



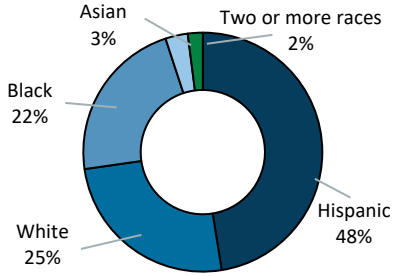
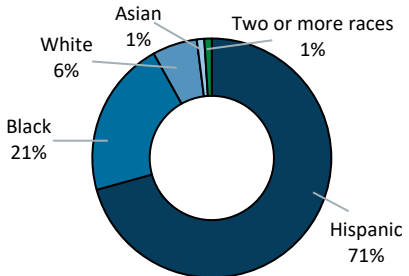
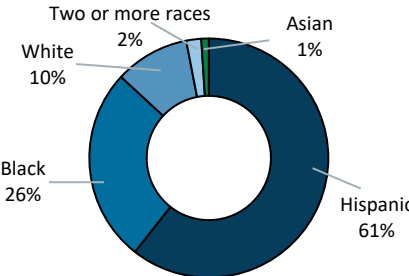
# BRIDGES COLLABORATIVE MEMBER PROFILE

## Dallas Independent School District



Organization type: Public School District

Location: Dallas, Texas	Size
	 <p>The Dallas Independent School District services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>141,804</b> students and</li> <li>• <b>23,271</b> staff members in</li> <li>• <b>141</b> elementary schools,</li> <li>• <b>36</b> middle schools,</li> <li>• <b>37</b> high schools, and</li> <li>• <b>26</b> multi-level schools.</li> </ul>

Population Served		
<p><b>Dallas ISD residents</b></p>  <p><b>16%</b> below the poverty line</p>	<p><b>Dallas ISD students</b></p>  <p><b>85%</b> eligible for FRPL<sup>1</sup></p>	<p><b>Transformation Schools</b></p>  <p><b>73%</b> eligible for FRPL</p>

Desegregation/Integration Focus	
 <p><b>Dallas ISD Transformation Schools</b> aim to foster integration in the district. In Transformation Schools, Dallas ISD implements a 50-50 socioeconomic diversity-by-design model. A lottery determines enrollment offers.</p>	 <p>The first Transformation School was opened in 2015. There are <b>19 Transformation Schools</b> in Dallas ISD, serving a total of <b>5,916 students</b>.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Free or reduced-price lunch.



## How do Transformation Schools ensure diverse and equitable schools?

Transformation Schools offer specialized academic programming (e.g., Montessori, STEAM, personalized learning, visual and performing arts, biomedical, and virtual) but do not have academic requirements or attendance boundaries. They promote integration via a 50-50 socioeconomic diversity-by-design model in which schools aim to have 50% of enrolled students come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and 50% from non-disadvantaged backgrounds (Century Foundation, 2016). Transformation Schools use a prioritized lottery system to achieve this 50-50 balance (Rix, 2022). The 50-50 socioeconomic diversity lottery categorizes students as economically disadvantaged or non-disadvantaged according to their free and reduced-price lunch (FRPL) status (Dallas ISD, 2022c). In addition, each campus has specific lottery priorities that increase or decrease the student's chance for an enrollment offer. Examples of priorities include sibling enrollment at the campus, radius or designated area created around the school site, and employer or employment geographic location. Any student who applies to a school but does not receive an enrollment offer is added to a waiting list.

After confirmed enrollment acceptances are received from families, Dallas ISD's Office of Transformation and Innovation conducts an equity audit to ensure that students from the lowest opportunity neighborhoods are represented school-wide in Transformation Schools (Koprowski, 2016).

Dallas ISD offers Transformation Schools what one district leader calls "*integration by choice*"—that is, 50-50 diversity-by-design schools are offered a choice among a wide array of school models that are attractive to families (Century Foundation, 2016). In response to interest from district families, Dallas ISD scaled Transformation Schools from one school to 19 schools in 4.5 years.

### USING EQUITY AUDITS AND CENSUS BLOCK DATA FOR ENROLLMENT AT TRANSFORMATION SCHOOLS

To balance student enrollment across socioeconomic status, Dallas ISD starts with the most recent census tract data from 827 census blocks. Then they categorize these data into five socioeconomic tiers based on median household income, parents' level of education, single parent status, and home ownership (Century Foundation, 2016). For each census block, these four factors are combined to create a composite score. Socioeconomic blocks range from 1 to 5, where 1 represents the most affluent areas in the district and 5 represents the least affluent areas.

Dallas ISD uses equity audits to ensure that there is a diverse student body in Transformation Schools. As part of the equity audit, district leaders determine whether at least 12% of the students in each Transformation School are from Socioeconomic Block 4 and 12% are from Socioeconomic Block 5. If either threshold is not met after confirmed acceptances are received from families, more offers are made to wait-listed students from the appropriate socioeconomic block to reach the minimum threshold of 12%.



## Spotlight on recruitment and sustainability

### Recruitment

Dallas ISD conducts a regional market analysis to identify students and families who are looking for an alternative to their current learning environment. For instance, Dallas ISD determines where there is opportunity (e.g., where parents are disproportionately enrolled in private or charter schools) and focuses its recruitment strategy in those areas. As part of their marketing strategy, Dallas ISD uses mailers, brochures, door hangers, recruitment fairs, billboards, and social media to share information about Transformation Schools.

To recruit students in a competitive landscape, Dallas ISD uses an application period for choice schools that is similar to that used by charter and private schools. Transformation Schools notify families within the same time frame as other schools in the region. To promote enrollment, Dallas ISD hosts an annual Discover Dallas ISD event that offers informative presentations on the various options within the district as well as supports families in completing applications for their desired schools.

Recruitment materials for the ISD's choice schools generally focus on finding the "best fit" school for every child. Diversity-by-design schools emphasize integration in their recruitment. When parents apply to have their children attend Transformation Schools, they know that they will be included in a lottery weighted by socioeconomic status. As a district leader stated, *"[W]e started the 50-50 diversity-by-design schools so that we could put new [school] models into [less affluent areas]. Then parents could choose to go into one of those schools, if they were interested. So, it's all diversity-by-design, but it's also by choice. Nothing's forced."*

### SPOTLIGHT TRANSFORMATION SCHOOL: EDUARDO MATA MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Eduardo Mata Montessori School was originally founded in 1997 and became a Transformation School in 2016 (Dallas ISD, n.d.-a). It is located in the northeast of Dallas and serves students in Grades PK–8. The school offers a Montessori model, including mixed-age grouping, student self-direction, and uninterrupted work periods (Dallas ISD, n.d.-b). To select new students, Eduardo Mata Montessori uses the 50-50 socioeconomic diversity lottery and the sibling preference lottery.

Since Eduardo Mata Montessori School's conversion into a Transformation School, its student body has grown and become more racially diverse. Enrollment increased from 374 students in 2015 to 697 students in 2022 (Gándara & Orfield, 2021; Dallas ISD, 2022b). The demographic composition of the student population also changed. In 2012, the student population was 92.4% Hispanic, 1.7% White, and 2.1% Black, with 0.6% of students identifying as another race. In 2022, the student population was 72.7% Hispanic, 17.4% White, and 5.2% Black, with 4.7% of students identifying as another race (Dallas ISD, 2022b).

## Sustainability

Dallas ISD's choice model is supported by the Office of Transformation and Innovation (OTI). The OTI helps develop coaching tools called "innovation continuums" to codify and support fidelity of the different instruction models in the district. OTI staff indicated that the office develops such tools as guiding principles and rubrics to codify and specify parameters as well as determines metrics and clarifies the goals for each school model. The continuums can support principals and principal evaluators when they assess the effectiveness and ensure fidelity of the school model. For example, the STEM/STEAM rubric includes standards on leadership, vision, culture, curriculum, and learning environment. These rubrics ensure the integrity of the models in case of school leadership changes.

According to OTI staff, the choice model is also supported by the district's *Board Policy*, which is a policy manual generated by the school board to help govern district operations. With regard to integration, the manual provides scaffolding and guidance on the auditing of the lottery, the notifying of the parents of the lottery's results, equity audits, and the waiting list protocol, among other issues.



## What factors support Dallas ISD's work integrating public schools?

### Offering a range of high-opportunity school choices

Dallas ISD's choice model focuses on keeping students who are already in the district and convincing parents who have children outside of the public school system to choose a school within the system. Therefore, the Dallas ISD model offers diversity-by-design schools to families as a choice, not as a requirement. Offering a range of school models is key to meeting the various needs of parents and fostering family buy-in. The district's public school choice model allows families to choose between Transformation, Innovation, Magnet, Early College, PTECH, Career Institutes, and traditional neighborhood schools. One district leader explained, *"Our success has really been in the fact that these are choices for families and [school selection] is based on the best fit between schools and your child's unique skillset. We literally give that to them as a choice. And they have been happy with that."* According to this district leader, offering diversity-by-design schools as a choice has been a successful approach with parents in the district, and there is growing demand for Transformation Schools.

### Removing attendance boundaries for diversity-by-design schools

Although traditional neighborhood schools and Innovation Schools in Dallas ISD are tied to school attendance boundaries, Dallas ISD opted to remove attendance boundaries from Transformation Schools to encourage a more diverse group of applicants (Century Foundation, 2016). A study from the Urban Institute (2021) found that school attendance boundaries reinforce segregation patterns dating back decades. Because Transformation Schools do not use attendance boundaries, economically disadvantaged students can attend a high-opportunity school they otherwise would not have had access to. Parents are notified in advance that the Transformation Schools do not have attendance boundaries so that they can make an informed decision that aligns with their family's needs. In Dallas ISD's public school choice model, parents have the option of enrolling their children in traditional neighborhood schools or Innovation Schools that adhere to attendance boundaries or sending their children to a Transformation School with open enrollment. Parents can apply to as many as five schools through Dallas ISD's online application process.

## Data analysis and visualization

Another important strategy practiced by Dallas ISD is to use data analysis and visualization for targeted recruitment and messaging about Transformation Schools. Relaying the success of Transformation Schools while citing data on enrollment and student outcomes drives interest in and demand for integrated schools. As a district leader stated, *“We’re always looking at [enrollment] data. And then, we’re also looking at student outcome data to ensure that the students in [Transformation Schools] for the most part are outperforming other students. And when that happens, that just drives success and interest, and it makes more families want to come to the schools.”*

## Institutional support and district capacity

Support from the superintendent and district leadership, together with the *Board Policy*, has helped Dallas ISD make integration a priority and foster buy-in from other stakeholders within schools and across the district. For instance, the commitment to equity “from the top” has enabled the OTI to provide transportation to students attending Transformation Schools.

Selecting staff with prior experience in school leadership roles to lead integration work has also been beneficial. In addition, many of the staff leading integration work in the district are former principals. According to district leadership, these staff used their professional knowledge to facilitate training, collaboration, and foster buy-in within the district, thereby improving the process of implementing integration.



## What challenges did Dallas ISD face when working to integrate public schools?

### Leadership alignment

Aligning the district and campus leaders around the integration work was an initial challenge for Dallas ISD. Obtaining internal buy-in and building coalitions within the district required a champion. As one district leader explained, *“When I came in, the issue was not necessarily convincing the public. It was internally aligning all of our leaders around the work. And so five years ago, I had to really be a connector and an influencer around the work.”* Now, the support from district and campus leadership is well established.

### Meeting the growing demand for Transformation Schools

One of the most challenging aspects of this work, according to district leadership, is managing the long waiting lists of parents interested in diversity-by-design schools. Dallas ISD is addressing this issue in two ways: by launching more choice schools and by offering neighborhood schools opportunities to reimagine themselves. Funding is provided to regular neighborhood schools so that they may redesign their campus based on innovative models, such as STEM or fine arts. Further, for families who are enrolling in Dallas ISD for the first time and are wait-listed for a choice school, Dallas ISD provides support to help them explore campuses with enrollment availability.



## Lessons learned

- Providing families with a choice to enroll in schools that appeal to a broad group of families can foster buy-in around integration.
- The combined approach of removing attendance boundaries for Transformation Schools and using a weighted lottery to achieve balance across socioeconomic tiers promoted integration by moving students beyond segregated neighborhoods and into more diverse schools.
- Aligning the timing of the Dallas ISD enrollment period with that of private and charter schools has been crucial in attracting students to Transformation Schools in a competitive landscape.
- Within the context of a choice model, using student data to inform and target recruitment materials can be an effective way of driving interest in integrated schools.
- Building coalitions within the district is essential. Having a champion who can align district leaders can help the district prioritize integration, obtain buy-in from stakeholders, and ensure that integration is sustainable.
- Hiring staff with previous school leadership experience to lead integration efforts is highly beneficial, as this approach facilitates collaboration with schools, communities, and district stakeholders.
- Scaling the 50-50 diversity-by-design model requires leadership alignment, codified systems, and assessment practices to ensure fidelity to the model.



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