



Changing the Story



RGV FOCUS

a collaboration with Educate Texas

407 N. 77 Sunshine Strip
Harlingen, TX 78550

rgvfocus.org



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2017 ANNUAL REPORT



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Every child begins their educational journey with the potential to succeed.

Our vision is that all Rio Grande Valley learners will achieve a degree or credential that leads to a meaningful career.

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CHANGING THE STORY THROUGH COLLABORATION

RGV FOCUS, a collective impact initiative in collaboration with Educate Texas and Communities Foundation of Texas, has served to measurably improve educational outcomes across the four counties and change the story of the Rio Grande Valley region since 2012.

RGV FOCUS works through a Leadership Team of school district, higher education, philanthropic, workforce and community leaders to align resources along the cradle-to-career educational pathway for the region's 427,000 pre-K-12 and higher education students. Results are measured along each step of the learners' journey from pre-K through higher education.

The mission of RGV FOCUS is to transform college readiness, access and success in the four counties of the Rio Grande Valley - Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr and Willacy. This mission will be achieved by working toward four goals:

- all students graduate high school college ready
- all high school graduates transition to higher education within a year
- all higher education students achieve a degree or credential on time
- all higher education graduates are employed within six months

These goals are key to improving the quality of life in a region where 75 percent of high school graduates that enroll in higher education choose local colleges and universities.

RGV FOCUS works in support of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's 60x30 Strategic Plan that aims for 60 percent of Texans ages 25 to 34 to have a postsecondary degree or certificate by 2030.

A COLLECTIVE IMPACT

RGV FOCUS utilizes collective impact, a framework that brings cross-sector community members together to drive social change by aligning regional assets around a common vision and objectives that strengthen the cradle-to-career educational pathway. For the framework to be effective, the partnership must have five conditions: a common agenda, common progress measures, mutually reinforcing activities, communications and a backbone organization.



LETTER FROM THE LEADERSHIP

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Regional collaboration is changing the story of the Rio Grande Valley.

We are committed to working collaboratively to change the educational landscape of the Rio Grande Valley to ensure all learners can achieve their aspirations. Our vision recognizes the responsibility of leaders to remove barriers to student success. Student achievement is the key to continued prosperity in the region.

This year's annual report continues to illustrate the commitment and success of cross-sector engagement. For example, the 2017 annual report shows that the Rio Grande Valley matches or exceeds the State in 9 of 11 metrics established by the Leadership Team in 2012.

The annual report offers key insights into the progress being made toward creating a seamless cradle-to-career educational pathway for students. It also highlights four bright spots in 3rd grade reading, 8th grade math, AP/Dual-Enrollment credit completion and postsecondary readiness. Each of these areas is critical to meeting the goals of the partnership.

As we move into the next phase of changing our story, we will leverage bright spots within and among our partner organizations to accelerate student achievement across the Rio Grande Valley.

We invite you to get involved and join us in changing the story of the Rio Grande Valley by building a stronger cross-sector collaboration for student success.

Sincerely,



LUZELMA G. CANALES, Ph.D.
Executive Director
RGV FOCUS



EDUARDO INFANTE
Superintendent
Lyford CISD



ALDA BENAVIDEZ, Ed.D.
Superintendent
La Joya ISD

Our mission is to transform college readiness, access and success in the four counties of the Rio Grande Valley - Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr and Willacy.



THE LEADERSHIP TEAM

PRE-K-12

TERI ALARCON

Area Assistant Superintendent - High Schools
Brownsville ISD

ALDA T. BENAVIDES, Ed.D.*

Superintendent
La Joya ISD

ARTURO CAVAZOS, Ed.D.

Superintendent
Harlingen CISD

ADRIAN GARCIA

Chief of Technology and Student Services
McAllen ISD

LISA GARCIA, Ed.D.

Superintendent
Port Isabel ISD

NARCISO GARCIA, Ed.D.

Superintendent
Vanguard Academy

JOSE GONZALEZ, Ed.D.

Superintendent
McAllen ISD

MARLA GUERRA, Ed.D.

Superintendent
South Texas ISD

SILVIA IBARRA, Ed.D.

Assistant Superintendent for
Instructional Services
McAllen ISD

EDUARDO INFANTE*

Superintendent
Lyford CISD

VIRGINIA N. RICHTER, Ed.D.

Vice President of Advancement
IDEA Public Schools

GONZALO SALAZAR

Superintendent
Los Fresnos CISD

LINDA URIBE

Administrator for College Readiness
PSJA ISD

ESPERANZA ZENDEJAS, Ed.D.

Superintendent
Brownsville ISD



4
COUNTIES
1
COMMUNITY

37 School Districts
356,964 pre-K-12 Students | 97% Latino
4 Public Institutions of Higher Education
70,373 Higher Education Students* | 92% Latino
*Includes dual enrollment
Source: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
Higher Education Accountability System 2017



PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

KRISTIN CROYLE, Psy.D.

Vice President for Student Success
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

PATRICIA ALVAREZ MCHATTON, Ph.D.

Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs,
Student Success and P-16 Integration
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

JESUS ROBERTO RODRIGUEZ, Ph.D.

President
Texas Southmost College

CLEDIA HERNANDEZ

Interim Provost Harlingen Campus
Texas State Technical College

SHIRLEY REED, Ed.D.

President
South Texas College

COMMUNITY-BASED

LUZELMA G. CANALES, Ph.D.*

Executive Director
RGV FOCUS

CHRIS COXON

Managing Director
Educate Texas

MELISSA I. LOPEZ

Director, Office of College
and Career Readiness
Region One

TRACI WICKETT

President/CEO
United Way of Southern
Cameron County

TANIA CHAVEZ

Fund Development Strategist
La Unión Del Pueblo Entero

CHRISTINA PATIÑO HOULE

Network Weaver
Rio Grande Valley
Equal Voice Network

JUANITA VALDEZ-COX

CEO
La Unión Del Pueblo Entero

BUSINESS

FRANK ALMARAZ

CEO
Workforce Solutions
Lower Rio Grande Valley

PAT HOBBS

CEO
Workforce Solutions
Cameron County

REBECCA LYNCH, Ph.D.

Vice President for Curriculum,
Program Planning and Faculty Affairs
Doctors Hospital at Renaissance

ABOUT THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY

The Rio Grande Valley (RGV)—Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr and Willacy counties—is home to more than 1.3 million people along the Texas-Mexico border. The RGV is young (median age of 30), Latino (91 percent), bilingual and bicultural. The region's population continues to attract investments that have driven an economic transition from agriculture and tourism to health and professional services, education, advanced manufacturing and retail. This shift is why educational attainment is crucial to a generation for whom earnings and job security are connected to a higher education degree or certificate.

Strategies implemented over the last decade are shifting educational attainment for the region's 18-to-24-year-old population. Recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau shows the gap is narrowing between RGV and statewide 18-to-24-year-olds in high school graduation and some college or associate degree completion. RGV learners are within 3 percentage points of other Texas learners who've achieved a bachelor's degree or further.

However, there is still work to be done to move students into and through college. Data from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shows that, although higher education graduation rates for public four-year institutions of higher education (IHEs) increased from 42 to 46 percent from 2016 to 2017, they still remain below statewide performance.

Two-year IHE graduation rates did increase to 23 percent in 2017 after remaining flat at 16 percent since 2013, outpacing Texas by one percentage point.

RGV FOCUS leaders are committed to ensuring that all students in the region graduate from high school and pursue higher education degrees or credentials.

DEMOGRAPHICS	PRE-K-12 SYSTEM	POSTSECONDARY AWARDS
POPULATION: (5% of Texas)	1,322,071	SCHOOL DISTRICTS: 37
LATINO:	91%	STUDENTS: 356,964
MEDIAN AGE:	30	HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES: 21,706
MEDIAN INCOME:	\$35,073	LATINO: 97%
LIVING IN POVERTY: (compared to 17% in Texas)	33%	ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED: 86%
AREA: (1.6% of Texas)	4,275 sq. miles	ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS: 36%
		CERTIFICATES*: 2,467
		ASSOCIATE DEGREES: 4,707
		BACHELOR'S DEGREES: 4,374
		MASTER'S DEGREES: 1,186
		DOCTORAL DEGREES: 24








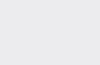


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2012-2016

Source: 2017 Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Report

*A professional or trade certification earned by a person to assure qualification to perform a job or task.
Source: 2017 Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Accountability System



RGV FOCUS SCORECARD	STAAR 3rd Grade Reading	STAAR 8th Grade Mathematics	4-Year High School Graduation Rate	FAFSA Completion	College-Ready Graduates	AP / Dual Credit Completion	Higher Education Immediate Enrollment Rate	Public Higher Education Graduation Rate		Higher Education Graduates Employed or Enrolled	
								2-year	4-year	2-year	4-year
2016-2017*	72%	74%	91%	74%	32%	43%	56%	23%	46%	89%	80%
2011-2012 Baseline	70%	69%	87%	59%	-	32%	56%	17%	44%	92%	78%
Difference from Baseline	▲2%	▲5%	▲4%	▲15%	**	▲11%	-	▲6%	▲2%	▼-3%	▲2%

RIO GRANDE VALLEY/TEXAS COMPARISON	STAAR 3rd Grade Reading	STAAR 8th Grade Mathematics	4-Year High School Graduation Rate	FAFSA Completion	College-Ready Graduates	AP / Dual Credit Completion	Higher Education Immediate Enrollment Rate	Public Higher Education Graduation Rate		Higher Education Graduates Employed or Enrolled	
								2-year	4-year	2-year	4-year
RGV 2016-2017*	72%	74%	91%	74%	32%	43%	56%	23%	46%	89%	80%
Texas	71%	74%	89%	62%	39%	36%	52%	22%	61%	88%	78%
Matches or Exceeds the State											

Note: Calculations are weighted averages based on student population. Increases, decreases or differences described with percent signs indicate percentage point changes rather than percent change based on the original level.

* Graduating Class of 2016
** The difference of this year's data from the baseline cannot be calculated because the definition of college readiness by the Texas Education Agency has changed.

Definitions

Pre-K Enrollment: The percentage of estimated, eligible 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in public pre-K programs. Total number of eligible students estimated (assuming equal cohorts) by using twice the number of first-graders classified as eligible.

The number of enrolled students is calculated as the total pre-K enrollment of both 3- and 4-year-olds, as reported by the Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Report 2017 report. The number of eligible 3- and 4-year-olds is estimated by taking twice the number of eligible first-graders, as reported by the TEA Texas Public Education Information Resource 2016 report.

STAAR 3rd Grade Reading: The percentage of third-grade students who met the "approaches grade level" standard in the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) reading assessment.

Texas Education Agency STAAR Aggregate Data at the "approaches" standard, 2016-17 school year

STAAR 8th Grade Mathematics: The percentage of eighth-grade students who met the "approaches grade level" standard in the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) mathematics assessment.

Texas Education Agency STAAR Aggregate Data at the "approaches" standard, 2016-17 school year

4-year High School Graduation Rate: The longitudinal rate of a ninth-grade cohort followed through their expected high school graduation. The rates reported are for the high school graduating class 2016 (i.e. the cohort entering high school in 2012).

Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Report (2017)

FAFSA Completion: Seniors from the high school graduating class of 2017 who completed a Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) as of September 22, 2017.

US Department of Education, FAFSA rates as of September 22, 2017

College-Ready Graduates: The percentage of high school graduates that met or exceeded college-ready criteria on the Texas Success Initiative Assessment, the SAT test, or the ACT test. Note: This is the current TEA definition as of 2015. Prior to 2015, TEA measured college-readiness as the percentage of high school graduates that met or exceeded the college-ready criteria on the TAKS exit-level test, the SAT test or the ACT test.

Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Report (2017)

Advanced Placement (AP)/Dual Credit: High school students (grades 9-12) who complete and receive credit for at least one advanced or dual credit course in the previous school year. Advanced courses include both Advanced Placement (AP) courses and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses

Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Report (2017)

Higher Education Immediate Enrollment Rate: The percentage of high school graduates from the class of 2016 who enrolled and began instruction at an institution of higher education (IHE) in Texas in the fall following high school graduation.

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), High School Graduates Enrolled in Higher Education (2016)

Higher Education Graduation Rate – 2-year Public IHE: First-time, full-time, credential-seeking undergraduates in RGV 2-year institutions of higher education (IHE) who graduated within three years. Degrees and certificates are included.

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Accountability System (2017)

Higher Education Graduation Rate – 4-year Public IHE: First-time entering, full-time, degree-seeking students in RGV 4-year institutions of higher education (IHE) who graduated with a bachelor's degree or higher from the same institution of higher education or another Texas public or independent institution after six years.

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Accountability System (2017)

Higher Education Graduates Employed or Enrolled 2-year IHE: Academic or technical graduates employed or placed in military service in the fourth quarter of the calendar year after graduation and/or enrolled in a Texas two- or four-year institution of higher education (IHE) in the following fall after graduation.

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Accountability System (2017)

Higher Education Graduates Employed or Enrolled 4-year IHE: Graduates employed or placed in military service in the fourth quarter of the calendar year after graduation and/or enrolled in a graduate program at a Texas institution of higher education (IHE) in the following fall after graduation.

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Accountability System (2017)

THE CRADLE-TO-CAREER EDUCATIONAL PATHWAY

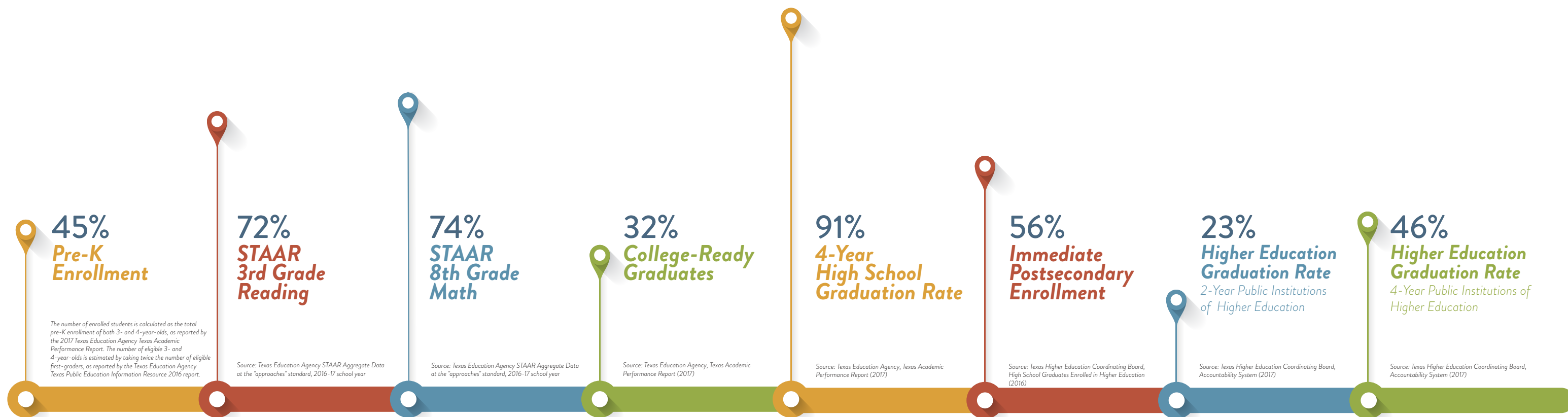


RGV FOCUS

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RGV FOCUS works to strengthen, better connect and align community resources across the cradle-to-career educational pathway to support learners from the earliest stages of their educational journey, from pre-K to higher education completion.

These student achievement indicators reflect key milestones in a learner's education.



BRIGHT SPOTS

3rd Grade Reading

DR. ESPERANZA ZENDEJAS
Brownsville ISD Superintendent



“The Brownsville Independent School District used insights from data to better serve our 47,000 students, particularly those from households classified as 100 percent economically disadvantaged.

We carried these insights through to action by tasking our principals with creating data rooms where teachers strategized on how best to serve their classes and individual students. These strategies helped contribute to the improvement in the percentage of 3rd graders reading at grade-level.

We are optimistic about the future of education in the Rio Grande Valley.”

3rd Grade Reading in RGV

“Approaches” increased from

70%
TO
72%

Between 2012 and 2017

Source: Texas Education Agency STAAR Aggregate Data at the “approaches” standard, 2016-17 school year

BRIGHT SPOTS

8th Grade Math

DR. NARCISO GARCIA
Vanguard Academy Superintendent



“Our work with RGV FOCUS helped Vanguard Academy better meet the needs of our 8th grade students through data collection and sharing. Veteran teachers from our schools in Alamo and Pharr planned their classroom strategies with Planned Learning Communities where they shared knowledge with other educators and superintendents.

These strategies filtered through our district as we addressed the needs of one child at a time, family by family, especially in a community where so many are economically disadvantaged. What is great for economically disadvantaged kids is also great for any student.”

8th Grade Math in RGV

“Approaches” increased from

69%
TO
74%

Between 2012 and 2017

Source: Texas Education Agency STAAR Aggregate Data at the “approaches” standard, 2016-17 school year

BRIGHT SPOTS

AP/Dual Credit

DR. DANIEL KING
PSJA ISD Superintendent



BRIGHT SPOTS

Postsecondary Readiness

DR. ALDA BENAVIDES
La Joya ISD Superintendent



“RGV FOCUS contributed to our success by convening leaders of different school districts and higher education institutions with community leaders to share best practices, set goals and meet the challenges our community faces.

We set very clear goals for our AP/Dual Credit Program at Pharr-San Juan-Alamo North High School and our other initiatives in the district; connect every student to, then through, their college education.

At Pharr-San Juan-Alamo North High School, about 20 to 25 percent of graduates have already earned associate degrees. 70 percent have already started college. We’ve had young people finishing their undergraduate degrees within two years of high school graduation before admission to law school at age 20. One young lady graduated from Rice University within two years, while many others have gone on to post-graduate studies.”

PSJA North
Graduates
UP TO
25%
of their students
with an
Associate Degree

Source: Self-reported ISD Data

“Our five years working with RGV FOCUS have helped us zero in on the needs of our students. When RGV FOCUS raises a topic of interest, we follow through at our leadership meetings to address it with our principals.

It really comes home when we focus on kids living in economically disadvantaged households. The community comes together to build basic support systems to help them succeed, from developing small learning communities to delivering resources, or even simplifying the college application process for students.

College readiness has improved in part from programs like dual-enrollment courses that help students gain college experience and, in many cases, associate degrees before graduation. For many students, it is their family’s first encounter with college that helps them realize their true agency and ability to take the next step toward success.”

College-Ready Graduates
in RGV increased from
18%
TO
32%
Between 2016 and 2017

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Report (2017)



EUGENIO LONGORIA SAENZ
RGV FOCUS Deputy Director

DR. LUZELMA G. CANALES
RGV FOCUS Executive Director

KATHERINE DIAZ
RGV FOCUS Deputy Director

RGV FOCUS BACKBONE

The RGV FOCUS Backbone serves as an administrative core and partner in the collective impact initiative. In these roles, the backbone is a convener, facilitator, capacity builder and catalyst for the thought, strategy and purpose of regional leaders looking to transform the RGV through collaboration.

RGV FOCUS FINANCIAL AID INITIATIVE

In a region like the Rio Grande Valley (RGV), understanding how to pay for college is the first step in achieving college-going aspirations for students. In 2012, the Leadership Team set an annual target that 65 percent of high school seniors would complete FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid.)

RGV FOCUS partners worked together to align policies and practices that led to increased FAFSA and TASFA (Texas Application for State Financial Aid) completions in three significant ways:

- RGV FOCUS partners developed a single process for DREAMers (individuals who qualify for the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act) and other state-aid applicants to submit financial aid applications at local colleges and universities. The counselor toolkit built for this process resulted in a 26 percent increase in state financial aid applications.
- RGV FOCUS partners facilitated a federal policy change to include 19-year-olds in the formula for calculating FAFSA completions; implementing a Super Saturday financial aid event at each college or university campus and providing monthly FAFSA reports to school district leaders.
- RGV FOCUS partners aligned financial aid calendars at each institution of higher education, which led to earlier awarding of financial aid packages in a collective regional response to federal policy changes.

The region previously reported FAFSA completion rates under 60 percent with a goal of 65 percent. These reports resulted in the RGV achieving a 74 percent FAFSA completion rate in 2017.

FAFSA Completion in RGV increased from

56%
TO
74%

Between 2016 and 2017

Source: U.S. Department of Education Federal Student Aid
FAFSA Applications
(October 1, 2016-September 22, 2017)

A LOOK TO THE FUTURE

The 2019-2022 strategy focuses on five areas:

1

EARLY CHILDHOOD THROUGH ELEMENTARY

Improve quality of education through grade level literacy in reading and math, pre-K to 3rd grade

2

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Successful completion of 4 years of an intentional and rigorous math pathway

3

SECONDARY THROUGH POSTSECONDARY

Decrease remediation / developmental education
Re-engage individuals with significant college credits to complete a degree or credential
Increase immediate enrollment to postsecondary
Increase accessibility of college knowledge resources for parents and families

4

WORKFORCE

Regional youth workplace experiences and models
Employer-led educational partnership models in IT, Healthcare and Education

5

TEACHING EXCELLENCE

Improve educator preparation through coordinated efforts between the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley College of Education, school districts and talent

JOIN US IN CHANGING THE STORY OF
THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY

rgvfocus.org

ABOUT EDUCATE TEXAS

RGV FOCUS is a collective impact initiative of Educate Texas, an educational arm of Dallas-based Communities Foundation of Texas (CFT).

In 2003, CFT launched the Texas High School Project to introduce the Early College High School model to the state of Texas to address the declining graduation rates for Texas high school students and the low percentage of minority, low-income, first generation students earning higher education credentials (two- or four-year, or technical college).

In 2012, CFT renamed the Texas High School Project as Educate Texas to better represent the broader scope of work being undertaken by the organization and its partners to not only educate students, but also support the teachers and leaders responsible for the education systems' ultimate success.

Also in 2012, with the recognition that the establishment of an education-focused collective impact initiative in the Rio Grande Valley could greatly improve the educational outcomes across the four-county region, CFT and Educate Texas partnered with Valley-based leaders to establish RGV FOCUS in support of the vision that all Rio Grande Valley learners will achieve a degree or credential that leads to a meaningful career and successful life.

In addition to RGV FOCUS, Educate Texas' efforts in the Rio Grande Valley include work supporting Texas Regional STEM Degree Accelerator, Investing in Innovation (i3) Early College Expansion Project and the Texas Education Agency's College and Career Readiness Models Network of T-STEM Academies, Early College High Schools and Industry Cluster Innovative Academies.

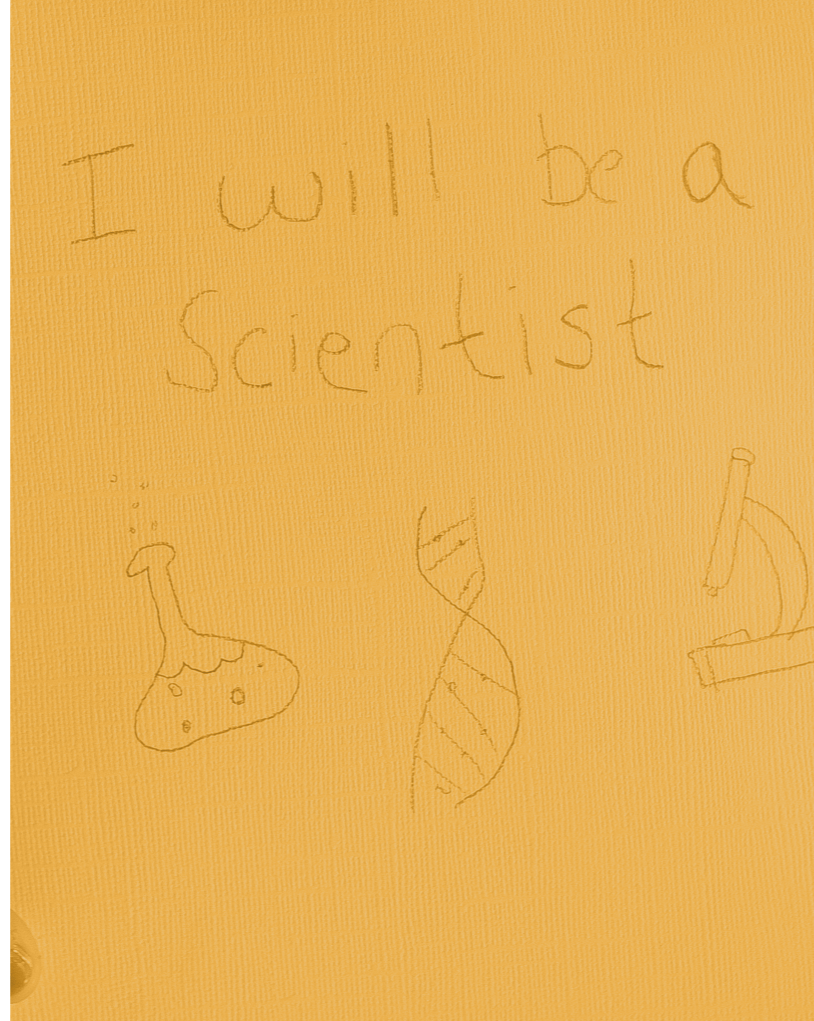


RGV FOCUS FUNDERS

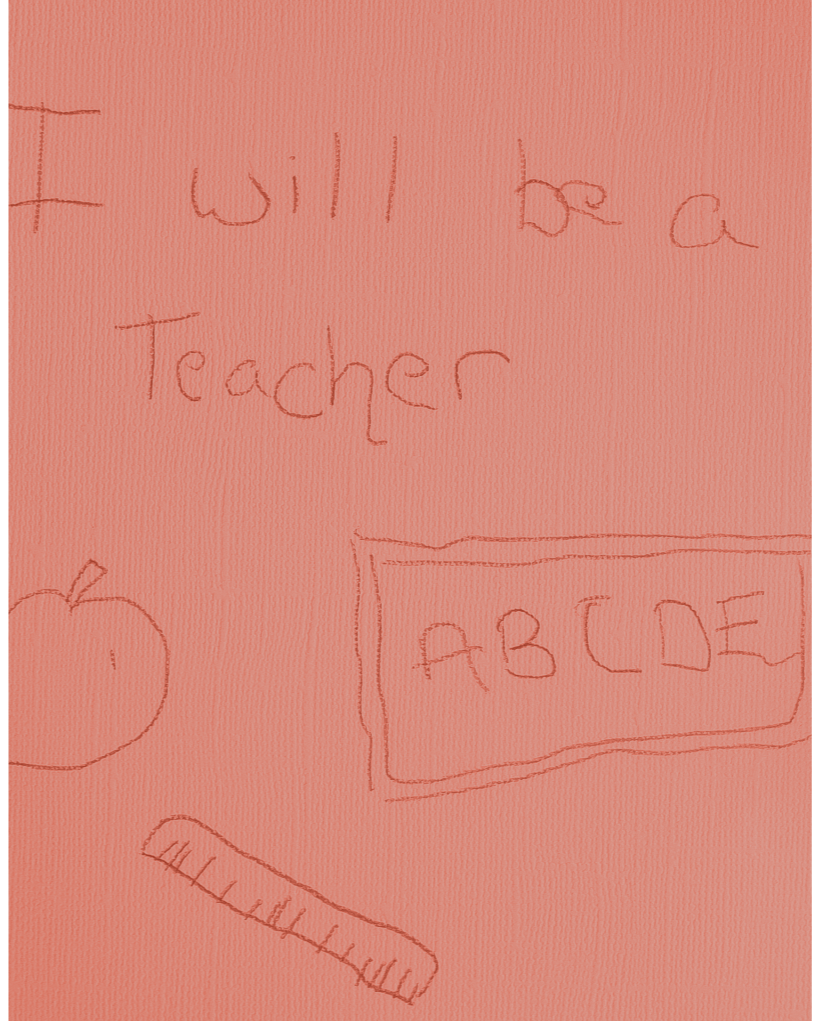




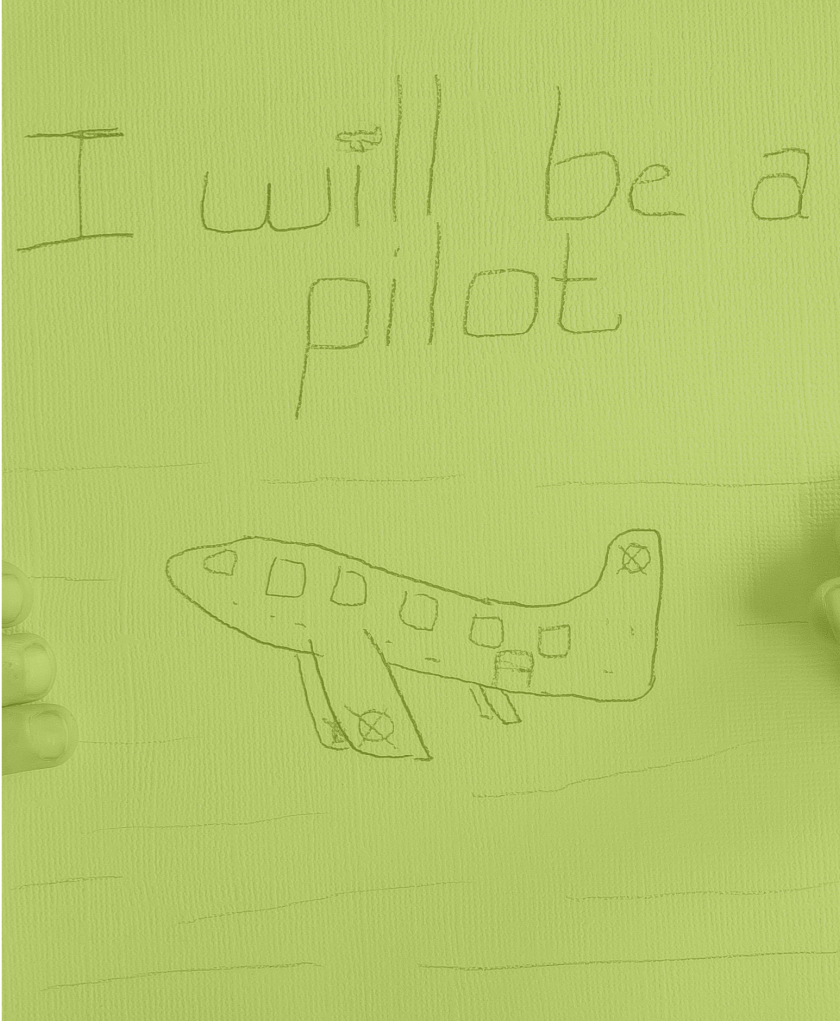
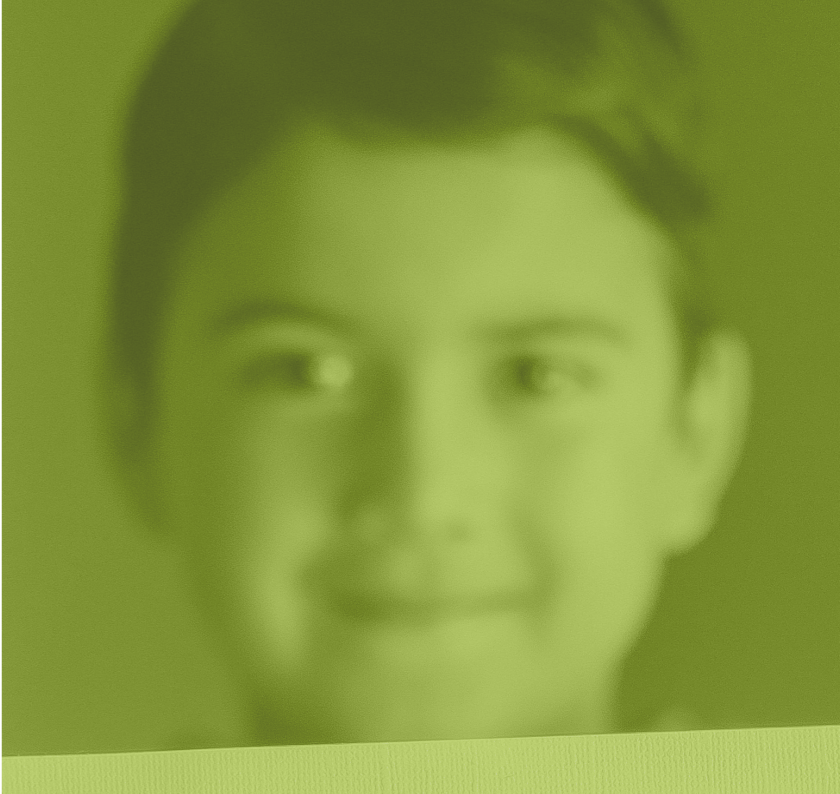
LEADERS



UNITED



CHANGE



LIVES