

# Empowered for Success



*A College and Career Newsletter for the Gulf Coast*

## Gulf Coast PASS Grant

### Houston A+ Challenge

The Gulf Coast Partnership for Achieving Student Success (GC PASS) initiative is in the first year of its three-year program. The initiative is designed to ensure more Texas students graduate high school ready for college rigor. It does so by focusing on fostering collaborative relationships between entities on both sides of the transition: independent school districts (ISDs) and community colleges.

The Institute for Evidence-Based Change, Houston Community College (HCC) and Houston A+ Challenge are partnering institutions in the GC PASS grant, which is funded by Houston Endowment and directed, coordinated and evaluated by The University of Texas at Austin's Student Success Initiatives.

Houston A+ Challenge Program Coordinators Betsy Breier and June Giddings work to help forge and strengthen the relationships between the community colleges and their partnering districts.

"Every partnership started out in a different place," Breier said. "In some cases, there was a pretty well-established partnership already going on. So this grant has just been moving them forward. For others, this is a newer concept. That's one of the challenges, but it's also what makes it interesting. Everybody is all over and we're trying to get them all to the same end point: Student success."

The GC PASS grant is active in eight community colleges: Brazosport College, College of the Mainland, Galveston College, Houston Community College System, Lee College, Lone Star College System, San Jacinto College District and Wharton County Junior College. Based on size, each community college works with one or two ISDs, seen in the chart below.

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## Professional Development Calendar

Regions 4, 5 and 6  
December 4

[Increase Rigor with Differentiation](#)  
8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Region 4 ESC  
December 11  
[CSCOPE: Middle School Planning Science](#)

College	Public K-12 School District(s)
Brazosport College	Brazosport ISD
College of the Mainland	Hitchcock ISD
Galveston College	Galveston ISD
Houston Community College System	Houston ISD and Spring Branch ISD
Lee College	Goose Creek CISD
Lone Star College System	Cypress-Fairbanks ISD and Spring ISD
San Jacinto College District	Pasadena ISD and Sheldon ISD
Wharton County Junior College	Wharton ISD

Gulf Coast PASS Grant Collaborative Partners,  
[www.houstonaplus.org/gcpass/partners](http://www.houstonaplus.org/gcpass/partners)

These partnerships focus on aligning curriculum and student expectations; increasing access to dual enrollment; and improving student, parent and educator understanding of financial aid.

In working with the colleges and ISDs, Giddings said there is freedom in the grant for each institution to identify and work toward the end goals of increased college readiness and college access on their own terms.

"Everybody has a little different definition of college readiness," Giddings said. "What we've been trying to say is that when the grant goes away, we still need to do the work. You have to define what readiness looks like for your district."

One definite component to college readiness is a student's ability to handle the demands of college-level courses.

"The big overarching goal of the grant is to prepare more students to be college ready, which means they are ready to enter postsecondary without having to take developmental education classes."

This is currently not the case for the more than 200,000 students who tested into remedial courses when entering Texas colleges and universities this year.

The grant's work has been in progress since early 2012.

"Right now, we're working on creating baseline data," Giddings said.

[Lessons with Alignment and Networking](#)

8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Region 5 ESC

December 11

[CSCOPE: High School Science Planning](#)

[Lessons with Alignment and Networking 4th 6](#)

[weeks](#)

8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Region 5 ESC

December 12

[Developing STAAR Instruction](#)

8:30 a.m. - 3:15 p.m.

Region 4 ESC

December 12

[Decision-Making Process for Texas](#)

[Statewide Assessment - 2012-13](#)

9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Region 4 ESC

December 16

[CSCOPE PLAN Math](#)

Grades 3 - 5

8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Region 5 ESC

See the complete ESC event calendars:

[Region 4](#)

[Region 5](#)

[Region 6](#)

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"From there, we'll look at each partnership and what their gains could possibly be. Some districts are graduating more students who are college and career ready than others, so those districts will be working on creating their own internal benchmarks to help increase that."

Visit [www.houstonaplus.org/gcpass](http://www.houstonaplus.org/gcpass) for more information.

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This section of *Empowered for Success* is based solely on the feedback of our readers. To share your institution's CCRS initiatives, simply visit the [Gulf Coast CCRS](#) website [Contact Us](#) page and send us an email with your information.

## College Readiness Symposium

### Gulf Coast Event Review

Education Service Center IV in Houston hosted a college readiness symposium on Nov. 5, 2012 for more than 300 educators and administrators. Speaker Bill Daggett, founder and chairman of the International Center for Leadership in Education, used the morning session to engage attendees by shedding light on the past, present, and possible future of public education in America.

Daggett presented a compelling case for curriculum relevance and rigor, and the creative use of technology in classrooms, providing global and national context with research and historical data.

(Download the [keynote presentation](#) [PPT, 8.1 MB].)

Partnered with Jim Collins, author of the 2001 best-seller *Good to Great*, the center identified the "25 most rapidly improving elementary, middle and high schools in America" in order to observe their unique methods and cultures. This study is funded by The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and it provided much of the information Daggett shared in the symposium.

The schools identified and studied were not found to have similar policies or operation strategies; however, they had several characteristics in common.



The 25 most rapidly improving schools were found to be "unrelenting in having a dual vision in what school was about: preparing kids for college and for career," Daggett shared.

They also have "fewer, clearer, higher" standards, he said.

Daggett emphasized that the necessity for higher standards is not coming from teachers or administrators, but from business and the demands of an increasingly competitive and global world.

"We have misdiagnosed the problem," Daggett said. "It's not the college issue that's going to get us; It's the career issue."

He encouraged educators to embrace technology, skimming through several game-changing technologies and Web developments that will hit the market as well as be in the hands of students as soon as next year.

"We need to change, not because schools fail, but because the world is changing," Daggett said. "And the world is changing because of technology."

He urged schools to implement Web-based essay-grading programs to help raise the level of rigor without demanding more of teachers.

"Computer-based scoring of essays enables us to have kids write two pages a day in every class," Daggett said, pointing out the gains in grading efficiency and consistency this would yield.

"The highest-performing schools use technology fundamentally differently," he said.

To learn more, visit the International Center for Leadership in Education at [www.LeaderEd.com](http://www.LeaderEd.com), or download his [keynote presentation](#) [PPT, 8.1 MB].

## Online Resources

### New K-12 Classroom Resources

South Texas College Readiness  
Special Advisor Conchita Hickey has contributed several additions to K-12 Resources, including lesson plans and professional development



materials.

The following American History lesson plans are aligned with the CCRS and TEKS.

- [Causes and Effects of the American Revolution](#) (PDF)
- [Analyzing Maps to Understand the Causes of World War II](#) (PDF)
- [Events Leading to US Involvement in World War II](#) (PDF)

Other resources include professional development materials for [English/Language Arts](#) and [Mathematics](#) educators.

For a complete list, visit [K-12 Classroom Resources](#).

We are working diligently to bring you the Texas CCRS Network Web site by Dec. 1, while keeping the Gulf Coast Web site as up-to-date as possible. Don't forget to visit and send us your feedback.

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If you have feedback or suggestions, please email  
*Empowered for Success* Editor [Alicia Wilson](#).  
Be sure to stop by the [Gulf Coast CCRS](#) Web site  
for more information and updates.

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[Houston A+ Challenge](#)

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