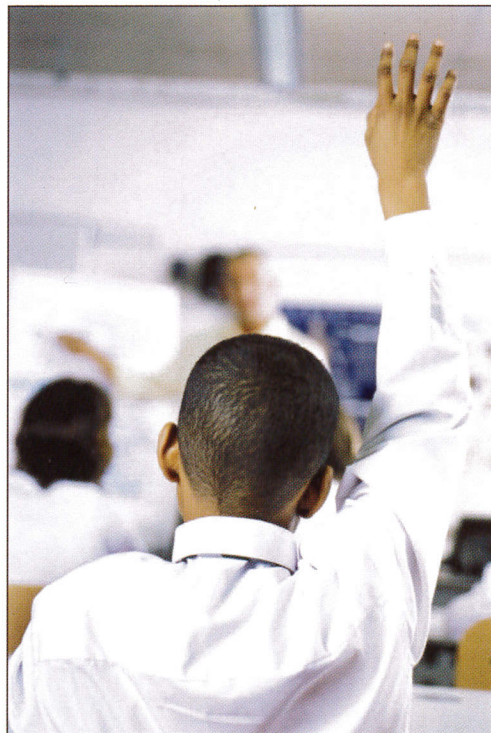


February 2010

Final Report

Educational Reform Effort for the Dallas Independent School District



This report to the Texas Instruments Foundation Board documents the outcomes of a five-year effort to improve student achievement across Dallas ISD. The goal was to create a repeatable process for the systemic deployment of data, proven practices and focused action toward year-to-year campus improvement. The work was made possible by a grant from the TI Foundation to the Foundation for Community Empowerment.

Message from the President



Future engineers, students from Billy Earl Dade Middle School, suit up during a field trip to Texas Instruments as part of an event sponsored by FCE.

I am happy to report that the outcomes desired by the Texas Instruments (TI) Foundation in this historic effort were achieved. Today, at the click of a mouse, every principal and teacher in Dallas ISD has access to a suite of proven, powerful tools to generate a roadmap for academic improvement – for an individual student or an entire campus. Those tools are integrated into the district's regular practices and IT systems, and are being warmly and eagerly adopted. Dallas ISD is reforming itself into a culture in which comparative data is routinely used to drive enhanced performance.

None of this would have

been possible without the sustained financial support of the TI Foundation and the Foundation for Community Empowerment (FCE) or the dedicated partnership of the National Center for Educational Accountability (NCEA) and Dallas ISD.

To fully appreciate the magnitude of this shift and the fortitude of those responsible, it is necessary to review the history of the effort and the events that threatened to derail it over the past five years.

In 2004, a small but powerful team of business and educational leaders began planting the seeds for educational reform. Tom Engibous, Chairman of the Board

of TI, and Phil Ritter, TI Community Affairs leader, who had deep connections and relationships with Dallas ISD and the greater Dallas community, represented TI. They were joined by Don Williams, Chairman Emeritus of Trammell Crow Company and founder of FCE, Dallas ISD superintendent Mike Moses, Tom Luce, co-founder of NCEA and sponsor of the Just for the Kids (JFTK) school improvement model, and Shirley Ison-Newsome, a veteran Dallas ISD administrator and passionate advocate for the children of southern Dallas.

In March 2005, I had the fortune to be assigned as a loaned executive from TI to lead the school reform effort, working

Desired Outcomes: a Snapshot

Outcomes achieved

- Contributed to an increase in the number of "recognized" and "exemplary" schools from 47 to 128
- Contributed to Dallas ISD's climb from No. 6 among Texas' 6 large urban districts to No. 3
- Contributed to Dallas ISD having 54 "Higher Performing" schools as rated by NCEA
- Incorporated JFTK tools and practices into the district's Campus Improvement Planning (CIP) process, making academic gains sustainable
- Created a central repository, making CIP tools and information easy to use and available to all campuses
- Implemented a yearly audit process to ensure accountability and monitoring of implementation
- Provided training on the new CIP process to leaders at all of Dallas ISD's 220-plus campuses
- Assigned a CIP process owner to drive a consistent process across all Learning Communities

Still left to do:

- Allocate staff development days for training campus leadership teams on the CIP process
- Further develop systems to automate and integrate budgeting and monitoring capabilities with the CIP process
- Conduct periodic executive leadership team reviews to ensure continued improvement in the quality and execution of campus improvement plans and process

through FCE. Early on, I brought in Joan Nichols and later Patti Waterbury, consultants with expertise in change management. This team was in place during the entire effort and provided the thread of consistency that stitched together various phases and approaches into a cohesive whole.

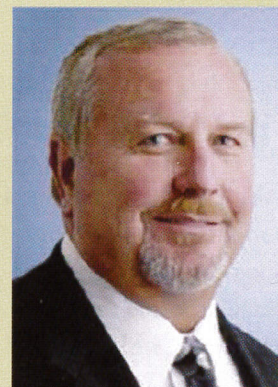
What turned out to be a five-year journey kicked off in July 2005 with a grant from the TI Foundation to FCE to conduct a pilot program using the JFTK

model on 26 campuses representing a cross-section of Dallas ISD. The JFTK model, which will be described in more detail in later sections, uses comparative student performance data and proven practices to drive improvement.

While NCEA was known for its use of data to define appropriate learning goals for K-12 students and its research on the importance of higher learning standards, it had never been deployed systemically across a

**“Failure
is not an
option.”**

– Tom Engibous,
Chairman of the Board,
Texas Instruments



large urban school district. Dallas ISD would provide a fertile testing ground. It presented all the common challenges of urban education: diverse student populations including speakers of many languages, poverty and its fallout, concentrations of low-performing schools, and teacher turnover, to name a few.

Those were the expected difficulties; following the initial funding of the project, they were swiftly compounded by unanticipated events that would have deterred or discouraged any but the most dedicated, passionate people.

Dr. Moses left the district in August 2004. Other members of the core team continued to shape the initiative, and in July 2005, Dallas ISD's new leader, Michael Hinojosa, embraced it, making it a plank in his ambitious, four-part transition plan. Dr. Hinojosa's support and vision remained a driving force throughout the project.

During the ensuing years, the Dallas ISD executive leadership team experienced turnover in key roles, including Chief of Staff, Chief of Schools and Chief of Teaching and Learning. Geographically based "Area Superintendents" were replaced by seven "Executive Directors" of "Learning Communities," segmented by grade level as well as geography. Only one senior leader, Shirley Ison-Newsome remained constant throughout the five years.

A districtwide curriculum overhaul and intense push to change classroom teaching practices absorbed much of the time, energy, and attention of principals and teachers. In addition, school closings, changes in the grade-level configurations, turnover in principals, a highly publicized budget crisis, teacher layoffs, and program cuts distracted campus leaders.

Change was not isolated to

Dallas ISD. During the life of the project, many of the original sponsors and influencers retired or moved into new positions. Tom Engibous retired in April 2008. Phil Ritter retired in March 2009. Tom Luce moved to the U.S. Department of Education as an Assistant Secretary. NCEA was acquired by another organization, which shifted its focus to reach a broader audience through more Web-based tools.

In spite of these disruptions, and with the support of the new Dallas ISD superintendent, the team forged ahead in the effort to institutionalize a robust, data-driven Campus Improvement Planning (CIP) process in Dallas ISD. The unwavering support of sponsors and their belief in the project's ability to impact the future of students in Dallas ISD was the single consistent strength of the project.

As the following sections will show, the school reform effort went through several

MILESTONES: Funding

This educational reform effort was co-funded by community-minded foundations and private families fervently committed to improving Dallas and its educational system.

For years, TI and the TI Foundation supported the deployment and use of data, proven practices and campus-centered leadership as pillars of education reform. Concurrently, FCE supported comprehensive

efforts to transform low-income neighborhoods in southern Dallas, efforts centered around improving public schools.

Together, over five years, they provided a series of grants totaling over \$2.6 million to deploy the JFTK model and create a replicable, sustainable process for raising student achievement. (TI Foundation funded \$2,153,000; FCE funded \$520,500.)

In parallel, the Bill and

Melinda Gates Foundation and Dell Corporation provided \$4.5 million in grants to improve Dallas ISD's technology infrastructure. These critical technology upgrades enabled the JFTK tools to be incorporated into the district's existing MyData Portal system, providing for their seamless use by teachers and principals. Without this work, the new Campus Improvement Planning process could not have been integrated into Dallas ISD's

phases. On the strength of the 2005 26-campus pilot, the program expanded to include 105 campuses over the 2006-2008 school years while competing with a multitude of other initiatives. Although this phase sometimes seemed chaotic, the experience helped the team solidify the JFTK process and identify the tools and structure needed to make it an integral part of how Dallas ISD does business.

Dallas ISD budget cuts in the 2008-2009 school year, combined with NCEA's shift to online training, led the district to discontinue its contract with NCEA. With the support of FCE and an additional TI Foundation grant, Dallas ISD decided to accelerate the integration of the JFTK model with its own Campus Improvement Planning process.

Surprisingly perhaps, this proved to be not a setback but the impetus for the district to fully own and sustain this

process. In a heroic effort in the final six months of 2009, a task force of leaders from the seven Learning Communities worked with key personnel from central administration and our consultants to redesign the CIP process around the JFTK tools, create the technology interface to make those tools highly attractive to teachers and principals, and train principals and other leaders from virtually every campus in their use.

This collaboration is an unprecedented step in taking down silo walls that have hindered systemic change in the past. The testimonials included in this report are evidence that Dallas ISD is undergoing a culture change.

However, the ultimate measure of success will not come immediately but through the sustained improvements year over year that this effort, along with other effective Dallas ISD initiatives, should produce.

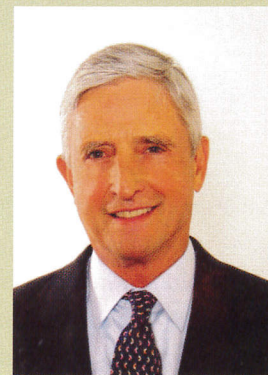
operations and practices.

Ideally, funding for a reform initiative of this magnitude would have been secured at the outset. However, because pilot results were needed to fully grasp the complexity of the effort, and because of turnover in Dallas ISD's leadership, it was difficult at the outset to know what the total cost would be. Consequently, funding for this effort came through a yearly series of intensely scrutinized grants.

The money, but more importantly the steadfast dedication of the project's sponsors within the TI Foundation and the Foundation for Community Empowerment, laid the foundation for success. Without their commitment to systemic improvement, a commitment expressed in generous funding and wise executive leadership throughout the effort, change would not have been possible.

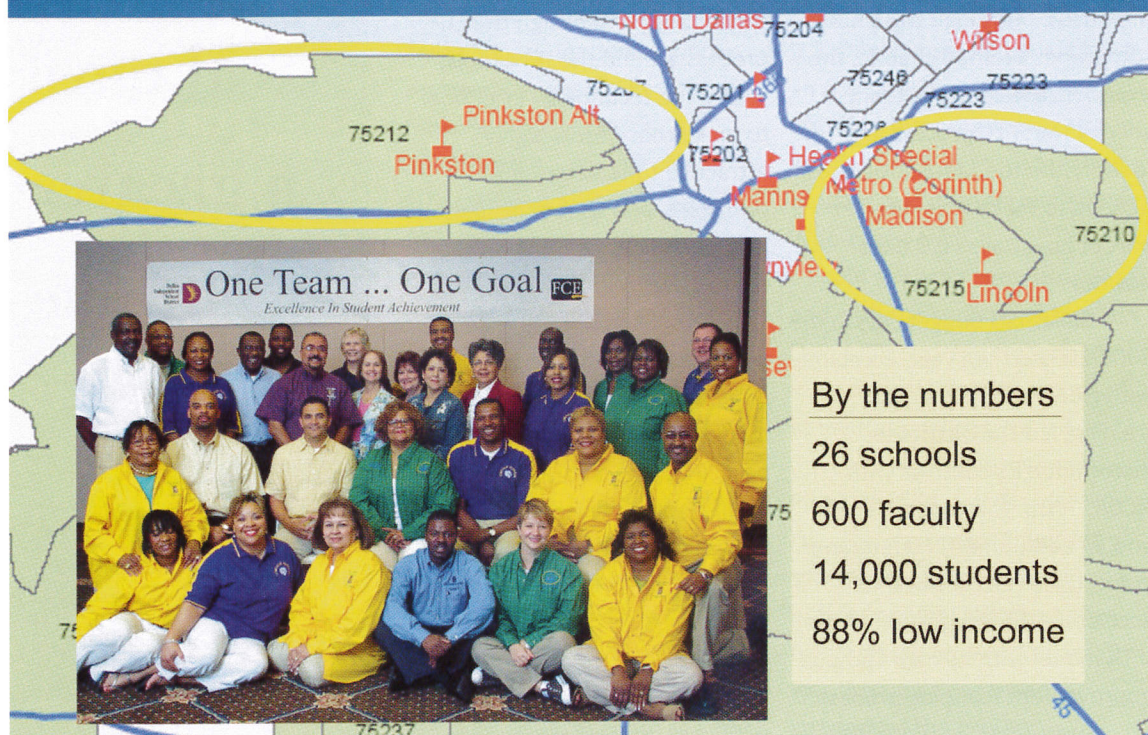
“**Nothing
we ever do
will have
a greater
positive
impact .**”

— Don Williams,
Founder and Chairman,
The Foundation for
Community Empowerment



MILESTONES: Pilot

DISD Pilot at a Glance



The outcome of a pilot is not measured in success or failure, but rather in how much can be learned and the value of that information. A pilot enables a core group of people to help shape and build the process they are testing so that, ideally, they become allies and can exert influence on a larger group.

This pilot laid the foundation for changing minds throughout Dallas ISD about how a robust campus improvement process and tools can drive improved student achievement at every campus.

The initial 26-school pilot took place on the campuses of three southern Dallas high

schools: Madison, Pinkston and Lincoln, as well as the 20-plus elementary and middle schools that feed into them. These campuses represented a cross-section of Dallas ISD's Area Superintendents oversaw campuses involved in the pilot.

NCEA, with a long and distinguished history of leadership in the school accountability movement, provided the substance via a pilot program. Based on its research at hundreds of school districts across the nation, NCEA drives home the idea that a principal's leadership around a core set of practices is the overriding factor

in determining students' success. At top schools, principals are given leeway to chart their campuses' course, and they use their skills as instructional leaders to direct, coach and inspire teachers.

NCEA's School Improvement Services program offers a comprehensive three-part professional development program to teach educators how to benchmark their schools against higher performing schools. The program addresses the following themes at a district, school and classroom level:

- Recognition, Intervention and Adjustment
- Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis and Use of Data

- Instructional Programs, Practices and Arrangements
- Staff Selection, Leadership and Capacity Building
- Student Learning, Expectations and Goals

Put another way, by identifying schools that are succeeding, even in the face of serious socioeconomic and demographic challenges, the JFTK model dispels any notion that students and campuses cannot improve. By drilling down to determine what factors successful schools have in common, it offers proven, practical guidance for administrators, principals and teachers who want to replicate that success.

Specifically, at the district level, Dallas ISD responded by raising the bar on its fundamental definition of success from the number of students achieving passing scores on statewide tests to the number of students achieving a college-and-career-ready (CCR) score.

Through the 26-campus pilot, more than 600 teachers from all grades, including the typically overlooked K-2 teachers, received JFTK training. FCE bolstered the effort by engaging specialists in organizational change to provide structured support including regular one-on-

one campus visits with principals to help them apply the training. FCE also provided regular reports to the Area Superintendents for accountability. Workshops that brought together leaders from the pilot campuses promoted dialogue within feeder patterns and learning across campuses. The workshops also provided FCE with vital feedback.

In response to the feedback, the project team adjusted the training and coaching to better meet the needs of principals and teachers, thus overcoming much of the natural resistance to change. Over time, principals came to trust and support the process. At the end of the first year, the Area Superintendents recommended that the pilot be expanded to other campuses.

Among the pilot campuses, the number achieving a "recognized" or "exemplary" rating increased by 20% over the previous year. The Just For The Kids training, the new structured improvement process, higher student goals and enhanced horizontal and vertical communication were widely credited as factors in that positive change.

The next step was to figure out how to scale the model to all of Dallas ISD and how to sustain it and integrate it into existing processes and systems.

“ We
came as
skeptics
but left
with
hope.”

— A principal who took part in the original 26-campus pilot



MILESTONES: Expansion & Evolution

The next two years, 2006-2008, marked the expansion of the pilot to include 105 campuses. During the same period, the district experienced profound changes on a number of fronts, including a new curriculum planning guide, new instructional methods and restructuring into Learning Communities.

Expansion of the pilot exposed a critical mass of campus leaders and administrators from every Learning Community to the JFTK process. Based on the feedback from the pilot and the reorganization of the district into seven Learning Communities, segmented by grade levels, the

project team chose to deploy the process in complete feeder patterns and an entire Elementary Learning Community. This approach was designed to drive increased collaboration and accelerate the acquisition and acceptance of the program.

In parallel, Dallas ISD invested in deploying a limited version of the pilot program on some campuses not covered by the TI Foundation grant. On district-funded campuses, only principals and a handful of campus leaders received JFTK training. On TI-funded campuses, principals and all teachers were trained (doubling the number of teachers trained from 600 to 1,200), and campus leaders

received follow-up coaching on how to apply the JFTK training in the Campus Improvement Planning process.

Responses to a survey of principals and Learning Community Executive Directors showed that training all teachers and providing subsequent on-campus support to principals gave campus leaders more faith in the program and their own ability to impact improvement. It also helped campus leaders develop the capacity to drive improvements.

FCE worked with the administrator designated by the district to oversee the JFTK pilot to track campus participation and measure the level to which the



Using a ropes puzzle to tackle the hard work of campus improvement planning .

model was adopted by various Learning Communities. Case studies of the most successful and least successful campuses reinforced the importance of leadership and excellent execution of the core practices.

The successful campuses embraced the tools provided JFTK School Improvement Services – which demanded a considerable investment of time and energy on the part of principals, other campus leaders and teachers.

These campuses demonstrated many of the practices of high performing campuses in accordance with the JFTK Best Practice Framework. In turn, these campuses showed

absolute improvement in academic achievement year-over-year and against comparable schools in the state.

At the other end of the spectrum, unsuccessful schools were marked by leadership turnover, ad hoc decision making by the district and significant disruption.

The pilot had validated the effectiveness of the JFTK model and provided a definitive understanding of the factors that governed success or failure in its deployment. It remained to bring the reform effort fully to scale and to sustain a process that gave campus leaders a deeper understanding of the strategies critical to driving student success.

MILESTONES: Sponsorship

In 2008, school reform in Dallas ISD came to a critical crossroads. The district was due to renew its agreement with NCEA to deliver JFTK training for a third year as contemplated by their original contract. TI Foundation and FCE wanted Dallas ISD's leadership to reaffirm its commitment to deploying the JFTK model across the district. However, budget cuts loomed.

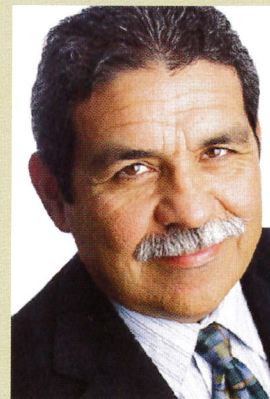
The shortfall forced the district to eliminate the third year of NCEA/JFTK training. In its place, Dallas ISD executive leadership decided to take

ownership of the effort and continue the deployment on its own. TI and FCE agreed to fund and support this effort.

To provide continuity and minimize the impact of losing NCEA's involvement, the FCE team provided training workshops to campus leadership teams as requested. FCE consultants collaborated with the district's systems specialists to develop tools for analyzing student, classroom and campus performance accessible via the Dallas ISD data portal. An ad-hoc team of key players across various departments and

“Our
purpose is
to
graduate
students
ready for
college.”

— Dr. Michael Hinojosa,
Dallas ISD Superintendent





Dallas ISD student orator Dalton Sherman asks: "Do you believe in me?"

MILESTONES: Integration

Dallas
Independent
School
District



MyData Portal

[Home](#) [School Data](#) [TAKS](#) [Benchmark](#) [CIP](#) [DCM](#) [Training Materials](#)

2009-10 Tools for Campus Improvement Plans NEW

The documents on this page include tools to guide the Campus Improvement Plan process: evaluate, investigate, monitor/adjust.



A CIP should be a focused action plan for the campus. It should define student achievement goals, establish instructional strategies for the campus community, and set priorities. The construction of a CIP requires *evaluation* of existing campus goals, making decisions based on relevant data; *investigation* of best practices, such as the "Core Framework Practices"; and knowledge of what to *monitor* and how to *adjust* throughout the school year.

For questions or more information about the CIP process, accessing the [CIP online](#), or using the tools and reports on this page in your school or classroom, contact Alternative Programs at 972-925-4878.

Presentations and Templates

Document/Template	Presented by...	Presented to...	Description/Purpose
<p>The formation of the CIP Task Force, a first of its kind within Dallas ISD,</p>	<p>was critical to the collaborative development of the tools and processes needed to support full deployment and sustained</p>	<p>adoption across campuses. Task force members drew heavily on experience gained from the JFTK pilot, as well as the collaborative</p>	

campuses was formed and a process owner was identified to spearhead adoption across all campuses and departments. Transition appeared to be at hand.

However, budget cuts took a further toll. Other, more urgent needs distracted key players and consumed their energy. The FCE team sustained support and continuity for the TI-funded campuses, but further expansion and system integration efforts were stymied.

The breakthrough came in May 2009, when, at the

continued urging of TI and FCE, the ad-hoc team that was promoting the reforms was formally chartered by district leadership as the CIP Task Force. Its members were given the critical mission of fully integrating the JFTK tools and practices into the district's own Campus Improvement Planning processes. The CIP Task Force had representatives from every Learning Community and worked with representatives from FCE, Dallas ISD IT, data and campus services to tackle the work of transition in earnest.

approach modeled by FCE.

Adoption of the CIP process was accelerated by technology contributions from various Dallas ISD departments that enabled campus leaders to find and utilize information more easily. To that point, even though many campuses were using the JFTK model, it existed as a separate exercise, involving laboriously analyzing student performance data "by hand" according to a framework presented in a massive handbook. Some teachers and principals regarded it as an unwelcome imposition that competed with other priorities and district mandates.

The addition of a CIP homepage to the existing MyData Portal provided a one-stop shop for training material, graphically formatted student-level data and decision-making tools. Pre-populated student goals based on prior year TAKS data made sharing individual goals with

students and parents easy and timely.

Campus Services modified the online CIP system so principals could look at their CIPs by subject area or strategy. This made the online system a viable tool for monitoring CIP implementation and underscored its function as a "living" document and official Dallas ISD tool. A JFTK Core Practice Framework Self-Audit allowed principals to monitor, adjust and reinforce the implementation of core practices selected as part of their campus improvement plan. Additional links on the CIP homepage to external research, case studies and school comparisons allowed principals to investigate successful schools for a deeper understanding of how to implement strategies for boosting student performance.

The pieces were finally in place; the stage had been set for a breakthrough.

**“It’s our
passion for
education
that will
take us to
the top”**

— Shirley Ison-Newsome,
Executive Director,
Southeast Elementary
Learning Community

MILESTONES: Deployment

After more than four years of phased introduction, feedback, refinement and adaptation, the district was finally in a position to deploy a robust, data driven CIP process with their own systems across all 220-plus campuses. Learning Community Coordinators and lead principals from all Learning Communities were shown how the powerful new CIP process and tools revitalized campus improvement planning and made it a relevant and integral component of their practices.

In August 2009 the redesigned CIP process and tools were presented to all principals who had not been included in the pilot phase and to some members of their Campus Improvement Leadership Teams. Because Learning Community involvement had varied over the last four years, the deployment



Transitioning the work to DISD process owner Keitha Shelby.

process was tailored to each Learning Community's needs. Funding from the TI Foundation was used to extend support to campus leaders through meetings of principals, campus visits, one-on-ones, workshops and train-the-trainer sessions.

As awareness spread, campus leaders and teachers began asking to attend

workshops. Even beyond the end of the year, requests continued to flow in and additional training sessions were scheduled.

All 220-plus campuses have been exposed to the tools. All principals have agreed to adopt the new process. Campus leaders from 90% of campuses have participated in hands-on working sessions.

Conclusion

At the end of this five-year school reform effort, I am pleased to report that the Dallas ISD Campus Improvement Process is being adopted district-wide and will be sustained by Dallas ISD in the future. Generous funding from Texas Instruments and the Foundation for Community Empowerment sustained this

project from inception to conclusion.

Early successes among the pilot campuses helped educators believe they could improve student achievement at all campuses through a repeatable process using student data and proven best practices. Expansion efforts reconfirmed the value of the model and identified the comprehensive

system of supports needed to deploy it to a large urban school district. Dallas ISD leadership affirmed their desire to own the reforms throughout the district. Process tools and materials were integrated into district practices and systems. Collaborative teams of Dallas ISD educators drove deployment to all district schools and will continue to maintain ownership and support.

They saw the powerful decision-making data tools incorporated into their own system. They realized they could establish clear goals to drive student achievement and they could monitor the effectiveness of supporting strategies and actions. They recognized that the process and tools could be used to communicate priorities to their staffs and build confidence that their CIP plans were tied to the most critical work of the campus. During campus visits, Executive Directors began accessing online campus improvement plans, wanting to know if they were reflective of the true campus priorities.

Armed with a proven, structured process and newly enhanced, easy-to-use tools, district educators are embracing the CIP as a valuable tool for improving student learning. Widely held views of the CIP process as a static and largely

empty exercise are being altered. The belief that ongoing improvements are possible is emerging as a cultural norm. Reform has come. The relentless pushing from without has finally led to a breakthrough, and internal momentum is propelling change forward.

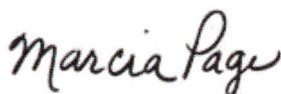
Moving ahead, the CIP Task Force is structured to ensure that lessons learned across the district are shared to reinforce success and facilitate improvement. Each coordinator, armed with a deep understanding of the tools and practices supporting the CIP process, is now able to support campus leaders.

The CIP Task Force is committed to continue deployment until every principal, assistant principal, CILT member and teacher understands the value of the CIP process and until the tools become an integral part of the way Dallas ISD works in 2010 and beyond.

In conclusion, I would like to say that it has been a pleasure writing this report. The success of this effort is directly attributable to the commitment of Texas Instruments and the Foundation for Community Empowerment, the vision of Dallas ISD executive leadership, and the dedicated efforts of district educators who embraced the concept that children of all

ages, on all campuses, can achieve.

Sincerely,

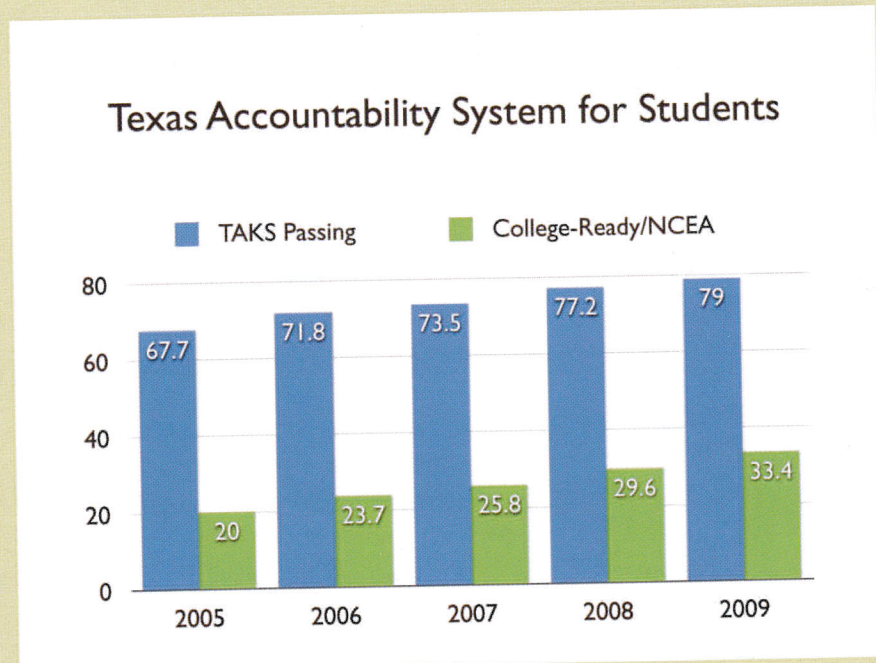


Marcia Page
President and CEO
The Foundation for
Community Empowerment

“When everyone can take ownership, it changes the culture.”

*Dallas ISD teacher,
reflecting on the
impact of the new,
district-wide CIP
planning process*

Evidence of Success



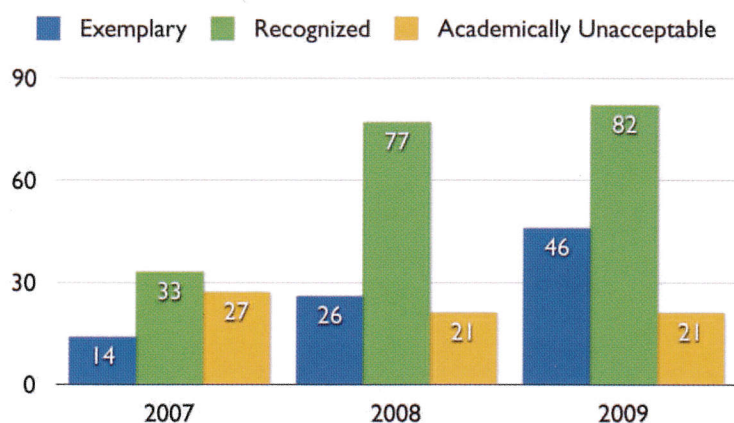
“ Dallas ISD has improved more than any other urban district in Texas and more than all but one urban district in the country in narrowing the achievement gap ”

— Brown Center on Education Policy
Brookings Institution
February 2009

“ The Dallas Independent School District and the students it serves have made substantial strides over the last several years. Its academic gains have been some of the most impressive in the country. ”

— Council of Great City Schools
June 2009

Texas Accountability System for Schools



“ Students are showing improvement on college readiness indicators ... and (the district) has shown improvement on Broad Prize indicators. ”

—National Center for Educational Achievement
December 2008

“ Dallas ISD principals and their teachers are creating academically challenging assignments that will better prepare students for college and the world of work. Dallas ISD has become an exemplar for urban schools as an effort-based district that focuses on high achievement for all. ”

— Institute for Learning
June 2009

“

The Dallas ISD reform model represents the most promising educational initiative that we've seen, and the TI Foundation is very pleased to support this outstanding effort.

We believe this is the first time the principles of campus and principal empowerment, data collection and best practices deployment have been systematically put into use in a major urban school district.

This is an ambitious project with a critical mission, and resources from the private and non-profit leaders in this community will be essential if it is to succeed. We must do all we can, and, until every student is achieving, we can not be satisfied. ”

— Tom Engibous.