



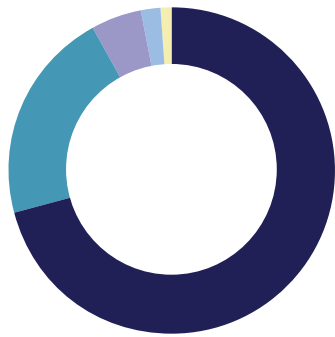
DALLAS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



145,113
STUDENTS



27.3%
OF FAMILIES
HAVE INCOME
BELOW THE
POVERTY LINE
(NCES)



■ HISPANIC: 71% ■ OTHER: 2%
■ BLACK: 21% ■ ASIAN: 1%
■ WHITE: 5%

Source: Dallas ISD Fact Sheet

ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION IS ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAYS TO ADDRESS INEQUALITY AND CREATE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY.

Investments in strong postsecondary pathways—the meaningful connections between K-12 education and college and career—are vital to ensuring a better future for our young people.



“Dallas ISD students have multiple strategies to prepare them for success after high school. Through life-changing initiatives like P-TECH, Career Institutes, Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate programs, students are building agency to change the trajectory of their lives. Through our partnership with Dallas College, the P-TECH/Early College High School program helps students simultaneously earn their high school diploma and associate degree. Last spring, 10 percent of Dallas ISD’s senior class earned an associate degree, and students earned \$1.7 million working summer internships with our industry partners. These partners include Thomson-Reuters, Accenture, American Airlines, IBM, Microsoft and others. Students also earn stackable certificates in high-demand fields like aviation, cybersecurity, mechatronics, construction management, and HVAC through the district’s Career Institutes, positioning them for a livable wage right out of high school. Dallas ISD has a pathway to success for all students.”

—MICHAEL HINOJOSA, *Superintendent of Dallas Independent School District and member of Chiefs for Change*

Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) is a national leader in providing high school students with college opportunities. The district has focused significant energy and effort on scaling its **Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH)** and **Early College High School/Collegiate Academy** opportunities for students, resulting in substantial increases in postsecondary degree and credential attainment for its graduates.

Although the foundational work to launch the programs predates the pandemic, the importance of building stronger connections between high school and postsecondary education and training has grown, and stimulus funding has enabled Dallas ISD to further enhance its offerings.

PRIORITIZING CAREER READINESS



Dallas ISD’s efforts in recent years to scale P-TECH and early college high school opportunities have resulted in an impressive **26 campuses** offering these options. Participating students choose a career pathway and take courses that provide the **academic, technical, and workplace** skills needed to succeed in a particular field. Students have the potential to earn up to **60 credit hours** or an **associate’s degree** in four to six years, along with industry certificates for their selected career pathway, all while pursuing their high school diploma. These opportunities are tuition-free for students who wish to take advantage of them.

Building on the learnings and best practices that have emerged from its early college opportunity work, the district decided to be creative in developing ways to support other students who were not taking advantage of P-TECH options. District leaders developed the concept of “**career institutes**,” which are career technical education (CTE) centers embedded in different quadrants of the city. Students who participate in career institutes are in their regular high schools for half of the day and engage in CTE work for the second half of the day. Dallas has made major investments in building four new state-of-the-art facilities to support the career institute work, and each of the available pathways—in the **construction industry, mechatronics, cybersecurity**, and more—is intentionally aligned to regional labor market demand. Dallas leaders intentionally built on- and off-ramps to ensure that participating students can continue on to college or to earn a certification and retain the option to upskill later.



USING THE STIMULUS TO KEEP STUDENTS ON TRACK



Although Dallas had a robust model of early college and career preparation in place prior to the pandemic, its students—like those all across the country—have faced significant challenges in the past two years. Stimulus funding offered an opportunity to give students additional support to help them get back on track for successful transitions to life after high school. The district used the funds to hire **seven specialists to provide dedicated support** to P-TECH and early college participants, targeting those students who had slipped behind for extra hands-on help and advising. This investment complements a larger district priority around **building more intentional advising** to support postsecondary match and fit for students. Aligned with many of the strategies outlined on Invest Forward’s resource hub, district leaders are currently engaged in efforts to expand postsecondary advising, as well as

fostering students’ purpose and career exploration. The district plans to create an **elective course for 11th-grade students** that will empower them to make choices that maximize their opportunities beyond high school.

Dallas ISD is also thinking about college and career readiness work in the pre-high school grades. The district has used some of its stimulus funding to expand use of the **SchoolLinks College and Career Readiness platform** to reach students in earlier grades. The district is currently piloting an elective course for **middle school students** to engage in career exploration and identify high school pathways of interest to them, featuring a course curriculum aligned to priority CTE career clusters based upon the Dallas regional labor market. **Elementary school students** now also have a space through SchoolLinks to begin conversations about their likes, interests, and ideas.

LOOKING AHEAD: GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY



Dallas ISD’s extensive P-TECH, early college high school, and career institute programs can serve as a model for other districts looking to invest in early college and career opportunities for students. District leaders recommend considering several key priorities as part of these efforts:

- **Invest in your infrastructure.** Dallas ISD made a deliberate decision to substantially invest in dedicated capacity to support this work over time rather than adding it to leaders’ existing responsibilities.
- **Leverage community.** The scale of Dallas’ success is dependent on partnerships carefully forged between the district and local companies, postsecondary institutions, governmental leaders, and more. Identifying influential people within the local community to serve as champions for this work will ultimately help connect students to a wider range of high-value opportunities.
- **Build intentional bridge programming for students.** Dallas ISD has carefully developed a multi-day summer bridge program for incoming students to set the culture and expectations around P-TECH and early college participation. This model can be a major shift in the structures students are used to, so the district has found that preparation is key for success.
- **Be intentional about progress monitoring and systems.** Having a deep understanding of student progress is key to helping them succeed, but building those systems takes time, resources, and capacity. Engage IT professionals early in the process to help set up necessary data-sharing agreements with postsecondary partners, custom data fields to illustrate student progress, and alerts related to particular data points or trends that spur intervention.