



OVERVIEW

Texas Pathways Project

Good educational policy is shaped by good educational data. Texas' approach is simple: use robust, comprehensive data to identify problems, develop solutions, evaluate implementation, and monitor progress. The Texas Pathways Project is a data-driven effort to answer critical questions about student preparation and achievement at the local level. Through this project, local educational partnerships between secondary and post-secondary institutions collaborate to identify course-taking patterns that are predictors of success, identify specific campuses or classes where the level of academic rigor may not be preparing students for college-level work, to work together on curriculum alignment between high school and postsecondary institutions, and to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of academic interventions to improve student success.

The Texas Pathways projects are comprised of three main components:

Data Collection: The first component is a large scale data collection and research effort. Local Pathways partners—public schools, community colleges, and universities—sign agreements to share student-level data including enrollment, course (including grades), and graduation data, while assuring student privacy. This data-sharing agreement is especially important in Texas, where the classroom link data are not currently collected¹ at the state level for either the secondary or postsecondary systems. The data are received and stored at the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) where requested reports are generated.

Data-driven Curriculum Alignment: An abundance of data is of little value if it is not used effectively. The second Pathways component is the comprehensive review of student data, conducted by local vertical alignment teams comprised of administrators and/or faculty from each partner. Data reports are sent to the local vertical alignment teams for analyses to identify patterns that emerge at student transition points, including predictors of student academic success. When the team discovers evidence that suggests curriculum misalignment, they are charged with the task of creating interventions to correct the misalignments.

Feedback Loop: The third component is evaluation. The local vertical alignment teams are monitored to ensure they are achieving their goals and being supported by regional coordinators and data experts. After interventions are developed, THECB staff members use their evaluation and data expertise to evaluate and provide feedback on interventions. This model creates an endless loop of data report generation, intervention creation and execution, and evaluation.

Current Projects

The San Antonio Pathways Project served as the Pathways pilot in Texas. Partners involved in this pilot include the Alamo Community College District, The University of Texas at San Antonio,

¹ Texas (in a collaborative effort between TEA and THECB) has received funding from IES, Department of Education, for the enhancement of its Statewide Longitudinal Data System. The SLDS grant will allow both agencies to improve data collection systems and provide for classroom links at secondary and postsecondary levels within the next three years.

and six San Antonio local education agencies (Edgewood ISD, Judson ISD, Harlandale ISD, Northside ISD, North East ISD, and San Antonio ISD). During this pilot, necessary planning and procedural materials such as data collection manuals, data reports, sample agreements between Pathways partner institutions, evaluation documents (i.e. surveys), evaluation report templates, and secure online data delivery systems were produced and are being used to launch other Pathways projects.

The San Antonio pilot is carefully monitored and documented through a detailed process evaluation. It has now evolved to the point that partners have started creating interventions based on the data they have found. These interventions include complex course redesign and educator reform.

The San Antonio project attracted interest from around the state, and three additional projects have been launched:

- El Paso Pathways
- Houston Pathways
- Rio Grande Valley Pathways

Four universities (University of Houston, University of Houston-Downtown, University of Houston—Clear Lake, and University of Houston-Victoria), two community colleges (Houston Community College and San Jacinto Community College), and six local education agencies (Houston ISD, North Forest ISD, Spring Branch ISD, Pasadena ISD, Deer Park ISD, and Galena Park ISD), are currently working on data collection agreements to implement Pathways in their community.

The Rio Grande Valley is the most recent emerging partnership which includes 27 school districts to date.

Texas Pathways Planning and Expansion

The San Antonio Pathways project is serving as a model for new projects. The pilot phase created important documents and established effective organizational procedures. It is clear that this foundational work has benefitted future projects: The El Paso and Houston projects launched in six months compared to eighteen months for San Antonio.

The THECB would like to expand use of the Pathways model to every urban-suburban area in the state. Doing so will provide personnel at secondary schools and their postsecondary partners with the knowledge and skills needed to make effective use of data designed to improve educational outcomes.

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