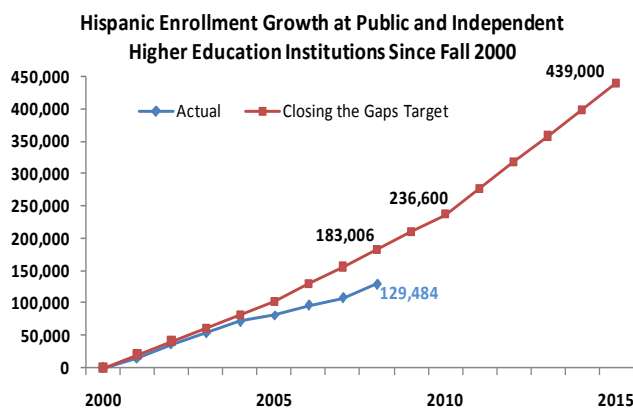
By focusing on college enrollment rates, the foundation is doing several important things:

1. Rather than looking just at current state test scores (TAKS), which are based on basic skills and are not indicators of college preparation levels, we are taking the long view and looking at graduation and college attainment rates; the ultimate purpose of K-12 education.
2. We are focusing our grantmaking - early school readiness, middle grade math and reading, and teacher development - on building the educational "ramp" that leads to college and toward achieving the 2015 target.
3. In this way we are organizing our grantmaking activities toward one overarching and measurable goal.
4. We are aligning ourselves with the state's educational priorities and with a number of other foundations that fund education in Texas, thereby increasing the concentration of human and financial resources on a single, measurable result.

It is critical to recognize that while the college enrollment rates for African American and White students appear to be on track to achieve the overall target, the rates for Hispanic students are not (see table below). Unless Texas raises Hispanic educational outcomes, economic competitiveness and quality of life will decline in the state. **Thus, the key to meeting the state's goal is improving Hispanic participation rates.**

Closing the Gaps Measure	Progress Relative to Target	
	July 2008 Report	July 2009 Report
Participation		
Statewide	Somewhat Below Target	Somewhat Below Target
African American	Somewhat Above Target	Well Above Target
Hispanic	Well Below Target	Well Below Target
White	Somewhat Above Target	Somewhat Below Target

To reach the statewide targets, we must prepare 310,000 Hispanic students over the next six years to be able to graduate and be ready for college level work. Therefore, while the Meadows Foundation will support the educational advancement of all students, much of our focus will be on increasing the college participation rates of Hispanic students.



We have separated the six-year goal into three-year and six-year targets:

Meadows three-year target: To increase the number of students, primarily Hispanic students, enrolling in higher education by 150,000 between 2010 and 2012.

Meadows six-year target: To increase the number of students, primarily Hispanic students, enrolling in higher education by 310,000 by 2015.

The urgency of the issues facing Texas compels the Foundation to move forward on multiple strategies simultaneously. However, it is important to realize that there are different timeframes by which we expect to see measurable results towards our college attainment goals. We are taking the following approach:

1. Immediate Objectives and Strategies – Grant activities designed to produce measurable results within 1-3 years. For example, projects assisting students nearing high school graduation.
2. Intermediate Objectives and Strategies - Grant activities that result in measurable changes over the next 3-5 years. For example, projects aimed at increasing the quantity and quality of school teachers and leaders.
3. Long-term Objectives and Strategies -Grant activities that will take 5-10 years in order to contribute toward our goals. Examples include projects targeting pre-school readiness, and those focused on reading and math instruction in the middle grades.

Immediate Objectives and Strategies (1-3 Years)

1. Objective: Increase high school completion rates of students currently in secondary grades annually by an additional 50,000.
 - a. Strategy: Implement effective interventions for increasing high school completion rates of students. These could include online test preparation programs, intervention programs in adolescent reading and middle school algebra, and other proven programs to assist students in completing high school requirements. Special attention should be given to first generation college students who appear to be college ready but may encounter non-academic barriers to college enrollment.
 - b. Strategy: Implement the research-based intervention strategies being developed by the Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk to help struggling students avoid dropping out of school (e.g., a screening measure for identifying students at risk for dropping out, school-wide models to promote school engagement and literacy, etc.).
 - c. Strategy: In coordination with appropriate agencies, increase the number of dual credit and early college programs available so that high school students can easily transfer to college, with particular emphasis on enrolling Hispanic students.
 - d. Strategy: In coordination with appropriate agencies, expand the enrollment capacity of high-performing charter high schools that produce high graduation and college enrollment rates, particularly for minority students.

Intermediate Objectives and Strategies (3-5 Years)

1. Objective: Increase the focus on academic outcomes and the quality of academic instruction in high-need schools.
 - a. Strategy: Increase the number of certified teachers in high-need content areas (math, science, bilingual) teaching in middle and secondary schools through targeted teacher preparation, retention, and professional development.
 - b. Strategy: Increase the number of effective principals, particularly in high-need middle and secondary schools.
 - c. Strategy: Provide training in leadership and good governance to 10% of all school board members in Texas.
 - d. Strategy: Ensure that 10% of all superintendents receive quality professional development in effective strategies to improve academic outcomes.

Long-term Objectives and Strategies (5-10 Years)

1. Objective 1: Increase the number of four- and five-year-old children demonstrating school readiness which focuses on social and emotional development, reading, writing, math, communication, and language, especially English language.
 - a. Strategy: Build on the learning developed through the Zero-to-Five Collaborative in Dallas to inform other groups and communities in how to conduct a comprehensive school readiness program.
 - b. Strategy: Increase the number of quality pre-school programs that focus on preparing their students for school with an emphasis on English language skills.
 - c. Strategy: Increase efforts to inform parents and caregivers of the benefits in expanding language development in children, especially in English.
 - d. Increase the number of pre-school teachers that receive professional development focused on ways to improve the school readiness levels of their students.
2. Objective 2: Increase the percentage of students in middle grades passing state assessments in reading at or above proficient levels (based on NAEP) from 28% to 43% (top scoring state).
 - a. Strategy: Continue efforts to train teachers in elementary grades in effective early reading instruction.
 - b. Strategy: Increase the number of teachers trained in effective adolescent reading instruction and interventions, with a focus on developing academic language.
3. Objective 3: Increase the percentage of students in middle grades passing state assessments in math at or above proficient levels (based on NAEP) from the current 35% level to 51% (top scoring state).
 - a. Strategy: Increase the number of teachers in middle grades trained in effective math instruction and interventions particularly focused on the foundations of algebra.
 - b. Strategy: Scale up evidence-based effective math programs that focus on teaching the foundations of algebra.
 - c. Strategy: Support the development of a Math Center(s) similar to the Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk, which can develop and translate research on effective math instruction into teacher training and classroom materials.
 - d. Strategy: Support research where needed to answer key policy questions related to teaching math. A critical need is research on the relationship between elementary and secondary teachers' knowledge, their instructional skill, and students learning, and to identify the mathematical and pedagogical knowledge needed for teaching mathematics.

4. Objective 4: Texas public school students will demonstrate the ability to compete with the top performing international countries, particularly in reading and math (fourth and eighth grade levels) by 2020.
 - a. Strategy: Assist the state to use globally competitive reference standards based on the existing American Diploma Project (ADP) framework. The ADP is now working to further calibrate the framework to reflect international expectations as well as recent research on college and career readiness.
 - b. Strategy: Support development of more sophisticated student assessments which are typically more expensive to develop and administer than the multiple-choice exams commonly used in the U.S.
 - c. Strategy: Assist the state and districts to translate findings from high-performing countries into textbooks, workbooks, diagnostic tests for teacher use, and other classroom materials that enable teachers to bring the curriculum into the classroom in a relatively consistent, effective way.
 - d. Strategy: Ensure that teacher and administrator preparation and development programs include concepts and practices derived from international benchmarking efforts.
 - e. Strategy: Support research where needed to answer key policy questions related to other educational attainment issues.
5. Objective 5: Increase the affordability of higher education.
 - a. Strategy: Inform policy makers about the cost-benefit value of increasing state funding for financial aid.
 - b. Strategy: Study the expansion of innovative financial aid programs such as repayable loan programs.
 - c. Strategy: Create incentives for more students to follow “two-plus-two” educational paths where students opt for completing their first two years of academic coursework at community colleges rather than universities.
6. Objective 6: Increase the academic supports designed to ensure college retention rates and success.
 - a. Strategy: Research best practices in developmental education (a student taking a developmental course in math has only an 11% chance of advancing and completing a credit-bearing college-level math course with a passing grade).