



# Education INSIGHTS

## Ensuring that tomorrow's leaders are land stewards

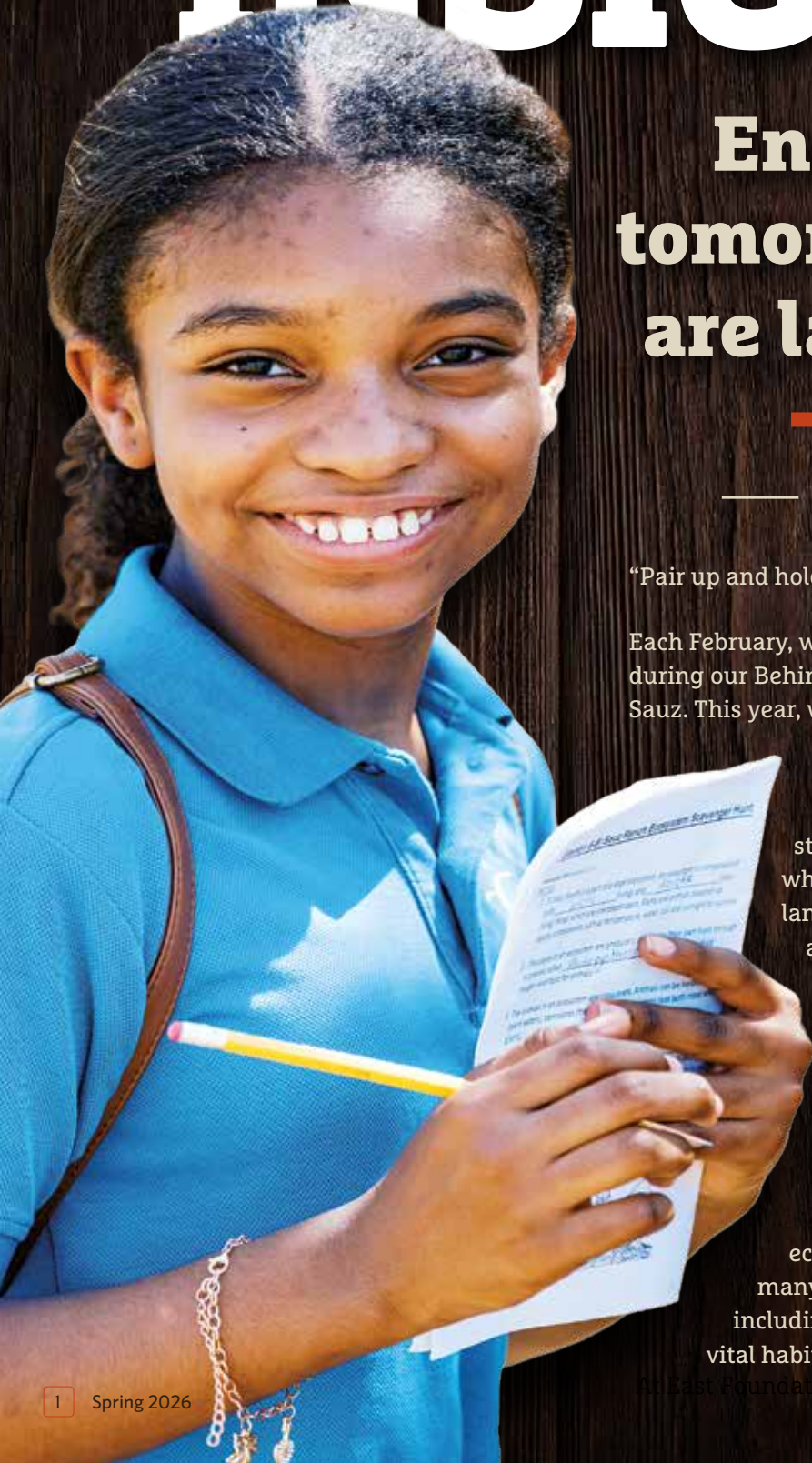
— Masi Mejia —

“Pair up and hold hands – you are now a cow-calf pair!”

Each February, we host students from regional schools during our Behind the Gates Field Days event on El Sauz. This year, we hosted our largest group of students

on El Sauz ever – more than 1,900 fifth graders! During the event, East Foundation staff and partners help students connect with the natural world while learning about ranching, wildlife, and land stewardship. We would not be able to accomplish this feat without our many valued partners who are aligned with our mission.

One of our signature topics is our Cattle Ranching Station. At this station, we emphasize how our rangelands are more than just places where cattle graze; they are living ecosystems. These landscapes provide many benefits to people and wildlife alike, including beef, clean water, fresh air, and vital habitat for many native Texas species.





At East Foundation, ranch managers and scientists work side-by-side to care for the land. Researchers study rangeland conditions, vegetation growth, soil health, rainfall patterns, and wildlife populations. This information helps ranch managers decide how many cattle the land can sustainably support. Our cattle team then highlights a calendar year's cattle production on the ranch, along with the many tools our cowboys use.

Students can see this process in a simple activity called the Cattle Grazing Game, an interactive simulation model that shows how ranch managers protect resources as stewards. Working in cow-calf pairs, students “graze” by collecting resources that represent food and water on the ranch. As the game progresses, students observe how resources change and discuss how land management can keep ecosystems balanced. Some of our favorite scenarios to include in this game are drought, disease, and predators. Have you ever listened to forty-five fifth graders getting upset because they didn't have enough water to survive? This simulation helps students understand the many scenarios that land managers and stewards must consider.

Active participation in our programming ensures that students walk away with a better understanding of land stewardship. For example, when asked a series of questions before and after participating in our BTG program, nearly 60% of students had

a better understanding of what goes on Behind the Gates of a working ranch.

Experiences like these reflect the heart of East Foundation's mission – to promote the advancement of land stewardship through ranching, science, and education. By opening our gates to students, we are helping the next generation understand where their food comes from, how healthy rangelands support both wildlife and agriculture, and why responsible land management matters. Inspiring young minds today helps ensure that tomorrow's leaders are land stewards who will continue caring for Texas rangelands for generations to come. 