



Policy & Innovative Practice Transform Texas Students' **Post-Graduation Opportunities**

The Texas Legislature has passed several key policies (e.g., HB 3 (86R) and HB 8 (88R)) to **enhance the value and rigor of Texas' high school experience**. Combined with innovative local practices, these programs aim to increase the percentage of students graduating college, career, or military ready (76% in 2024) and support them in securing quality, family-sustaining jobs. Despite these efforts, only 3 in 10 (29%)¹ of Texas voters believe that students are graduating ready to succeed. Texas has effective models that can be scaled to increase opportunities for students across the state.

EXISTING POLICIES CAN SCALE TO INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES ACROSS TEXAS



Career and Technical Education (CTE)

CTE is a core component of Texas' education landscape, offering state-funded workforce preparation alongside the Foundation High School Program. **Over 70% of 2022 Texas high school graduates participated in CTE courses** leading to an increased likelihood of college enrollment and employment compared to their non-CTE peers.²



Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools (P-TECH)

SB 22 (85R) established the P-TECH model to foster PK-12, higher education, and industry partnerships where students earn a high school diploma and an associate degree, credential, or industry-based certification. The number of P-TECH campuses in Texas has grown significantly: from 34 designated campuses in SY2018-2019 to **over 275* operating and planning P-TECH campuses** now providing students with work-based learning opportunities across the state today.³



Early College High Schools (ECHS)

Aspiring to reduce barriers to college access and accelerate student outcomes, ECHS offers students the ability to earn college credit alongside their high school diploma. In SY2022-23, **234 ECHS designated campuses** supported Texas students, resulting in two-thirds of graduates from a P-TECH or ECHS earning at least 15 hours of college credit before graduating from high school.⁴



Rural Pathways Excellence Partnership (R-PEP)

HB 2209 (88R) created R-PEP to enable small schools to collaborate with education and industry partners and provide numerous career pathways. **Three partnerships, including 10 LEAs, with 18 pathways** were officially designated as R-PEPs by TEA in the spring of 2024. R-PEP students significantly increase their postsecondary readiness outcomes, including increased participation in dual credit and industry-based credentials attainment.⁵



Financial Aid for Swift Transfer (FAST)

The FAST program provides access to free dual credit courses to eligible students, allowing them to earn college credit while in high school. In 2019 and 2020, only 76,800 low-income high school students participated in dual credit. In its first two years, FAST has provided **access to dual credit to 260,000 students with financial need, helping them earn 1.46M credit hours** at no cost.⁶

What's Next for Texas Policy?

To build the **skilled and competitive workforce** that our state needs as the 8th largest economy in the world, Texas **must strengthen the value of our PK-12 education and reimagine what the high school experience can look like**. Every student deserves to graduate from high school ready for college and a career. **Scaling effective school models and ensuring the finance and accountability systems differentiate between high and low-quality credentials** are necessary steps toward achieving this goal. **Incentivizing and rewarding high-quality, in-demand credential and degree attainment in high school** while **expanding participation in existing college and career programs** will create more opportunities to help all Texas students reach their full potential.

¹ Texas 2036 2024 Polling Results

² Texas Public Information Resource "SY21-22 Texas Public College Enrollment Outcomes for Texas Public High School Graduates by CTE Participation"

³ Texas Education Agency, "8/12 HPE Commissioner State of Education Comments"

⁴ Texas Education Agency, "PEIMS, Division: 213"

⁵ Texas 2036 "R-PEP One-Pager"

⁶ Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board "9/10 HAC Testimony"

BRIGHT SPOTS: TEXAS SCHOOL DISTRICTS MODEL HIGH-QUALITY PROGRAMMING

Innovative school models maintain rigor by requiring students to complete Foundation High School program criteria **while participating in worthwhile work-based learning**. These experiences can lead to **dual credit completion, Level I or II certifications, industry-based certifications, and associate degrees** for students that **expand their post-graduation opportunities** as well as **increase funding for schools**.



Dallas ISD's Career Institutes **offer career programs across 18 pathways leading to one or more certification opportunities**. It provides students with the option of hands-on training while working toward a traditional diploma. Additionally, since HB 8 (88R), DISD and Dallas College have expanded dual credit courses with **nearly 14% of the district's graduating class earning an associate degree or certificate from Dallas College in 2024**.



Elgin ISD has cultivated **impactful local partnerships to support its P-TECH campus**. Aiming to support in-region job placement, its welding program provides **100% of students with a paid internship in the industry and a full-time, high-paying job offer upon graduation**.



Waco ISD partners with area businesses to offer **high-quality CTE Academies reflective of regional industry needs in many fields** including Automotive Technology, Construction Science, Future Educators Academy (P-TECH), Welding and Drones Academy, and the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program.



The **Rural Schools Innovation Zone**, an **R-PEP model**, includes five South Texas districts jointly **offering college and career pathways across 4 career academies and 2 Early College High School pathways**, including a Grow Your Own Educator Academy and a Naval JROTC Academy in Premont ISD, Next Generation Medical Academy in Freer ISD, and Ignite Technical Institute in Brooks County ISD.



Pharr-San Juan-Alamo (PSJA) ISD's ECHS provides high school students with the opportunity to **earn up to two years of college credit, significantly reducing the cost of higher education**. By enrolling approximately 3,500 students each semester in college courses, the ECHS programs in PSJA ISD help students accelerate their postsecondary success.

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