

A

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

DECADE

OF CHANGE UNA DÉCADA DE CAMBIO



RGV FOCUS

a COLLABORATION with EDUCATE TEXAS

A DECADE OF CHANGE, A FUTURE OF PROGRESS

In 2012, education, business, and community leaders from across the Rio Grande Valley had a clear vision for student success in the region. They knew it would take all facets of the community partnering together to ensure students received the education they needed to achieve meaningful careers and lives. The result was RGV FOCUS and una década de cambio.

Over the last decade, about half a million students in the Rio Grande Valley have been better prepared for postsecondary programs and employment facilitated by RGV FOCUS, a collaboration with Educate Texas.

This Annual Report shares new data from our 10th year and stories about our work from across our diverse, dedicated, four-county RGV community. As we look ahead, we are more focused than ever on the next decade of change. In short: Ensuring all RGV students succeed in school, in the workforce, and in life.

Our Mission

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

Our Vision

Our vision is for all RGV learners to achieve a degree or credential that leads to a meaningful career.



RGV FOCUS is committed to supporting Educate Texas' statewide 2025 Strategic Plan by achieving
TWO ESSENTIAL GOALS IN OUR REGION:

1

Contributing to the Educate Texas statewide goal of 85,000 new postsecondary degrees, credentials, and certificates by 2025

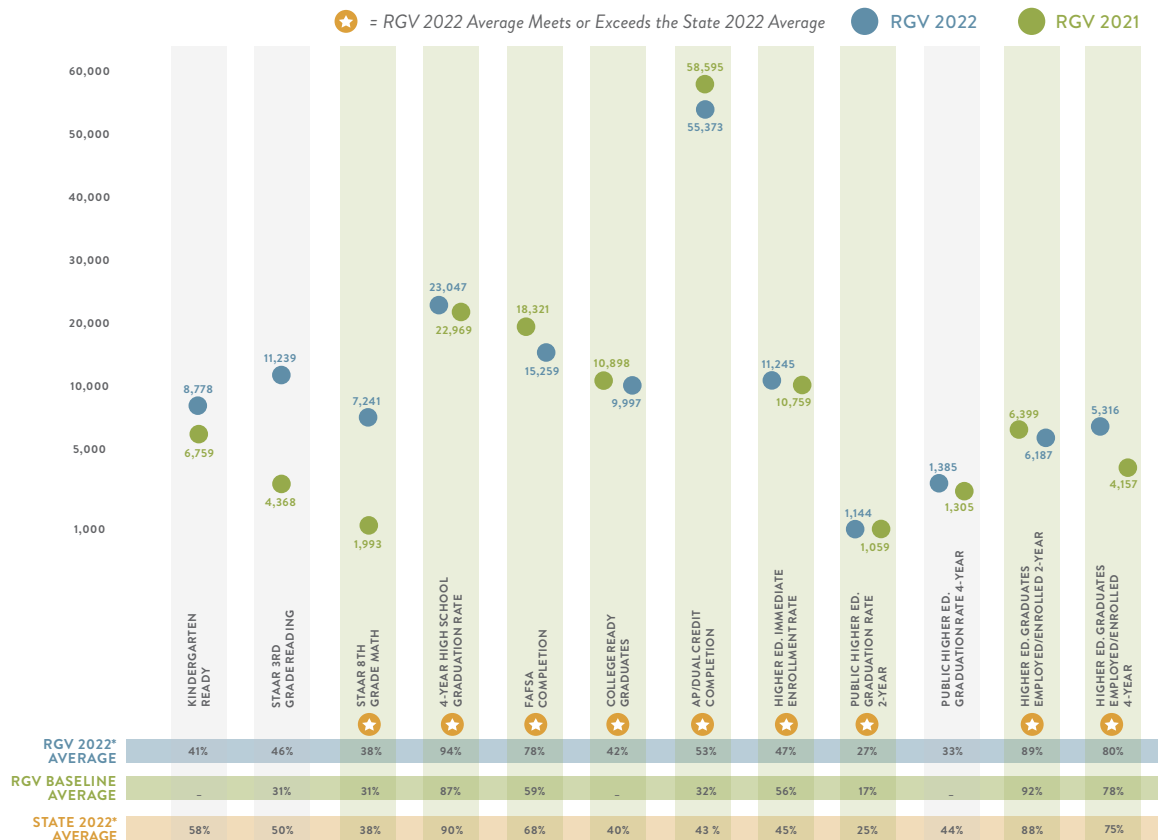
2

Enabling schools to better attract, prepare, develop, and retain more high quality and diverse teachers to improve our state's effective teaching workforce

SEEING THE IMPACT & RESILIENCY: CRADLE TO CAREER PATHWAY

Pandemic learning loss lessening; Support still needed for college/workforce access

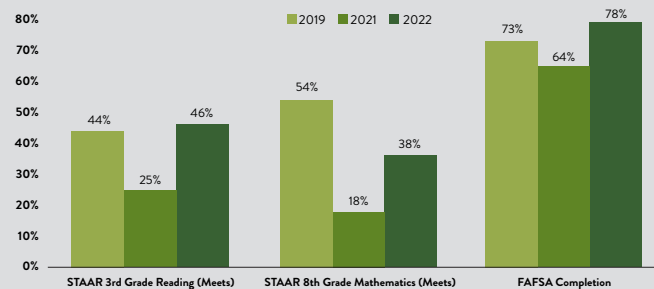
Strong learning foundation held + steady progress across the board



HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2022 DATA

STAAR 3rd grade reading scores grew **BEYOND 2019 LEVELS**

STAAR 8th grade mathematics scores are rebounding post-pandemic and are **ON PAR WITH THE STATE**



Two-year higher education graduates employed or enrolled are up by **2 PERCENTAGE POINTS** from 2021 and on par with the State.

Four-year higher education graduates employed or enrolled are up by **6 PERCENTAGE POINTS** from 2021 and are outperforming the State.

For more information, data, and to visit the expanded scorecard, scan the QR code.

FAFSA completion is up by 14 percentage points from 2021 and outperforms the state; **RGV - 78%; STATE - 68%**



Source: Texas Education Agency STAAR Aggregate Data at the "Meets Grade Level" standard, 2021-2022 school year; US Department of Education, FAFSA rates

A SNAPSHOT OF 2022

What We Accomplished & Our Focus Going Forward



LEVEL-SETTING AND ELEVATING POST-PANDEMIC

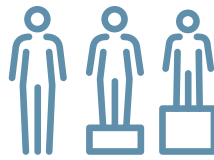
Reestablishing and strengthening partnerships across the region

Assessing academic impact and needs of campus and district leadership

Increasing access to higher education, job training programs, employers, and work-based learning opportunities

“While there’s more work to be done with college enrollment and completion, we are pleased to see the Valley rebounding so well post-pandemic. Our collective efforts are paying off; we’re maintaining the progress we’ve been making for years and continue to outpace the state on many indicators.”

- Chris Coxon, Managing Director, Educate Texas



CONTINUING DEEP FOCUS ON EQUITY

Working with all partners to look at performance and opportunity through an equity lens

- Latino students in RGV continue to outperform Latinos across the state in college-ready indicators

AP/dual credit completion - **53% RGV; 40% State**

College-ready graduates - **RGV 42% college-ready; State 34%**

- Economically disadvantaged students in RGV, which make up 85% of RGV PK-12 students, continue to outperform similar students across the state
 - College-ready graduates - **RGV 38% college-ready; State 30%**
 - STAAR 3rd grade reading - **RGV 42% met; State 39% met**
 - STAAR 8th grade math - **RGV 35% met; State 29% met**



REDOUBLING EFFORTS TO INCREASE COLLEGE ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETION RATES

- Creating stronger alignment and coordination across K-12, higher education, and workforce
- Hosting action networks around access and persistence/completion
- Helping increase & leverage HB3 Outcomes Bonus Funding through a region-wide College Career Military Readiness Professional Learning Community (CCMR PLC)





INSIDE A DECADE OF CHANGE

The vision, stories and collaboration behind RGV FOCUS

Educate Texas Managing Director Chris Coxon clearly remembers a call in late 2011 from RGV native and longtime educator Alma Garcia, who was making headway on implementing the early college high school model at scale in the Valley and felt that a collective impact initiative could support the model and advance the region.



“She saw the pressing need for a systematic, region-wide approach - vs. district by district - to improve education from cradle to career in her home, the Valley,” said Coxon. “She was willing to do whatever it took to make it happen.” With the help of Educate Texas,

anchor funding from the Greater Texas Foundation, and a hard-and-fast commitment by education, community, and business leaders across the four counties within the Rio Grande Valley, the RGV FOCUS initiative came to life.

Traci Wickett, former President & CEO at United Way of Southern Cameron County and an early education and



workforce trailblazer, recalls being part of the inaugural RGV FOCUS leadership team. “We quickly recognized that we were so much stronger together than we were separately - and the danger of working in silos,” said Wickett.

She points to sharing accountability across organizational boundaries and normalizing the use of data “not as a weapon, but as a flashlight” as two of the most important practices the team learned and adopted.

Wickett, Coxon, current RGV FOCUS Director Rebeca Lopez, and many other involved leaders call out specific educational strategies and relationships that were core



to raising up a region that, at the time, was the lowest performing in the state. However, all agree that progress wouldn't have been possible without alignment and the "strategic glue" provided by RGV FOCUS. "Systemic change doesn't happen without someone analyzing outcomes data and determining the strategies that will drive the most impact - and those strategies have to work at scale, from the smallest districts, like La Villa, to the largest, like Brownsville," said Coxon.

Dr. Daniel King, Executive Director of the Region One Education Service Center and Former Superintendent of Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD, was involved with RGV FOCUS from day one. He points to many "big wins" across the ten years, including markedly increasing FAFSA completion rates and a 4 county-wide agreement between high schools and higher education institutions about what would be deemed "college ready."

While much progress has been made, Lopez says the focus

is now on ensuring students in the Valley have exposure and access to career pathways, internships and work-based learning experiences, as well as supports for postsecondary persistence and completion, that will allow them to pursue a career with a living wage after high school.

King agreed and said, "RGV FOCUS has definitely had a good impact. I think we all agree that now, post-COVID and with many leadership changes, it's important to revisit, refresh, and reenergize the program. Should the program change in any way? Are we still

measuring the right things? A decade in, it's a good time to reflect."

Wickett adds, "The challenge now is to keep the fire burning with the same intensity it has been for a decade. We won't be seeing the same degree of change and we'll be going for the more difficult wins. But we'll continue to move the needle if we use data as our guide and keep people working together."

"Ten years later, the Valley now matches or outpaces the state in 9 out of 12 educational learning indicators. We're making an impact, and there's still much work to do."

- Rebeca Lopez, Director, Educate Texas' RGV FOCUS initiative

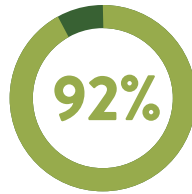
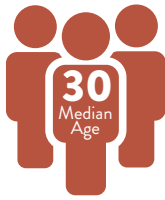
SCORECARD HIGHLIGHTS ACROSS 10 YEARS (2012 - 2022)

3rd grade STAAR reading
**UP 15 PERCENTAGE
POINTS**

AP/Dual Credit
Completion
**UP 21 PERCENTAGE
POINTS**

8th grade STAAR math
**UP 7 PERCENTAGE
POINTS**

2-year public Higher
Education Graduation Rate
**UP 10 PERCENTAGE
POINTS**



Latino Population

RIO GRANDE VALLEY BY THE NUMBERS

Only 14% of Hidalgo and Cameron County residents **25-34 years** old are earning at least a **\$50,000** annual living wage.

In the RGV, **28%** of the population lives below the poverty threshold, compared to **14%** in the state.



Of RGV residents 25 years old and older:



6% have associate degrees, compared to **8%** in that age group in the state.

19% have bachelor's degrees or higher, compared to **32%** in that age group in the state.

356,944
Public Pre-K-12
Students (95% Latino)

72,316
Public Higher Education
Students (92% Latino)



73% of RGV residents have internet access, compared to **87%** in the state.

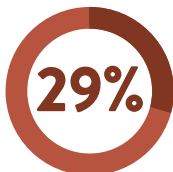


90% of RGV teachers are Latino, compared to **29%** in the state.

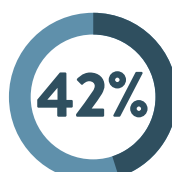
12% RGV teacher turnover rate, compared to **18%** in the state.



RGV teachers have an average **11.9** years of experience, compared to **11.1** years in the state.



of RGV Latino residents live in poverty, compared to **19%** in the state.



of RGV high school graduates are college-ready, compared to **40%** in the state.



OUR DESIGNATIONS AND NETWORKS



WITH HEARTFELT THANKS TO OUR GENEROUS FUNDERS WHO
SUPPORT OUR WORK

BILL & MELINDA
GATES *foundation*

COMMUNITIES 
FOUNDATION of TEXAS



 The Meadows
Foundation
Serving the People of Texas

StriveTogether[®]
Every child. Cradle to career.

TexasMutual[®]
WORKERS' COMPENSATION INSURANCE



W.W. CARUTH, JR. FUND
at COMMUNITIES FOUNDATION of TEXAS

ABOUT EDUCATE TEXAS & COMMUNITIES FOUNDATION OF TEXAS

In 2012, Educate Texas and Communities Foundation of Texas (CFT) partnered with Valley-based leaders to establish RGV FOCUS. Educate Texas is proud to be an initiative of Communities Foundation of Texas and, together, we are building thriving communities and a thriving education system for all Texas students. Trusted as a change agent in Texas education, Educate Texas works side by side with partners through programs and policies to empower students to realize their dreams and fuel a thriving Texas.

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