



Are Harris County Students Prepared for Success After High School?

TWO MEASURES OF COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS
TELL VERY DIFFERENT STORIES

SUMMARY

- In a statewide poll of Texas parents, 65% are worried about whether their student is prepared for life after high school. This is especially true for the parents of Spanish-speaking students (86%), Latino students (74%), and students from low-income backgrounds (70%).¹
- While 72% of Harris County students in the high school class of 2019 met the state's accountability standards for college and career readiness, just 31% earned an industry-based certificate, an associate degree, or enrolled in college.
- College, Career and Military Readiness (CCMR) bonus funding can pay for investments to ensure more students are prepared for success after high school.
- By investing in proven strategies to improve students' college and career readiness, districts in Harris County could earn nearly \$175 million in additional state funding. There are key steps district leaders can take to improve postsecondary readiness, such as setting districtwide goals and including metrics in staff evaluations.

The phrase "College and Career Readiness" can mean different things to different people. This brief explains two different definitions used in Texas and the resulting outcomes for Harris County students so that policymakers and advocates can better assess and improve students' readiness to succeed after high school.



The Education Trust

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MEASURING COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS MATTERS

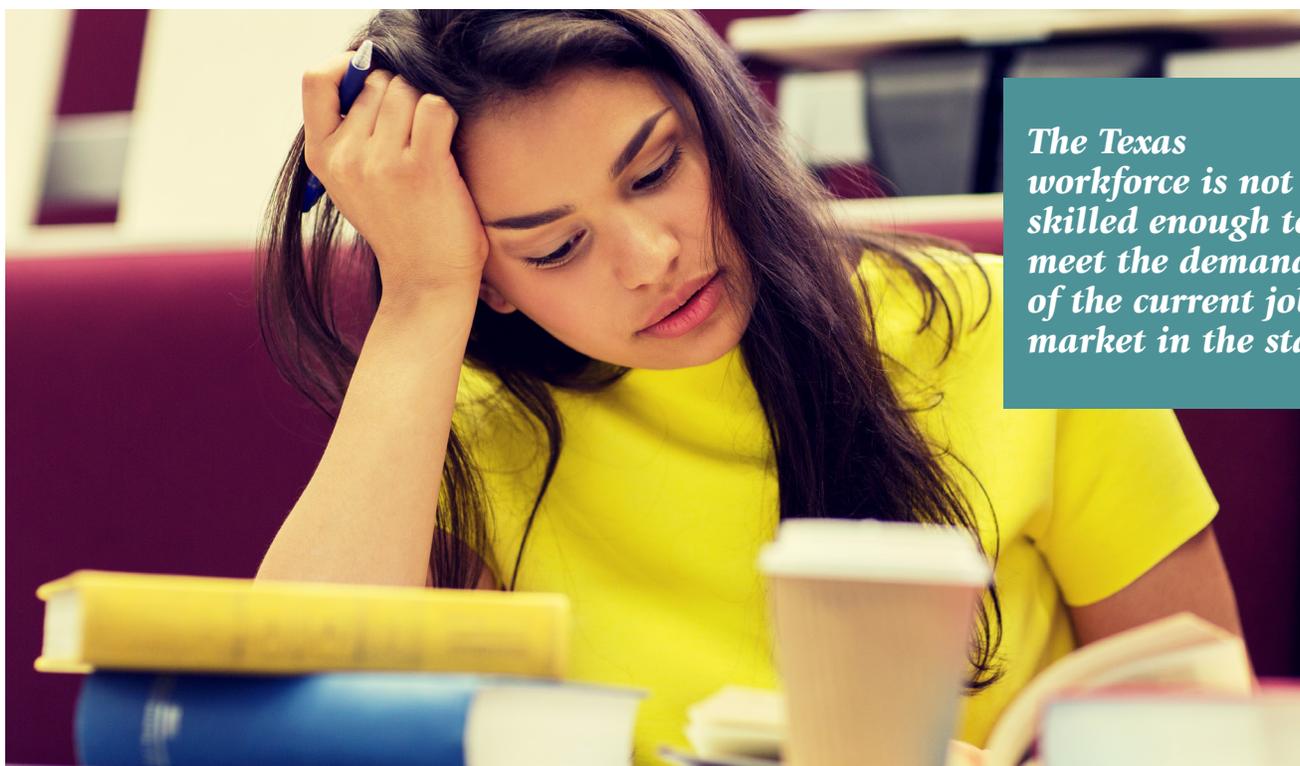
What happens when a student graduates from high school but is not ready for college or a career? The stakes for that student's trajectory, potential earning power, and economic opportunity couldn't be higher.

Texans ages 25-34 who earn an associate degree are nearly twice as likely to earn at least \$50,000 per year than those who don't earn a degree (24% vs. 13%). Those earning a bachelor's degree or higher are nearly four times as likely to reach this self-sustaining wage (49% vs. 13%).²

If every eighth grader in Harris County were to earn an associate degree, that one graduating class would collectively earn nearly \$818 million in additional annual income. Across the eight largest counties in Texas, annual income gains would total \$6.1 billion.³ **Today, only 22% of Harris County students complete a postsecondary certificate or program within six years of their high school graduation.**⁴

The Texas workforce is not skilled enough to meet the demands of the current job market in the state. Today, 80% of good jobs — those with median earnings of \$65,000 per year — require a postsecondary credential. By 2036, 71% of all jobs in Texas will require at least some form of postsecondary credential.⁵ Recent analysis of the Houston region shows demand for workers with college degrees far outpaces supply and is projected to grow through 2030.⁶

School districts will need to make significant investments in college and career readiness to produce a highly skilled and educated workforce. How college and career readiness is measured matters. To improve results, school and district leaders must measure the right things. Do the metrics match the objective of supporting more students to attain a postsecondary credential? Are students truly prepared to succeed after high school? **The cumulative result — students' postsecondary success — should be the guiding objective for any measurement of student achievement.**



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HOW CCMR IS MEASURED IN TEXAS

Presently, Texas has two different ways of measuring students' College, Career, and Military Readiness (CCMR). One framework is embedded in the state's system of reporting and rating school performance — otherwise known as A-F accountability, introduced by House Bill 22 (2017). The other framework is known as the CCMR Outcomes Bonus, introduced as part of House Bill 3 (2019).

CCMR ACCOUNTABILITY

To calculate CCMR within the accountability system, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) uses a long list of indicators for high school students. Under this system, schools and districts are awarded credit for a student meeting any single criterion. Each of these criteria has a varying — and sometimes unclear — connection to a student's ultimate ability to earn a postsecondary credential. **Within this system, 65% of Texas high school students qualify as CCMR; however, actual attainment data reveals that only 23% of students earn a postsecondary degree or credential within six years of graduation.**

CCMR OUTCOMES BONUS

The Texas CCMR Outcomes Bonus was established in 2019 under House Bill 3 to reward districts for supporting students to successfully enroll in a postsecondary institution, complete an industry-based credential, and/or enlist in the military. The intent of this program is to incentivize improvement against a more rigorous measure of readiness, especially for students from low-income backgrounds and students with special needs.

It's important to note that the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) is emphasized in this framework. First, it is the primary measure postsecondary institutions use to measure student readiness for college courses. If a student scores high enough, they can begin to take credit-bearing coursework. If their score does not meet the standard, they must often take developmental courses, which results in higher costs and can delay degree or credential completion. These developmental classes do not count for college credit but cost the same as college courses. (Some colleges offer Texas College Bridge⁷ for students that have not demonstrated TSI readiness.) Second, use of the TSI for either college or career readiness avoids unnecessarily tracking students into vocational opportunities and maintains students' ability to choose their path.



While 72% of all students in the class of 2019 met accountability standards, just 31% of students met the CCMR outcomes bonus benchmarks



In contrast to the CCMR accountability framework, measuring districts against the more comprehensive outcomes bonus framework considers the outcomes and success of individual students and incentivizes districts to achieve more holistic and meaningful student milestones such as postsecondary enrollment and workforce credentials.

CCMR Accountability ¹⁴	CCMR Outcomes Bonus ¹³
<p>COLLEGE READY</p> <p>Meet criteria of 3 on AP or 4 on IB examinations; OR</p> <p>Meet TSI criteria (SAT/ACT/TSIA*/College Prep course) in reading and mathematics; OR</p> <p>Complete a course for dual credit (9 hours or more in any subject or 3 hours or more in ELAR/mathematics); OR</p> <p>Earn an associate degree; OR</p> <p>Complete an On Ramps course in any subject and earn college credit</p>	
<p>MILITARY READY**</p> <p>Enlist in the United States Armed Forces</p>	
<p>CAREER READY</p> <p>Earn an industry-based certification; OR</p> <p>Career and Technical Education (CTE) coherent sequence coursework completion and credit aligned with approved industry-based certifications (one-half point credit)***; OR</p> <p>Graduate with completed IEP and workforce readiness ; OR</p> <p>Earn a Level I or Level II certificate; OR</p> <p>Graduate under an advanced degree plan and be identified as a current special education student</p>	

*In 2022, TSIA2 will meet Texas Success Initiative criteria.

**After October 2020, TEA will exclude military enlistment data from both CCMR accountability calculations and CCMR OB Student Listings due to inconsistent data from the Department of Defense and PEIMS.

***Class of 2018 was the last class eligible to receive 0.5 CTE CCMR credit for use in accountability

Please see the appendix for a detailed list and definitions.

A TALE OF TWO MEASURES: HARRIS COUNTY DATA

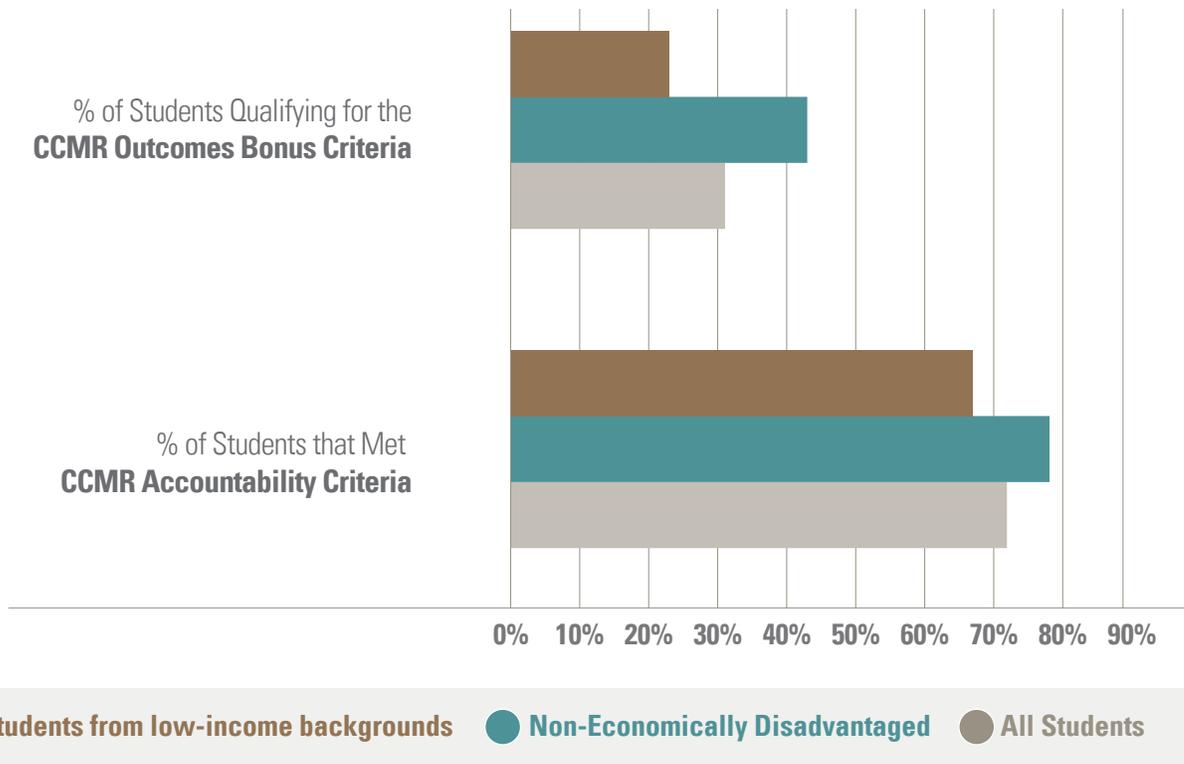
Comparing Outcomes Trends – Houston Region

Even though House Bill 3 established the CCMR Outcomes Bonus in 2019, the graduating classes of 2018 and 2019 were the first to be measured and incentivized using the framework, providing a baseline for districts to improve upon in the future. Data shared here is from the high school class of 2019, the most recent year of data that is available for outcomes bonus metrics.

Overall, significantly higher percentages of Harris County students meet the state’s CCMR accountability standards than the outcomes bonus thresholds. While 72% of all students in the class of 2019 met accountability standards, just 31% of students met the CCMR outcomes bonus benchmarks. Considering that only 22% of all Harris County students complete a postsecondary degree or certificate within six years of their high school graduation, there is a wide disconnect between the state’s accountability standards for student readiness and actual success.

When comparing the college and career readiness of Harris County students from low-income backgrounds and their more affluent peers, the state’s accountability measure reveals an 11% gap (78% vs. 67%). However, when comparing the same groups of students using the outcomes bonus measure, the gap nearly doubles to 20% (43% vs. 23%). This gap more accurately reflects actual postsecondary completion disparities for Harris County: only 14% of students from low-income backgrounds complete a degree or certificate within six years of high school graduation, compared to 33% of their more affluent peers.⁸ Therefore, the state’s accountability criteria also mask a much wider gap in students’ readiness outcomes. (Figure 1)

Figure 1: Harris County, Class of 2019 Graduates



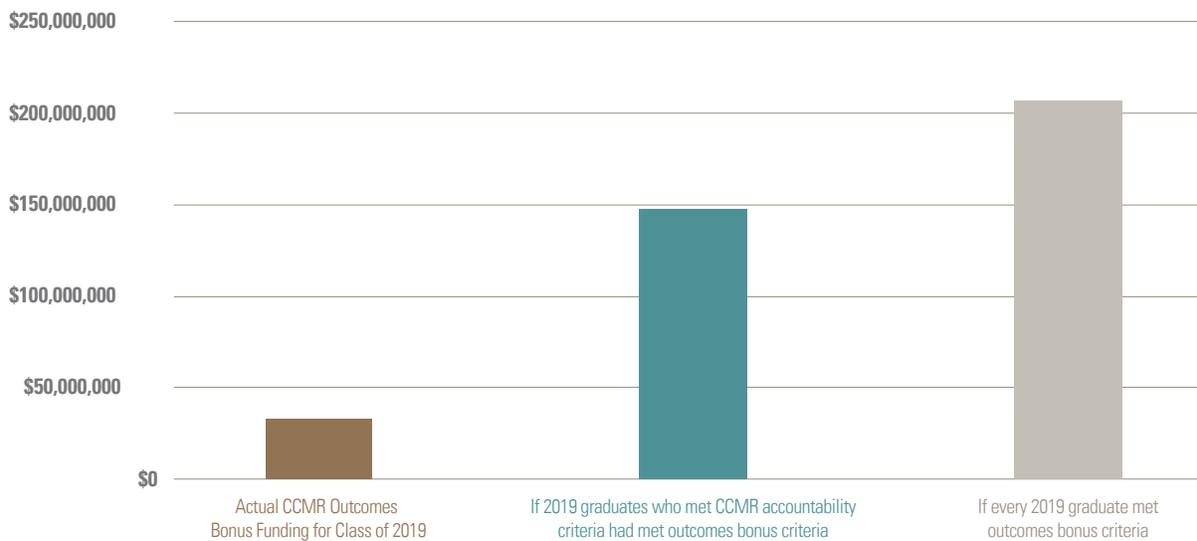
Source: Ed Trust Analysis, TAPR data 2019-2020, TEA CCMR Outcomes Bonus Funding PIR, 2020-2021

CCMR OUTCOMES BONUS FUNDING

Districts receive state funds in the following amounts for exceeding the threshold performance set for each student group. The thresholds for each student group are set at the 25th percentile of statewide CCMR results from the 2016-17 school year. These bonus funds aim to incentivize districts to graduate more students ready to succeed in college or career, with additional funds awarded for supporting students with greater needs. Districts can use the funds (a minimum of 55%) to invest in preparing more students for college, careers, or the military.

Students from Low-Income Backgrounds: \$5,000	Students Not from Low-Income Backgrounds: \$3,000	Students with Disabilities: \$2,000 (plus income-based bonus)
<p>Threshold A district receives funding for every student from a low-income background that meets CCMR benchmarks above 11% of the district’s enrollment of students from low-income backgrounds.</p>	<p>Threshold A district receives funding for every student who is not from a low-income background that meets CCMR benchmarks above 24% of the district’s enrollment of students from higher-income backgrounds.</p>	<p>Threshold A district receives funding for every student with disabilities that meets CCMR benchmarks above 0% of the district’s enrollment of students with disabilities.</p>

Figure 2: Harris County, Class of 2019 Graduates – CCMR Outcomes Bonus Funding: Actual and Projection



Source: Texas Impact Network[®], TAPR data 2019-2020, TEA CCMR Outcomes Bonus Funding PIR, 2020-2021



If the graduates of the Class of 2019 who met the CCMR accountability criteria had met the outcomes bonus criteria, Harris County districts would have received \$147.8 million.

Graduates in the class of 2019 in Harris County earned districts an additional \$32.7 million from the state. If the graduates of the Class of 2019 who met the CCMR accountability criteria had met the outcomes bonus criteria, Harris County districts would have received \$147.8 million. Furthermore, if every graduate in that class had met the outcomes bonus criteria, then funding would have totaled \$206.5 million. This would have resulted in almost \$174 million more to invest in postsecondary readiness supports for students in Harris County. (Figure 2)

Although students are meeting the college or career readiness accountability criteria, they are not being supported to earn a certification or associate degree or matriculating into a program after high school graduation at the same rate. If school and district leaders are not using the CCMR outcomes bonus framework to measure and monitor student readiness, then far fewer students are likely to earn a postsecondary credential.

In 2021, Texas invested \$216 million in districts that met the CCMR outcomes bonus criteria. District leaders can focus on the students with the most need and simultaneously increase their state revenue that can then be reinvested to prepare even more students for postsecondary success. District leaders are leaving millions of dollars of funding on the table that could pay for the districts' postsecondary investment.



Once we know the baseline and understand the patterns, we can advocate for all Texas students



RECOMMENDATIONS

How does Texas ensure that school districts are preparing every student for postsecondary success? Are you wondering how your district is doing? To close gaps between student groups and raise the standard for every student, it's important to first understand where students currently are. Once we know the baseline and understand the patterns, we can advocate for all Texas students. When advocating and monitoring progress, keep in mind that data from state lags and that changes will take time to be reflected in the data.

Action #1

Districts should make disaggregated CCMR accountability and outcomes bonus data easily accessible

Action #2

School boards should set and monitor concrete and timebound goals to improve CCMR metrics, particularly outcomes bonus metrics

Action #3

Districts should use CCMR outcomes data to evaluate equity of access and participation in advanced coursework, certification offerings, and advising services

Action #4

Districts should invest in targeted, evidence-based initiatives to improve CCMR outcomes, such as increasing the number of college and career advisors

Action #5

Districts should incorporate CCMR metrics within their performance evaluations of school and administrative leadership





DISTRICT BRIGHT SPOT: DALLAS ISD

The Dallas ISD board adopted a policy, EA LOCAL,¹⁰ in February 2022 that holds the district accountable for strategic investments and equitable opportunities for students in:

- Early College High Schools
- Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools (P-TECH)
- Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB)
- Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs of study
- Career Institutes (CI)

They emphasize both demonstrating readiness and achieving postsecondary outcomes by obtaining an industry-based certification or matriculating into a postsecondary institution.

The board holds the administration accountable by:

- Receiving annual reporting on these metrics
- Monitoring progress throughout the year
- Ensuring there is budget alignment to these priorities

For the 2022-2023 school year, Dallas ISD quadrupled its investment in postsecondary advisors. With 24% of the district's 2020 graduating class meeting the outcomes bonus threshold, they earned nearly \$2.9 million in additional funding. **For each additional 10% of students meeting the threshold in the future, Dallas ISD would receive approximately \$4.1 million in annual bonus funds.**

Dallas ISD invested \$12 million this school year with the purpose of drastically increasing CCMR outcomes for its graduates.





CONCLUSION

It is up to each of us to advocate for our students' college and career readiness and to hold districts accountable to those outcomes. The future workforce depends on skilled students with postsecondary credentials of value. Even if the outcomes bonus funding did not exist, this is the investment school districts should be making if the purpose of a public school education is to prepare students for a productive future. If the investments are made strategically, then the outcomes bonus funding will continue to grow year over year. Districts leaders' decisions to invest in college and career readiness will pay financial dividends, put students on a trajectory of postsecondary success, and produce an educated, upwardly mobile workforce.





APPENDIX: DEFINITIONS

TSI	Texas Success Initiative required by the Texas Education Code
TSIA	Texas Success Initiative Assessment - administered to students who do not meet any of the exemptions (demonstrating college readiness) at community colleges, universities, or school districts
OnRamps	Initiative of UT Austin that provides dual enrollment and distance education to high school students to earn college credit
Industry-based certifications	Certification demonstrating standards related to a career or occupation and validated through an entity such as a trade association and not an institution of higher education
CTE	Career and Technical Education
Dual Credit	Enrolled in college courses while in high school and receives credit for both high school and college
AP	Advanced Placement program: college-level courses students may earn college credit when they score high enough on the exam
IB	International Baccalaureate diploma program
IEP	Individualized Education Plan for students with special needs
Level 1 certificate	Program consisting of at least 15 but not more than 42 semester credit hours usually awarded by an institution of higher education
Level 2 certificate	Program consisting of at least 30 but not more than 51 semester credit hours usually awarded by an institution of higher education
College Prep Course¹¹	Courses offered in partnership with an institution of higher education in math and language arts for students in 12th grade who have demonstrated they are <u>not</u> ready to perform entry-level college coursework



TSIA Cut Scores ¹²	
Mathematics	A minimum score of 350
Reading	A minimum score of 351
Writing	a score of 5 on the essay section or a score of 4 on the essay and a minimum score of 340 on the multiple-choice section
Exemptions (Qualify for TSI and not required to take TSIA)	<p>Scored a composite score of 23 with a minimum of 19 on the English test shall exempt both Reading and Writing sections of the TSIA</p> <p>Scored a composite score of 23 with a minimum of 19 on the Math test shall exempt the Math section of the TSIA</p> <p>Took the SAT administered prior to March 2016 and earned a minimum score (verbal critical reading + math) SAT score of 1070, with a minimum score of 500 on both sections</p> <p>Took the SAT administered March 2016 and later and earned scores on the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (EBRW) assessment of 480, and a minimum score of 530 in Mathematics (no combined score needed)</p> <p>A TAKS scale score of at least 2200 on the math section and/or 2200 on the English Language Arts section with a writing subsection score of at least 3</p> <p>Veterans, active-duty personnel, and a student who is serving as and, for at least three years preceding enrollment, has served as a member of a reserve component of the U.S. armed services</p> <p>Transferred from another institution having satisfactorily completed college-level coursework</p> <p>Enrolled in a certificate program of one year or less (Level One certificates) at a public institution</p>



ENDNOTES

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