

Tracking Eighth-Graders' Postsecondary Outcomes in Harris County

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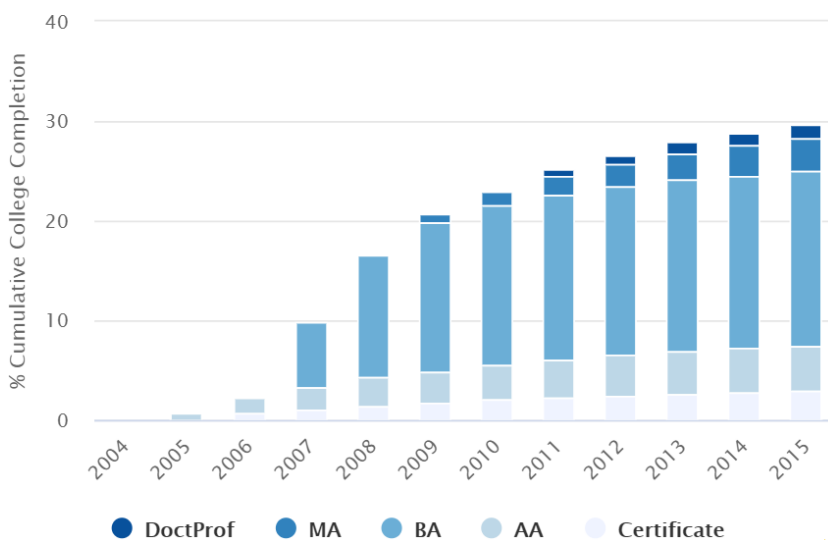
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This study tracked college and workforce outcomes for students who began 8th grade in fall 1998 and attended a Texas public school. Students were tracked for 17 years, through summer 2015, when they were approximately 30 years old. Of the 38,322 eighth-grade students in Harris County, 30 percent finished a postsecondary certificate or degree. Female, white, Asian, and non-economically disadvantaged students were more likely to earn a postsecondary credential than male, black, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students.

The results are available on an interactive website: <https://www.datahouston.org/story/8thgrade.html>

Key Findings

Figure 1: Cumulative College Completion



Source: Interactive website (see link above).

- The fall after high school (fall 2003), 38% of students were enrolled in college, 38% were working, and 24% were neither in college nor working.

- Among individuals neither in college nor working, one-quarter was unemployed and over half was not in the labor force, which might include stay-at-home parents or people working in the underground economy.

- One-in-five students earned a postsecondary certificate or degree within 6 years of high school (by the end of summer 2009). However, upon extending the window to 12 years of high school (by end of summer 2015), the postsecondary completion rate increased to 30%.
- There was significant variation in the rates of college enrollment and completion by gender, race and ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Female, white, Asian, and non-economically disadvantaged students had higher rates of enrollment and completion than male, black, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students

Recommendations

Intervene with a focus on equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was significant variation in educational outcomes by gender, race and ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. • In addressing college and career readiness, policymakers and practitioners should identify strategies that can serve <i>all</i> students, including targeted programming and differentiated instruction, with a focus on equity.
Districts are unique, but can learn from each other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was significant variation in educational outcomes among the 20 school districts in Harris County. • While districts differ in the students served and strategies used, they may be able to identify forums during which they can share what has worked to improve college and career readiness.
Identify why some students are neither in college nor working after high school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection efforts like additional linked data, survey data, and interview data may help policymakers and practitioners learn more about and support this population.
College completion statistics should consider non-traditional students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistics are often calculated with traditional students in mind—students who enter college right after high school, attend full-time, and complete without stopping out or dropping out. • Many students may have responsibilities outside school disrupting their education. Others may pursue an education after working, completing military service, or serving a prison sentence. • There are many paths to and through college. These different paths may explain the increase in college completion when the window extended from 6 to 12 years of high school.
Repeat the analyses in the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The statistics may look different for more recent cohorts. • The state and school districts have increased their focus on college enrollment and completion. For instance, the Houston Independent School District has implemented innovative college counseling programs like EMERGE and College Success Advisors. • Because of these efforts, educational opportunities for younger students may be more promising.
Support efforts to link data across multiple agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Texas Education Agency, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the Texas Workforce Commission should be commended for collaborating to link data in order to study pathways into college and the workforce. • However, current data collection practices do not capture other post-high school activities, such as enlisting in the military or being imprisoned. • Linking data to additional agencies (e.g., military, criminal justice, health) can improve student tracking over time and space.



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