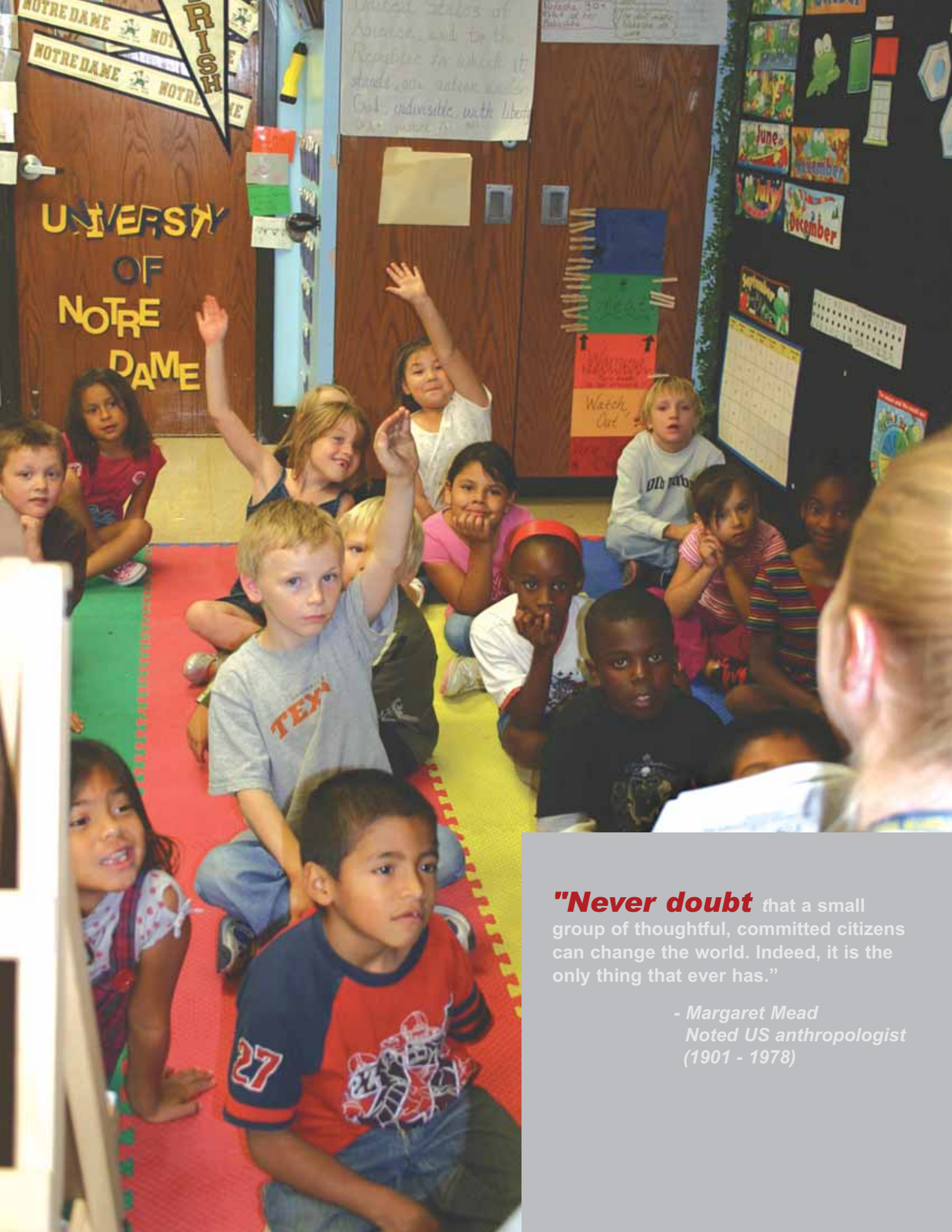


Economic Implications of
Educational Attainment
community in action 2008



engaging our citizenry in solving the community's problems



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

- Margaret Mead
Noted US anthropologist
(1901 - 1978)

Introduction

Problem Statement

The ability of Amarillo and the Panhandle to thrive in the 21st century global knowledge-based economy hinges on the quality and educational attainment level of its workforce, which is currently lower than the state and national average.

If current trends remain, the future of the workforce needed for a vibrant economy may no longer exist in the Texas Panhandle.

Community in Action

Panhandle Twenty/20's mission is to be a catalyst for positive change in the community. We began with the question, "Who is planning for the future of Texas?" A dedicated group of volunteers formed a loose-knit organization in 2002 to proactively address many of the challenges facing the future of Amarillo and the Panhandle. Now under the umbrella of the Amarillo Area Foundation with its own governing board, Panhandle Twenty/20 continues to ask questions vital to our region's future, and to connect, equip, and inform our citizens.

Two years ago, Panhandle Twenty/20 decided to address the almost overwhelming issue of educational attainment in the Texas Panhandle by conducting a community study and developing recommendations for change.

One year ago, Panhandle Twenty/20 released the report, "The Panhandle Imperative: Economic Implications of Educational Attainment in Amarillo and the Texas Panhandle," which included THE BIG IDEAS and recommendations for action developed by the committee.

Today, we release a compilation of some the actions being taken by organizations in our area, showing their efforts to address many of the issues discussed in the original report.

Regional concerns highlighted in the earlier study included low levels of educational attainment, declining wages, high poverty, brain drain and a lack of mid to high-skilled workers. These issues have not improved in this short time frame, though it is believed and supported by research that many of the actions being taken today will help our community prosper.

As Texas grows and changes, so do the challenges facing it and our region. **Texas still ranks 50th** in the number of adults with a high school diploma. **Texas ranks 44th** for the number of children living in poverty. The percentage of Amarillo ISD school children who come from low socio-economic homes went up to **62%** from 58%. Amarillo moved up a few spots in the Forbes Best Places list ranking **145th out of 200** for educational attainment (up from 149th in 2007). Our unemployment remains low, but so do our average wages when compared to other communities. Students will need some sort of postsecondary training or education to earn a living wage. "Only households headed by a college graduate saw their incomes rise over the past 20 years." (Council on Competiveness)

Our community continues to change. Our current actions can create a path to a prosperous future for our area. The choice is ours.

The Big Ideas

2

The Big Ideas

Create a **Culture of Expectation**



Improve **Access**



Connect Our **Resources**



Create a **Career Vision**



Encourage Educational **Rigor, Relevance and Innovation**



Developing the Workforce of the Future

Panhandle Twenty/20 asked the community to come together to solve a problem.

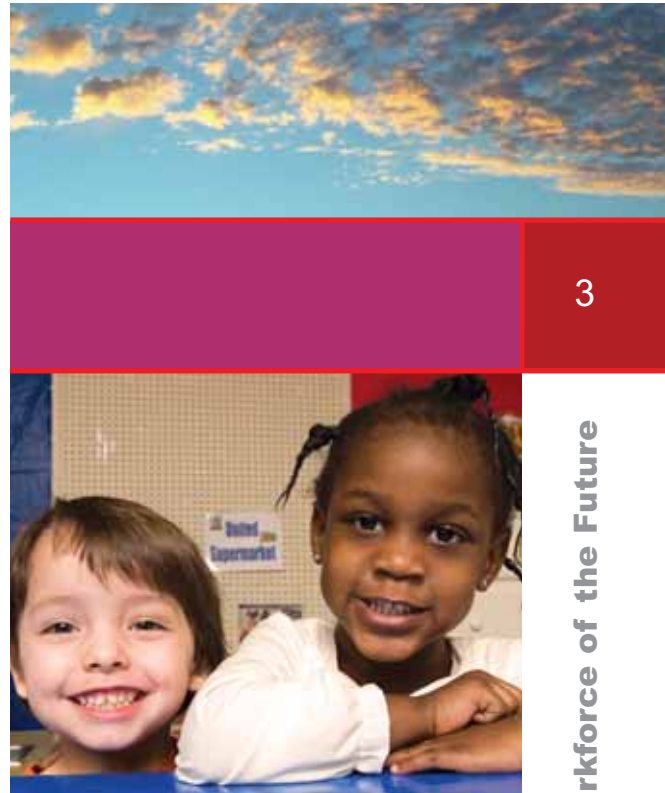
Over 300 people participated, along with great coverage by the media, and all the local institutions of education and government, and many nonprofits joined us to discuss this problem. A number of concerned citizens attended regularly as well. Recommendations were determined based on The Big Ideas, or themes, which had emerged from the conversations.

The “Panhandle Imperative” was released, and then things got quiet; or so it seemed to many in the community. What weren’t as visible as the study itself were the ongoing and almost countless discussions, meetings, and brainstorming sessions both within individual groups and among organizations. Collaborations that existed strengthened; new ones were formed. New connections continued to occur. The strength of the community grew by bringing together so many diverse threads and committed individuals. A stronger and more resilient connection has been built between educational institutions of all levels, with business, and other groups and individuals. This in turn helps create a better workforce for our community, and connect people to education and training, and then to jobs that pay better wages. Those with higher levels of educational attainment earn more income and are more likely to send their children to higher education, all of which helps improve and support the economy of our area.

The complicated issue of increasing our levels of educational attainment will not be fixed overnight. It will take continued concerted efforts by many in our community, building success upon success, before there is a significant change in the data.

Fortunately, the Panhandle is blessed with dedicated educators and concerned citizens and businesses willing to help. The problem is not solved, but the examples shown here, along with other solutions, will help build a stronger Panhandle for us all.

Look at some of the ways our community has come together to improve the chances for success for our citizens, for our region, and for our future.





Pursuing Real Opportunities

PRO is a community-wide initiative designed to develop a more skilled local workforce. A collaboration of Amarillo Economic Development Corporation, Amarillo ISD and Amarillo College, the program will initially target industries that currently have the greatest workforce needs, including:

- Architecture and Construction
- Finance
- Manufacturing
- Transportation, Distribution & Logistics

With the mission "to promote business expansion in the greater Amarillo area that builds a stronger, more diversified economy and increases the economic vitality and wealth of the community," the Amarillo Economic Development Corporation lives up to that mission and once again helps create a valuable partnership. This partnership will connect area students - our future workforce - with local businesses and job opportunities that exist here. Major funder for the earlier report, "The Panhandle Imperative," the Amarillo EDC continues to help build a stronger workforce for our community.

"Students are totally unaware of the career opportunities that exist in our community. Internship programs allow them to gain experience and knowledge that will literally change their lives by building self-confidence and making good, sound decisions about life."

- LeAnn Estep, Director,
Career & Technical Education
Amarillo ISD

Career Vision

Many students, parents and adult career-seekers have a perception that a four-year degree is the only option for students after high school. However, Amarillo employers and education partners offer viable training and resources to prepare individuals for successful careers in technical fields and skilled labor.

The PRO Team will assist Business Partners with:

- Organizing tours
- Meeting with candidates to ensure quality participants
- Assisting in placement of candidates based upon their interest
- Working with Intern Supervisor to design work experience
- Organizing mentorship training
- Providing evaluation forms and support to Intern Supervisor

PRO Business Partners will be involved in one or more of the following areas:

- Online Company Profile
- Internship
- Mentorship
- Job Shadowing
- Tours

The Student and Career Seeker Experience on the PRO Web site will include:

- Assessment
- Your Best Match
- Company Profiles
- Virtual Tour
- Amarillo Jobs in Demand
- Education Options
- Apprenticeships
- Career Events Calendar

Connect Our Resources

PRO will leverage community partnerships and resources to make high school and community college students, parents and adult career seekers aware of the career options that exist in Amarillo and the surrounding areas. PRO will bridge the gap that exists between employers/businesses and capable employees to help develop a thriving local workforce.

Benefits and Anticipated Outcomes

PRO Supports the goals of Panhandle Twenty/20 as related to “Educational Attainment” and implementation of “Inspire Me.”

Businesses have the opportunity to contribute to the education of high school and community college students and are able to partner with educational institutions to provide opportunities.

Community members gain access to and can hire from a pool of quality employees.

Parents gain support in assisting their children with career guidance and decisions.

High school and community college students have the opportunity to gain work experience that will assist them in making career decisions and will be able to add this experience to their professional resume.

High school and community college students witness first-hand the correlation of academic and technical skills as applied in the world of work.

Align and streamline AISD and AC programs.

Partners to Date

Amarillo Gear
Lone Star Machine & Tool
Bell Helicopter
Talon LPE
Nationwide Insurance
Amarillo National Bank
Xcel Energy
Maxivolt Corporation
Street Toyota
City of Amarillo
Ben E. Keith
Sage Oil Vac
Hilmar Cheese
Western Builders
Fuller & Sons Construction

For more information:

www.pro2day.com
806-379-6411

Generous assistance provided by:



Business Community Input

In the spring of 2008, a coalition made up of the Amarillo Globe News, the Amarillo Economic Development Corporation, Amarillo College, the Amarillo Chamber of Commerce, Panhandle Twenty/20 and the Amarillo Independent School District conducted a series of CEO input sessions with various local businesses. During those sessions, CEOs and business representatives discussed their workforce needs and completed a short survey asking for the numbers of new hires, the educational attainment needed and the important skills and knowledge they desired in prospective employees.

AISD is using this vital information to shape its instructional program where possible to address the needs of the workforce in the Amarillo area.

CEO Survey Summary

Educational attainment required for new hires divided into two groups, according to area CEO surveys (34 participating):

Group A - Businesses where a majority of the new hires do not need a college degree (approx 4000 new hires per year):

- 70% must have a high school diploma
- 13% must have a 2 year associate's degree or an advanced certificate
- 12% must have a college/advanced degree

Group B - Businesses where a majority of the new hires need a college degree (over 300 new hires per year):

- 22% must have a high school diploma
- 12% must have a 2 year associate's degree or an advanced certificate
- 66% must have a college/advanced degree

There are obvious differences between the two groups of employers. When all responses were combined into one group, employers said that 25% would need a college degree, 13% would need some postsecondary training, and 58% could be hired with a high school diploma.

Students who do not desire to attend college immediately after high school have ample opportunities to find a job with the Group A employers.

In the future, 20% of the workforce will need a 4 year college education, 60% will need some college or postsecondary education and the remaining 20% will receive on the job training.

-Texas Workforce Commission



CEOs of over 50 businesses in Amarillo responded to a survey that asked them to rank key skills they need in a workforce. Notably, employers valued new hires that had what is commonly referred to as "**soft skills.**" Behaviors such as **work ethic, professionalism, social responsibility, self-direction** and **teamwork** headed the list. **Critical thinking** and **problem solving** also surfaced high on the list. **Speaking** and **writing English** were equally important to the soft skills mentioned above. Although important to CEOs in their discussion, math and science skills were lower on the ranking of skills and behaviors.

Amarillo ISD is beginning to design experiences that will build the "soft skills" into the instructional plan. The first step is to create an information plan that will communicate to students what employers need in this area.

This information is reflective of those businesses that responded and cannot take into consideration the needs for a changing workforce, should the local economy shift to more or less-skilled needs.

See page 18 to see Amarillo ISD's current actions in response to this input.

Report courtesy of Rod Schroder, superintendent, Amarillo ISD

Texas Panhandle P-16 Council

The P-16 Council is a consortium of Texas Panhandle Universities, all regional Community Colleges, 59 of the 63 Panhandle Independent School Districts, Region 16 Education Service Center, Panhandle Twenty/20, and representatives from Early Childhood and the business community.

Each higher education institution has appointed P-16 Advisory Council members in addition to the president of the institution. The business of the organization will be guided by a smaller management team.

The P-16 Council was formed to unify curriculum from pre-school through the senior year of college. The council looks at ways to close-the-gaps in education, making it available to all. The mission of the Council is to promote success across the education continuum so students will grow to be successful citizens, professional, and life-long learners.

The goals of the P-16 Council are to:

- Convene the stakeholders representing P-16 initiatives in the Texas Panhandle
- Advance the systemic, comprehensive, and seamless core curriculum alignment of education and training experiences for students in the regional institutions
- Promote a culture of expectation among all stakeholders for advancement of all students to postsecondary education or training
- Serve as a catalyst for policy development around P-16 student success
- Follow state guidelines for implementation of a regional P-16 Council
- Support the recommendations of the Panhandle Twenty/20 2007 report “The Panhandle Imperative”

The guiding principles that govern the P-16 Council:

- Acknowledge and encourage input from all segments of the Texas Panhandle
- Be accountable by establishing and measuring progress toward outcomes pursued by the Council
- Respect students' needs and community perspectives
- Embrace the larger outcomes of quality of life for individuals, sustaining democracy and facilitating economic and community development
- Ensure that the Council functions as an innovative "learning organization"

The Texas Panhandle P-16 Council is developing a strategic plan to help guide meaningful actions for improved student success in our region.

ACE

Achievement through Commitment to Education

The Amarillo Area Foundation initiated the ACE Scholarship Program in 1994 in partnership with Amarillo ISD, Amarillo College and West Texas A&M University. ACE began at Palo Duro High School in 1994 and at Caprock High School in 2002.

ACE guarantees access to higher education for students at both of these high schools by providing numerous preparatory activities throughout high school and college, including:

- Frequent and timely information regarding the path to a college education
- Early intervention during high school regarding grades, discipline and attendance
- Significant information and direct assistance during high school regarding all aspects of higher education, including field trips to college campuses, college testing preparation, financial aid workshops, one-to-one assistance with college paperwork, special college orientation and registration, and ongoing support and encouragement

ACE guarantees payment for tuition, fees, and books for up to 130 semester hours at Amarillo College or West Texas A&M University. ACE is “last money in” meaning all federal and private aid is applied prior to awarding ACE scholarship funds. ACE requires high school students to pledge annually to maintain at least an 80 grade point average, a 95% attendance record and appropriate behavior while attending high school.

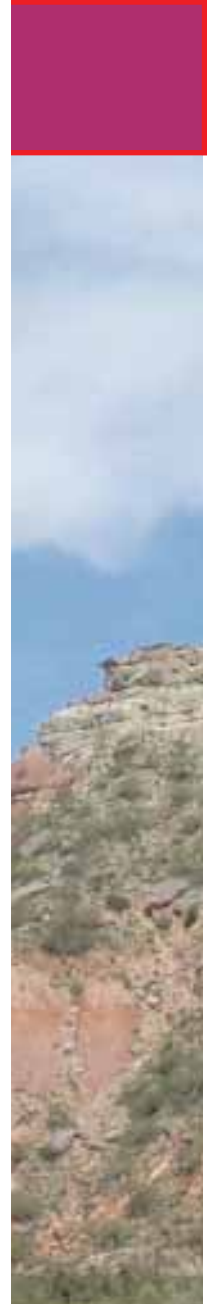
The ACE Program has paid \$3,867,020 for tuition, books and fees since inception of the program. The ACE Endowment has awarded 48% of all cost. Federal aid and non-ACE scholarships have brought in additional 52% to help support the ACE program.

For the year 2006, 65% of ACE eligible students attended college, as compared to 16% of students in similar cohorts across Texas. The likelihood of an ACE student graduating with a bachelor’s degree was **almost 10 times** that of cohort group for that year.

Approximately 50% of all high school graduates from Caprock and Palo Duro are ACE graduates. Since 1998, 483 Caprock students and 1603 Palo Duro students have graduated ACE eligible. As of the Fall 2007 Semester, 221 graduates attended AC, 189 attended WTAMU and 37 attended other institutions of higher education. A total of 286 certificates and degrees from AC and WTAMU have been awarded to ACE graduates.

For more information:

www.amarilloareafoundation.org
806-350-4518





West Texas A&M University

West Texas A&M University has been a driving force behind Panhandle Twenty/20 efforts to increase education attainment for the Texas Panhandle. The following programs effectively work to achieve the goals set forth by Panhandle Twenty/20.



Create a Culture of Expectation

Study Abroad: Studying abroad is an experience students will carry with them throughout life by exposing students to a different and unique culture and opening doors in academic areas as well as future employment opportunities. WTAMU Study Abroad office is an important initiative in providing students with a culture of expectation.

PUP program: The Pre-University Program (PUP) provides a university-based, higher-education academic experience for high school students who intend to enroll in a university following high school graduation.

ACE Scholarship Program: see page 9

Quality Enhancement Plan: The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) theme, Engaging the First Year Student serves as a context through which students will thrive academically, professionally, and culturally. The QEP learning outcomes aim to ensure students develop college success skills in reading, writing, communication, problem solving, critical thinking, and ethical decision making.

New Student Orientation: NSO is a two-day program that prepares incoming students for success at West Texas A&M University by: Providing you with tips and strategies for becoming a successful student; receive intensive academic advising; and developing a career plan.

Interdisciplinary Group Dynamics: IDS develops communication skills through the context of college success. With this communication focus, students develop a set of skills and experiences to ensure their academic and professional success. This course lays a strong foundation for success by guiding students to engage with the course content, improve academic skills, and further define a career vision.

Honors program: The William H. and Joyce Attebury Honors Program is a place where exceptional undergraduate students participate in an enriched learning community. The odyssey shared by honors students is highlighted by innovative discussion-based teaching, research, study abroad, mentoring, internships, leadership and a host of wider opportunities.

Improve Access

Buff Promise: West Texas A&M University has committed 100% of its available resources to cover fall and spring in-state tuition and fees for undergraduate Texas residents who have an annual family income of \$40,000 - the median income level for our region - or less. Buff Promise is designed to reassure academically talented students from low- and middle-income families in Texas who may not feel that a university education is possible. Buff Promise will expand upon an already robust aid program that awards more than \$36 million in assistance.

Student Success Center: By remodeling a facility that places services most important to student success in one location, WTAMU is improving its ability to educate, support, and retain students. The Student Success Center houses advising, career counseling, personal counseling, testing, tutoring, student support services, disability services, first year experience, and study abroad.

Financial Aid: The Office of Financial Aid works to minimize the cost of attending college by assisting students with funds available from local, state, and federal programs and private resources.

STARR Center: The mission of the Student Advising, Registration and Retention Center (STARR) is to foster the success of all freshman and sophomore students, as well as students in transition from other institutions of higher education. It is a comprehensive student-friendly center where students can find academic assistance, accurate information, and helpful referrals to the variety of available University resources.

Career Center: The Career Center works with students and alumni at every point in their academic career by providing career assessments, developing resumes and job interview skills, offering job placement opportunities, and networking.

Virtual Math Lab: Used by over one million people a year, WTAMU's Virtual Math Lab is world-renowned. It helps students with College Algebra, Intermediate Algebra, Beginning Algebra, or preparing for the math part of the THEA, ACCUPLACER or general GRE test.

WT Downtown Campus: Housed in the Chase Tower, WTAMU offers upper division and graduate courses. In its first semester, over 30 courses and 600 students have accessed education in downtown Amarillo.

Connecting Our Resources

Clinical Simulation Center: A collaborative effort between WTAMU, Texas Tech, and Amarillo College to develop and operate an Amarillo area simulation clinic for healthcare training.

P-16 Council: see page 8

Tyler Street Resource Center: Students enrolled in the Social Work program at WTAMU intern at the Tyler Street Resource Center. The center connects the underprivileged population of Amarillo to area resources.

Health Partners Clinic: The West Texas A&M Health Partners Clinic was established in a medically underserved area in the city. The clinic provides health services for 1,200 patients from the immediate neighborhood as well as from other areas and serves as a major learning center for the West Texas A&M Division of Nursing students.

College Readiness Standards: Unless exempt, all entering undergraduate students are required to be assessed in the areas of reading, writing and math prior to enrolling in college-level courses. Students who do not meet the minimum standard in one or more areas will be advised regarding TSI compliance and enrolled in the appropriate developmental program.

Create a Career Vision

“Reality Check” Web Site as a part of pre-admission homework: As part of our orientation “homework,” students are asked to visit the Reality Check website that has been created by the Texas Workforce Commission. The site has students plan out their future lifestyles, then explains what careers the students should seek out depending on the lifestyle they pick. The site shows students how a college degree and a higher salary are linked.

MyPlan Career Assessments: Every student that comes through orientation takes the MyPlan Career Assessment. The assessment matches students with careers that would be best suited with their personality type, explains the careers in depth, as well as gives students a list of schools that would offer degrees to help them find these careers.

Career Portfolios: Students are given a flash drive at orientation that has been segmented into folders that exemplify various items that employers are looking for when they are hiring. During the senior year, students meet with Career Services to begin building a successful resume based on the documents they have saved over their college years.

Career Center with mock interviews, etc.: The Career Center on campus hosts monthly mock interviews between students and business leaders in the Amarillo Area. These interviews allow students to be better prepared as they begin their quest to finding a job. Once the interview is over, students are critiqued on their performance and are given advice on how to improve.

Orientation with business representatives: Our entire orientation program has a career focus to it; however, in one specific portion students are able to interact with a business representative. The students are given pieces from a resume and have to choose the best candidate, the business representative provides feedback on their selection. Steven Covey's words, "begin with the end in mind" serve as the mantra for this session.

Encourage Education Rigor, Relevance and Innovation

Core Fellows teaching and technology program: The Core Fellows program selects faculty members in core courses that are considered to have high drop rates and presents these faculty members with tools to make their courses more engaging. Faculty members are given a Tablet PC with software installed that will assist them in incorporating technology. The Core Fellows are instructed on how to incorporate technology effectively, taught about various learning styles and teaching methods, and meet to discuss their successes. These courses have seen an increase in scores on the course evaluation, as well as a higher rate of retention.

Readership WT Ambassadors: 20 West Texas A&M University freshmen were selected in 2007 to take an expenses-paid trip to central Europe to study the Holocaust based on essay contest submissions and their reading of the selection, "Night" by Elie Wiesel. Upon their return, each of the 20 were named Readership Ambassadors. As ambassadors, they take their European experience out into the community to share and educate.

Learning Communities: The Learning Communities at WTAMU have proven to be successful. Students enrolled in many of our freshman seminar courses are also dual enrolled in a core course with the same cohort of students. Out of this link come natural study groups, as well as more open discussion in the classroom. Last year, students enrolled in a learning community saw a ten point increase in their final grade as compared to students not enrolled in the learning community.

Readership WT: A Common Reading Experience at WTAMU has been a vital part of our efforts to close the gaps for our first year students. The Readership WT program is a proven strategy in successfully addressing our student transition issues and improving student engagement.

Smartthinking On-line tutoring:

Smartthinking is an On-line tutoring service that WTAMU has subscribed to. The site offers 24-7 live math tutoring, as well as assistance in writing and grammar, history, Spanish, and general chemistry.

For more information:

www.wtamu.edu
806-651-0000

"The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn."

- Alvin Toffler,
Noted American Writer



Amarillo College

Amarillo College is working closely with Panhandle Twenty/20 to increase the quality and educational attainment level of the Panhandle of Texas workforce. Listed are programs and/or activities that have been implemented by AC that address the Goals of Panhandle Twenty/20. Although all were not initiated as a direct result of Panhandle Twenty/20, the community awareness and support created by Panhandle Twenty/20 increased participation in and endorsement of these programs and/or activities.



Create a Culture of Expectation

Gear Up: a grant for a 6-year project with Amarillo ISD, Dumas ISD, and Hereford ISD. This project is intended to raise the college-going rates of students from several high-risk middle schools. The grant follows a cohort of 7th graders through high school to encourage college attendance.

Dual Credit Program: a cooperative partnership between a high school and AC through which a student may be awarded both college and high school credit in courses that meet the requirements of both institutions. With direct encouragement from high school faculty some students who would not have attempted college begin course work with AC. It is not uncommon for students to graduate with 6 -18 hours or more of college course work.

Early College: a partnership between AC and Caprock High School that encourages high school seniors to begin college their senior year. Students who pass TAKS but do not test at college level are targeted to participate in a College Success class and a developmental class. The program's goal is to get students to perform at college level by the time they graduate from high school.

ACE Scholarship Program: see page 9

Quality Education for Students (QUEST): college access for Moore County.

Career Clusters: a strategy aligning AC programs of study with one or more of 16 industry clusters. It intends to aid students in selecting a field of study and understanding how they can move within a cluster as their skills and educational level increase. AC is currently targeting four areas that are in high demand locally: manufacturing, information technology, healthcare and transportation.

Improve Access

Facility expansion: \$68 million in facility expansion in order to expand access to greater numbers of students in the future.

Financial Aid: assist students in obtaining their education by reducing their educational costs through aid that is available from state, federal, local government and private resources. The AC Financial Aid office participates in many out-reach programs during the year.

disAbility Services: assists students with disabilities in achievement of educational goals by minimizing barriers through the use of appropriate and reasonable accommodations.

The First Year Experience: AC facilitates and enhances student engagement by creating opportunities for personal growth, college success, life-long learning, and civic responsibility.

High School Equivalency Program (HEP): is a migrant education program designed to meet the special needs of migrant and seasonal farm workers in pursuit of a GED diploma. The intent of HEP is to assist these students in the preparation and successful completion of GED exams. HEP will provide assistance for placement in universities, colleges, vocational institutions, military services, and other postsecondary activities or career positions. HEP is funded by the U.S. Department of Education. All services are free to eligible students.

Community Link (CLINK): is a growing outreach program for Amarillo's northeast neighborhoods. The mission: To provide outreach services to the disadvantaged to increase participation in higher education. The center offers classes in Conversational English, GED, employment skills and computer training. Staff members help students explore different careers and find ways of paying for college. Financial aid assistance is also available, along with help enrolling in academic classes at Amarillo College.



Connect Our Resources

Clinical Simulation Center: a collaborative agreement between Amarillo College (AC), West Texas A & M University (WTAMU) and Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) to pool resources, share a facility, and fully cooperate with each other to develop and operate an Amarillo area clinical simulation center. The center will enhance medical, nursing and allied health educational programs, strengthen medical research, and provide continuing healthcare training to regional professionals. Included in the Alliance is a medical school (TTUHSC), two schools of nursing (AC, WTAMU), and two schools of allied health (AC, TTUHSC). Students and physicians in training will be able to practice invasive procedures prior to performing them on actual patients.

Title V Grant with South Plains College: Title V grants are awarded to Hispanic Serving Institutions (25% or greater Hispanic enrollment). This is a cooperative grant with South Plains College entitled E-SPAN: Broadening Educational Access for Hispanic and Low Income Students. E-SPAN means Education through South Plains and Amarillo Network. Awarded October 1st, 2005. Total grant award, \$3,455,102. AC portion, \$1,527,026. Overall Scope of the Grant: Provide online distance education, services, and online degrees especially targeting Hispanic, low-income students. All students benefit as a result.

P-16 Council: see page 8

Create a Career Vision

New web site: AC website now features a career emphasis including career information. It also lists the 16 Career Clusters, sample jobs, and AC programs. (<http://www.actx.edu>)

New Initiatives: AC is proceeding with a new program that will include both certificate and degree programs in wind energy. Preliminary work is also underway to investigate options for training in machining.

PRO (Pursuing Real Opportunities): see page 4

Encourage Educational Rigor, Relevance and Innovation

Dual Credit – Dual Credit students are challenged to meet college level standards and earn college credit while still in high school. This rigor prepares students to meet the demands of college/university curricula.

First Year Experience: the 2008 Common Reader is “All Over but the Shoutin” by Rick Bragg. This is a college-wide effort to encourage a common experience across AC and to improve the engagement of first-year students to higher education.

For more information:

www.actx.edu
806-371-5000

San Jacinto Elementary

“No Excuses University”

Schools in the Texas Panhandle do an excellent job of educating children every day. Each school does things a little differently, for each has a unique set of students. San Jacinto Elementary in Amarillo recently decided to Create a Culture of Expectation and approach their challenges through the “Turnaround Schools” program of the No Excuses University.



Doug Curry, recently appointed principal at San Jacinto, was challenged with a low soci-economic student body and below average test scores. Mr. Curry presented the “No Excuses” program to the staff at San Jacinto which unanimously embraced the program and quickly began to turn their own school around.

They first had to be accepted into the “No Excuses University” Program. Not every school can join. From the “No Excuses University” website:

No Excuses University schools are part of an elite network that aggressively promotes college readiness for every student. They do this by embracing cultures of universal achievement and creating exceptional systems. Educators at No Excuses Universities believe they have the power to influence every student to be academically successful, even those who are most at risk. This is a radical concept, but No Excuses Universities are making it a reality every day.

From the moment students enter San Jacinto Elementary, they are exposed to the ‘going to college’ theme. College and university banners are displayed throughout the building and each classroom has adopted a college or university theme and many have been adopted back in return. Friday is designated “college shirt” day, and some classrooms even have matching university shirts. Students understand that it is expected they perform their best to be ready to ‘go to college’, even if that means something other than a four year university. Test scores have improved to over 90% passing in all subjects, a dramatic improvement from several years ago. Students are not only improving test scores, but building skills that will translate into success later in life.

Walking the halls at San Jacinto Elementary reaffirms the belief that “Our Kids Are Going to College!”

For more information:

www.amaisd.org
806-326-1001



Amarillo Independent School District

Mission: To graduate every student prepared for success beyond high school.



Every day, in classroom after classroom, dedicated teachers help our students gain valuable skills for their future. Amarillo ISD is committed to improving student success. They have been strong advocates for and participants in the efforts of Panhandle Twenty/20, with scores of educators participating in the study and the subsequent activities. A number of programs have expanded, and new connections have been built to improve student success since the release of the study report. Here are a few of the things happening across the district:

Achieve Texas Initiative

AISD has embraced the Achieve Texas Initiative--an education initiative designed to prepare students for a lifetime of success. It allows students to achieve excellence by preparing them for secondary and postsecondary opportunities, career preparation and advancement, meaningful work, and active citizenship.

More information regarding the Achieve Texas Initiative can be found at www.achievetexas.org.

Career Clusters

AISD has aligned all courses and reformatted the course guide under the sixteen Career Clusters. Additionally, AISD has completed a program review of all courses offered and coherent sequences currently in place.

PRO (Pursuing Real Opportunities) see page 4



Students are more likely to be engaged in their education if they see the relevance of today's efforts on tomorrow's success.

AISD “Next Steps”

An AISD Initiative designed to create a climate in which students are:

- Inspired to aim for their greatest potential
- Empowered to realize their dreams
- Prepared for success beyond high school

AISD “Next Steps” Goals

- Administrators, counselors, teachers and other staff will understand the need to educate students about career opportunities and postsecondary education/training options
- In an effort to connect our resources, AISD counselors, Amarillo College reps and members of the AEDC toured various businesses and industries to learn about local career opportunities
- A survey was conducted with AISD teachers in the spring (2008) to determine the perceptions of postsecondary education and/or training and the world of work

Each student and his or her parent will receive substantial exposure regarding:

- The need for postsecondary education in order to be successful in life
- A chance to discover particular career interests
- Knowledge of the next steps needed at each level
- Knowledge about the resources available

AISD has many activities and programs already in place. However, listed below are new activities and programs:

Elementary – Career Awareness

- Increased classroom career guidance lessons K-5
- Heavy emphasis on career awareness in 5th grade
- Career Fairs and Career Activities at various campuses

Middle School – Career Exploration

- Career Connections Class – (implemented school year 2007/2008)
- Career Connections is a course in which every student in MS will take with the possibility of earning 1/2 high school credit after successful completion
- Students are acquainted with the “world of work,” find out more about themselves and about careers or opportunities for which they might be suited

- Students learn about all types of postsecondary education and training available to them including 4-year university, 2-year community colleges or technical schools, certifications and licensure, internships, apprenticeships, on the job training and the military
- Students develop an on-line career portfolio using Bridges Explorer/Planner (www.bridges.com)
- Students take several career interest inventories in order to begin the exploration process
- Students begin to develop a 4-6 year plan which can be updated and changed as the interest and skills of the students change
- Students answer three questions: Who am I? Where do I want to go? How do I get there?

High School – Career Concentration/Career Preparation

- Internship Opportunities for Juniors and Seniors - The City of Amarillo is partnering with Amarillo ISD to develop a program that will provide worked-based learning opportunities for our students. This program has grown from 20 interns last year (January 2008) to 60 interns this year. Interns are placed in various positions through the city including the municipal garage, transit, police department, safety department, Instructional Technology (IT) and much more.
 - This arrangement allows students to participate in meaningful & relevant work on site with a current practitioner
 - Students spend six hours each week gaining on-the-job training experiences
 - In class, students are taught “soft-skills” (responsibility, sociability, self-management leadership, problem solving, customer service, team work/collaboration, etc.)
 - These positions are unpaid and allow the students opportunities to explore career options
 - The City of Amarillo hopes to use these students as a pool for potential employees in the future
- AISD partnered with Xcel Energy this past summer (2008) to provide summer internships for students interested in learning about career opportunities and/or pursuing a career with Xcel Energy.
- AISD partnered with Atmos Energy during the summer (2008). Fifteen students were trained in the Atmos Call Center. Currently, these students are working at Atmos in conjunction with participation in the AISD work-based learning class.
- AISD is in the process of expanding internship opportunities for students with other interested companies using the same internship model that is used for the City of Amarillo internship program.
- AISD is considering restructuring career guidance at the MS and HS level to ensure a successful, seamless transition from high school and beyond. A “PRO” committee made up of counselors will be helping with this effort this year 2008/2009.
- AISD is designing a resume template to be completed with all seniors in the Senior English class in an effort to prepare students for success beyond high school.



Postsecondary – Career Preparation

- PRO (Pursuing Real Opportunities): see page 4
- AISD is currently partnering/collaborating with Amarillo College to align various technical programs so that students can take courses in high school and be ready to enter into the world of work or continue their postsecondary education. The first cluster targeted in this endeavor is the Manufacturing Cluster as it is a high need in our area.
- AISD is exploring the options of dual credit and certificate programs with Amarillo College in an effort to prepare our students for the world or work, postsecondary education and success beyond high school.

Existing Programs

Career & Technical Education

Each August, area school districts organize staff development for their faculty. This year the Career & Technical Education teachers from Amarillo ISD, Canyon ISD, Bushland ISD, Highland Park ISD, and River Road ISD will combine resources and expertise. The five public school districts in Potter and Randall county are joined together to form a Career & Technical Education Professional Learning Community. This combined effort has also extended into a joint Advisory Council for Amarillo ISD and Canyon ISD. In an effort to reduce duplication and work as a community both districts have worked to develop opportunities for our students.

Ready for the Real World

Every high school junior attends this 1/2 day event at the Civic Center. Students attend 4 sessions and are exposed to over 30 different career fields in Amarillo, education and training beyond high school, keys to living successfully on their own, and money management.

Teachers and Students Touring Businesses Day

Over 200 8th-12th graders and faculty members visit a number of businesses in Amarillo to see first hand the skills they will need to secure jobs in Amarillo. Participants tour facilities and learn more about business and industry in Amarillo.

Lunch with the Mayor

Fifth grade students from each campus are selected to attend Lunch with the Mayor where they learn more about city government and see a few of the job opportunities that exist within the City of Amarillo.

For more information:

www.amaisd.org
806-326-1001

Region 16



Texas is divided into 20 education service centers under the Texas Education Agency. Region 16 serves the Texas Panhandle, which consists of 63 school districts with 220 campuses in a 26,000 square mile area. Amarillo is the economic and geographic center of the Panhandle. Region 16 school districts have an average daily attendance of about 78,000 students, with individual districts ranging from fewer than 30 to more than 29,000 students and the total regional school staff numbering more than 11,400.

Mission: Enhancing student success by providing quality services.

Region 16 helps support educational attainment in numerous ways across the Texas Panhandle. In addition to their assistance in the coordination of the Texas Panhandle P-16 Council, they coordinate regional Adult Basic Education and Migrant/ESL/Bilingual Programs as part of their contribution to the region.

Adult Basic Education

ESL/GED students are encouraged to see the program as a transitional stepping block to the next level. For ESL the next step is GED. For GED the next step is college, technical training schools, or the military.

During the GED orientation process (the first stage of enrolling in GED classes), educational and career goals are discussed with every student individually to help them develop a map or plan to work toward accomplishing those goals after their GED.

Representatives from Amarillo College, Milan Career Institute, and the Armed Forces talk to the students about the next step after passing their GED.

Services are provided to help students complete applications, financial aid documents, and learn the “higher ed” process.

Students are encouraged to apply for scholarships through the TALAE (Texas Association for Literacy and Adult Education) Foundation.

In our rural sites, R16 collaborates and has college days with Frank Phillips & Amarillo College (Hereford). Locally, R16 takes some of them around AC, WBU & even has driven to WT so they get the feel of what being at college is like. Most of these students have never stepped foot on any college campus.

Most of all R16 drills the belief into their heads that EVERYONE can attend college no matter how inadequate they may feel. Most of these students feel inadequate and have been told they’re not smart enough for college; R16 works hard to change that perception.

Migrant/Bilingual/ESL Program

The following includes samples of strategies implemented by the Region 16 Education Service Center's Migrant/Bilingual/ESL team to impact high school completion and postsecondary educational attainment of the students and families served by the programs.

Postsecondary Planning Guides

Students and parents receive the guide as well as training on its utilization in the process of pursuing postsecondary education.

Parent and Student/Parent Meetings

Meetings scheduled through collaboration with districts include bilingual presentations on issues foremost in parental concerns such as TAKS testing, accessing postsecondary education, academic support offered through the school, community, etc. Meetings are held in the evenings and on weekends including immediately after church services both on campus and at alternative sites such as churches and community centers (Childcare for pre-school-age children and Spanish translation/presentations provided).

Collaboration with Higher Education

Parent meetings and workshops are offered on college campuses. These include sessions on accessing postsecondary education, strategies for helping students with academics in the home, employment trends to assist with career planning for students as well as parents, etc. These meetings end with on-campus dining and campus tours led by students specifically selected to represent the parents' communities and demographics (Childcare for pre-school-age children and Spanish translation/presentations provided).

Parent Technology Workshops

Parents experience in a live computer lab the world of resources available through technology including but not limited to translation sites, multilingual news and special interest sites, homework assistance sites, college searches, FAFSA, etc.

Early Childhood Education

As part of the Building Bridges migrant early childhood education program, Region 16 is implementing an iPOD pilot to bring previously inaccessible technology into the home to be utilized as an educational tool for parents working hand in hand with their child/children as their child's/children's first teacher. The iPOD is being employed as a language/English acquisition and school readiness tool.

Pre-event Parent Orientations

Prior to events such as the student leadership retreats and student participation in the Bert Corona Leadership Institute in Washington D.C., meetings are held with parents to address any and all questions and concerns about the upcoming activities and to explain to parents the value of the events to student participants' high school and postsecondary success.

For more information:

www.esc16.net
806-677-5000



Early Childhood Education

Investments in quality child care and early childhood education do more than pay significant returns to children - our future citizens. They also benefit taxpayers and enhance economic vitality. Economic research demonstrated that the return on public investment in high quality childhood education is substantial.¹

Amarillo ISD

Campus Based Pre-kindergarten

Amarillo ISD provides campus based pre-kindergarten for eligible children who are four years old on or before September 1 of the current school year. The program is aligned with K-12 and offered at thirty elementary campuses, Caprock's Learning Lab, and Carver Early Childhood Academy.

Community Based Pre-kindergarten

By forming community based partnerships, the District offers half-day pre-kindergarten to three and four-year-old children taught by Amarillo ISD teachers at five child care and two Head Start locations. The program is aligned with K-12 and features best practices in teaching and learning, quality classroom resources and materials, current technology, and professional development. The child care partners provide wrap-around care, space, and support services. These partnerships focus attention on how to bring children to their fullest potential by offering high-quality pre-kindergarten partnerships.

Through campus based and community based programs, Amarillo ISD provides pre-kindergarten services to over 1,700 children.

For more information:

www.amaisd.org/early
806-326-1322

Preschool and Career and Technical Education Partnership

Tradewind's pre-kindergarten program and Caprock's Career and Technical Education (CATE) program have developed an early education partnership and learning lab to mutually benefit young children and high school students. Early Childhood Professions I and II prepare high school students as the next generation of educators. Upon completion of the two-year program, students will be eligible to obtain the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential.

Juniors And Seniors Observe, Support, And Teach In a Variety of Instructional Settings such as the Caprock High School pre-kindergarten learning lab, the campus-based pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms and the community-based pre-kindergarten classrooms housed in child care agencies.

1. Early Childhood Education for All, A Wise Investment, Legal Momentum, April 2005
www.mit.edu/workplacecenter/docs/full%20report.pdf

Building On The Strengths Of Each Program

Preparation for school and life ensures young children are successful in the early years, features best practices in early education methods and instruction, promotes all aspects of children's cognitive, social, emotional, language, artistic, and physical development and graduates high school students prepared to enter the early childhood work force as paraprofessionals and work toward an advanced degree.

For more information call:

AISD CATE: 806-326-1319 or AISD ECE: 806-326-1322

Region 16

In the 07-08 program year, the Region 16 ESC Head Start Program served 1494 three and four-year-olds across the Panhandle. Of that number 174 had documented disabilities. A total of 397 pregnant women and birth-to-three-year olds were served and 65 of those had documented disabilities. Each child in the program also received comprehensive medical, dental, mental wellness, nutrition, social services and their parents were offered GED/ESL services or assistance in pursuing higher education.

For more information:

www.esc16.net
806-677-5000

Amarillo College

Through a TEEM state grant, teachers are able to improve Pre-K and childcare services to 62 low-income classrooms in the Texas Panhandle.

For more information:

www.actx.edu
806-371-5000

Opportunity School

Opportunity School (OS) continues to operate at capacity serving 152 children with full day or part day preschool. Thirty-two of those receive dual services from AISD and OS through shared service model at Opportunity School Grand Street Campus. A Head Start classroom has been added, actually converting an existing preschool classroom to Head Start - serving 15 children. This isn't an increase in numbers but does improve level of services provided through the partnership with Region 16 because now these children will receive health and mental wellness services in addition to their preschool and full-day care while parents work or attend higher education full-time.

For more information:

www.opportunityschool.com
806-373-4245





Panhandle Workforce

Workforce Solutions assists residents and businesses of the Texas Panhandle with a range of comprehensive resources such as:

- Providing local labor market information to businesses, educators and economic developers to assist in targeting academic, technical and other employment skills that are needed in our region
- Providing financial aid to eligible adults and youth to train in those high-demand skills
- Helping dislocated workers quickly find comparable jobs and/or gain locally needed skills for re-employment
- Assisting Amarillo EDC, Amarillo College, AISD and McCormick Company in the development of a new website, PRO (Pursuing Real Opportunities)
- Participating in CEO “brainstorming” sessions sponsored by the Amarillo Chamber and AISD to determine how to retain and train youth in our region
- Conducting semi-annual job fairs with community partners to match local employers and job seekers, and promote educational opportunities (In April and October, these each serve 100+ employers and approximately 2,500 job seekers)
- Assisting companies involved in the development of emerging technologies (e.g., wind energy) with skill-building for their future workers (with educational partners)

For more information:

www.wspanhandle.com
806-372-3381

“Our challenge is making sure our workers today, and those being prepared through the education system for tomorrow, have the necessary skills to align with the jobs that will be available in the future.”

- Diane Rath,
Former Texas Workforce
Commission Chair

Amarillo Area Foundation

Mission: To improve quality of life in the Texas Panhandle through effective philanthropic efforts.

The Amarillo Area Foundation has long been a leader in increasing educational opportunities in the Texas Panhandle. Besides being the chief driver behind the ACE Scholarship Program, the Foundation currently oversees and awards 96 scholarship funds for a total of \$372,678 for 245 area students, which does not include ACE scholarships.

The recently established Community Fund which matches locally raised funds with Foundation monies has garnered more than \$4 million for participating communities. Some have chosen to use the funds for scholarship programs, including the communities of Shamrock, Dalhart, Stratford, Perryton and Dumas. The latter two use their funds in programs similar to the ACE Scholarship Program: the Ranger Excellence Foundation in Perryton with Frank Phillips College and Quest in Dumas in conjunction with Amarillo College.

Recent funding initiatives of the Foundation include the Collegiate G Force at WTAMU, which is the peer education component of the Go Center there, and assisting with a planning grant for the Panhandle Regional Simulation Center alliance with Amarillo College, WTAMU, and Texas Tech Health Sciences Center.

In addition to ongoing support for Panhandle Twenty/20's efforts to increase local levels of educational attainment, the community can always look to the Amarillo Area Foundation to be a leader in promoting education in our region.

For more information:

www.amarilloareafoundation.org
806-376-4521



**AMARILLO AREA
FOUNDATION**
A Mosaic of ... Connecting. Empowering. Enriching.



Amarillo Chamber of Commerce

Education is key to a strong economy and for more than 80 years, the Amarillo Chamber of Commerce has been a leader in the development and growth of Amarillo's economy. The Chamber has strong local business and education partnerships and sponsors supporting programs such as:

Teachers and Students Touring Businesses Day gives students and teachers the opportunity to tour local companies to learn current business practices and give them a firsthand view of the use of skills and technology in business and industry.

Educator for aDay invites business men and women to shadow a teacher and interact with a teacher and students in the classroom.

Ready for the Real World is held to give Junior High School students the opportunity to better prepare themselves for college, trade school and/or the workforce. They hear speakers on different career choices, how to live on their own, education and training beyond high school and taking care of their money.

Top Two Percent Awards recognizes the top two percent graduating seniors from 15 local and area high schools.

Workforce Development Committee is working with WTAMU, and Amarillo College developing internships with local businesses.

Government Affairs Council is working with educational institutions developing issues for the State Legislators to consider in the 81st session in 2009.

For more information:

www.amarillo-chamber.org
806-373-7800



Celebrate Education

The goal of the Celebrate Education program is to increase awareness to the need for educational attainment and to develop and facilitate solutions for this issue. To reach this goal, the Globe-News published a number of special features focusing on individuals who credit their success in life to their education (Profiles of Success); profiled companies chronicling their efforts to help employees reach their educational goals (A Helping Hand) and coordinated a meeting of more than 50 CEOs of Amarillo area companies seeking their input into the issue of educational attainment.

Hundreds of students have been recognized for achievement in the classroom (Class Act) and a series of stories was published focusing on students who overcame challenges to achieve educational success (Beating the Odds). Valedictorians, salutatorians & other outstanding students were recognized at a luncheon and with a special section in May (Best & Brightest) and area spellers were spotlighted at the regional spelling bee in their quest to go to Washington, DC to compete in the Scripps National Spelling Bee.

The Word of the Day feature kept words and spelling in the forefront every day on Page 1 and the CE partners partnered with the City of Amarillo Library, Hastings, Amarillo College & others to focus the community on reading, the crucial building block to education. More than 403,220 copies of the Amarillo Globe-News with Celebrate Education content have been delivered to area students and the Celebrate Education website became a permanent resource that has all the information for the program. The site has had more than 50,000 page views in 2008.

For more information:

www.celebrateeducation.org

Acknowledgements

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For more information:

www.panhandle2020.org
806-376-4521



This report is dedicated to all current and future residents of the Texas Panhandle, especially to the children who will graduate in the year 2020.

May your future inspire our actions.



801 S. Fillmore
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Amarillo Texas 79101

www.panhandle2020.org
806-376-4521

a project of the Amarillo Area Foundation

Vision:

To cultivate a unified effort to improve our community for the future.

Mission:

To be a catalyst for positive change in our community.

Role:

To connect, equip and inform.