



RGV FOCUS
A COLLABORATION with EDUCATE TEXAS

ANNUAL
REPORT
2025

Talent LIVES HERE.

EL TALENTO VIVE *Aquí.*

WHERE *Talent* GROWS.
DONDE EL TALENTO *Florece.*

Across the Rio Grande Valley, students, educators, and communities bring talent, ambition, and lived experience that shape the region's future. The opportunity ahead is to ensure that talent is recognized, developed, and connected to meaningful pathways.

RGV FOCUS, an initiative of Educate Texas, brings partners together across education, workforce, and community, translating policy into practice and using data to strengthen alignment across the Rio Grande Valley. The region is moving from fragmented approaches to a coordinated talent ecosystem that connects students to credentials that prepare them for real opportunities in the workforce.

When systems are aligned, employers can hire with confidence, students can navigate clearer pathways, and education systems are better equipped to respond to evolving workforce demand. The result is a region where talent is intentionally cultivated and able to flourish.



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.

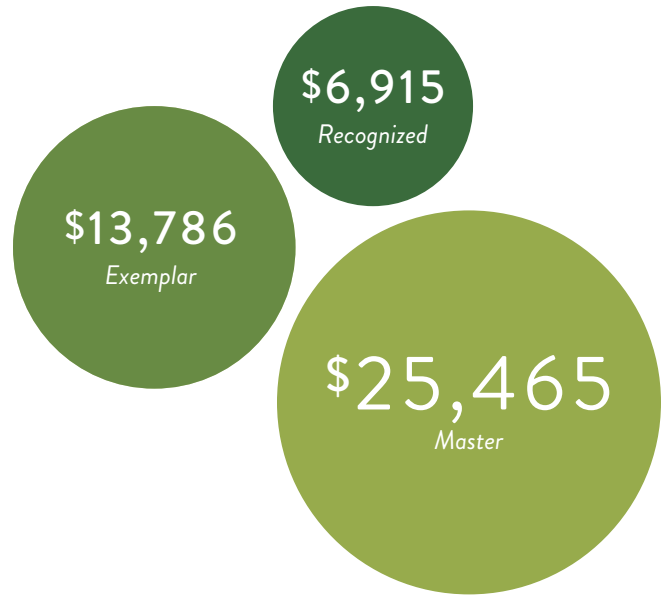
Growing the Educator Workforce

TEACHING AS A CRITICAL TALENT STRATEGY

The strength of the educator workforce directly shapes student outcomes and the region's future workforce. Teachers influence how students learn, what they aspire to, and how prepared they are for life beyond high school.

Educate Texas is working with districts to strengthen how the **Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA)** is used through strategic staffing practices. Now in its second year, the Strategic Staffing Community of Practice is supporting districts as they take a more intentional, data-driven approach to using TIA. The allotment is helping districts extend the reach of effective educators, strengthen high-need campuses, and improve long-term retention. As participation has grown rapidly from 2023-24 to 2024-25, districts are using TIA more intentionally to improve student outcomes and stabilize the educator workforce.

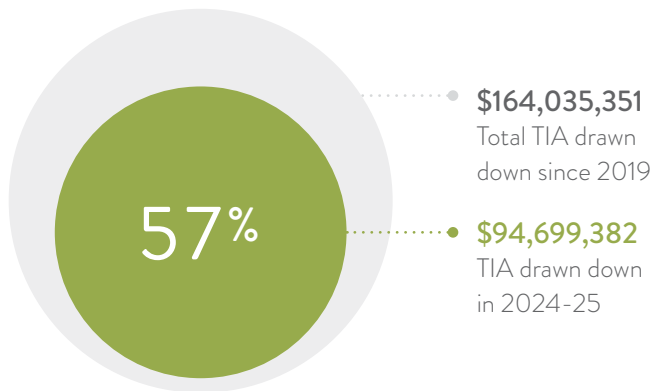
AVERAGE CAMPUS TIA ALLOTMENT 2024-2025



TIA IN RGV FOCUS DISTRICTS 2024-2025

 **34**
Districts

 **366,801**
Students



Educate Texas's leadership at the state level has helped advance efforts like the passage of House Bill 2 during the 89th Legislative Session, expanding how Texas prepares, supports, and sustains its educator workforce. In the Rio Grande Valley, RGV FOCUS is working with districts, Region One ESC, and UTRGV to align preparation pathways, certification, and workforce needs so these opportunities lead to stronger, more stable educator pipelines.

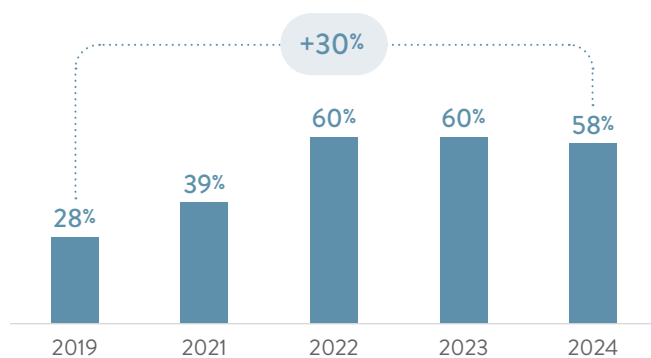
When districts take a more intentional approach to how educators are prepared, supported, and positioned, they can strengthen their workforce and expand the reach of their most effective teachers. In the Rio Grande Valley, teaching is a critical talent strategy, shaping classroom experiences and contributing to long-term regional workforce strength.

Accelerating Talent

INDUSTRY-ALIGNED PATHWAYS *and* PRACTICE

Career and Technical Education (CTE) plays a vital role in the Rio Grande Valley's talent ecosystem, preparing learners for high demand, middle and high-skill careers. CTE's impact increases when programs are aligned with employer needs and connected to other education and workforce strategies. **Industry-Based Certifications (IBCs)** strengthen this connection by validating workforce-relevant skills and providing students portable credentials that support both immediate employment and continued education. As a core component of College, Career, and Military Readiness, IBC attainment directly contributes to CCMR outcomes and serves as a key lever for improving district and regional performance.

RGV STUDENTS GRADUATING WITH CREDENTIALS MORE THAN DOUBLED SINCE 2019.



The Regional Pathways to Excellence Partnership (RPEP) model brings education, industry, and workforce partners together around shared priorities and real labor market demand. Over the past year, Region One ESC has expanded this work significantly, moving from one RPEP with six district partners to 4 RPEPs with 12 district partners. This coordination is strengthening alignment, deepening employer engagement, and helping districts move isolated programs toward more connected, regionally informed strategies.



“Students benefit when their teachers understand the real world of work. When teachers bring those experiences back to the classroom, students gain a clearer view of real career pathways and the opportunities within their own communities.”

Colt Stacer, Founder, Stacer Group

RGV FOCUS plays a critical connector and backbone role in this work. In partnership with ESC 1 and Stacer Group, and with support from Methodist Healthcare Ministries, RGV FOCUS helps districts, employers, and workforce partners connect CTE pathways to the broader talent system. This includes convening cross-sector partners, supporting rural districts following the passage of House Bill 2209, and ensuring that pathway development complements other routes to postsecondary and workforce success.

A key component of this alignment is preparing educators alongside students. Through the RGV CAREER Externship Program, CTE educators engaged directly with employers across priority industries, gaining insight into workplace expectations, emerging technologies, and in-demand skills. These experiences strengthen instruction by helping educators connect classroom learning to real-world applications and a broader range of postsecondary and career opportunities. When employers engage in learning experiences alongside educators, students gain clearer career navigation and stronger preparation for what comes next.

RPEPs, CTE pathways, and educator externships operate as part of a connected talent ecosystem where employers inform learning, educators translate workforce insight into instruction, and multiple pathways work in concert to support learners. This is how intentional alignment ensures pathways lead to real workforce opportunities.

CRADLE TO *Career* PATHWAY

● RGV 2025 ● RGV 2024 ★ RGV 2025 average meets or exceeds the Texas 2025 average

K-12 OUTCOMES		RGV '25 Avg.	RGV '24 Change	RGV Baseline	TX '25 Avg.
Kindergarten Ready	10,028 ● 10,315	47%	0%	-	51%
STAAR 3rd Grade Reading	11,919 ● 11,982	47%	▲ 1%	31%	50%
★ STAAR 8th Grade Math	8,697 ● 9,540	50%	▲ 3%	31%	45%
★ 4-Year High School Graduation Rate	23,363 ● 23,527	96%	▲ 1%	87%	91%
★ FAFSA Completion	17,543 ● 20,015	83%	▲ 8%	59%	68%
College Ready Graduates	10,668 ● 12,194	50%	▲ 7%	-	57%
AP/Dual Credit Completion	47,655 ● 57,221	45%	▼ 9%	32%	46%

HIGHER EDUCATION OUTCOMES

★ Higher Education Immediate Enrollment Rate	12,540 ● 13,160	56%	▲ 2%	56%	48%
★ Public Higher Education Graduation Rate (2-Year)	712 ● 770	32%	▲ 4%	17%	31%
Public Higher Education Graduation Rate (4-Year)	1,589 ● 1,683	35%	0%	-	45%
★ Higher Education Graduates Employed/Enrolled (2-Year)	6,000 ● 6,494	89%	▼ 1%	92%	89%
★ Higher Education Graduates Employed/Enrolled (4-Year)	5,169 ● 5,286	78%	▼ 2%	78%	74%

RGV BY THE *Numbers*



ECONOMICS

● RGV ● Texas



Residents with internet access



Population below poverty threshold



Hidalgo and Cameron county residents 25-34 years old who earn at least \$50K annually.



EDUCATION

● RGV ● Texas



College-ready high school graduates



Residents 25+ with an associate's



Residents 25+ with a bachelor's



TEACHING

● RGV ● Texas



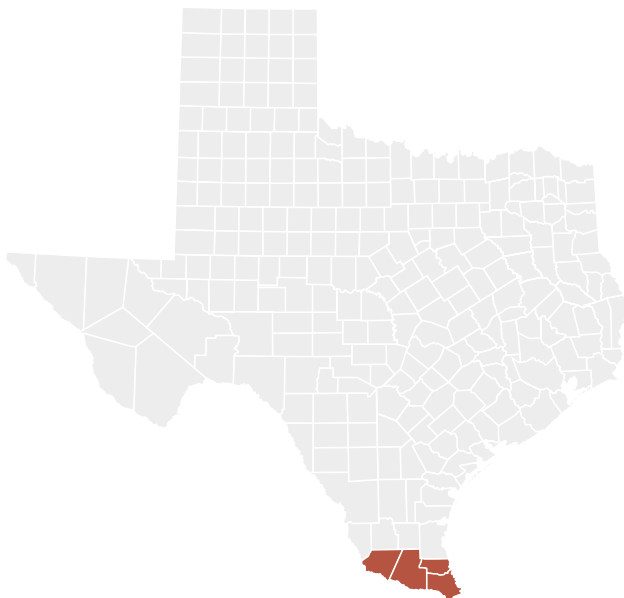
Average years of teacher experience



Latino representation among teachers



Teacher turnover rate



Population	1.4M
Latino Pop.	91%
Median age	31
Pre-K-12 students* (95% Latino)	368,132
Higher Ed students* (89% Latino)	73,392

*Public



Advancing Together

STRENGTHENING THE BACKBONE *for* LONG-TERM IMPACT

Participation in **Advance Together**, a community partnerships initiative of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, marks an important inflection point for this work in the Rio Grande Valley. It has brought greater clarity to priorities, strengthened how data informs decision-making, and aligned partners around a shared understanding of progress across the region's talent ecosystem.

Advance Together has strengthened focus, alignment, and accountability across partners. Data is being used more intentionally to support learning and decision-making, helping identify gaps, test strategies, and adjust in real time.

This approach supports more transparent conversations about progress and ensures that resources are directed toward what is working.

Advance Together reinforced the importance of strong coordination across education, workforce, and community partners. The Rio Grande Valley is rich in talent, and continued progress depends on how effectively systems support and connect that talent to opportunity. Sustained alignment across pathways will be essential to maintaining momentum and strengthening outcomes for learners, employers, and the region's future workforce.

REGIONAL *Gains*, REGIONAL *Responsibility*

Over the past three years, RGV FOCUS convened regional partners through the College Access & Enrollment Action Network—creating shared space for alignment, learning, and coordinated action to expand postsecondary access across the Rio Grande Valley. Through this network, educators, counselors, and community-based organizations strengthened advising practices, increased financial aid support, and worked together to help students and families navigate the transition from high school to postsecondary education.

By the close of 2025, this work had helped solidify a culture of collaboration across school systems, higher education institutions, and community partners. Just as importantly, it built trust, shared language, and regional capacity—assets that positioned partners to respond together when challenges arose and to reflect collectively on student success. Across its first three years, this collective work contributed to increases in immediate postsecondary enrollment and meaningful improvements in FAFSA completion rates across the region.

As this phase of the work came to a close, partners also recognized that the progress made in college access created an opportunity to think more intentionally about how to support students beyond enrollment. The relationships and shared learning built through the College Access & Enrollment Action Network laid a strong foundation for deeper collaboration focused on long-term outcomes. Conversations began to shift toward persistence, completion, and the systems students encounter in their postsecondary pathways.

This learning and momentum are informing the development of RGV SUCCESS—Supporting College Completion, Enrollment, and Student Success. RGV SUCCESS is grounded in the belief that improving student success requires cross-sector alignment, shared responsibility, and practitioner-informed strategy. This action network will focus on strengthening alignment across K-12, higher education, and community organizations to better support students in their postsecondary pathways. RGV SUCCESS reflects a growing regional commitment to ensuring that the talent that lives here is met with systems designed to support students through completion and beyond.

OUR DESIGNATIONS & NETWORKS



WITH HEARTFELT THANKS *for* THE FUNDERS WHO SUPPORT OUR WORK

 Federal Reserve
Bank of Dallas

Gates Foundation

 Methodist
Healthcare
Ministries
SERVING HUMANITY TO HONOR GOD



RGV FOCUS
A COLLABORATION *with* EDUCATE 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. As a trusted 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.

RGVFOCUS.ORG
EDTX.ORG
CFTEXAS.ORG