



SYSTEMS RESEARCH FOR BETTER HEALTH

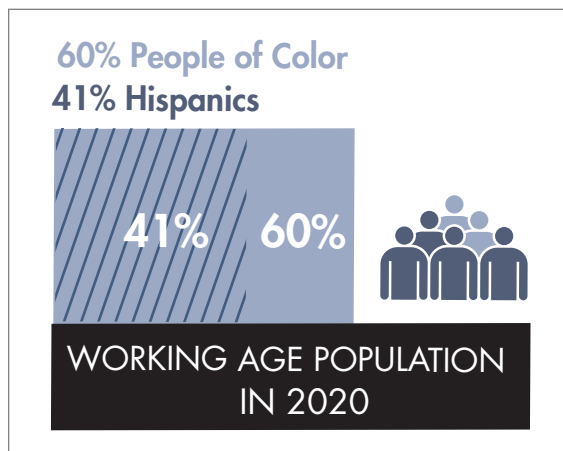
Programs for Expanding Opportunity and Equity in Texas

Prepared by Altarum Institute and funded by Greater Texas Foundation
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OVERVIEW

Texas has been one of the fastest growing states in the nation for much of the past decade.¹ Population growth in Texas is expected to continue, from 27 million people today to more than 40 million by 2050.² Economic growth will be strongly influenced by the achievement and life outcomes of the Hispanic, Black, and Asian populations who together represent the majority of the Texas population today and the source of future population growth.

Virtually all of the state’s population growth in the coming decades will come from people of color, mostly people of Hispanic origins.³ By 2020, people of color will represent 60 percent of the working age population, with Hispanics representing the largest share at 41 percent.⁴



People of color in Texas, on average, are currently behind their White counterparts in educational attainment, earnings, homeownership, health status, family wealth, and other life outcomes.⁵ For example, the average Hispanic person in Texas currently earns half what his or her White age/sex counterpart earns, while Blacks on average earn about 40 percent less.⁶ Post-secondary completion rates are 46 percent for Whites, 30 percent for Blacks, and 18 percent for Hispanics,⁷ achievement gaps that are of particular concern given that 62 percent of jobs in Texas are expected to require some post-secondary training by 2020.⁸

As we show in our companion brief, *The Business Case for Expanding Opportunity and Equity in Texas*, closing these gaps in outcomes even modestly means a workforce that is better aligned with employers’ needs, and the potential for billions of dollars in additional earnings, tax revenues, purchasing power, and economic output for the state.⁹ We estimate that by 2050, closing the earnings gap alone could represent \$335 billion more in earnings, \$2 trillion more in state economic output, and \$25 billion more in state and local tax revenues.¹⁰

Life outcomes are shaped by forces that start at birth and are interconnected and reinforcing, including the safety and quality of one’s physical environment, the financial security of one’s family, the educational resources available, and the opportunities for jobs and social connections in one’s community.

As complex and stubborn as these factors of circumstance can be, there is ample evidence that smart policies and programs can make a real difference.

This brief highlights examples of initiatives already underway to improve equity and opportunity in Texas. While not necessarily endorsed by Greater Texas Foundation, these and similar programs are great examples of the hard work of groups and communities throughout the state that are already having a positive impact.

INITIATIVES

The **TEXAS HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD** sets and tracks state-wide goals for closing educational gaps through strategic plans that cover 15-year periods. The plan for 2000 through 2015, called *Closing the Gaps*, did not meet all goals but tracked notable progress in enrollment and completion of postsecondary education.¹¹ Between 2000 and 2015, enrollment in higher education in Texas increased from about one million students to more than 1.6 million. Enrollment nearly doubled for Blacks (113,000 to 223,000), far exceeding the goal, and more than doubled for Hispanics (241,000 to 571,000), while White enrollment also grew from 579,000 to 611,000. Bachelor’s, associate degrees, and certificates awarded increased from 116,000 to 259,000, with Black awards tripling from 11,000 to 33,000 and Hispanic awards nearly quadrupling, from 23,000 to 88,000.



The Board’s new strategic plan, *60x30TX*, sets an ambitious target of 60 percent of all young adults in Texas holding a postsecondary degree or certificate by 2030. Additional goals include that 550,000 students will graduate with a certificate, associate, bachelor’s or master’s degree from a Texas institution; all graduates will have marketable skills; and students of Texas public universities will not graduate with debt higher than 60 percent of average first-year wages.¹²

High quality **early childhood education** has been shown to narrow the achievement gap in education, lifetime earnings, and life outcomes.¹³ Early childhood is a period of rapid cognitive, emotional, and social development that lays the groundwork for later achievement. A large body of research suggests societal gains from investments in early childhood programs of more than \$8 for every \$1 spent, through increasing educational achievement, reducing the need for remedial education, reducing rates of teen pregnancies and involvement with crime, and increasing lifetime earnings of students and of their parents.¹⁴ The City of San Antonio convened a task force of business leaders and educators to respond to concerns about the size and education level of the city’s workforce.¹⁵ The task force studied area graduation rates and the evidence on interventions and determined that investing early would have the most impact. The city voted in 2012 to implement a one-eighth cent sales tax to fund full-day pre-kindergarten program for all four-year-olds.¹⁶ An independent evaluation of the Pre-K for San Antonio (Pre-K 4 SA) program after the third year (2015–16) found positive results in enrollment and outcomes. The program served more than 1,700 children, 75 percent of whom were considered economically disadvantaged. The majority of Pre-K 4 SA children were Hispanic (76 percent), 10 percent were Black, 8 percent White, and 5 percent other ethnicities. Pre-K 4 SA children started the school year well below the norm in six kindergarten readiness outcome measures, but by the end of the year, they surpassed the norm in three outcomes (cognitive, literacy, and mathematics) and closed the gap by 74 percent on the physical outcome.¹⁷

The **TEXAS PATHWAYS MODEL** is a long-term strategy for developing and implementing the American Association of Community College Pathways Model.¹⁸ This model supports guiding each student on a path from high school degree program to postsecondary enrollment to the completion of credentials that are valued in the labor market. The Texas Pathways Model builds upon the national Pathways Project, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and includes intensive work with four Texas colleges: Alamo College, El Paso Community College, Paris Junior College, and San Jacinto College.¹⁹ A similar program is being implemented in the Houston Guided Pathways to Success (GPS) Program, an initiative of the University of Houston system and four area community colleges.²⁰

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EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS (ECHS) are innovative Texas high schools that allow students from populations least likely to attend college an opportunity to earn a high school diploma and 60 college credit hours. Early College High Schools provide dual credit at no cost to students, offer rigorous instruction and accelerated courses, and provide academic and social support services to help students succeed, increase college readiness, and reduce barriers to college access.²¹ Building upon the ECHS program, **Jobs for the Future** wrote a report featuring partnerships in the El Paso region to help ECHS students, who have not yet graduated from high school but already earned an associate degree, to transition to the regional four-year institution for their 61st college credit. This helps minimize credit loss that can be associated with transfer between institutions.

The **TEXAS EDUCATION CONSORTIUM FOR MALE STUDENTS OF COLOR** is a statewide collaboration focused on improving Hispanic and African American male student success across the state.²² The Consortium seeks to both coordinate existing programs that focus on the education of underrepresented male students and to stimulate new male-focused initiatives within Texas school districts and post-secondary educational institutions. The Consortium is headquartered at the University of Texas at Austin and includes community colleges, four-year universities, and school districts. Early objectives include expanding membership, conducting annual meetings, promoting mentorship and other “incubator” programs at participating schools, and disseminating best practices for supporting and increasing the educational success of boys and young men of color in Texas.



While some variety of quantitative skills are important in most careers, the standard algebra-based mathematics courses may not represent the skills that are used or needed for students’ intended fields of study and careers. In the **NEW MATHWAYS PROJECT**, the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin, in partnership with the Texas Association of Community Colleges, developed three mathematics pathways designed to better align with students’ educational and professional goals.²³ The pathways are *Statistical Reasoning*, for students in social sciences careers; *Quantitative Reasoning*, for students in humanities or general liberal arts fields; and *Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics*, for students pursuing careers that require strong algebraic skills such as engineering. Targeting coursework to more closely match career paths both improves the chances of student success and better aligns studies with real job requirements. Early data suggest that participation in the program may help students achieve developmental and college-level math milestones needed to complete post-secondary education.²⁴



EDUCATION = ECONOMICS

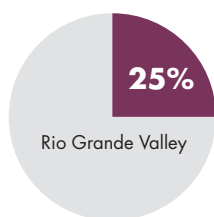
The **E3 ALLIANCE – EDUCATION EQUALS ECONOMICS** – is a data-driven organization that focuses on cradle to career initiatives in central Texas.²⁵ The E3 Alliance “Blueprint for Educational Change” is designed to be a research and data-based model that can be replicated across Texas and the rest of the country. The goal is to prepare students, educate families, and develop a stronger, more qualified workforce, while saving taxpayer money. Specific initiatives include the following:

- **Pathways of Promise (PoP)** is “a research and implementation initiative in Central Texas designed to identify and scale strong college and career pathways for high school students that lead to successful transitions to and completion of a post-secondary credential.”²⁶ To develop the optimal career pathways calibrated to state and regional economies, as required by law, E3 conducted a statewide research study analyzing the relationship between the highest level of mathematics mastered by high school students and subsequent education outcomes.
- The **E3 English Language Learner (ELL) Collaborative** brings together 12 school districts, 3 universities, and community partners to research and identify practices to improve ELL education. The initiative produced a research-based rubric to understand what practices lead to higher-performing campuses for ELLs, as well as studies to identify and replicate best practices in schools to promote the highest academic growth for ELL students.
- The **Ready, Set, K! Program** provides enhanced coaching and online tools to support pre-K teachers to improve kindergarten readiness.
- The **STEM Pipeline Collaborative** brings together 11 school districts, 4 institutions of higher education and 8 area STEM companies to engage middle schoolers through robotics competitions, expanded secondary STEM course offerings, improvements in STEM professional development opportunities for teachers, and provides articulation agreements between high school engineering courses and college credit. The result was to triple the number of students participating in secondary education courses.

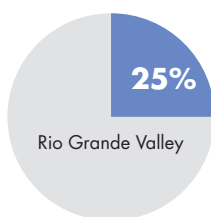
THE PLAN

**BUILD THE STRONGEST
EDUCATIONAL PIPELINE
IN THE COUNTRY**

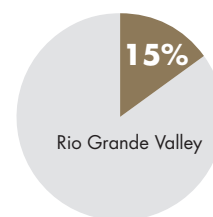
The Rio Grande Valley’s **RGV FOCUS** began in 2012 in an effort to transform college readiness, access, and success across four counties in Texas.²⁷ Currently, one-quarter of adults in this region have not graduated high school, another quarter have only a high school education, and only 15 percent have a postsecondary degree. The collaborative includes educators, nonprofits, community groups, funders, and business and civic leaders. For students who want to go to college but are not yet college-ready in one or more core academic areas, RGV FOCUS has developed college preparatory courses in English and Math designed with input from both local school districts and local institutions of higher learning. RGV FOCUS also provides toolkits of information to help counselors guide students through the college application and financial aid processes.



Adults with no high school education



Adults with high school education



Adults with postsecondary degree

DALLAS: COMMIT! OUR KIDS OUR TOMORROW brings together regional institutions to help provide opportunity for educational attainment to the students in Dallas.²⁸ The program leverages data, community expertise, and collaboration to measure, identify effective practices, and align and disseminate what works. The initiative tracks a number of indicators ranging from kindergarten readiness to high school graduation and postsecondary completion rates. The 2015 scorecard shows success in increasing kindergarten readiness, 4th grade math, 8th grade science, Algebra I, and high school graduation measures. Additionally, the program is able to identify high performing schools and to publish their “stories of impact” to help spread best practices.



Programs for Expanding Opportunity and Equity in Texas

The **PHARR-SAN JUAN-ALAMO (PSJA) INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT** is reducing high school dropouts and increasing college enrollment by graduating all students “College Ready, College Connected, and College Complete.”²⁹ With a dropout rate double the state average in 2007, PSJA committed to the goal of preparing all students to graduate ready for and connected to college. Of the 32,000 students served by the district, 99 percent are Hispanic, 89 percent are eligible for free or reduced lunch, and 41 percent are English language learners.³⁰ Most would be the first generation in their family to enter college. The district created and implemented a variety of school designs and options, including the Dual Language Program, Early College Initiative, and Dropout Recovery Program. More than 1,000 former dropouts have graduated. The district has a high school completion rate of almost 97 percent, and 3,000 high school students are currently enrolled in college courses through dual and concurrent enrollment programs.³¹

The **GULF COAST PASS PROGRAM (HOUSTON A+ CHALLENGE)** focuses on the number of students who attain post-high school degrees in the Houston area.³² It is a collaboration between Houston A+ Challenge, the University of Texas at Austin, the Institute for Evidence Based Change, and the Houston Endowment. They offer Houston area teachers and school leaders professional learning opportunities that strengthen instruction, school culture, family engagement and technology integration. These include workshops, monthly working groups and on-site coaching for teachers. The program has served over 13,000 teachers and school leaders and has partnered with more than 180 public schools in the Houston area.



The **FRAZIER REVITALIZATION** effort in South Dallas is an example of a multi-sector group working to address multiple dimensions of need in one of the poorest neighborhoods in the city.³³ The innovative effort is a partnership between residents, churches, schools, social service organizations, and others working together on solutions in housing, education, health, jobs and public safety. Early successes include:

- The development of Hatcher Station Village as a hub for economic development, including the conversion of a former motel and nightclub into the new \$20 million Parkland Health Clinic serving Frazier and surrounding neighborhoods;
- A partnership with The University of North Texas at Dallas, Legal Aid of Northwest Texas and the Dallas County Public Defender’s Office, to bring legal expertise and services to help reduce economic barriers created by a past criminal record; and
- The FRI After-School Program Initiative to develop and implement elementary and middle school after school programs to increase academic, social, and emotional skills, starting with FRI-sponsored scouting programs in several locations.

The **TEXAS PRISON ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM (PEP)** was initiated in 2004, and with more than 1300+ graduates, has shown success by many measures:³⁴

- 100 percent of PEP graduates were employed within 90 days of release from prison, with an average of only 20 days from prison to paycheck;
- PEP graduates had higher starting wages at \$11.50 an hour (60 percent above minimum wage);
- Nearly 100 percent of PEP graduates were still employed 12 months after release;
- More than 200 businesses have been launched by PEP graduates, including six that generate over \$1 million in gross annual revenue; and
- PEP graduates have a less than 7 percent three-year recidivism rate, compared to 50 percent nationally.

CONCLUSION

As highlighted here, regions, communities, and organizations around the state are already taking action, and improvements have already been made in raising levels of achievement and reducing gaps in outcomes. Advocates for these and similar policies increasingly include business leaders who recognize that supporting efforts to increase achievement for those who are furthest behind is not only the right thing to do, it can lead to greater prosperity for all Texans.

NOTES

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- ² Texas Demographic Center, Texas Population Projections Program, 2014 Population Projections by Age, Sex, and Race/Ethnicity, 2010-2050, middle series (assumes in-state migration continues at half the pace of 2000 to 2010 migration). Downloaded from <http://osd.texas.gov/Data/TPEPP/Projections/> on March 11, 2016.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ By 2020, the Texas Demographic Center projects that the population age 18 to 64 will be 40 percent White, 12 percent Black, 41 percent Hispanic, and 7 percent Asian or other.
- ⁵ Murdock, Steve H. and Michael E. Cline, Mary Zey, P. Wilner Jeanty, Deborah Perez, *Changing Texas: Implications of Addressing or Ignoring the Texas Challenge*, Texas A&M University Press, 2014, especially Chapter 9: Conclusions and Implications and Chapter 7: Health, Human, and Correctional Services.
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- ⁷ Hunt, Woody L, Chairman, Higher Education Strategic Planning Committee, "The Future of Higher Education in Texas" presentation slide 18. Cites 2011-2013 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey data.
- ⁸ Carnevale, Anthony P., Nicole Smith, and Jeff Strohl, "Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements through 2020, State Report," Georgetown University Public Policy Institute, Center on Education and the Workforce, June 2013.
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- ¹⁷ Edvance Research, Pre-K 4 SA Year Three Evaluation Report, August 30, 2016, [http://www.sanantonio.gov/Portals/0/Files/PreK4SA/Pre-K%204%20SA_Year percent203%20Evaluation%20Report.pdf](http://www.sanantonio.gov/Portals/0/Files/PreK4SA/Pre-K%204%20SA_Year%20percent203%20Evaluation%20Report.pdf)
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- ¹⁹ American Association of Community Colleges, The Pathways Project, <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Resources/aaccprograms/pathways/Pages/default.aspx>. Accessed September 9, 2016.
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- ²² <http://diversity.utexas.edu/projectmales/texas-education-consortium-for-male-students-of-color/>
- ²³ <http://www.utdanacenter.org/higher-education/new-mathways-project/>. Accessed September 28, 2016.
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