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***Citizens for Educational Excellence (CEE) serves as a catalyst to bring people, information, and resources together to promote outstanding education in Corpus Christi***

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## WHO IS CEE?

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Citizens for Educational Excellence (CEE) is an independent, community-based organization that partners with the six public school districts in the Corpus Christi area:

- Calallen
- Corpus Christi
- Flour Bluff
- London
- Tulo-so-Midway
- West Oso

CEE’s vision is for our diverse community to have great confidence in the public education system in Corpus Christi—a system where all children achieve high academic standards and are prepared to successfully enter the world of work and continue their education.

CEE was established in 2003 by the Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce Foundation as a non-profit 501(c)(3) Local Education Fund. The initial establishment of CEE as a Local Education Fund was supported by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, the Scripps Howard Foundation and the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, the Moorhouse Charitable Foundation, and Public Education Network (PEN).

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## ONGOING PROJECTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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### ***Spring 2008***

#### ***“Closing the Achievement Gap” Public Engagement***

CEE was one of six members of the Public Education Network to be invited by the Kettering Foundation to attend a September 2007 workshop to study public engagement specifically related to “Closing the Achievement Gap” in public education. Communities joining Corpus Christi at the table were San Francisco, CA; Bridgeport, CN; Washington, DC; New Orleans, LA; and Minneapolis, MN.

As part of its commitment, CEE will be responsible for planning and coordinating at least one public engagement venue in Spring 2008 involving the six Corpus Christi school districts and their stakeholders to address issues identified in closing the achievement gap.

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## ***Through 2008***

### ***Full-Service Community School Pilot Program***

CEE received two consecutive-year grants through the CHRISTUS Fund to plan and implement a pilot program establishing a full-service community school at Roy Miller High School, one of the five high schools in Corpus Christi Independent School District.

Since the 2005-2006 school year, CEE has worked closely with CCISD and Miller administrators. A full-time staff member, salaried by CCISD, has been hired whose job duties reflect the goals and expectations of the program. The CHRISTUS Fund grant monies will be used for programs, supplies, and support of the community-based advisory committee. Full implementation is anticipated by 2008.

A Full-Service Community School provides coordinated, comprehensive services to students and their families in school buildings during non-instructional (late afternoon and evening) hours to address two primary objectives:

- Decrease the likelihood of students dropping out due to "life issues," such as illiteracy, poverty, inadequate health care, and drug and alcohol use, by co-locating preventive and intervention services for students and families.
- Increase the likelihood that students and their families will make healthy choices that lead to improved quality of life.

### **Results:**

- CEE convened a 20-member committee of Collaborating Partners, including CHRISTUS Spohn Health System, City Parks and Recreation Department, Del Mar College, and other community agencies and organizations to identify community programs that would attract students and parents.
- Surveys of both students and families were conducted, and staff brainstormed with community leaders on goals and expectations.
- A 6-week intramural volleyball program was conducted during Fall 2006 with assistance from the Del Mar College Kinesiology Department.

## ***August 8-9, 2007***

### ***Professional Learning Communities Training***

A two-day "Professional Learning Communities" training enabled teachers and administrators from the city's six public school districts to investigate proven strategies of North America's most successful schools and discover how to align school practices to promote higher levels of learning. School principals and superintendents requested this two-day training for their staff members. Keynote presenter was Charlie Coleman of Solution Tree, and luncheon speaker was Al Silva, chief operating officer for Labatt Food Service headquartered in San Antonio, TX.

### **Results:**

Campus leaders discovered creative ways to develop timely, directive, and systematic interventions that give *all* students time and support needed to be successful. Anticipated outcomes include:

- Develop a coordinated plan which creates a collaborative culture within the school and district, and
- Improve academic achievement in line with federal mandates: *No Child Left Behind.*

## **September 13, 2006**

### **High School Transformation Forum**

Transforming high schools to increase relevancy and rigor has been a priority throughout the United States. CEE organized a full-day forum with nationally known speaker Dr. Willard Daggett and invited teams of administrators, teachers, students and parents from 11 high school campuses to participate. Financial and/or in-kind assistance came from the National League of Cities, City of Corpus Christi, Prichard Family Foundation, United Ways of Texas, and other local companies.

#### **Results:**

- Continued dialogue with superintendents and high school principals through frequent breakfast meetings.
- Calallen High School received a grant for high school reform and added new curriculum, including Process Technology and Building Trades, to prepare students to enter the local workforce.

## **January 28, 2005**

### **“High Schools That Work: Small Learning Communities” Leadership Luncheon**

CEE convened a luncheon program with keynote speakers representing the National League of Cities, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Texas High School Project, and Moody High School’s academy program. This meeting addressed one of the 15 recommendations reflected in the “One Drop Out Is Too Many” report.

#### **Results:**

- Through dialogue between CEE, CCISD, and Del Mar College, a \$400,000 grant was received from the Gates Foundation, through the Texas High School Project, to initiate planning and implementation of a high school program for at-risk students that would be housed on the Del Mar College campus.
- To enroll, students must display a motivation for learning with the potential for college-level work while in high school and demonstrate the personal characteristics to function in a demanding nontraditional school environment.
- Collegiate High School opened in August 2006 and completed a successful first year with approximately 100 ninth-graders. The 2007-08 school year added an incoming freshman class of 100. Each following year, the program will add a new class of 100 ninth graders to create a campus serving Grades 9-12 by Fall 2009.

## **January 13, 2005**

### **“Recruitment, Retention and Development of Quality Teachers” Community Forum**

CEE convened community members and educators to discuss how to recruit and retain quality teachers, one of the 15 recommendations reflected in the “One Dropout Is Too Many” report.

#### **Results:**

- Follow-up dialogue was held in Spring 2005 about recruiting and retaining teachers.
- CEE executive director serves on Del Mar College’s Alternative Certification for Teachers (ACT) advisory board along with personnel directors from school districts.

### **CEE Goals**

1. Be recognized as the information source for public school issues in the community.
2. Convene key stakeholders for the purpose of improving local public education.
3. Coordinate and support initiatives and professional development that promote school improvement and student success.



## ***Fall 2004-Spring 2005***

### ***Convening Community Groups and Volunteers***

CEE established the Leadership in Education and Area Development (LEAD) Council to bring together school superintendents and leaders in business, higher education, workforce and economic development, and chambers of commerce to strengthen the linkages between schools, the workforce, and economic vitality. CEE partnered with Corpus Christi Independent School District to implement "Breaking the Code," a structured, intensive phonics-based program for individuals struggling with reading and writing. CEE organized volunteers to receive student writing and to respond by writing encouraging notes to students.

## ***October 2004***

### ***"40 Developmental Assets for Children and Youth"***

#### ***Leadership Luncheon***

Introduction of the Search Institute's "40 Developmental Assets for Children and Youth" identifying 40 positive experiences and qualities that people have the power to bring into the lives of children and youth. Eight asset categories focus on external structures, relationships, activities, internal values, skills, and beliefs that create a positive environment that young people need to fully engage with and function in the world around them.

#### **Results:**

- Held training sessions on the 40 Developmental Assets to provide educators with heightened awareness of importance of positive experiences and activities that benefit students.
- The City of Corpus Christi Parks and Recreation Department incorporated the 40 Developmental Assets into the mission and operational objectives of its Juvenile Assessment Center.
- In September 2006, CEE partnered with the City of Corpus Christi to mail 90,000 flyers to households about the Juvenile Assessment Center and information about the 40 Developmental Assets.

## ***November 17, 2003—February 18, 2004:***

### ***"Even One Dropout Is Too Many" Community Forums***

Three community forums brought together more than 250 business and community leaders, teachers, students, and parents to discuss three questions:

1. Why do students drop out of school?
2. What are some "best practices" to pursue to address the causes of why students drop out?
3. What do we as a community need to do to implement the best practices we have identified?

#### **Results:**

- Heightened awareness of issues related to school dropouts and established CEE as an organization committed to educational issues impacting the Corpus Christi community.
- Published a comprehensive document in September 2004 entitled "Community Strategies To Help More Students Graduate from High School Ready To Continue Their Education and Enter the World of Work" that detailed 15 high-leverage community wide strategies to begin solving Corpus Christi's student dropout problem.

This report captures highlights and accomplishments of Citizens for Educational Excellence from the organization's inception in August 2003 through Spring 2008.

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