

TEXAS SHOULD CONTINUE TO INVEST IN AND EXPAND RURAL PATHWAY EXCELLENCE PARTNERSHIPS (R-PEP, HB 2209)

The Rural Pathway Excellence Partnership program (HB2209) was passed by the 88th Legislature (2023), with the goal of **increasing access to high-quality post-secondary pathways** for rural students meeting local workforce needs through scaling the successful Rural School Innovation Zone (RSIZ) model statewide. Across the state, there is strong and growing interest for LEA participation and we encourage the legislature to continue to invest in R-PEP.

Current R-PEPs and Pathways

Three partnerships, including **10 LEAs**, with **18 pathways** were officially designated as R-PEPs by TEA in the spring of 2024.



Rural Schools Innovation Zone (launched 2019)

- Diagnostic & Therapeutic Services
- Nursing Science
- Teaching & Training
- Early Learning
- Welding
- Electrical
- HVAC & Sheet Metal
- Drone (Unmanned Vehicle)
- Cybersecurity
- Early College High School

Permian Basin Innovation Zone (launched 2023)

- Teaching & Training
- Diagnostic & Therapeutic Services
- Welding
- Oil & Gas Exploration
- Renewable Energy

Falls County Rural Collaborative (launched 2024)

- Robotics & Automation Technology
- Exercise Science, Wellness, & Restoration
- Marketing & Sales

"After hearing about the PBIZ, I realized being a teacher would be perfect for me. I explored the idea and saw that the PBIZ was basically handing me a future ...It's all thanks to the PBIZ for helping me see the path ahead." - PBIZ student

Driving Student Success

R-PEPs dramatically increase post-secondary readiness outcomes in participating districts

Freer ISD joined the Rural Schools Innovation Zone in 2019 and has seen dramatic student outcomes.

	2017	2023	
College, Career, Military Ready Graduates	38.6%	91.5%	+52.9pts
College Ready Graduates	19.3%	83.1%	+63.8pts
Industry-Based Credentials	1.8%	49.3%	+47.5pts
Dual Credit Completion	20%	59.2%	+39.2pts
Dropout Rate	2.2%	0.0%	-2.2pts

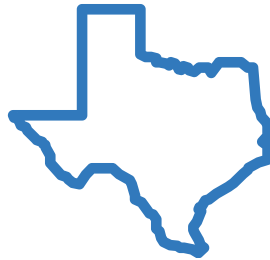
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Potential for Impact

Strengthening R-PEP will accelerate college, career, and military readiness and post-secondary success for more rural students.



Texas educates more rural students than any other state, just over one million students



Fifteen of Texas' twenty Education Service Centers are majority rural



Over 600 districts in Texas have fewer than 1,600 enrolled students

What's Next for R-PEP?

We encourage the committee to further strengthen and leverage R-PEP in the coming legislative session by providing **planning and implementation grants** so that districts can have **access to high-quality support and essential start-up costs** to launch their R-PEPs to be strong from day one. The Legislature should also ensure more districts are able to access allotment funds via **increasing or removing the current financial cap to support strong outcomes for students and support thriving local rural economies.**

Sources - TAPR Data, TEA, R-PEP Overview National School Boards Association, Center for Public Education. Educational Equity for Rural Students: Out of the Pandemic, but Still Out of the Loop, 2023, nsba.org/-/media/CPE-Growing-Diversity-of-Rural-Students.pdf.

Supporting Organizations



GREATER TEXAS FOUNDATION

