

ICIA Overview

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CHRIS COXON: Cluster Innovative Academies are open enrollment secondary schools that offer applied learning opportunities in high demand career pathways. They are funded through a \$7.6 million grant from the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Workforce Commission, and the Higher Ed Coordinating Board. Educate Texas is thrilled serve as technical assistance provider for this work and in partnership with Governor Abbott's vision to support the growing needs of our workforce and existing businesses.

GARY SENIOR: The ICI program is different than a lot of school partnerships because this is something that we from industry have some input on, so they'll be able to meet our needs. And then we'll be able to provide for the schools, because I have subject matter experts who work in the fields.

MELANIE PHARIS: And the idea is that you take students who may not view themselves as college material, may not be on a path to college and help set them on that path. We're able to purchase equipment-- software computers, tablets-- that students are able to work with on a daily basis. They're able to pursue a pathway. And those pathways will set students on a course to a very lucrative and readily available career.

JEREMY FORD: The benefit for us is it provides a tangible way for our company and our people to be engaged in the communities they work in. And then frankly, it provides us a broader talent pool of resources that we can pull from that really help fill some of the emerging jobs that we see.

JOHN FITZPATRICK: One of the great things about the Innovative Academy's whole cluster model is it really came out of Governor Abbott's vision of connecting economic development and education and equity. And in my opinion, the Innovative Academy's model is one of, if not, the most exciting because it's real. You've got K12 education and workforce, TEA, the Korem Board and the Texas Work Court Commission that pooled dollars. But local school districts, local community colleges, local universities, and most importantly the missing link in a lot of ways employers are coming together.

GARY SENIOR: Several of our people who have come in and through these programs and then they've gone on to actually earn those four year degrees, it's a start. And why not start with something that you know that there's going to be opportunities there? Where you go from there, it's all about your drive, it's all about what you want to do. How far do you want to take it?

JOHN FITZPATRICK: So one of things I'm really proud of here at Educate Texas is we are working directly in the nexus of K12 higher education and workforce. So we have deep experience and history working with school districts and charter schools, community colleges, tech schools, and universities. We're getting smarter, we're learning more about the employers. But I think that's our role, to really put together what these partnership models and what these partnership options look like and have a playbook locally and a playbook for the state.

KEVIN GARCIA: One of the problems that I want our students to have in four years is the problem of having to decide which path to take. Just knowing that they were part of this program for four years and develop these skills, we know that no matter what path they pick, they're going to be successful. And it's going to be their own.

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