



Galveston Education Assessment Report Executive Summary

Introduction

Over the years, Galveston has weathered economic changes of fortune, hurricanes, political upheavals, and even the threat of loss of its largest employer, The University of Texas Medical Branch. As the city and its residents continue to engage in comprehensive rebuilding after the 2008 destruction caused by Hurricane Ike, we have the opportunity to shape a vision for the future.

Assessing various systems within the city, including its education system, is a critical part of developing Galveston's vision for the future. High quality, accessible education—from early childhood development to college and beyond—has profound effects on residents by increasing earning potential and employment, improving lifelong health, reducing dependence on social welfare, reducing involvement in the criminal justice system, and supporting general success and quality of life.

At the same time, investment in education reduces the need for governmental and charitable expenditures and empowers our community to run more efficiently and effectively with greater social cohesion. A strong education system supports the economy by providing employers with a skilled workforce, broader tax base, and productive citizens.¹

The first step in transforming the current system in Galveston, which has a drop-out rate that is double the state average as well as challenges related to student performance, has been to conduct a thorough assessment to identify educational assets and gaps. The Galveston Sustainable Communities Alliance (GSCA), with the support of the Cynthia and George Mitchell Foundation, conducted this assessment between November 2011 and September 2012. This report presents a detailed analysis of the current cradle-to-college education pipeline in Galveston, highlights the significant leaks in the education pipeline and positive assets, and provides recommendations for improving the system. We underscore the importance of approaching the solutions holistically, as each stage of a child's education prepares him or her for the next stage.

Figure 1. Cradle-to-College Education Pipeline²



This figure reinforces the understanding that, as well as an educational continuum that begins in infant daycare and continues through college, educational achievement is undergirded by strong and integrated family, social service and health programs as well as community-building programs that follow children throughout their educational journey.

¹ Klein, Joel and Rice, Condoleezza, Chairs, *U.S. Education Reform and National Security Task Force Report*, 2012

² This image of the Education Pipeline was replicated from the website for the Harlem Children's Zone www.HCZ.org.

Early Childhood Education in Galveston

Dr. Cindy Roberts Gray, Senior Scientist and Program Evaluation Specialist, Third Coast R&D, conducted a rapid assessment of the local system of early childhood education centers in November 2011 and the local informal education resources for early childhood in April 2012. Information was collected from the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), Search Texas Child Care and other websites; from interviews with spokespersons from licensed child care centers and school-based Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) programs in the City of Galveston; and from interviews with local providers of education resources targeted to families with children younger than five. The quality of center/school-based programs was assessed using the six guiding principles for high-quality early care and education prepared by the Business Roundtable and Corporate Voices for Working Families. These six principles include learning focus, standards aligned with K readiness, skilled staff, parent engagement, accountability for measurable results, and collaborative partnerships. Indicators of school readiness were also examined.

As of November 2011, GSCA identified 29 early childhood education centers in Galveston: 4 DFPS licensed centers located on or in collaboration with school-based Pre-K programs; 20 other DFPS licensed centers; and 5 school-based Pre-K programs. In addition to these centers, there were 8 DFPS licensed, registered, or listed child care homes in the City of Galveston with an estimated enrollment of 28 infants and toddlers and 32 children ages 3-4. Total enrollment in these entities was 1,647 children not yet in kindergarten. Nearly all centers had enrollments of preschoolers, but less than two-thirds had infants or toddlers.

Gaps. The study revealed several gaps in Galveston's early childhood system, among them:

- **uneven quality among Galveston early childhood centers (ECE)**, with only 50% (14 out of 28) serving ages 3-4, and only 26% (5 out of 19) of those that serve infants and toddlers rating as "high quality";
- **inability to meet current demands for high quality ECE** especially for infants and toddlers, with 829 additional spaces needed for infants and toddlers and 292 additional spaces for children ages 3-4 in low-income families; and
- **inequitable distribution of quality**, with only 12% of low income families enrolled in higher quality infant/toddler centers and 69% enrolled in higher quality ECE for children ages 3-4.

Surveyed providers most frequently identified the following common concerns: the need for better staff training, books and educational materials, funding for full-day Pre-K, collaborative programs, and parental



involvement.

Assets. Galveston ISD's participation in the new *Kindergarten Readiness System (KRS)* created by the Texas Education Agency to measure literacy readiness of PK students is a promising development.³ All GISD Pre-Ks

³ In addition to measuring quality based on inputs (skilled teachers, curricula, parent engagement, etc.,) we will also

have entered their data into KRS and results will be available in 2013. Currently, 8 GISD Pre-K classrooms and 3 Pre-K classrooms at Odyssey were certified as Texas School Ready,⁴ indicating students entering from these Pre-K classrooms are ready for kindergarten level work.

In addition, despite the uneven quality of and insufficient resources in early childhood programs, we found a number of options that allow many families to choose high quality school year programs for their preschoolers (ages 3-4). In addition, we found a number of centers engaged in partnerships, such as Head Start and Galveston ISD, and willing to participate in collaborative community planning, program development, and system oversight. Finally, there are a variety of community- and clinic-based informal education programs for children ages 0-5 including SMART Family Literacy, Rosenberg Library, Moody Gardens, Fanfare Music Academy, the 1898 Grand Opera House, Galveston ISD as well as The University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB). These organizations have provided enrichment programs and ancillary support such as *Ages and Stages*, *Play and Learning Strategies*, and *Reach Out and Read*, among others.

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K-12 System

Dr. Marina Ballantyne Walne, CEO, EduStart, conducted an assessment of the K-12 options

have the ability to measure outputs (developmental readiness for K) through TEA’s new KRS.

⁴ The former system was managed by the Children’s Learning Institute at UT Health Science Center Houston

in Galveston through site visits of each entity and a comparative analysis of all publicly available student performance data, focusing primarily on college readiness indicators.⁵

Galveston’s K-12 system is both diverse in student population and in its array of educational options. The population of GISD is 49% Hispanic, 24% African American, 24% white, and 2% Asian. Among the traditional public and charter schools, the percent of economically disadvantaged students ranges from 46% to 92%, with an average in GISD schools of 76%. Galveston is home to 13 GISD schools including five district charters, two state open-enrollment charters, and three private schools serving approximately 8,000 students.

Gaps. GISD TAKS passing and commended rates fall below region, state, and benchmark comparisons in almost every subject, especially in math and science.⁶ Critical gaps that must be addressed include the following:

- ***Students dropping out of school:*** GISD, impacted by Hurricane Ike, reached a peak of a 22% drop-out rate in 2008, but that has since declined to 15%, still high by comparison standards. For example, Texas City, which has similar student demographics, has a drop-out rate of 5.7%.
- ***Many high school graduates are not prepared for postsecondary work:*** About 50% of students graduating from Ball High School require one or more remedial courses in community college. Only 51% of GISD students took the SAT

⁵ Data is from the Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System

⁶ The primary source of data is the annual testing system currently known as the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). A student who met standard equates to a state-defined rate for passing. Passing does not equate to reaching a level of performance that positions a child to be ready for the rigor of reading, math, or science in subsequent grades. Only the advanced level of performance, called commended, is comparable to true readiness for future success.

or ACT compared to 63% for the state with an average ACT score of 20.1 compared to 21.0 for the region and an average SAT score of 932 compared to 985 for the state.

- **Persistent achievement gaps exist** between white, African American, Hispanic, and Limited English Proficient (LEP) students: passing scores for African American students are 14% to 35% lower than for white students in the various subjects; and passing scores for LEP students are 22% to 62% lower than for whites. The SAT average is 778 for African Americans and 845 for Hispanics, compared to 1050 for White students.
- **Postsecondary access:** Only 26% of Ball High School students complete dual credit course work and get college credit while in high school; only 77% of Ball High School graduates enter a postsecondary institution upon graduation from high school.



Assets. Despite these challenges, Galveston ISD is on the move. Its new superintendent, Larry Nichols, has a track record of success and a desire to make tough personnel decisions and to develop strategies based on research and data. GISD is an open choice system, one of the few in the state, enabling families to choose among a variety of school options. Moving from one monolithic system

to a system of high performing schools is a cutting edge approach highly touted by the Gates Foundation and by Dr. Paul Hill, Executive Director of the Center for Reinventing Public Education (CRPE).⁷

For the first time in many years, families can choose schools providing a first-rate education from Pre-K all the way up to high school with new options such as Austin Middle School STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), Scott Collegiate Academy, and Ball Prep, schools that compare well to high performing schools with similar demographics in Texas with commended scores in the 35% to 45% range for math and reading. GISD was one of 16 districts in Texas to win a competitive Teacher Incentive Fund grant of \$10 million which has enabled the district to restructure its teacher evaluation system and to offer monetary incentives to the most effective teachers in the system.

Five district charters⁸, including KIPP Coastal Village, and two state open enrollment charters, Ambassadors Preparatory Academy and Odyssey Charter School, offer additional choices to families, positioning themselves as college preparatory schools. Ambassadors Preparatory Academy's commended scores in math and reading of 36% and 42% respectively compare favorably with top performing state charter schools such as KIPP-Houston. Odyssey Charter School, showing strength in its social studies results, and KIPP Coastal Village that boasts an exceptional social and emotional learning program, have the potential to achieve excellence. Galveston charter schools provide healthy competition within the public school system.

Two postsecondary institutions call Galveston home: Texas A&M University – Galveston

⁷ See Portfolio Strategy at <http://www.crpe.org/>

⁸ In the case of a district charter, all funding comes to the district and then is allocated to the charter according to the MOU between the school board and the charter school. A state open enrollment charter is authorized by the State Board of education and receives its revenue directly from the state.

(TAMUG), a specialized 4-year institution boasting 1,952 students⁹ and Galveston College, home to 2,222 students. TAMUG does not reflect the diversity of the island, with 76% white, 14% Hispanic and 3% African American students. Galveston College hits the state average with its enrollment of almost 50% minorities. The overall retention rate for students at Galveston College is 26%; for TAMUG it is 57%, comparable to state averages for such institutions. Both universities offer significant outreach to GISD and charter schools on the island in the form of summer programs, 21st Century Grants, specialized science programs, teacher training, and technical assistance for STEM programs. GISD and Galveston College are entering into a partnership to offer more dual credit courses to high school students as part of an ambitious plan to graduate all students with at least 12 hours of college credit and/or career certification, making them more ready for success in postsecondary work and careers.

Funding for Education in Galveston

The remarkable potential for Galveston to transform its PK-12 education system hinges in part on the ability to align the significant funding that is already coming into Galveston from UTMB, TAMUG, GISD Foundation, GISD grant office, and local foundations. Shown below is a synopsis of funds that have come into Galveston for education from 2009-2011¹⁰ with a caveat that some of the GISD and foundation grants are for multiple years. Note that these funds are above and beyond the total revenue Galveston received from the state, \$65.2 million or \$11,862 per pupil revenue, in 2010-11:

- GISD grant office: \$31,344,302
- GISD Foundation: \$ 103,950
- UTMB: \$ 509,243
- TAMUG: \$ 950,000

⁹ 2011 data taken from
<http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>

¹⁰ Sources of funding information: GISD grant office records; GISD foundation office records; UTMB, information provided by Diana Davison; TAMUG, information provided by Donna Lang; Foundations, IRS 990 records

➤ Local Foundations: \$ 2,376,924¹¹

Total: \$35,284,419

There is perhaps no other city in Texas the size of Galveston that has foundations of the size and stature as Moody, Harris and Eliza Kempner, Mary Moody Northen Endowment, Moody Methodist Permanent Endowment, and (once it is fully funded) the Cynthia and George Mitchell Foundation, which all share an interest in improving education in Galveston.

And there is perhaps no better time than now to capitalize on the indomitable spirit of Galvestonians and come together as a community to build a plan that will not just improve the current education system, but will truly transform it.



The Texas Area Health Education Center East, based at UTMB, is exposing, attracting and encouraging families and students from all ethnic and economic backgrounds to consider careers in health care. It is an excellent model of public school/university partnerships.

¹¹ Note: This figure includes \$982,250 in scholarships that goes to students in Galveston County, not only the City of Galveston

Initial Recommendations

Based on this assessment, we recommend that the Galveston community—education, business, foundation, and nonprofit leaders—develop a strategic education transformation plan and align their energy and funding around the plan. Cities like Indianapolis, Los Angeles, and New Orleans¹² are seeing dramatic progress toward goals established in comprehensive, city-wide plans. It is time to move from random acts of improvement to aligned acts around a coordinated and wide-ranging plan.

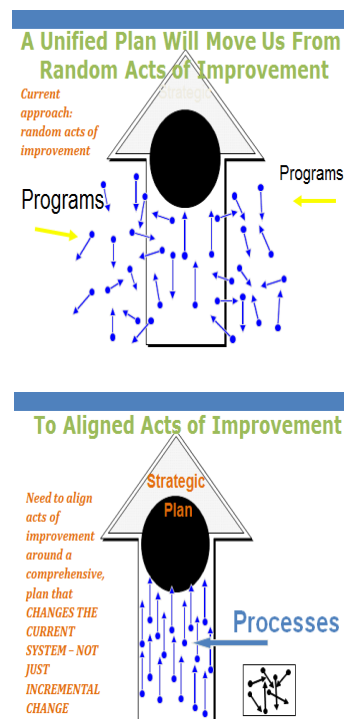
Within that overarching theme, we propose five key strategies:

- **Strengthen the Foundation Zero to 5:**
 - a) Develop parent / child literacy interactions by implementing parent training in *Play and Learning Strategies (PALS)* and matching *Reach Out and Read* with the Galveston nonprofit SMART Family Literacy;
 - b) Expand the supply of high quality centers, particularly for infants and toddlers, by creating one or several child care centers of the caliber of Atlanta’s Drew Charter / YMCA partnership; and
 - c) Raise the quality of currently available spaces through targeted training.
- **Enhance quality K-12 school options** for Galveston families by maintaining and improving magnet schools and STEM options within GISD, sustaining and / or expanding high performing charters, and maintaining scholarships for low income families for private schools.
- **Strengthen career and technical education and postsecondary readiness** through partnerships with GISD, Galveston College, College of the Mainland, UTMB and TAMUG and provide sufficient funding for all students to earn at least 12 hours of college credit and/or career certification.

¹² See Mind Trust, Indianapolis; Los Angeles Partnership, Los Angeles; New Schools for New Orleans, New Orleans.

- **Expand the technology infrastructure** so that digital learning can scale rapidly in Galveston, addressing the particular needs of English Language Learners and at-risk students who may need extended time to achieve success.
- **Provide transparent, high quality information** incorporating key performance metrics about education options PK-16 so that parents can easily assess quality ratings and make informed decisions.

It is time to move from random acts of improvement to aligned acts around a comprehensive, bold education transformation plan.¹³



¹³ See the GSCA Education Transformation Plan for additional recommendations in a 10-point plan.