

IMPACT REPORT

2023-24



EDUCATION
IS FREEDOM





EDUCATION IS **FREEDOM**

Education is Freedom transforms lives through education. We believe that every young person deserves the opportunity to pursue a college education and a fulfilling career. We also empower students by providing them with the resources and guidance they need to achieve their academic and professional goals.



LEARN, GROW, THRIVE.

INSIDE

A Message from our CEO	4
Our History	6
Why Education is Freedom?	7
Who We Serve	8
Master Classes and Tuesday Talks	10
Next Generation Student Advising	11
Internships and Career Programs	12
Evidence of Impact	13
Evening with the Stars	14
Scholarship Winners	16
Partnership Highlights	18
Statement of Activities Summary	19
Education is Freedom Team	20
Governance	21
Donors	22

Please note that in an effort to be inclusive, this report comprises participating schools, advisors, board members, and donors from the 2023–24 and 2024–25 school years. For further details, please contact EIF.



FOR OVER TWENTY-TWO YEARS, EDUCATION IS FREEDOM (EIF) HAS SERVED THE STUDENTS OF DALLAS COUNTY. As we reflect on the 2023–24 and first half of the 2024–25 school year, our future is bright, indeed. Transition marked 2023–24 when our former CEO, Marcia Page, retired after fourteen years of dedicated service. February 1, 2024, I became the new President and CEO and am proud to carry the torch for Education is Freedom Foundation—and EIF hit the gas!

While our mission remains the same—transforming lives through education—we have broadened our scope and efforts. EIF continues to provide near-peer higher education advisors in every high school that we serve. But we are doing so much more! EIF is proud to play a key part in the coalition to disrupt generational poverty in Dallas County. Our collaboration with other nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher learning, and our partner districts—has deepened our impact and synergized our efforts.

Spring of 2024 was a time of rapid growth for EIF. Key highlights that will impact the coming school year include:

- We moved all of our advisors to 12-month contracts, so they can work year-round to support students on their journey to and through to a postsecondary credential.
- We established performance goals and bonuses linked to goal attainment for all staff. These will be implemented in the 2024–25 school year.
- We acquired the middle school college and career curriculum from Education Opens Doors and expanded it to include a year-long course, as well as a semester one. As a result, EIF is now in every middle school in Dallas ISD.
- We expanded our services in Garland and Grand Prairie ISDs and will be piloting a program at South Garland High School.



- We added Mesquite and DeSoto ISDs for high school advising.
- We added a family engagement specialist, to educate and empower our families to support their children's college and career choices.
- We added three career specialists, who will support students whose postsecondary plans are to go directly to the workforce.
- Every EIF staff member became certified in career advising.
- To accommodate our expansion into new schools, we grew from 68 staff members to 110, including adding an integration director.
- We partnered with Mainstay to launch a texting platform and a chatbot, Torchy, who answers students' enrollment questions in real time.
- We dove in deep to combat summer melt. This summer all hands were on deck making personal contact with students who planned to attend college, helping them remove obstacles and enroll.



It is an honor and privilege to serve as the President and CEO of Education is Freedom Foundation. We are focused on the future, innovating for results, and driven by outcomes. Your partnership and support help us create brighter futures for our Dallas County community.

Susanna

SUSANNA RUSSELL, EdD
President and CEO

OUR HISTORY

“Being first-generation means stumbling through the college process in the dark . . . I felt completely overwhelmed, lacking the support I needed to make it through college season. EIF gave me that foundation and sources to make it through. I felt more confident in my abilities to send off college applications to schools I had dreamt of attending since grade school.”

—JESSICA

Dallas ISD School
for the Talented
and Gifted '21

Student at Yale University



Visionary Leadership

Education is Freedom was founded in 2002 by a visionary board of leaders who saw the power of education to create a brighter future. Their goal was to build a skilled and educated workforce that could drive strong communities and a thriving economy.

In its twenty-two-year history, EIF has grown to serve over 100,000 students and their families over multiple school districts. We've developed a range of impactful programs to address students' needs, including:

- **High School and Middle School Advising:** Dedicated advisors guide students through the college application process, financial aid, career exploration, and more.
- **EIF Scholars:** This program offers additional support to high-performing students to maximize their college potential.
- **Intern Programs:** We connect students with internship opportunities to gain valuable work experience.
- **Workforce Readiness:** We equip students with essential skills for success in the job market.
- **Community Connection:** We provide resources and support to students, families, and the broader community.



A Better Tomorrow

Education is Freedom's sole purpose is to equip, enable, and empower all students to reach their postsecondary aspirations whether seeking a college education, pursuing a career or trade, or enlisting in the military. We want a better tomorrow for our underserved and under-resourced communities.

Our mission is to **transform lives through education**. This past year, EIF's strategic focus began with college access but throughout the year expanded to include college enrollment, retention, completion, and future employment.

To achieve this goal, we utilized our campus and community model facilitated by our Higher Education Advisors (HEAs). Each advisor this year completed college and career certifications to best serve our student population individually, and in a group setting. Below is our portfolio of services offered:

- College, Career, Military, and Life Advising
- College Enrollment
- Community Connection
- Personal and Professional Development
- EIF Scholars
- Intern Program

Our HEA's are committed to the success of the students they serve and many mirror the population. Our advisors' approach:

- Expect that all underserved students are capable of obtaining a certification, associates or bachelors degree
- Provide a wide-range of high-quality, college preparatory tools for students and families
- Provide internship experiences to help students solidify postsecondary pathways
- Help students leverage both private and public scholarship funds
- Equip students with the necessary skills for success after graduation

70%

Young Dallas County adults earn less than a living wage

75%

Children live in poverty

12%

Low income students earn a credential within 6 years

-\$234K

Difference in lifetime earnings without a post secondary credential

40%

Decline in last 50 years for national upward mobility

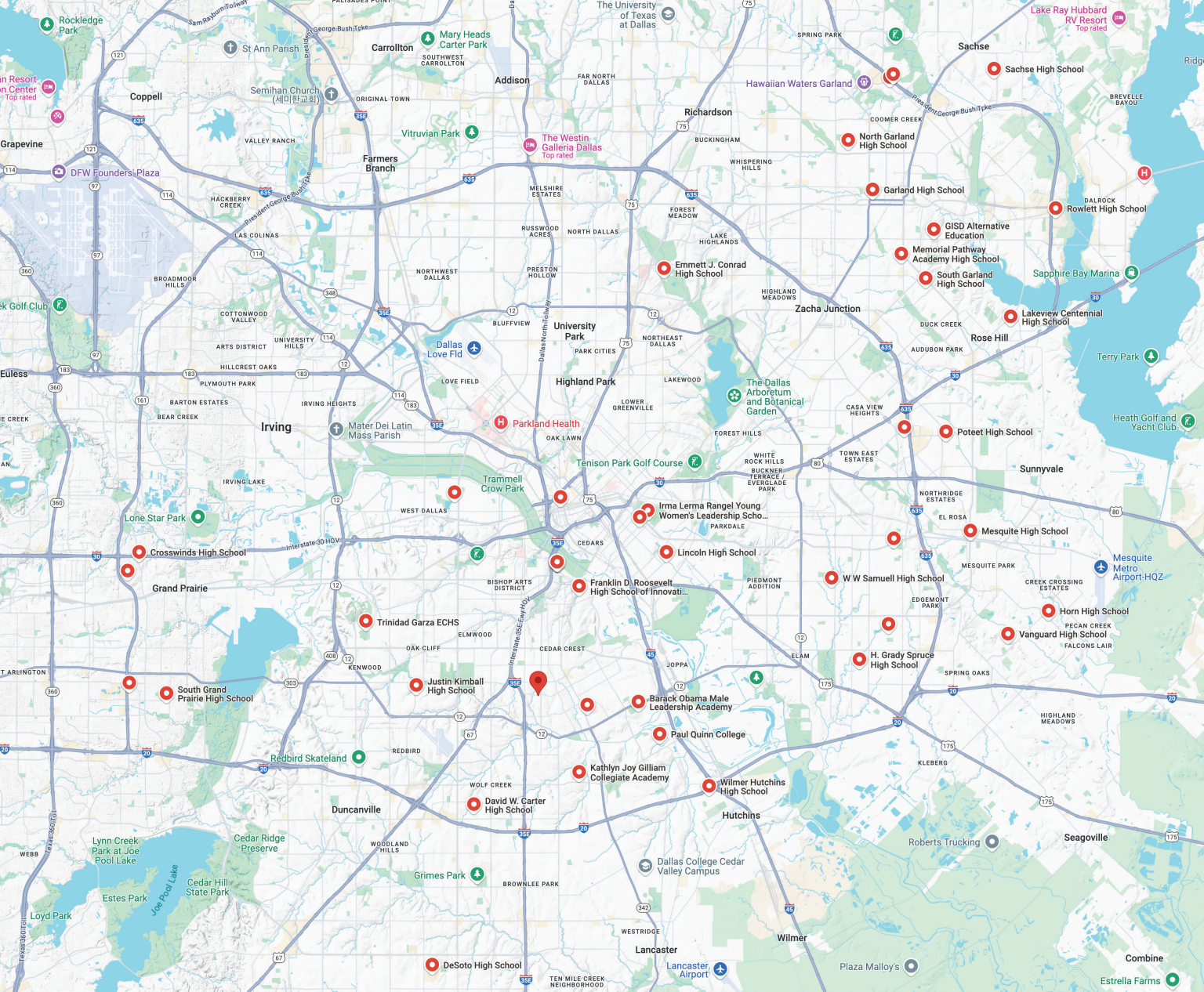
7th

Dallas rank in the US for young adults living in poverty

6th

Dallas rank in the US for children living in poverty

Data from [Commit Partnership's Dashboard](#)



Serving the independent school districts of

DALLAS

DESOTO

GARLAND

GRAND PRAIRIE

MESQUITE

Expanding Reach

EIF expanded its reach beyond campus grounds through EIF Mobile Van, Cart on Wheels (mobile laptop cart), and the new EIF App. These initiatives provided students with access to college, career, and military guidance, applications, scholarships, and more. EIF also introduced Torch, a chat bot offering 24/7 virtual guidance. In response to summer melt, EIF continued advising through the summertime resulting in increased enrollment. This work was all made possible by our dedicated team of advisors and staff.

Serving Students throughout the Metroplex

Education is Freedom served approximately 25,000 students in 43 high schools throughout five districts in the DFW Metroplex—Dallas ISD (22), DeSoto ISD (1), Garland ISD (10), and Grand Prairie ISD (4), and Mesquite ISD (6). Below are the high schools in each district.

DALLAS ISD

- A. Maceo Smith New Tech High School
- Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy
- David W. Carter High School
- Emmett J. Conrad High School
- Franklin D. Roosevelt High School
- Dr. Frederick D. Haynes III Global Prep Academy
- H. Grady Spruce High School
- Irma Lerma Rangel Young Women's Leadership School
- James Madison High School
- Judge Barefoot Sanders Law Magnet Center
- Justin F. Kimball High School
- Kathlyn Joy Gilliam Collegiate Academy
- Lassiter Early College High School
- Lincoln High School and Humanities / Communication Magnet
- L. G. Pinkston High School
- Rosie M. Collins Sorrells School of Education & Social Services
- South Oak Cliff High School
- Trinidad Garza Early College High School
- Wilmer Hutchins High School
- W. W. Samuell High School
- Young Women's STEAM Academy at Balch Springs
- Yvonne A. Ewell Townview School for the Talented and Gifted

DESOTO ISD

- DeSoto High School

GARLAND ISD

- Garland High School
- Gilbreath-Reed Career and Technical Center
- GISD Alternative Education Center
- Lakeview Centennial High School
- Memorial Pathway Academy
- Naaman Forest High School
- North Garland High School
- Rowlett High School
- Sachse High School
- South Garland High School

GRAND PRAIRIE ISD

- Grand Prairie High School
- Grand Prairie Early College High School
- South Grand Prairie High School
- South Grand Prairie Early College High School

MESQUITE ISD

- John Horn High School
- Mesquite High School
- North Mesquite High School
- Poteet High School
- Vroonland Vanguard High School
- West Mesquite High School

“Before EIF, I didn't know where to start or how to prepare for college, and EIF swooped in and guided me slowly and effectively through the steps and information I needed to know to be successful in the present and the future. EIF has paved a new path for me, and it's because of them I am on my way to the next chapter of my life.”

—KHALYL

Pflugerille
High School '21
Student at Texas
State University





“ EIF has opened up many opportunities for me. Not only have my advisors helped me with the college process, but they also guided me to do better. They were always encouraging me to apply for scholarships, apply to more colleges, attend more workshops, etc. EIF has made my entire college process one big easy step to my future. ”

—CLEMENTE

Dallas ISD Sunset High School '21

Student at University of Texas at Austin



Vital Training

EIF Master Classes, facilitated weekly on Wednesdays by our expert Higher Education Advisors (HEAs), offer vital training for students and families focused on college and career readiness.

These sessions are designed to support attendees in exploring educational opportunities, successfully navigating application requirements, and comprehending available funding options.

Examples of Master Classes include:

- College 101
- College Applications
- Common Applications
- Essay Writing
- Exploring College Types
- FAFSA
- Financial Literacy
- On-Campus Success
- Resumes
- Senior Final Steps

A Comprehensive Approach

Education is Freedom (EIF) has evolved from focusing on college applications and financial aid to a comprehensive approach that supports students ranging from underclassmen to graduates. We've implemented initiatives like the EIF Scholars program, expanded workforce and trade school options, and partnered with Dallas County Promise.

To address summer melt, we've retained staff to provide ongoing support, utilized the Mainstay messaging platform, and partnered with Dallas County Promise to track student progress. Early data indicates increased enrollment rates.

We've also enhanced data tracking and security. The Promise CM Tool provides a centralized platform for tracking student progress, and Dell laptops with secure virtual machines protect sensitive information. Staff have received phishing training, and we've strengthened Microsoft cloud security measures.

“EIF is the lifeline for college and career, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) and EIF go hand in hand at leading these successful students here at Samuell High School.”

—STEPHANIE GOSSETT

AVID Coordinator at
Samuell High School





“Through EIF, I have been able to achieve many things that otherwise I wouldn’t have. With them I was able to have my first ever internship, and with an amazing company nonetheless. Additionally, I was able to tremendously expand my network, including people like Mayor Eric Johnson!”

—LISBET

Dallas ISD Seagoville
High School ‘21
Student at University
of Texas at Dallas



Hands-On Experience

Education is Freedom offers a transformative 6-week paid summer internship program for Dallas-area high school students. This invaluable program provides hands-on experience aligned with their career interests across various industries, such as childcare, education, healthcare, law, and marketing.

For those not participating in the internships, EIF also facilitates summer job opportunities for youth aged 16–24, ensuring they gain valuable skills and insight into professional expectations and communication within their desired fields.

This experience not only enhances their professional skills but also allows for meaningful networking, **which can lead to potential full-time employment opportunities after high school graduation.** The benefits of face-to-face interactions have proven crucial in building relationships and gaining insights that are often more challenging to achieve in remote settings.

Education by the Numbers

32,290

One-on-one meetings with students

26,118

College applications completed



218

Group meetings with students

6,234

College acceptance (2 or 4 year)



40,350

Total students assisted

DISD & GPISD

6,409

Financial aid applications submitted

2,746

Enrolled (8/27, preliminary, 31.66%)

5,902

Financial aid applications completed

13,516

Summer melt messages from advisors

126

EIF Scholars



132,951

Outgoing summer melt reminder messages (mainstay)



\$198,411,435

Scholarships & institutional grants

\$79,950

in scholarships given

\$240,203,909

Total financial aid packages





A Celebration of Scholars

The 9th Annual Evening with the Stars Scholarship Ceremony celebrated the accomplishments of 126 exceptional EIF Scholars. Held at the Perot Museum, the event recognized the students' dedication and perseverance in their academic pursuits.

EIF awarded a total of \$79,950 in scholarships to these deserving students, ranging from \$300 to \$5,000. The funds were intended to help cover costs not traditionally covered by financial aid, ensuring the scholars could continue their educational journeys.

Senator Royce West, a prominent figure in Texas politics, delivered the keynote speech. His inspiring words encouraged the students to reach for their dreams and make a positive impact on the world.

The ceremony was a testament to the power of education and the importance of supporting students' aspirations. As the scholars received their awards, it was clear that the evening was about more than just financial support. It was a celebration of their hard work, resilience, and the bright futures ahead.

“The benefit of EIF on our campus is our students get a strong support system for college. The presence of EIF helps them with FAFSA, recommendation letters, college applications, etc. I did not have that when I was in high school, I didn't know how to do anything, so thank you.”

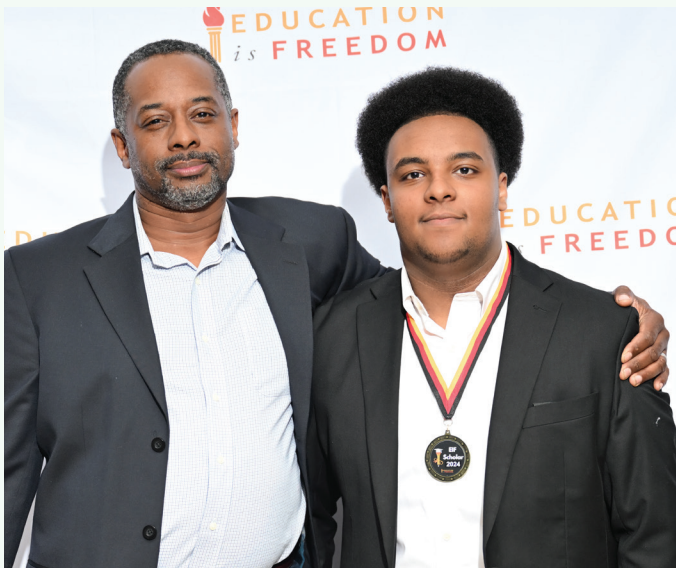
—PETER CHADBOURNE

Lead Senior Sponsor
at Lassiter Early College
High School



Spotlight on Scholars

Our 126 EIF Scholars received a total of \$79,950 this year. Below and on the adjacent page, we spotlight our top 5 scholarship recipients. These students were selected for these particular scholarships due to their full completion of the program as well as their storytelling ability. Storytelling is integral to the essay all of our EIF Scholars submit. Essays were reviewed by Essay Review Team of 12 advisors.



CHARLES OKORO, a senior who attended Garland High School was awarded the Dallas Foundation Scholarship in the amount of \$2,500. Charles will be attending Dallas Christian College in the fall.

BENYAT SIMMONS, a senior who attended Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy was awarded the Texas Capitol Scholarship in the amount of \$5,000. Benyat will be attending Prairie View A&M University in the fall.



SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



JESSE MUNIZ, a senior who attended Lassiter Early College High School, was also a recipient of the Dallas Foundation Scholarship in the amount of \$2,000. Jesse will be attending Rice University in the fall.

ANGIE NOIS, a senior who attended Grand Prairie Collegiate Institute was also a recipient of the the Dallas Foundation Scholarship in the amount of \$2,000. Angie will be attending the University of North Texas in Denton in the Fall.



DALLAS ROSS, a senior who attended Lincoln High School and Humanities/Communication Magnet was awarded the Elayne Wax Memorial Scholarship in the amount of \$1,500. The Elayne Wax Memorial Scholarship was given in honor of our former CEO Marcia Page's mother, Elayne Wax, to assist a young African American male who planned to attend a HBCU. Dallas will be attending Texas Southern University in the fall.



PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

Education is Freedom’s mission to transform lives through education would not be possible without our dedicated supporters:









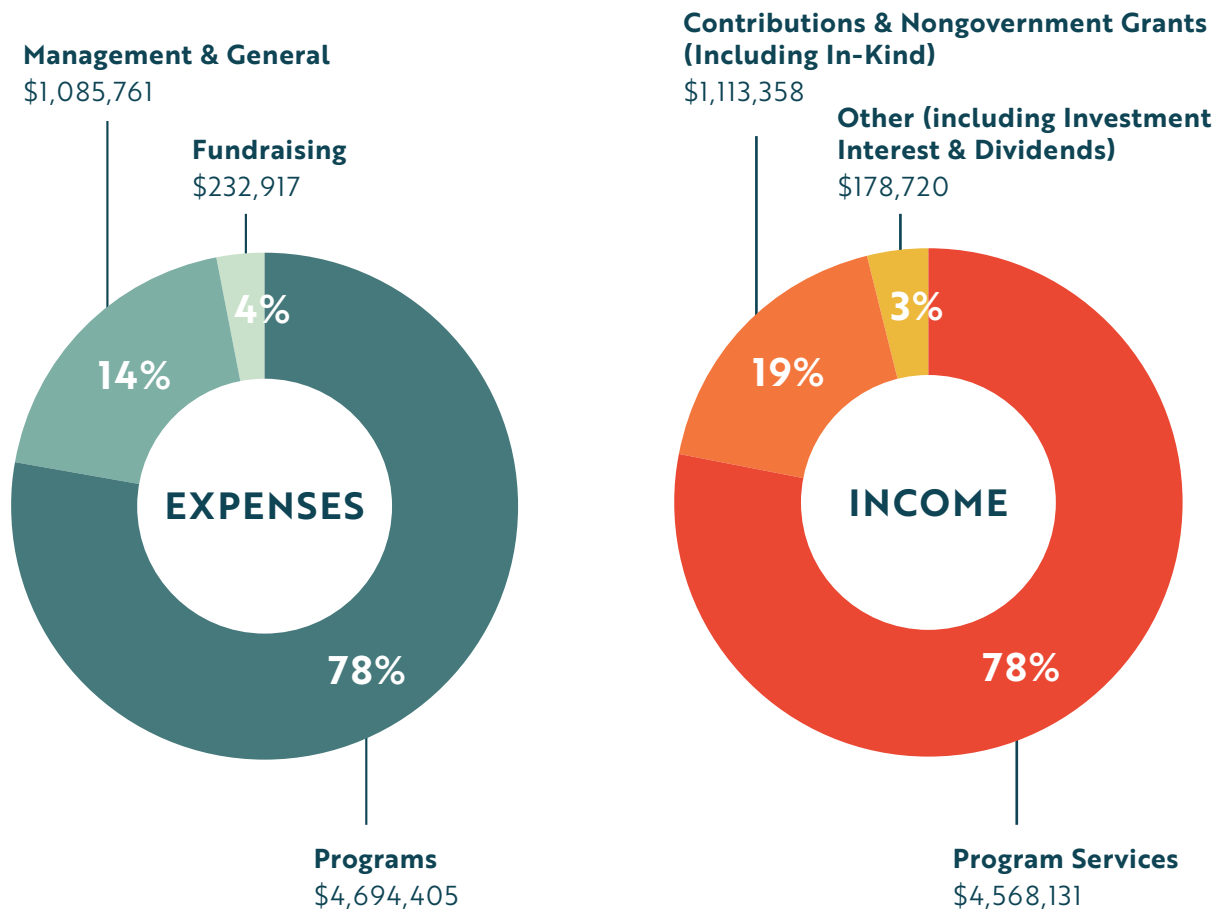






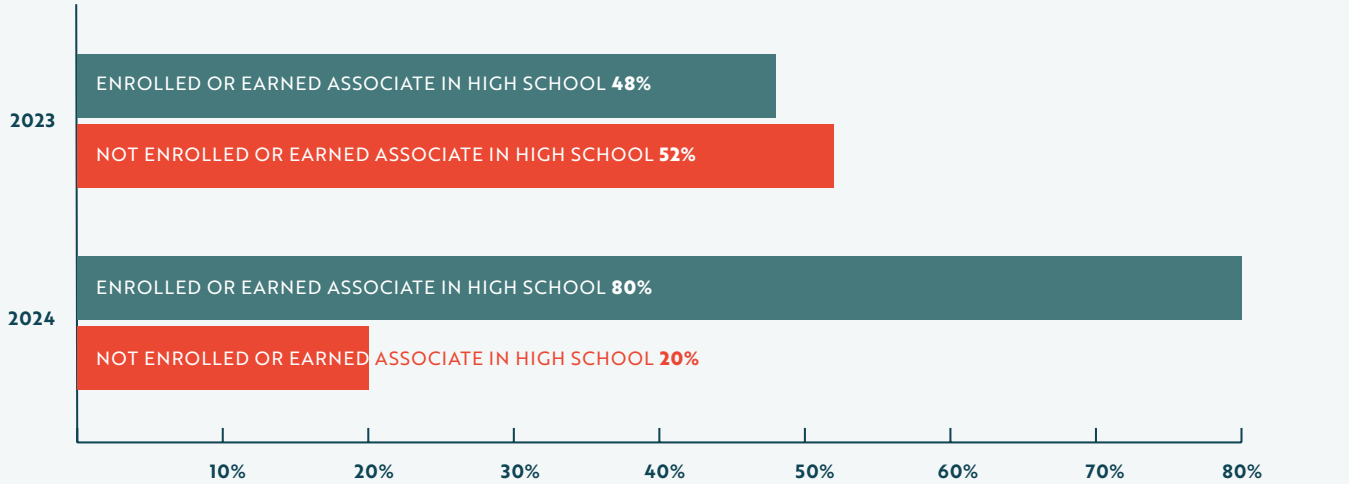






In DISD Education is Freedom Schools, PS Enrolled/Attained for 3.5+ Grads Increased 32% vs. 2023

Enrollment Outcomes of 3.5+ Roster Students at Education is Freedom DISD DCP High Schools



“ I really appreciate having EIF on our campus. Ms. Briones is fantastic with the students and parents, incredibly knowledgeable, and always willing to assist. Her work ethic, attention to detail, and professionalism greatly contribute to the overall success of our campus. She is a wealth of knowledge, solution-oriented, and a wonderful teammate. ”

—MS. ANDREA ALEXANDER

Lead Counselor at Lassiter Early College High School



EIF Team

DR. SUSANNA RUSSELL
Chief Executive Officer

CHRIS SMITH
Chief Operations Officer

SHANNON PAGE
Chief Programs Officer

JACKSON FELTY
Director of Data Management & Information Technology

BRANDON WALKER
Program Director

RAY MERRILL
Implementation Director

KULOOD ALZAYADI
Human Resources Director

DEVON LOCKARD
Data Manager

RACHEL ACEVEDO
Family Engagement Manager

DIAMOND EDWARDS
Senior Trainer

Assistant Directors of Campus Operations

STEFFANI LEVI
DEBBIE RICHMAN
MILTON SANDIFER
LI' KAYLA TURNER

Career Liaisons
JOSHUA DE HOYOS
ESME GARCIA
JEFFERY MCKELLER

HIGHER EDUCATION ADVISORS

VALERIA ADAN-ABAD	E'LEXIYA BOLES	AUSTIN HIGH	ASHLEY NEAL
CASSANDRA	SHAUNTESA BRAND	LUCY HOLGUIN	ALLISSA NELSON
ASARE-SACKEY	JENNIFER CABRERA	ATARAH HOOTEN	JOSHUA NEWMAN
DIANA BRIONES	STEPHENY CABRERA	SHARDAE JACKSON	EMMA O'CONNELL
REBECCA BURNS	LESLEY CARO	ANTHONY JAMES	IVAN ORTEGA
MIRANDA FELTY	VICTORIA CEBALLOS	ADRIENNE JENKINS	RICHARD ORTIZ
ABEL GUTIERREZ	ALEXIS CLARK	IAN JOHNSON	LUPTIA RANGEL
LEONARDO GUTIERREZ	DANIELLE CLAY	MADISON JOHNSON	JAQUELINE RESENDIZ
DEVAUGHNTA	ANTHONY	TERRANCE KELLEY	DEMITRUSS REYES
JOHNSON	DARLINGTON	DOMINIC KEOBOUTH	BIANCA SALAZAR
RODDRICK JONES	CELSEA DE JESUS	ALLEN KIM	JACQUELINE SANCHEZ
ITZEL LOPEZ	RAFAEL DE LEON	AMY LARRY	LORI'L SANDERS
SHANNON LOUGH	MATHOB DIAZ	ETHOIA LEWIS	VERNESHA SIMMONS
EVA MELENDEZ	MYA DORSEY	ALEXIS LOPEZ	GARRINECIA
MARK MITCHELL	IDRIS FAHMI	MILLENNIA LOPEZ	SINGLETON
NABIL NASER	CHRIS FLOOD	DENISE MACIAS	RASHAUD STIGGERS
DAVID VEGA	JONATHAN FULLER	NATALIE MANCIA	KAYMEISHA
J'NAE ADDISON	ARIANA GARCIA	JAZZLYN MANNING	TARKINGTON
IRRUM ALI	EMILY GONZALEZ	GISSELLE MARTINEZ	BROC TAYLOR
EMILY BACHTALER	MARIAH GRAHAM	TRISTAN MARTINEZ	KAMRON TAYLOR
ERIN BALBUENA	BRIDGET HARRIS	JESSENYA MEZA	RAQUEL TOVAR
CITLALY BARRERA	AMAARA HARRIS-	DALON MITCHELL	DANIELA VENTURA
HAILEE BARTLETT	MITCHELL	SERMARC MITCHELL	BREANNA WARD
RESHITA BECKHAM	ASIA HENRY	BRENDA MONTALVO	IVY WILLIAMS
YULISSA BELTRAN	DANIELA HERNANDEZ	BOBBY MORNES	DAVID WINSLETT

100% of EIF's Higher Education Advisors are certified by the National College Attainment Network.

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Executive Director, Tarrant County To and Thru

TODD WILLIAMS

Chairman & CEO, The Commit Partnership

“Education is Freedom is on an exciting path, with new leadership, investors, and funders driving its mission. Dallas County is at a pivotal moment, with partners united to support students through post-secondary education and improve economic mobility for families. On behalf of the board, we are honored to work with Dr. Susanna Russell and the EIF team, grateful for their dedication, and eager to help achieve our shared vision for better educational and workforce outcomes across Dallas County.”

—ALEJANDRA BARBOSA

EIF Board Chair



Thank You

Education is Freedom could not transform lives through education without the help of its generous investors.

Your funds help underserved students access critical resources for continuing their education beyond high school, whether that is career training, college, or the military.

Provided through EIF's Higher Education Advisors, these resources allow students to earn a livable wage and enter into a sustaining career. Thank you for helping us create lasting impact!

THE ADDY FOUNDATION
ALL POINTS NORTH
FOUNDATION
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FOUNDATION
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KANSAS CITY
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