

Support Rural Pathway Excellence Partnership (R-PEP) House Committee on Public Education August 12th, 2024

Key Takeaways:

- The R-PEP Program is a scalable, innovative workforce and education model that provides rural Texas students with college and career pathways that are responsive to and aligned with regional workforce demands.
- The R-PEP model produces positive outcomes for rural students, as demonstrated through the success of high-quality CCMR programming offered within the Rural Schools Innovation Zone (RSIZ), the model upon which R-PEP is based.
- To ensure all rural students have the opportunity to prepare for high-demand, high wage careers in rural Texas, R-PEP should be expanded and scaled across the state.

Background

The Rural Pathway Excellence Partnership (R-PEP) program was established by HB 2209 (88R) in an effort to scale the RSIZ collaborative model across the state. The R-PEP program provides an opportunity for eligible, rural school districts to partner with other rural districts to offer students college and career pathways that align with high-wage, high-demand careers. This structure provides new career pathways to rural students, while also boosting economic development in rural Texas.

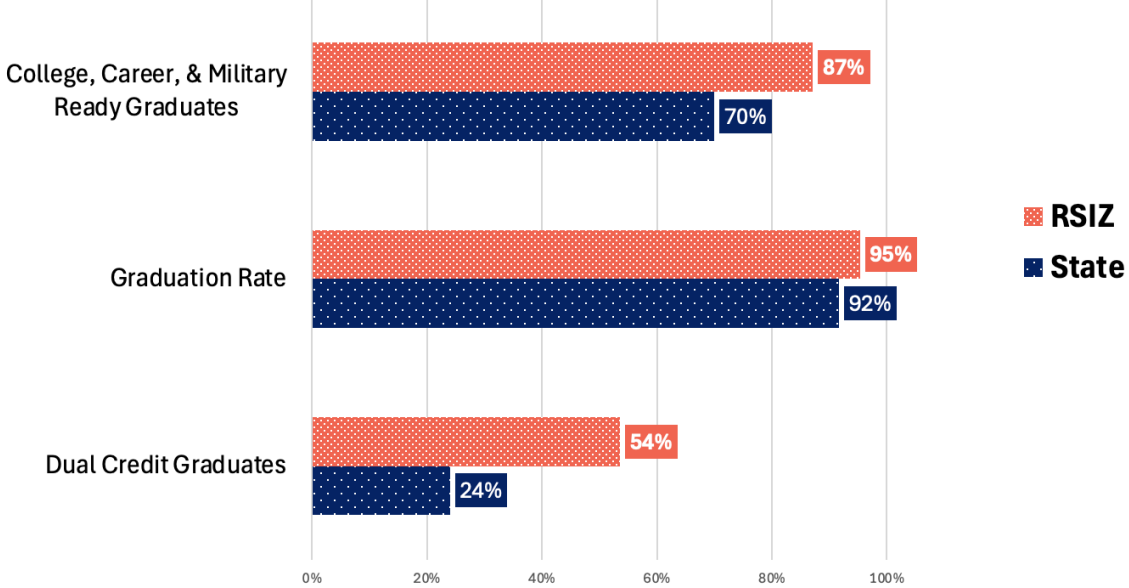
Data

Through the RSIZ's innovative and efficient approach to supporting career-aligned education pathways, RSIZ districts have continued to outperform the state in certification attainment, CCMR scores, graduation rate, and dual credit completion.¹

As shown below, students who participate in RSIZs currently outperform students in the rest of the state across a variety of key success indicators:

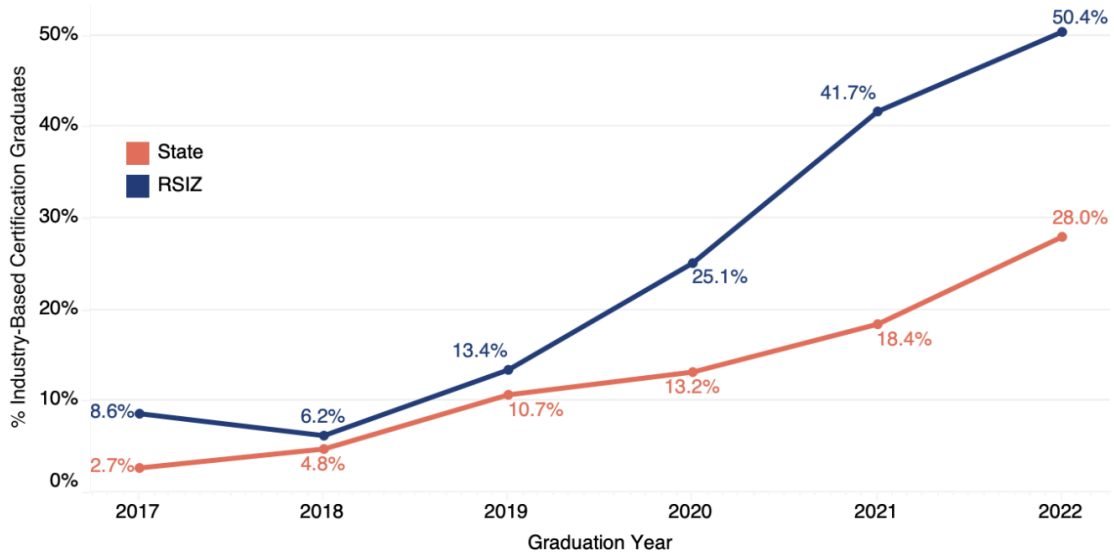
¹ Texas Commission on Virtual Education. (2022). *Reinventing the rural education experience*. <https://tea.texas.gov/texas-schools/health-safety-discipline/covid/rsiz-virtual-ed-commission-slide-deck-06-29-22.pdf>

Dual Credit, Graduation, and CCMR (2021-2022)



Additionally, they outperform the state in the attainment of industry-based certifications (IBCs), with RSIZ students earning IBCs at 22 percentage points higher than the state:

Industry Based Certifications





Policy Recommendation

Supporting education and economic development in rural Texas is important to the future of our state. The innovative R-PEP model is uniquely positioned to deliver the kind of education and workforce programming that will give young, rural Texans a head start in preparing for high-demand, high-wage careers aligned with regional and rural workforce needs.

Texas 2036 recommends that the Legislature consider the following policy changes with regards to the program:

1. Remove the cap on R-PEP funding, allowing the program to expand over time as demand increases.
2. Providing grants to school districts, Education Service Centers, or education nonprofits to support districts in both funding and creating staff capacity as they launch these partnerships.

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