

Homegrown superintendent fosters strong partnerships with all stakeholders

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Since East Central Independent School District was established in 1949, the San Antonio Spurs have become a multi-national championship winning NBA team, and perhaps more impactful, the population ballooned from just over 450,000 to more than 2.3 million.

Superintendent Roland Toscano, a graduate of East Central ISD schools and University of Texas at San Antonio, has been there for more of that change than most district administrators. He has worked in the district in nearly every capacity since 1997: bus driver, coach, teacher, principal and, as of 2014, superintendent.

It is no doubt this long history has allowed Toscano to cultivate strong academic and social programs that continue to benefit the families, students and local business leaders in his district.

"I have a pretty clear understanding of the values and the interests this community has, as well as historical context of what's been tried in the district and why, so that perspective has been useful in terms of making sure our decisions are aligned with those values and interests," Toscano explains. "But I try to lead in a way that enables the development of other leaders, not just the creation of followers. You've got to get creative about the problems you're trying to solve, and you don't do that alone."

In recent years, the district completely overhauled its school system structure and boundaries so that children didn't have to transition to so many different schools in their K-12 career. And, through being notably good stewards of public funds, East Central ISD has developed a community performing arts center, added early childhood education centers at every elementary school campus, and repurposed numerous district buildings to improve the delivery of instruction for students and professional development for staff and faculty.

Perhaps the greatest show of Toscano's ability to creatively



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bring community interests together, however, is the coming Center for Applied Science and Technology school. East Central ISD high school students who enroll at the new school this fall will participate in workforce training relevant to local in-demand leadership roles in retail, hospitality and tourism, and e-commerce—three sectors that make up \$14.9 billion of the San Antonio economy—and leave with a guaranteed path to a career.

"There is significant opportunity for these kids once they have the right training, skills and credentials," Toscano said.

"Establishing mutually beneficial partnerships is critically important—whether that's with higher education, local industries, non-profits, or other public and

private partners—anything we can do to benefit our partners while at the same time advancing opportunities for our students in this community is something we're committed to."

Susan Cook, COO and Leadership Coach at School Innovations & Achievement—a longtime partner in East Central ISD's efforts to improve student attendance—said it is clear how the bold changes made under Toscano's charge have benefited students.

"He is much too modest to admit it, but Superintendent Toscano has been more than instrumental in the continuous improvement of the programs serving the students at East Central ISD," Cook said. "Under his leadership, children are set up for success both in the classroom and upon graduation. They leave East Central ISD ready to enter the workforce or enroll in college or university."

Toscano says he's just "thankful that the opportunities for continuous growth and contribution have seemed to always present themselves at the right time" throughout his career, and that he has always wanted "to stay right here, right in my community."