



education

HOW SHIFTING DEMOGRAPHICS, EVOLVING NEEDS, AND DISPARATE ACADEMIC OUTCOMES AFFECT HOUSTON-AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

As Houston continues its transition from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based economy, higher levels of educational attainment are essential for competing in the job market. By 2020, 65% of Houston-area jobs will require education past high school, and 47% will require a bachelor's degree or higher.¹ Every child needs to be prepared for success in college or career, and the work starts well before students reach school.

High-quality pre-K programs can increase the likelihood of graduation and even shrink socioeconomic achievement gaps for eligible children who attend.² Unfortunately, accessibility remains an issue, while 48,209 three-county area children were enrolled in pre-K in the 2017-18 school year, just 55% of students were enrolled in a full-day pre-K program despite research indicating high-quality full-day programs reap the most benefits. Furthermore, just 48% of Kindergartners who began school in 2018-2019 were considered Kinder-ready and demonstrated appropriate literacy skills, lower than the state.

Fortunately, the recent passage of House Bill 3 (HB3) contributes \$9 billion to Texas public schools over the next two years, with \$6.3 billion earmarked for additional district funding. HB3 will increase funding for full-day pre-K programs; teacher pay and reward higher experience levels; promote college readiness levels through bonus programs; and add support for special education programs.

However, HB3 will take effect amidst a challenging public education landscape in Texas. As of 2017, Texas ranks 49th out of the 50 states in high school graduation rates, although the percent of the adult population with at least a high school diploma has steadily increased since 1990—reaching 83% of the population in the three-county area in 2017. Despite this positive trend, significant achievement gaps persist across socioeconomic status.

Third-grade reading is an important indicator that has a strong relationship to academic success in upper grades.³ Just 51% of Houston-area third-graders tested at or above grade level on STAAR reading tests.



And, the growing Hispanic and economically disadvantaged student populations fared worse with 41% and 36% of third-graders testing at or above grade level respectively. In addition, Texas and the three-county area both lag behind in aspects of career and college readiness. By the most generous standard of "college ready," we see less than half of high school graduates in the three-county area meet the criteria, with larger shares of Asian and white students college ready, while black, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students remain behind their peers.

Finally, while postsecondary completion measures are limited, a cohort analysis shows that of the 67,579 students across the three-county area who began eighth-grade in 2007, ultimately just 22.3% received a postsecondary credential within six years of their anticipated high school graduation. These rates indicate slow progress, as a similar analysis of eighth graders begun in 1998 found that about 21% received some sort of postsecondary credential within six years of high school graduation.⁴

The challenges facing Houston-area students are tied to the increasing demands placed on our public schools.

Despite enrollment growth, overall spending per student remains well below the national average. Public schools also face a teacher shortage, both in quantity and quality. A stunning 39% of teachers in the three-county area have less than five years experience, with data clearly indicating that teacher qualification is one of the strongest correlations of student achievement in reading and mathematics.⁵

In addition to passing HB3, Texas launched the 60x30TX, the state's higher education plan that aims to educate the next generation of Texans and maintain the state's global competitiveness. This ambitious effort will require collective support and work.

The more we know about our public schools in the Houston area, the better equipped we are to work toward an education system that prepares every Houston-area child to thrive and contribute to Houston's vibrant future.

7 Subtopics of Education

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



33% of the total adult population has a bachelor's degree

Across the three-county area, the share of the adult population with a bachelor's degree is slightly higher than across Texas and the nation, seeing a 7.5 percentage point increase since 1990.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Only 55%

of enrolled pre-K students were in a full-day program.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT

61.6% economically disadvantaged

students across the three-county area, growing 3.3 percentage points in one year alone.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

88.6% graduated

Four-year longitudinal graduation rates in the three-county areas were two percentage points lower than the state average for the class of 2018.

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Less than half



of high-school graduates are college ready across the three-county area, slightly more than the state.

FUNDING AND EXPENDITURES

\$9,284 average per-student spending

across three-county area public schools, lower than the state (\$9,500) and national average (\$12,201).

TEACHERS

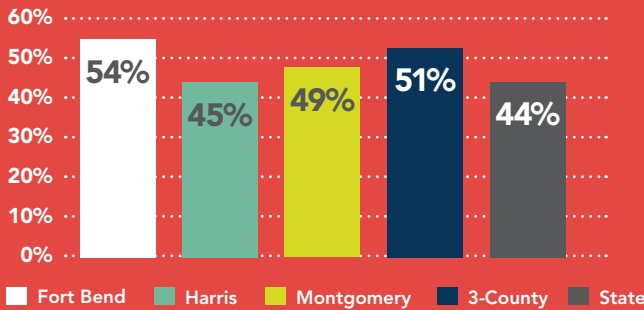
Nearly **40%** of teachers have limited experience

with major implications on student achievement.

EXPLORE ALL SEVEN SUBTOPICS FURTHER ON OUR WEBSITE.

THIRD-GRADE READING

Percent of 3rd-graders who achieve "Meets Grade Level or Above" on STAAR Reading Test (2018-2019)



By third grade, about half (51%) of all students in the three-county-area public schools were meeting grade level standards for reading comprehension during the 2018-2019 school year.

Trend over time:
 Compared to state:

HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR MORE



83% vs. 88%

Despite gains in higher educated populations outpacing the nation, just **82.9% of the population in the three-county area had a high school diploma** or more in 2017, compared to 88% across the nation and 83.6% in the state.

Trend over time:
 Compared to nation:

KINDERGARTEN READINESS

48%

Across the three-county area, 78% of Kindergarteners were assessed for literacy skills upon entering school in the 2018-2019 school year; **just under half (48%) scored well enough to indicate they were Kinder-ready**, about 4 percentage points less than the state average and **2 percentage points higher than the year prior**.

Trend over time:
 Compared to state:

POSTSECONDARY COMPLETION

67,579 students began eighth grade in 2007 at the age of 13

77% of whom graduated from high school **54%** enrolled in a Texas university/college

22% received postsecondary credentials from a Texas public college or university within 6 years of their anticipated high school graduation.

*See page 32 for important data note.

Trend over time:
 Compared to nation:

LEGENDS

LOCATIONS: **FB** Fort Bend **H** Harris **M** Montgomery

COMPARISONS: Better Worse Same No Info

See page 30-33 of 2019 Summary Report for references and data sources.