



# Supporting Dropout Recovery Programs to Focus on Postsecondary Success

## AT A GLANCE

This brief reports on the first year of a promising effort in Texas to deepen the postsecondary preparation that schools and programs offer. With support from the Greater Texas Foundation (GTF) and coaching and technical assistance from JFF, five sites have begun using JFF's Back on Track: Postsecondary Success model and JFF's Common Instructional Framework (CIF) to assess and improve upon the strategies they use to prepare participants for a successful transition to postsecondary education, training, and good jobs.

## AUTHORS

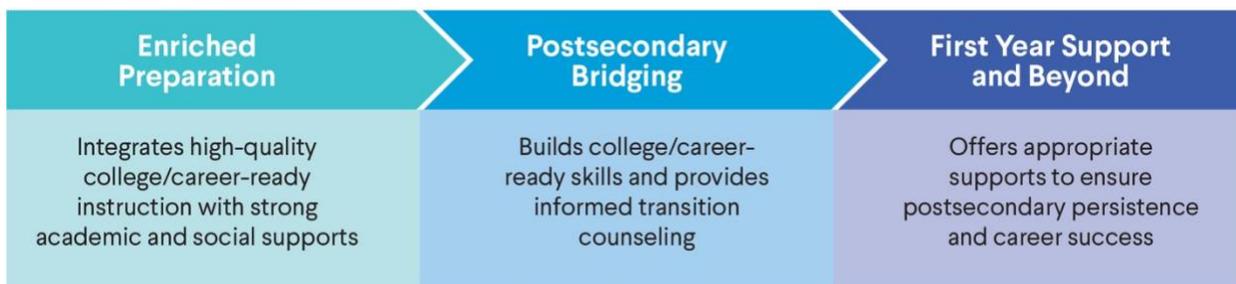
**Adria Steinberg**  
Senior Advisor, JFF

MAY 2020

Alternative schools and adult education programs perform the valuable function in many communities and most states across the U.S. of welcoming young adults who are seeking to complete high school and to obtain skills and credentials they will need for lifelong career employment. Yet despite their importance to individuals, communities, and state economies, these schools and programs often struggle to obtain sufficient support to provide the services needed. While many of the young adult participants attain a high school or alternative diploma, the vast majority face challenges in making a successful transition to further education and family-supporting careers.

This brief reports on the first year of a promising effort in Texas to deepen the postsecondary preparation that schools and programs offer. With philanthropic support from the Greater Texas Foundation (GTF) and coaching and technical assistance from JFF, five sites have begun using JFF’s Back on Track: Postsecondary Success model and JFF’s Common Instructional Framework (CIF) to assess and improve upon the strategies they use to prepare participants for a successful transition to postsecondary education, training, and good jobs.

The Back on Track model lays out three overlapping phases: Enriched Preparation, Postsecondary Bridging, and First Year Supports. After staff from the sites attended an institute to ground them in the core features of each phase outlined in the model, each of the sites began working with a JFF coach to select and begin to implement a set of core features of Enriched Prep and Postsecondary Bridging.



To double down on the Enriched Prep and Postsecondary Bridging phases and address the gap in postsecondary preparation for youth who have fallen off the track to graduation or dropped out altogether the selected schools/programs also began working with a JFF instructional coach to implement strategies within the CIF—a pedagogical approach that is integral to JFF’s Back on Track model. The CIF emphasizes the use of engaging, highly interactive pedagogy linked to college readiness to build students’ core competencies and power skills (also sometimes referred to as 21st century, anchor, or foundational skills). Because such instructional support is rarely available to teachers in alternative schools or programs, this report focuses particularly on how it has begun to impact the teaching and learning at the sites and what the future possibilities and anticipated challenges might be.

As of the publication of this paper—which was written before the COVID-19 crisis and the ensuing shutdowns of schools—JFF instructional coaches are working with the sites to implement the strategies through use of online platforms as well.

## The CIF: Key Practices

Although this brief describes the first effort aimed specifically at bringing the CIF into alternative schools and GED programs in Texas, it is not the first introduction of the CIF in the state. JFF first developed the CIF in the early 2000s, as the basis for its professional development work in Texas and North Carolina, the first two states to embrace the then-new idea of early college high schools.<sup>1</sup> Through research studies of classrooms where powerful teaching and accelerated learning take place, JFF identified six key instructional strategies evident in these classrooms and schools.<sup>2</sup>

### *Collaborative Group Work*

Students engage in learning by constructing group solutions, texts, experiments, or works of art. Students are grouped intentionally, with each student held accountable for contributing to the group work. Activities are designed so that students with diverse skill levels are supported as well as challenged by their peers. Students engage in meaningful tasks in the subject area that are conceptually rich and engaging and that have multiple entry points.

### *Writing to Learn*

Classrooms engage students every day in experimenting with written language as a way to develop their ideas and their critical thinking abilities as well as their writing skills. By taking time to write in low-stakes exercises, students actively engage in thinking about a concept and trying out their ideas in non-evaluative activities before they have to present them to a group or as individuals. Such exercises function as formative assessments and as a way to scaffold mid- and high-stakes writing assignments and tests.

### *Scaffolding*

Teachers help students to connect prior knowledge and experience with new information and ideas. Using information from assessments of prior knowledge, teachers plan a careful sequence of activities that continually links that knowledge and understanding to new knowledge and skill attainment. Teachers challenge students step by step with increasingly more difficult tasks and concepts to ensure they are continually learning.

### *Questioning*

Students and teachers formulate and use thoughtful questions as a way to open conversations and further intellectual inquiry. Effective questioning (by the teacher and by students) deepens

classroom conversations and the level of discourse students apply to their work. Teachers create opportunities for students to investigate and analyze their thinking, as well as the thinking of their peers and the authors they read in each of their classes.

### **Classroom Talk**

Students have multiple opportunities to articulate their thinking and strengthen their voices: in pairs, as part of Collaborative Group Work, and as a whole class. As students become accustomed to talking more in class, the teacher serves as a facilitator to engage students in higher levels of discourse. Teachers introduce and reinforce the vocabulary of academic language and encourage students to use that language in the classroom.

### **Literacy Groups**

Classrooms offer a collaborative structure through which students can engage in a high level of discourse that builds their understanding of a variety of texts, problem sets, and documents. Each student has a role to play and a defined purpose within the group. The specific roles or discussion guidelines may vary for different content areas, lengths of text, or students' levels of sophistication, but the purpose of Literacy Groups remains the same: to raise engagement with texts as students actively probe for meaning.

Although these are distinct strategies, all six succeed because they engage students in learning and require them to take an active role in their education. With the clear structures that the six strategies and accompanying protocols and activities provide, teachers can concentrate on planning and implementing intellectually engaging and challenging learning activities for all students during every lesson. Taken together, the six strategies form the basis of a coherent college preparatory curriculum that can give students of all skill levels the tools to access the complex information needed to meet state and college-ready standards. They also give students the confidence and the cognitive and social skills to thrive in the more adult environments of postsecondary education and the workplace. Research on early college high schools in Texas and North Carolina has shown the effectiveness of this model, revealing significant gains in student achievement and strong improvement in student graduation rates.<sup>3</sup>

## **Back on Track in Texas: Fostering High-Quality Instruction in Alternative Schools and High School Equivalency Programs**

For nearly 15 years, Texas has stood out for its concerted efforts, both within the state education agency and outside it, to support dropout prevention and recovery. Such efforts have been fueled by statewide demographic trends indicating that by 2020 the majority of the population will be young and Latinx; and that if current disparities in education and income are left unattended to, upward of 30 percent of Texas's population will not have a high school diploma—

and that the rate will be close to double that for the Latinx population. These disparities could cause the income level in the state overall to decrease significantly.

Impelled by growing recognition of the human and economic costs of dropouts and the importance to the state economy of improving postsecondary attainment, policymakers, funders, and other key stakeholders have made it a priority to reduce the state dropout rate and place formerly off-track students on a path to postsecondary success. This is evident in a series of state actions and statewide campaigns, from a 2007 omnibus bill aimed at dropout prevention and high school reform to the current “60x30” initiative, which calls for 60 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds to have a degree or certificate by 2030.

The heightened interest in Texas in helping returning dropouts prepare for postsecondary learning has helped to spawn a number of schools and programs that have the aspiration of functioning not just as dropout recovery but as preparation for postsecondary learning. In 2018, the GTF and JFF launched an effort directed at helping such schools and programs further deepen the postsecondary preparation they offer while also developing more comprehensive bridge programming and supports for young adults as they enter and try to thrive in postsecondary education.

After a competitive request-for-proposals process, five schools and programs are receiving funding, as well as coaching both for administrators and for instructional staff in direct contact with students.<sup>4</sup> School leadership coaching in Year 1 focused on supporting sites to strengthen their delivery of the Back on Track model. As a result of this work, sites have instituted a variety of organizational and staffing changes. For example, they did the following:

- Enriched the academic preparation for students interested in pursuing postsecondary education to meet Texas requirements and pass the state-mandated Texas Success Initiative (TSI) exam for a college-ready diploma.
- Hired new postsecondary transition counselors or coordinators to work with students individually and in groups to help them make a smooth transition to postsecondary.
- Designed and delivered senior year college-readiness seminars. This included several sites working with their postsecondary partners to offer credit-bearing summer bridge programs for students preparing to enter college in the fall.

### **Back on Track in Texas**

#### **Participating Community-based Organizations in the First Cohort**

La Joya College and Career Center

Goodwill Excel, Austin

Restore Education, San Antonio

Texans CAN Academy, Fort Worth

American Youthworks, Austin

- Began meeting with their postsecondary partners to craft data-sharing agreements to actively monitor and support students as they transition to college.

Simultaneous with making these changes, school leaders worked with JFF’s instructional coach to train and support their teachers in applying the teaching and learning strategies and key classroom practices detailed in the CIF. As described later in this report, this work can take time, involving culture and mindset changes for both staff and students. Nevertheless, by the end of the first year, sites were posting some significant milestones, including these:

- More students are applying college-readiness skills in their academic classes, including higher-level Questioning, Writing to Learn, and Collaborative Group Work.
- There have been significant increases in the number of students taking and successfully completing the TSI exam. For example, at La Joya CCC, the number of students taking the TSI almost doubled, from 77 to 144, and the number passing the TSI increased from 47 to 75.
- The number of students applying to college has increased significantly. For example, previously at Restore Education, only 15 of the 40 students taking TSI classes each year applied to college, whereas after the program added a full-time advisor in 2019, 58 students applied and were accepted to college.
- College entrance rates are up, as well. Both La Joya CCC and Restore Education track this data from year to year and found significant increases in the number of students entering postsecondary education and training.

Catherine Trevino, who now provides coaching on the CIF in the dropout recovery sites receiving support from Greater Texas Foundation and JFF, went to her first training on the CIF in 2008 as a founding teacher of one of the state’s new early college high schools.<sup>5</sup> “I was frustrated with teaching high school algebra the old way and had begun to look for more constructivist approaches,” she said. “The CIF gave me what I needed, and I could immediately start using the strategies in my classroom.” She further observed that the CIF is especially helpful in alternative education, which is charged with getting students ready for multiple experiences and career pathways. “They are expected to have college-success and employability skills as well as other ‘soft skills’ which they likely did not develop in prior schooling, where they were not successful.”

Leaders in the five sites selected to participate in the initiative concur with Trevino’s assessment of the fit between the CIF and the mission of dropout recovery programs, especially ones that are committed not just to high school completion but to preparing nontraditional students for college and careers. As Susan Hunt, the director of student supports for Goodwill Excel Academy, explained: “There’s strong alignment with what we are trying to do as a high school

for students who've been failed by the traditional schools. . . . Our students have not had the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills that are very important in career/college readiness and jobs. The framework promotes self-efficacy, student agency, building community, and taking control.”

Ku-Masi Lewis, the principal of the Texans CAN Academy in Fort Worth, elaborated on how the CIF has helped the school serve its nontraditional students: “Most of our students don't realize how powerful their thoughts and voices are. . . . They haven't had opportunities in their prior educational experiences to speak about their opinions in classroom or share with a peer their process of understanding, or listen to what others say and perhaps change their minds. That's what CIF protocols do for us.”

From her bird's-eye view across the five sites, Trevino observed that the CIF, along with the protocols detailing how to implement the strategies, provides a way not only to build rigor and critical thinking, but to help students “come out of spaces where they feel unsafe and become more involved in their own production of knowledge.” In addition, instructional staff call out the reinforcement CIF provides to students' self-confidence and the ways in which it prepares them for the kinds of teamwork that will be expected of them when projects are assigned in college classrooms or when they enter the workforce.

## **Customizing the CIF to Different School Contexts**

Working closely with JFF and with the principals and instructional leaders in the sites, Trevino has customized and modified the training in the CIF strategies to the particular circumstances and needs of each of the programs or schools. Alternative education, dropout recovery, and GED preparation are offered through a range of delivery systems, each of which offers somewhat different opportunities and challenges. The five pilot sites for the GTF/JFF initiative include an alternative fifth-year program within a public system; several schools operating under charters, each managed by different operators; and a nonprofit organization offering a primarily individualized GED preparation program.

Across these very different delivery systems, leaders within the schools/programs follow up with their staffs to help them embed the CIF into their teaching and to implement the strategies with fidelity. Each of the sites used the first year to pilot two or more of the strategies outlined in the CIF, starting with those that school leaders, working with Trevino, felt would resonate the most with and feel most familiar to at least some of their teachers. The text below illustrates the range of implementation strategies that the different sites are using.

### *Goodwill Excel, Austin*

Excel is part of a charter network managed by Goodwill, Inc. catering both to older youth (18 to 26) and adults (26 to 50). It offers both diplomas and GEDs and has a flexible schedule to allow for its older clientele to work and/or take care of their families. Now in its fifth year, Excel is poised to move from a small pilot of Classroom Talk and Writing to Learn in a few classes to a more systematic rollout of these strategies across the school. Leaders in the school see philosophical alignment of these two strategies to their goal of integrating concepts across academic disciplines with career exploration and preparation, with the ultimate goal of developing greater consistency and intentionality across the school program. To this end, the director of curriculum and instruction is conducting professional development sessions with teachers to help them incorporate the CIF strategies. School leaders are also committed to gathering data that will help teachers see concrete evidence of how using these strategies contribute to the effectiveness of instruction, no matter what the subject area.

### *American YouthWorks/Youthbuild, Austin*

American Youthworks is a nonprofit organization that offers a Youthbuild program, providing the opportunity for young adults in Austin to take control of their education through combining completion of a high school credential with attainment of skills and certifications in one of several industry areas, work experience in that area, and preparation for and successful transition to postsecondary education and/or training. To support students in each of these areas, the school faculty includes professionals who come with expertise in a particular technical/occupational area, teachers who have been more traditionally trained to deliver instruction in traditional high school subject matter to help students prepare for the GED or meet the TSI requirements and prepare for college coursework, and transition experts who teach courses such as Adult Life and Mental Toughness II to help smooth the path to college and/or workplaces.

Several members of the technical staff and transition experts have been among the first to implement strategies of the CIF, primarily focusing on implementing Writing to Learn, Classroom Talk, and Questioning as a way to reinforce and deepen the school's existing emphasis on student engagement. A few of the academic faculty have also begun to use Writing to Learn, specifically, to help students prepare for TSI and/or GED tests. Across both technical and academic classes, faculty agree that students need help seeing writing as a way to express themselves, and share ideas about what they are learning, not just an unpleasant school chore. In rolling out the strategies in 2020, Youthbuild charter school staff will collaborate with their new partner, Goodwill Excel, to learn how they are integrating CIF across their program.

### *Restore Education, San Antonio*

Restore Education is unique among the five sites in promoting a high degree of individualization and in offering only a GED, with no diploma option. Most students spend the majority of their school hours working to prepare for the GED in one-on-one sessions with paid instructional staff and volunteer tutors from the community. The program also offers group English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, as well as classes to help students who want to prepare to meet the requirements for the TSI and workforce training classes.

Leaders have begun by focusing on incorporating Questioning and Writing to Learn into the largely individualized learning context of the program. For example, these strategies can help tutors to create more interaction between the student and tutor and ultimately to foster greater student engagement in their learning. This requires adjusting the work packets used in tutorials to include more opportunities for students to come up with questions to discuss with the tutor as well as more student writing. School leaders are also looking to weave these strategies into the more traditional classes, such as the college-readiness and dual-enrollment classes with San Antonio College. They expect to also use Scaffolding, coming up with ways to connect students' prior knowledge to what they are currently working on in tutorials or classes.

### *Texans CAN Academy, Fort Worth*

The Fort Worth CAN Academy is part of a statewide charter network of schools, all of which focus on serving at-risk students who were struggling academically and/or socially in their high schools and seeking an alternative to the traditional school system. The academy offers a half-day high school-level academic program, where students proceed from subject-area class to subject-area class, much as in a traditional high school. In the second half of the day, students participate in classes focused on attaining industry certifications and dual-enrollment classes that carry college credit.

Thus far, 12 of the 15 teachers in the school have participated in a training with Catherine Trevino. To follow up on that training, the principal and her two assistant principals have incorporated the CIF into their weekly one-on-one curriculum-planning meetings with teachers. Teachers describe which CIF strategy they are working with and which activities they plan to incorporate into their lesson plans for the week. The emphasis is on helping teachers be specific about what they will do to reinforce the strategy in the classroom. As the school moves into a second year of implementation, the goal is to help teachers understand how the strategies reinforce each other, such as how the activities for Classroom Talk can include Writing to Learn and Questioning. To create more buy-in across the faculty, the leaders are working with Trevino to set up meetings in which teachers model for one another how they incorporated one or more of the strategies into a lesson.

### *College and Career Center, La Joya*

Unique among the sites, the La Joya ISD College and Career Center is a district alternative program offering older students the opportunity to complete high school or earn a high school equivalency degree while also preparing for postsecondary education, careers, and the military.

A majority of the students are English learners, needing to build up their language skills simultaneously with preparing for postsecondary education and life. The center shares a building with the La Joya Early College High School and also serves as one of the campuses of South Texas College. Unusual hours accommodate a nontraditional population, many of whom attend part-time for a year or even less. Classes are offered in the mornings, afternoons, evenings, and even on weekends for students who work and/or have child care responsibilities.

From the beginning, the principal has viewed the six strategies as integral components of an overall transformational framework to undergird strong instruction in every subject area and classroom. To that end, all staff have participated in training that laid out the foundation for the strategies and introduced them to the materials and tools. They decided as a staff to focus first on implementing Writing to Learn, Questioning, and Classroom Talk—strategies that were already somewhat familiar to staff. At the same time, the school principal and coaches have emphasized through regular observations, analysis, and feedback new ways both to go deeper into those strategies and how other strategies, such as Collaboration and Scaffolding, can come into play in support of the three “non-negotiable” strategies. In 2020, staff will work as well on embedding Literacy Groups in all subject areas—with the goal of helping students to read and write with intention and purpose daily and to develop the critical and creative thinking and writing skills they need for college and careers.

### **Working with Instructional Staff**

While the ultimate beneficiaries of the CIF are the students, the impact of the CIF depends on the commitment of the teachers in these programs to understand the strategies and make them part of their everyday practice in the classroom. Furthermore, beyond the value of helping individual teachers deepen the teaching and learning that occurs in their classrooms, the greatest benefit of the CIF comes from consistent use of the strategies across classrooms and subject areas. This can be especially complex in alternative schools where subject-matter classes may be offered by a range of staff: academic faculty whose prior experience was in traditional schools, social workers and specialists in youth development who offer transition and college/career success courses, community volunteers, and tradespeople or professionals with occupational expertise but little to no formal training in instructional strategies, who teach technical/vocational courses.

The school leaders report that some teachers in their programs are already using classroom strategies that increase what Trevino calls “choice and voice” and are familiar with differentiated instructional strategies, or with employability skills from their own industry experiences, or with the kinds of strategies used in therapeutic settings. These teachers tend to be most receptive to learning how to use the CIF to go deeper into these practices and to be more consistent and intentional in employing them. They can be the “early adopters” in a school who model the use of the strategies for others.

For example, Angie Clark, the postsecondary specialist at Youthbuild Austin, teaches a course on Adult Life and another called Mental Toughness II. (Mental Toughness I is a requirement before students enter Youthbuild.) She has found a number of the CIF strategies and protocols to be directly relevant to how she conducts her classroom. “We’ve been incorporating activities from Questioning and Classroom Talk in our daily check-ins and end-of-day check-outs, which allows us to bring out different perspectives for us all to analyze and discuss,” she said. “We’re also building in class time to write, so students see it as a way to share ideas, not just a chore.” She has decided to use Questioning practices to engage students in helping her refine the syllabus for the Adult Life class next semester.

Julie Jarzemsky is an occupational specialist (IT/media) who came to the school with very little formal training on instructional strategies. For her, the CIF has been a welcome introduction into good teaching methodologies. “I started incorporating it immediately after the training,” she reported.

At the same time, the introduction of the CIF can be more challenging for teachers who have taught only in teacher-centered classrooms—the basic model of teaching and learning in the traditional high schools where many of the faculty taught prior to coming to the alternative schools. School leaders report that some of these teachers see the CIF strategies and activities as one more thing they are expected to layer on top of all of the other things expected of them and on which they are evaluated.

One strategy site leaders have used is to start with the teachers who are most open to this type of approach, and to use their experiences, classrooms, and successes to engage other teachers to start to employ the strategies. For example, at Youthbuild Austin, which has a diverse faculty of academic, occupational, and life skills teachers, the program director, David Clauss, was able to get some momentum by beginning with his postsecondary specialist and several of his occupational teachers, who were familiar with project-based, teamwork-focused approaches.

Excel Goodwill has employed a similar strategy. In the first few months, the teacher of the Senior Seminar class implemented several of the strategies as part of a project on career readiness, while another teacher used it in a life skills class. Susan Hunt, senior director of

student supports, reported: “It made total sense to these teachers.” This year they are trying to focus more on the teachers of academic disciplines, helping them see how the strategies can connect to these disciplines.

Other leaders have tried engaging all of the staff from the beginning, asking them to start by trying one or two of the strategies. For example, Ronny Cabrera, the principal of La Joya CCC, has been giving all of his teachers the opportunity to try the strategies, analyze their practice, get feedback, and make adjustments on a weekly basis. To make that possible, Cabrera said, “I live in the classrooms, doing as many as 25 observations a week.” Cabrera draws a distinction between the CIF professional development and other training his teachers have been to, which he calls “one-offs.” “Teachers go to trainings and hear about new strategies—but it isn’t a framework or a model. They come back to the classroom, and the implementation level is very low.” His message to teachers about the CIF is that “this is the framework we will utilize throughout the school. Other techniques can be embedded into this system.”

It is a message that he feels has begun to pay off. He is seeing both staff and students begin to move from a fixed to a growth mindset. Despite the low skill levels of some entering students, “teachers and students alike are building their confidence that they can pass end-of-course exams and tests of college readiness, such as the TSI in Texas, and that ultimately they can not only enter but finish college and attain good careers.” One concrete sign of this is that of the 50 students eligible to graduate last semester, 25 stayed on in the school in order to prepare further for their next steps and continue in dual-enrollment courses.

As the second year of implementation begins, all of the school leaders are poised to engage staff members in implementing the strategies in a more integrated and consistent way. As Catherine Trevino observed: “The five sites have different plans in terms of improving instruction, but they are all more intentional and more ambitious than they were a year ago.”

For example, at Restore Education, the plan is to create monthly trainings for the teachers focused on reinforcing the strategies. At Excel Goodwill, the director of curriculum and instruction will observe and provide feedback regularly, highlight and give examples from classrooms where the teacher is implementing well, and create regular opportunities for teachers to work together on lesson planning. School leaders at Texans CAN will meet weekly with each teacher to talk about how to incorporate CIF strategies into their specific lesson plans.

All of the school leaders agree that one big difference between the CIF and other instructional programs they have experienced or tried to introduce in their schools is the combination of a strong overarching instructional framework with specific and defined tools for teachers to use in implementation. David Clauss put it simply: “One strength of CIF is that it’s focused on practical tools you can implement.” Ronny Cabrera elaborated on that theme: “The booklets give

examples, the materials are condensed and simple to embed in any class, and can even be used in staff meetings or with postsecondary or employer partners, who can then also see the same strategies in action in the classrooms.”

## Looking Ahead

At a time of uncertainty about the future of work, the strong consensus among policymakers and educational leaders and parents is that high schools must graduate students who will be able to succeed in postsecondary learning and working environments—in other words, students who are college- and career-ready. This consensus has important implications as well for the thousands of alternative schools and programs around the country that serve young people who were not well served by, or not progressing in, their high schools.

As traditional high schools struggle to deliver on this promise, alternative schools are left to do so with fewer resources, with less time (since many students enter at 17 or older), and with student populations that are trying to transcend particularly difficult life circumstances. The sites described in this report are demonstrating the potential of alternative settings to deliver on the promise of college and career readiness for all.

With a relatively modest infusion of resources and some technical assistance and coaching in the Back on Track: Postsecondary Success model and the CIF—both centered on college and career readiness—five very different alternative sites in Texas have made discernible progress toward the ambitious goal of preparing their students to transition successfully to postsecondary education or training and to careers. Observations and data collection from the first year reveal how far members of the faculty have come in using strategies detailed in the CIF to improve both the teaching and learning experience in their classrooms, and how optimistic the leaders and early adopters are about bringing additional faculty on board as they see the successes of this approach. As Ronny Cabrera summed it up: “This year opened our eyes to new possibilities. This work has transformed the school; we’ve laid out a strong academic foundation to build up an even stronger program that is even more connected to becoming college- and career-ready.”

Important indicators of student progress are also starting to emerge: Teachers report a different level of engagement and motivation in their classes, which also means fewer discipline issues are arising, greater numbers of students are taking and passing the TSI and GED exams, and dual-enrollment and college entrance rates are rising. With school leaders and teachers poised to be even more ambitious and intentional in their use of the framework in Year 2, and with five new sites coming on board, it will be important to continue to study the lessons being learned in the implementation of the CIF in Texas. This work can help demonstrate the potential payoff raising the quality of instruction in alternative schools in Texas and across the nation.

*The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of Greater Texas Foundation or any director, officer or employee thereof.*

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> As early as 2008, as Texas became one of the first states in the nation to fully embrace early college high schools, teachers in the first such high schools had the opportunity to participate in JFF-led trainings on the Common Instructional Framework, and some attended residencies at JFF's demonstration site, the University Park Campus School in Worcester, Massachusetts. In the decade since that initial introduction, hundreds of teachers in Texas early college high schools have received training in the instructional approaches detailed in the CIF.

<sup>2</sup> These strategies have been named in research-based compilations of effective classroom practices, including the works of Robert Marzano and Carol Ann Tomlinson and in large-scale studies of effective practices for teaching adolescents (Langer). Bryk and other Chicago researchers have found that when schools adopt a common instructional framework, they are able to achieve marked improvements in student learning (Newmann, et al.).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, in the case of North Carolina, Julie A. Edmunds et al., "Smoothing the Transition to Postsecondary Education: The impact of the Early College Model, *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 2016. And in the case of Texas, Viki Young et al., "Evaluation of the Texas High School Project" (Menlo Park, California: SRI International, October 2011), <https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/THSPE%20Final%20Comprehensive%20Annual%20Report.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> A second cohort of five schools/programs has been selected for funding for 2019-20, bringing the total number of schools/programs supported through this initiative to 10.

<sup>5</sup> Trevino later moved into a coaching role, first as an instructional coach for Educate Texas on a college and career grant in the Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD, and then as deputy director of early college expansion at Educate Texas after JFF and Educate Texas partnered to win a federal i3 (Investing in Innovation) award to further expand the successful early college high school model in Texas.