



Michael & Susan Dell Foundation Funds Statewide Tools for Teaching Excellence Project Expansion to Five Texas Districts

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Progressive education leaders understand the value of performance management

--Districts demonstrate commitment to Performance Management practices used to drive student and school achievement--

Austin, TX (January 21, 2010) – In an effort to help school districts improve student achievement and teacher satisfaction, the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation has committed \$5.5 million for the Statewide Tools for Teaching Excellence (STTE) project in five Texas public school districts. Designed to help participating districts build the capacity for performance management through the use of research-based indicators to identify areas of improvement, districts will be provided with research-based interventions to maximize the potential for improvement in the classroom and individual students. Edvance Research, Inc., a San Antonio-based education research organization, provides project management and technical assistance for the project.

The five Texas districts located throughout the state that are participating in the STTE project include Beaumont, Conroe, Galena Park, Lubbock, and Northside (San Antonio). These districts were selected for STTE due to their demonstrated commitment to Performance Management -- a leadership practice dedicated to positively affecting student achievement through the use of technology to gather, share and act upon relevant and timely information.

With the capability provided by performance management, districts can make broad-sweeping adjustments or very specific course-corrections based on

MSDF is a major funder of education initiatives in Texas

variables they are able to assess. For example, districts can see high-level data that indicates they need to focus on and adjust to meet their needs.

“This project brings together a team of progressive education leaders who understand the value of incorporating performance management to positively affect change,” said Janet Mountain, executive director, Michael & Susan Dell Foundation. “The real value of a project of this kind is in the classroom where we can empower teachers with the knowledge they need to intervene early on when students are at risk and completely change the outcome of their students for the better.”

The STTE project is part of a larger scope of work at the foundation aimed at improving student achievement by getting timely and historical information to the fingertips of administrators and teachers how and when they need it most. The foundation has committed more than \$140 million in education initiatives in Texas to date. For further information about these projects, please visit www.msdf.org. Visit www.pmvillage.org to learn more about the STTE project and performance management.

Edvance Research Launches PM Village™, an Innovative “Community of Practice” for Educators



As part of the STTE project, a unique community called PM Village™ has been created to bring together school leaders, district administrators, teachers and education researchers to create a professional learning center about managing performance. PM Village™ is a “community of practice” which provides a venue for members to connect with colleagues, learn from each other, and share experiences.

PM Village™ is a “Community of Practice”

With a focus on evidence-based practice, the community was developed to facilitate innovative approaches to old problems.

A featured tool in the PM Village™ is PM Pathways™, which enables educators to identify opportunities for improvement, select appropriate interventions and monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the interventions. This tool is intended to focus educators on high priority goals and outcomes and specific actions they can take to intervene for success throughout a school year. Key components of PM Pathways include:

- **Indicator Metric/View** - a dashboard / scorecard system based on performance indicators that helps identify area of need.
- **Intervention Clearinghouse** - allows users to browse a database of researched interventions to address area of need.
- **Intervention Planning, Implementation, & Monitoring** - users create and monitor an implementation plan.

“We like to think of PM Pathways as a ‘researcher in a box’ kind of application that gives educators access to evidence-based information that can supplement their professional judgment as they make key decisions about improving their schools,” says Kathleen Barfield, STTE Executive Sponsor, Edvance Research. “They can also contact us for personal assistance to interpret the results they achieve.”

Texas Consortium on School Research

“The Texas Consortium can assist districts in utilizing evidence-based indicators to develop action plans that result in measurable improvements.”

Leaders from 19 Texas School Districts plus additional Educational Organizations gathered in Houston on October 1st for the formation and launch of the Texas Consortium on School Research. The event was sponsored by the Regional Educational Laboratory – Southwest (REL Southwest at Edvance Research) and was held adjacent to the annual Texas Association of School Administrators and Texas Association of School Boards (TASA/TASB) fall conference. Dr. Johnny Veselka, TASA Executive Director, welcomed

participants to Houston. The Texas Consortium was modeled on the successful work of the Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) which is collaborating on the Texas Consortium with REL Southwest, along with The University of Texas at Dallas Education Research Center (ERC).

The goal of the Texas Consortium is to allow members from districts across the state to collaborate in building research capacity to address critical issues to support improvement efforts. The Texas Consortium will also allow participants to create a “community of practice” through shared knowledge and practices. The gathered educators and researchers heard innovative and compelling work from recognized national and state organizations that was presented by experts including:

- Christopher Mazzeo, Ph.D., Associate Director of Policy and Outreach and Vanessa Coca, MPP, Research Analyst at the **Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR)**
- Sandy Kress, **Chair, Commission for a College Ready Texas (CCRT) (2007-2008)**
- Dan O’Brien, Ph.D., Director and Jim Parsons, Assistant Director of the **Texas Schools Project at the University of Texas at Dallas Education Research Center (ERC)**
- Kathleen Barfield, M.B.A., **Executive Director, Statewide Tools for Teaching Excellence (STTE) Chief Information Officer, REL Southwest at Edvance Research.** (STTE is an initiative of the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation)
- Eric Rolfhus, Ph.D., Senior Researcher, **REL Southwest at Edvance Research**

Dr. Dean Nafziger, Laboratory Director of REL Southwest at Edvance Research expressed enthusiasm for the establishment of the Texas Consortium, stating “School districts across the nation are seeking to understand how factors that impact student achievement can be positively affected to significantly improve student outcomes. The

Texas Consortium on School Research



When: Friday, February 26, 2010
 Where: San Antonio, Texas
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Texas Consortium can assist districts in utilizing evidence-based indicators to develop action plans that result in measurable improvements”.

Representation at the Texas Consortium included 19 geographically and demographically diverse school districts in the state that demonstrated impactful approaches to school improvement including Aldine ISD, Austin ISD, Beaumont ISD, Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD, Conroe ISD, Corpus Christi ISD, Cypress-Fairbanks, Dallas ISD, El Paso ISD, Fort Bend ISD, Fort Worth ISD, Galena Park ISD, Houston ISD, Humble ISD, Klein ISD, Lubbock ISD, Northside ISD, Plano ISD and YES Prep Public Schools.

In addition, representatives from the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Texas Education Agency, Texas Association of School Administrators and The Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education participated in the event. A second meeting of the Texas Consortium is planned for late January 2010 in Austin, Texas. Districts requesting more information on the Texas Consortium may contact Dr. Laural Logan-Fain at lloganfain@edvanceresearch.com.

Update on REL Southwest On Track to Graduate Study

Texas education organizations have placed a high priority on improving high school graduation rates, college readiness rates, and college going rates. Both higher education and K-12 schools have committed themselves to addressing the needs of high poverty, high minority schools to close the achievement gap and prepare more students for 21st Century jobs and society. As Texas districts implement a more rigorous college preparatory curriculum and prepare to implement end of course tests required for graduation, educators face challenges to maintain hard fought improvements in test scores, graduation rates and progress toward reducing the achievement gap.

Many efforts across the country are focused on identifying “early warning indicators” to help educators know when students are struggling. The Consortium on Chicago

School Research (CCSR) worked with the Chicago Public Schools to develop an “On Track to Graduate” indicator that would help educators know when freshmen were at risk for not graduating. Such information can help educators intervene to help students recover credits and get back on the road to success.

Researchers at REL Southwest, operated by Edvance Research, are working with the five STTE districts to determine whether the CCSR On Track indicator produces similar results in Texas. Using the 2004-2005 cohort of entering freshman, the study examines the difference in graduation rates for students classified as on and off track at the end of ninth grade. It also explores the difference in graduation rates for specific subgroups of students. Off track is defined not having sufficient credit attainment to be classified as a sophomore, having more than one failing semester grade in a core course in the 9th grade, or both.

In Chicago, students who were on track to graduate at the end of grade 9 had a graduation rate of 81%, while students who were off track at the end of grade 9 graduated at a rate of 22%.

The Texas study results will help the STTE project determine whether this metric should be added to the PM Pathways indicator system, along with an existing measure that tracks expected credit attainment at each grade level in

high school. The study is also helping to inform a wider Texas study to look at how well this indicator would work statewide.

Data analysis has been completed and a draft report has been submitted to the Institute of Education Sciences, funder of the Regional Laboratory program at the US Department of Education, for approval. Publication is expected in April 2010.

TABLE 1
Predictive Ability of Indicators of Freshman-Year Performance

Freshman Performance Indicator	Overall Correct Prediction	Specificity <i>Predicting Nongraduates</i>	Sensitivity <i>Predicting Graduates</i>
GPA	80%	73%	85%
On-Track vs. Off-Track	80%	72%	85%
Semester Course Failures	80%	66%	89%
<i>Fall-semester failures</i>	76%	55%	91%
Absences	77%	59%	90%
<i>Fall-semester absences</i>	74%	53%	89%

Many Options for PM Village Support

With the release of PM Village, three options for getting support and information are available to users. Access to some of the tools require the user be registered and be a member of an STTE participating district. Please contact Edvance Research using one of the methods below to obtain a login and password. Others who desire to have access to a demo site and restricted materials may also request a guest account.

- 1) help@pmvillage.org - This email address will support any technical issues, content issues, bugs and/or enhancements related to PM Village, PM Pathways, PM Academy, PM Quickstudy, and PM Citizens.
- 2) info@pmvillage.org – This email address will be used for those people who enter PM Village and are seeking additional information about the application, content or projects associated with the site.
- 3) Support 800#: [866-552-2118](tel:866-552-2118) – This toll-free number will support technical issues, content issues, bugs and/or enhancements related to PM Village, PM Pathways, PM Academy, PM Quickstudy, and PM Citizens as well as any information requests.

The email addresses and toll-free number are supported by multiple subject matter experts on the PM Village team. Once an email or voicemail is received, our staff will research the request and provide a response with 24 hours.

PM Academy Webinars

In addition to the emails and toll-free number support options, Edvance Research provides webinars on topics related to Performance Management, Research Literacy, PM Village Tools, and Data Management. These webinars will be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays and will provide PM Village participants additional support and/or information regarding Performance Management.

Project Management:

Project Management: How to make a project schedule work for you – Learn how to effectively use a schedule scope of work and work breakdown structure to establish the tasks needed to complete your project effectively and efficiently.

Presented by: Mark Douglas & Karl Brennan

Date & Time: February 25, 2010 11:30 – 12:30

Project Management: Developing a communication plan that works for your team and your project! – Good project managers build team commitment by establishing clear lines of communication. Learn how to couple your project management capabilities with effective communication and motivation skills to support the success of your project.

Presented by: Mark Douglas & Karl Brennan

Date & Time: March 18, 2010, 11:30 – 12:30

Project Management : Developing a Project Charter – This webinar will walk you through a step-by-step process for building a Project Charter and will provide best practices and tips for starting your project off right!

Presented by: Mark Douglas & Karl Brennan

Date & Time: April 15, 2010, 11:30 – 12:30

Research Literacy:

Critiquing Research Articles – Research-based statements should be grounded in actual research that is published in articles. However, many statements are made that have no research support. This webinar teaches how to critique research articles and summaries in order to decipher whether research-based statements actually have supporting research.

Presented by: Leslie Grunden & Lauren Decker

Date & Time: February 16, 2010, 11:30-12:30

The Power of Randomization – The bottom line of most intervention studies is to assess whether the intervention worked. That is, did the intervention actually cause change in indicators of interest? This webinar teaches about the importance of randomization to rule out confounding factors and enable causal inferences to be made about intervention effectiveness.

Presented by: Leslie Grunden & Lauren Decker

Date & Time: March 9, 2010, 11:30-12:30

PM Tools:

Motivation and Usability – Does the excitement and motivation around an intervention have an impact on its usability? If you find that your intervention is not being perceived as useful, will the intervention results be impacted? This webinar will focus on ways to access interim usability and increase motivation around implementation of an intervention.

Presented by: Stacy Daugherty

Date & Time: June 18, 2010, 11:30-12:30

Creating Reports from the Indicators Module – Do you want to learn how to create ad hoc reports and export them from the indicators module? Join us as we walk through creating reports that meet your needs.

Presented by: Stacy Daugherty and Leslie Grunden

Date & Time: February 23, 2010, 11:30-12:30

Indicators Module: A district suggested pathway – Do you get stuck as you are trying to follow the indicators from lagging to leading? Are you not quite sure where to begin? Join us as we use the PM Pathways tool to answer district posed questions.

Presented by: Stacy Daugherty and Leslie Grunden

Date & Time: March, 23, 2010, 11:30-12:30

Creating Reports from the Monitor Results Module – Now that you have created an Intervention Implementation Plan (IIP), do you need to know how to view interim and final IIP reports? Join us as we walk through these two reporting features.

Presented by: Stacy Daugherty and Leslie Grunden

Date & Time: April 13, 2010, 11:30-12:30