

## Family Engagement Supports Student Pathways to College and Career Success

Families in Texas want their children to be academically prepared for college and a career and to become productive members of society.<sup>1</sup> Studies show that parents across socioeconomic status levels play a key role in promoting upward mobility and motivating their children to think about future employment.<sup>2</sup> Adolescents, including those from culturally diverse backgrounds, value parental guidance, particularly about academic choices and personal goal setting. In general, families play an important role in helping students navigate educational and career decisions, and they are influential in shaping students' perceptions about what is possible for their futures.<sup>3</sup> Yet families need knowledge, guidance, and resources to support their children in making educational and career decisions. For instance, family-child discussions about career interests and aspirations should ideally begin in elementary school and continue through high school.<sup>4</sup> Students can benefit from the added support of informed family members who can help them prepare for careers and postsecondary education, particularly if they attend low-performing schools where resources may be limited. In turn, educators can use extra family support at school and at home to help meet the career planning needs of every student. By working together, educators and families can support students as they navigate college and career decision-making processes throughout their academic experience.

Texas Education Agency | Strategic Priority 3



Connect high school to career  
and college




### Families Help Students Navigate College and Career Decisions

Students benefit when families and educators partner in providing support and guidance on college and career pathways. Families in Texas need to learn about College, Career, and Military Prep (CCMP) programs and career pathways designed to help students build a strong foundation of knowledge and cognitive/intellectual skills needed for college, the workforce, and the military.<sup>5</sup> Students who are well informed and engage early on in college planning, with the help of their families, have higher college aspirations and are in a better position to secure the academic, social, and economic resources needed to accomplish their goals.<sup>6</sup> A college and career outreach program study shows that Hispanic families without college experience benefit from training about college requirements, SAT and ACT preparation, financial aid options and processes, and the college admission process.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, high levels of parent-student discussions about college-and-career-related topics were shown to increase the odds of students enrolling in a 4- or 2-year institution of higher education. Findings from a study of more than 4,000 parents and their high school children show that parent-student discussions are improved when they both engage in college preparation, have higher college aspirations, and are more involved in the school and community.<sup>8</sup> Educators and families can share the responsibility of helping students identify and clarify their career interests and aspirations and support them along the path to successfully achieve their goals.

When Frank was a little boy, he liked to watch the fighter jets flying over Laredo and decided, at that young age, "I want to do that when I grow up." In 2018, he was recruited by NASA but instead chose to pursue his vision to be an aerospace engineer and will be attending Texas A&M University on a scholarship in Fall 2020. In high school, Frank excelled in math, played varsity football, and said he valued the motivation and support from his parents throughout his education. He is the first in his family to go to college and wants to be a role model for his two younger brothers. His youngest brother accepted the challenge exclaiming, "I'm going to do better than Frank!"

Frank, Senior Class of 2019  
Laredo Independent School District

## Strategies and Actions to Increase Family Engagement

 <b>Districts</b>	 <b>Schools/Educators</b>	 <b>Families</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Educate families and students about CCMP pathways to college and career and ways the district will ensure equity and access for all students.</li> <li>▶ Allocate needed resources to engage and equip families, including diverse families, with knowledge on how to support youth in achieving goals and with the resources needed to support their children's college and career readiness.</li> <li>▶ Create partnerships to expand opportunities for families and students. For example, Laredo College and Laredo ISD joined efforts in engaging high school students in dual enrollment/early college programs and encouraging families to return to school to attain a degree or certificate or enroll in English as a Second Language classes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide opportunities for middle school students and families to learn about college requirements, SAT and ACT preparation, financial aid options and application processes, and the college admission process.</li> <li>▶ Develop programs that are welcoming and support families in connecting with school staff, college representatives, and career and technical education advisors and promote learning about college and career pathways.</li> <li>▶ Provide access to school and college counselors, classes, and resources on how families can support students in making college and career decisions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Begin having conversations about college and career in elementary school. If your child is older, begin having those conversations now.</li> <li>▶ Engage your children early on in talking about their future. Through the “Hopes and Dreams Tree” activity, Klein ISD families learn to talk with their children about what they want to be in the future and parents share their dreams for their children. Together, they create tree leaves that record their hopes over the school year.</li> <li>▶ Discuss interests, aspirations, and career goals with your teen. Access school career center, resources, or counseling to explore career options and pathways.</li> <li>▶ Explore colleges and universities through field trips and online research.</li> <li>▶ Team up with your child to research and learn about scholarships, grants, and college assistance programs.</li> </ul>

## Family Engagement Tools and Resources

- ▶ TEA College, Career, and Military Prep (CCMP): [https://tea.texas.gov/Academics/College%2C\\_Career%2C\\_and\\_Military\\_Prep](https://tea.texas.gov/Academics/College%2C_Career%2C_and_Military_Prep)
- ▶ Texas Gear UP Parent Spot: <https://www.texasgearup.com/parent-spot>
- ▶ Own Your Own Future: <https://www.texasgearup.com/educators-lounge/resources/oyof>
- ▶ Texas Workforce Commission: <https://lmci.state.tx.us/explore/TSC/YBF.asp>
- ▶ College Affordability and Transparency Center: <https://collegecost.ed.gov/>
- ▶ Advance CTE: <https://careertech.org/recruitmentstrategies>
- ▶ Texas CTE Career Clusters: <https://www.txcte.org/binder/career-cluster-pages>
- ▶ Engaging Families in the Individualized Learning Plan Process: <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/infobrief-40-families-and-college-and-career-readiness-ilp.pdf>

<sup>1</sup> Texas State Board of Education. (2018, November). *Long-range plan for public education*. Retrieved from [https://tea.texas.gov/SBOE/long-range\\_plan](https://tea.texas.gov/SBOE/long-range_plan)

<sup>2</sup> Irwin, S., & Elley, S. (2013). Parents' hopes and expectations for their children's future occupations. *Sociological Review*, 61(1), 111–130. doi:10.1111/j.1467-954X.2012.02139.x

<sup>3</sup> Plasman, J. S. (2018). Career/education plans and student engagement in secondary school. *American Journal of Education*, 124(2), 217–246. doi:10.1086/695608

<sup>4</sup> Arrington, K. 2000. Middle grades career planning programs. *Journal of Career Development* 27(2): 103–9.

<sup>5</sup> Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board & Texas Education Agency. (2009). *Texas college and career readiness standards*. Retrieved from <http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/reports/PDF/10337.PDF>

<sup>7</sup> Downs, A., Martin, J., Fossum, M., Martinez, S., Solorio, M., & Martinez, H. (2008). Parents teaching parents: A career and college knowledge program for latino families. *Journal of Latinos & Education*, 7(3), 227–240. doi:10.1080/15348430802100295

<sup>8</sup> Downs. *Parents teaching parents*.