GOOD REASON HOUSTON

Houston Public Education Snapshot

PRESENTED BY H-E-B

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LETTER FROM THE CEO

CARY WRIGHT

CEO of Good Reason Houston

We believe in Houston's future, and that future is built on public education—our most powerful lever for a stronger, more just city. This report unites us around a shared North Star, clearly defining education as the engine of progress. We address the urgency of our challenge with unwavering optimism, focusing on the future we are building together.

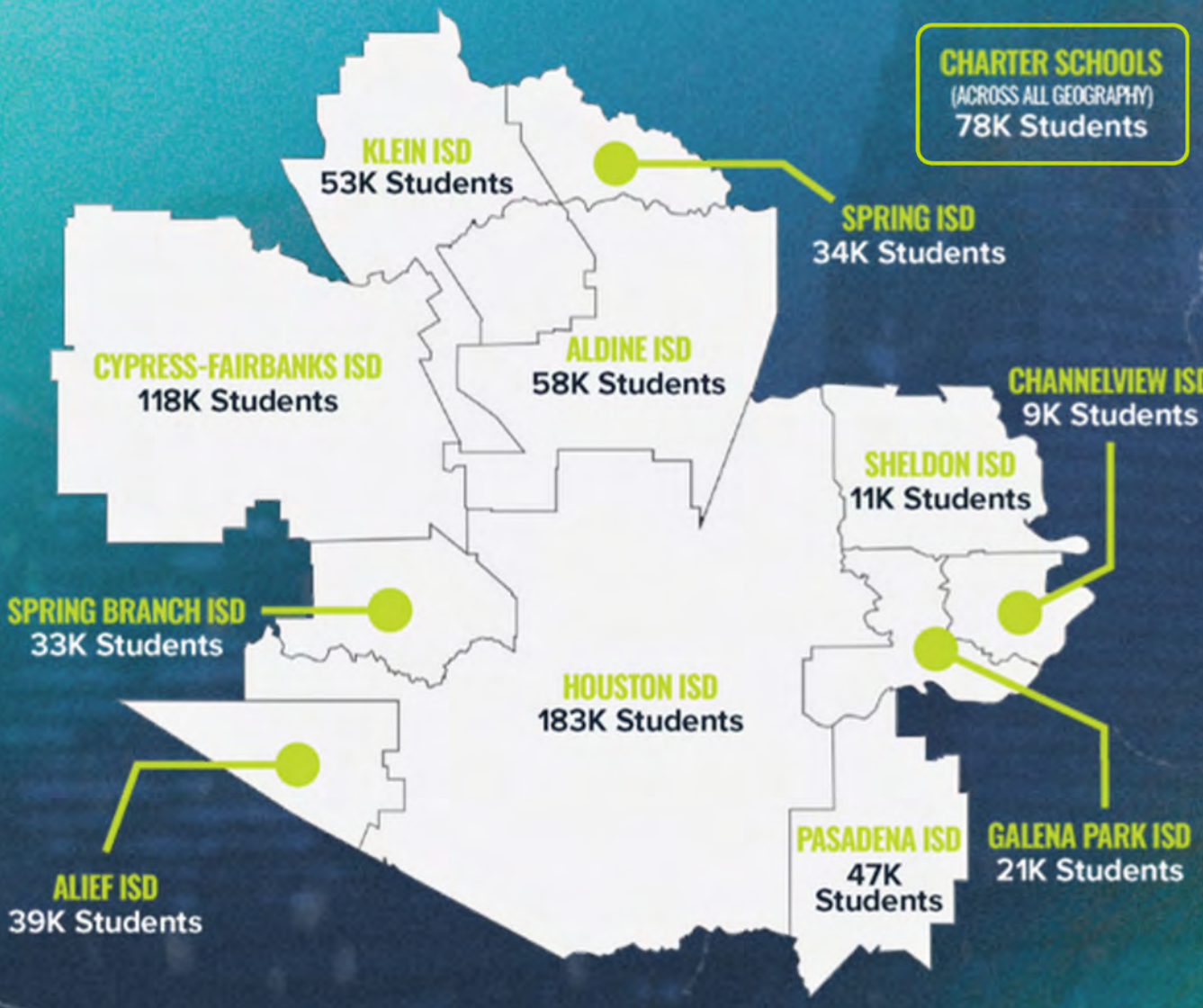
Inside, you will find a map of the journey to opportunity, showing how we drive change by working with partners like you. We provide essential insights and a moment-in-time look at progress to equip diverse audiences with the facts they need. This isn't just about systems; it's about lives. By centering students in the story, we invite you to join us in making Houston the premier education city in the nation.

25
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM PARTNERS

688,000
STUDENTS SERVED

901
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

THE HOUSTON REGION



of students in the Houston region are economically disadvantaged.

Source: 2023-2024 School Year Enrollment, 2025 Texas Academic Performance Reports.

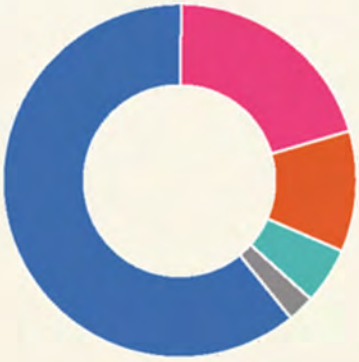
HOUSTON DEMOGRAPHICS

TOTAL ENROLLMENT ACROSS 901 SCHOOLS

688,000

ENROLLMENT BY DEMOGRAPHIC

61% HISPANIC	422,000
20% BLACK	139,000
11% WHITE	77,000
5% ASIAN	36,000
3% OTHER	17,000



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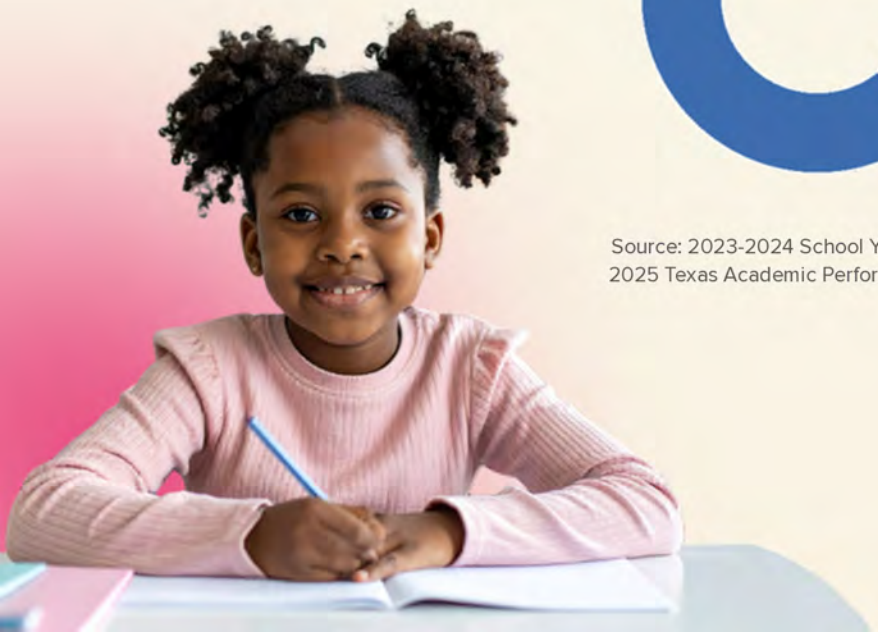


HOUSTON'S NORTH STAR

DOUBLING THE RATE OF GRADUATES EARNING A LIVING WAGE BY 2040

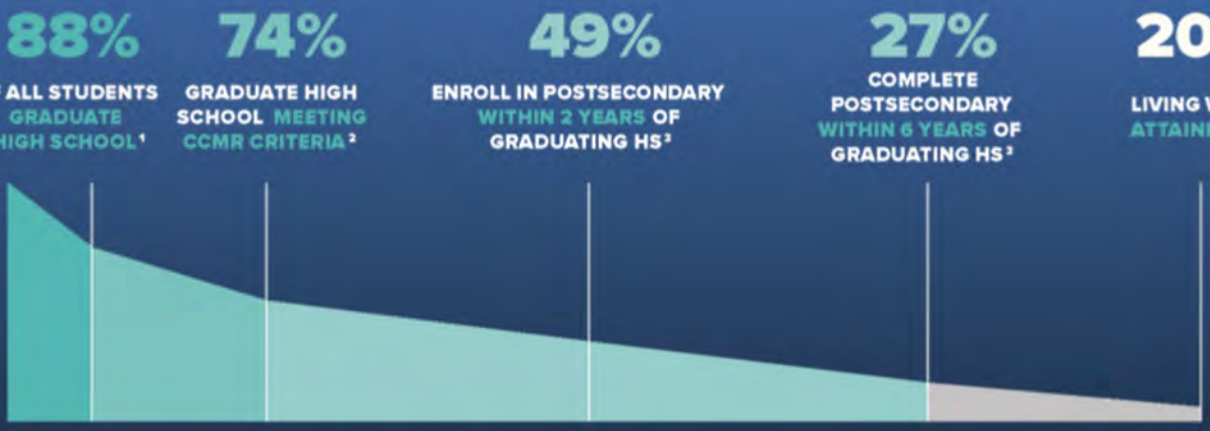
$ WHAT IS A LIVING WAGE?

$42,158

The estimated income a single person household needed to meet basic expenses in 2023 — such as housing, food, childcare, utilities, and taxes — without extra spending. Our report utilizes MIT's living wage data for Harris County.

This year's Snapshot introduces a new set of indicators that serve as strong predictors of postsecondary success. Focused on early childhood education, academic achievement, and postsecondary readiness, enrollment, and completion, these metrics form a comprehensive **cradle-to-career framework** that tracks progress at every stage of a student's journey—and measures how the region is advancing toward the goal of 45,000 students on the path to economic mobility.

THE CHALLENGE



1. Texas Academic Performance Reports 2025 for the high school class of 2023.
2. Public Information Request to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for 2023 CCMR Data.
3. Good Reason Houston Postsecondary Credential Attainment Analysis.

HOW WE DRIVE CHANGE:

We unite Houston around student success because when they thrive, so does Houston.

Awareness

We make student outcomes visible and actionable so communities and leaders can demand change.

Advocate

We push for bold, student-focused policies at both the local and state level.

Advising

We partner with school districts to set clear goals, use strong data, and improve results, especially for students too often left behind.

FROM THE FIRST DAY OF PRE-K TO THE FIRST DAY ON THE JOB.

At the heart of this framework is the belief in an **education continuum** — the idea that a student's experiences from early childhood through high school are inextricably linked to their postsecondary outcomes, including career advancement and wage attainment. By centering this holistic view, we aim to spark a critical mindset shift across systems: reorienting accountability beyond the traditional endpoint of high school graduation to focus on **life outcomes**.

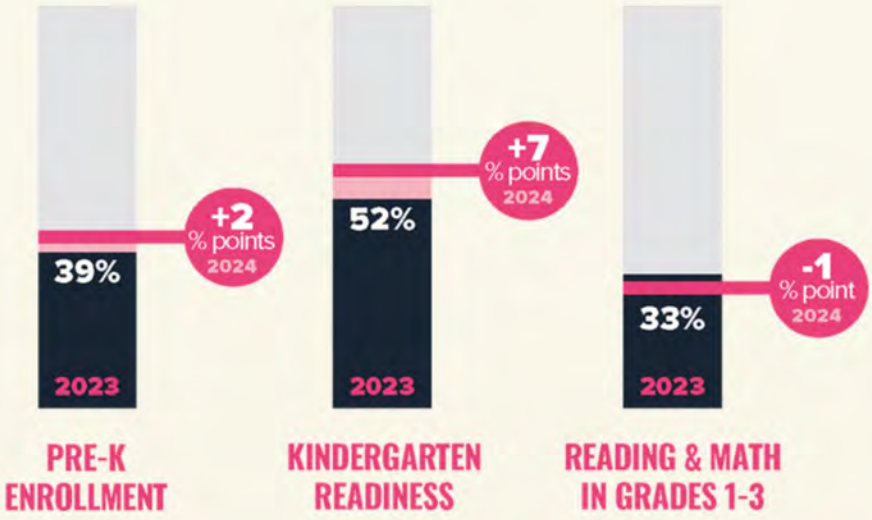
These indicators are more than just data—they are a call to action. They challenge us to **reimagine education as a continuum of care,** one that provides integrated, coordinated, and comprehensive learning experiences. Our collective aim is to equip students not only to succeed in school but to thrive in life—empowered to pursue meaningful opportunities and achieve lasting economic mobility well beyond the classroom.

Strong schools build a strong Houston. But today, a diploma isn't always enough. Every child in every neighborhood needs a clear path to a living wage and a future full of opportunities. To measure progress, we track key indicators across the Houston region — from early learning through postsecondary success — that act as a roadmap. These indicators show where our systems must improve so more students succeed.

On the next pages, look for the +/- to see how each indicator's reported data compares to the baseline year. Indicators only tell part of the story. The real question is: will Houston students have the chance to thrive here? To learn more about the indicators and their courses, please visit goodreasonhouston.org/data.

EARLY EDUCATION

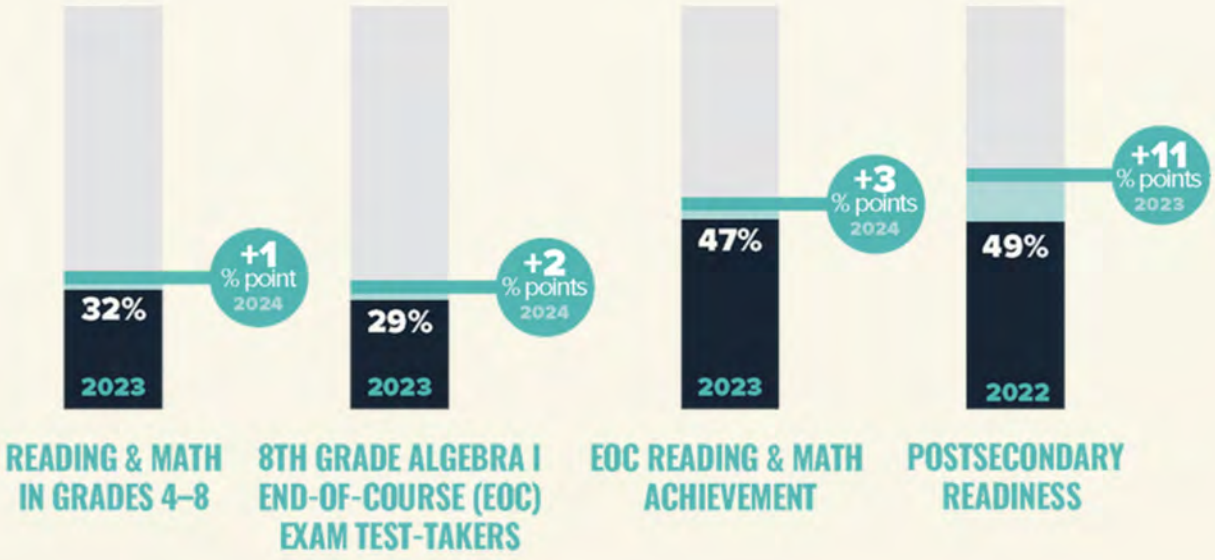
A child's trajectory is shaped long before fourth grade. Early education experiences mold students' academic, economic, and social outcomes. Measuring the education continuum subsequently starts by examining early learning outcomes, including pre-k enrollment, kindergarten readiness, and early reading and math outcomes.



- **Pre-K enrollment:** Pre-K is the first entry point into public school and sets a foundation for academic success later on. We're tracking the percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds eligible for free public pre-K who were enrolled in a given year.
- **Kindergarten readiness:** Kindergarten readiness is an indicator of how prepared students are for school upon entering the public school system. We're following the percentage of assessed incoming kindergarteners who met readiness standards.
- **Early reading & math:** Success in later grades depends on building the fundamentals early. Meeting grade level expectations on both reading and math by third grade enables students to build upon their knowledge and skills in later years.

CORE DEVELOPMENT

Success after high school requires that students establish a strong foundation in reading and math across their academic careers. Mastering core subjects and accessing advanced learning opportunities is essential to postsecondary success. In the "Core Development" portion of the education continuum, we track how well students are doing in math and reading, the percentage of eighth graders that take the Algebra I End-Of-Course (EOC) exam, and the percentage of students who meet postsecondary readiness standards. The emphasis on Algebra I is critical: Our research on postsecondary outcomes found that taking Algebra I in eighth grade allowed students to access advanced math coursework, which was linked to greater postsecondary success.



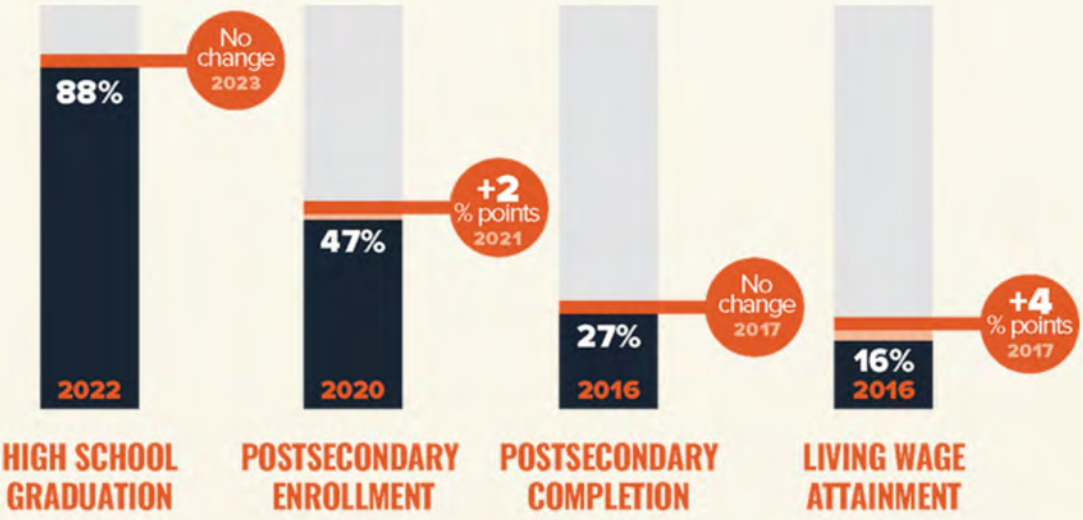
CORE DEVELOPMENT

- **Reading & math in grades 4-8:** Students require opportunities to grow their skills in math and reading throughout their academic career. Meeting grade level expectations on both reading and math in elementary and middle school puts students on a path towards postsecondary success.
- **Algebra I in 8th grade:** Taking Algebra 1 in 8th grade allows students to access advanced math coursework in high school, an opportunity known to be linked to postsecondary success. We're tracking the number of middle school students taking the Algebra I End-Of-Course (EOC) exam.
- **EOC exams in Algebra and English:** Meeting standards on math and reading EOCs on-time ensures students are prepared for high school graduation. This indicator captures the proportion of students who met standards on the Algebra 1, English 1, and English 2 exams.
- **Postsecondary readiness:** Postsecondary credential attainment is critical to long-term economic mobility, so we must ensure students are graduating high school with the skills and experiences they need to be successful in further education opportunities. This indicator tracks the percent of students considered "College Ready" by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) at high school graduation.

Read more about how these educational experiences impact postsecondary outcomes, such as college enrollment, credential attainment, employment, and earnings at **goodreasonhouston.org/postsecondary**.

POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS

Our education system must provide the foundation for meaningful college and career opportunities and economic mobility. We must ensure that graduates are prepared for economic mobility by accessing meaningful postsecondary opportunities and jobs that pay at minimum a living wage. We will track this by looking at high school graduation rates, postsecondary enrollment and completion, and living wage attainment.



POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS

- **High school graduates:** Students who graduate high school are more likely to enroll in postsecondary credential programs and ultimately, earn higher wages. This indicator represents the proportion of students who started high school at a Texas public school and graduated within four years.
- **Postsecondary enrollment:** Postsecondary credential attainment is critical to long-term economic mobility, and students cannot attain credentials without enrolling in some form of postsecondary education. This metric shows the percentage of high school graduates enrolling in a Texas institution of higher education within two years of graduating high school.
- **Postsecondary completion:** Good Reason Houston research has found that graduates with postsecondary credentials are 3-5x more likely to earn living wages than graduates without credentials. Thus, we're tracking the proportion of graduates attaining a workforce certification, associate's degree, or bachelor's degree within six years of high school graduation.
- **Living wage attainment:** Economic mobility and prosperity requires students to earn at least a living wage. Our most distal metric, this indicator examines the percentage of high school graduates that go on to earn a living wage within six years of high school graduation.

By taking the step as a region to align around these measures, we can track the success of young people across the education continuum — from the first day of Pre-K to the first day on the job — so more students each year reach the outcomes that matter: choice, agency, and a brighter future right here in Houston.

SNAPSHOT METHODOLOGY

The Snapshot indicators presented in this report require the careful compilation and integration of multiple, diverse datasets and multifaceted methodological considerations. The table below provides a detailed overview of the methodologies used to derive the Snapshot indicators, providing details on student groups, data sources, and the specific calculations for each metric in the education continuum, including living wage attainment, and our progress indicator to our goal of 45,000 more students on the path to economic mobility by 2028.

Metric and Student Group	Baseline Data Year	Most Recent Year Reported	Data Source	Methodology
Pre-K Enrollment All "Eligible and Enrolled" 3- and 4-Year-Olds[1] Students eligible for free public Pre-K in Texas are 3- or 4-year olds on or before September 1 of the current school year who meet at least one of seven criteria. The two most common criteria met include: inability to speak or comprehend the English language and coming from an economically disadvantaged background (eligible to participate in national school lunch program).	2023	2024	Texas Public Education Information Resource. A Public Information Report (PIR) is submitted yearly to access campus-level data.	Pre-K enrollment data reflects all eligible Houston region 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in public pre-K programs divided by the eligible population, which TEA determines by calculating the number of current first graders who would have been Pre-K eligible as 4-year-olds. This eligible population is doubled to reflect the eligibility of two grade cohorts, 3- and 4-year-olds. Only independent school district counts are included; charter pre-K enrollment data is excluded.
Kindergarten Readiness All "Tested Kindergarteners" within the first 30 days of the school year.	2023	2024	Texas Academic Performance Reports	Divide the number of kindergarten ready students who met readiness standards by assessed kindergarteners.[1]

[1] During the analysis, we identified that the Houston Independent School District reported a steep decline in kindergartners assessed, from 13,000 students before 2023 to 3,500 in 2023 and 4,500 in 2024. We will update the number as new information becomes available.

Metric and Student Group	Baseline Data Year	Most Recent Year Reported	Data Source	Methodology
Reading & Math Achievement ***Grades 1-3*** ***Grades 4-8*** All students scoring "Meets" or "Masters" on both Reading and Math on their grade-level STAAR tests: Grade 3 Grades 4-8 combined	2023	2024	A PIR is submitted yearly following the release of STAAR Aggregate data to retrieve the combined number of students meeting or mastering reading and math at the campus and district levels.	Divide the number of students meeting or mastering STAAR grade-level proficiency standards on both math and reading exams by the total number of test-takers. Data is aggregated separately for grade 3 and grades 4-8. At present, no standardized assessment exists for grades 1-2.
8th Grade Algebra I Test-Takers All 8th grade students	2023	2024	Texas Academic Performance Reports, Texas Assessment Research Portal (STAAR reports)	The number of middle school students taking Algebra I EOC divided by total 8th grade enrollment. This calculation excludes combined secondary campuses, coded by TEA as "B" for school type, who enroll 8th-12th graders on the same campus, given that we cannot separate the data by grade level, only test subject and campus type. The exception to this is when a district provided the data for each grade. In FY25, this included campuses for YES Prep and Spring Branch ISD. In addition, students may take Algebra I before 8th grade at a campus, however, we still only utilized the 8th grade enrollment as the denominator due to data limitations.

Metric and Student Group	Baseline Data Year	Most Recent Year Reported	Data Source	Methodology
EOC Reading & Math Achievement All students scoring "Meets" or "Masters" on any of three EOC exam: Algebra I, English I, and English II	2023	2024	Texas Assessment Research Portal (STAAR reports)	Using campus- and district-level data, we utilize the Standard Summary data download. For each test (Algebra I, English I, and English II), numerators reflect students in the "Meets and Above" performance level, divided by the total test takers in the subject. We then aggregate each subject (Algebra I + English I + English II) up to a combined EOC subject level. At the time of this report, this metric includes the meets and masters rate for all three tests, which results in over-counting in the numerators and denominators because the data represents all test-takers for each test, not individual students. This indicator currently counts the three EOC exams as three separate "milestones met" for students, which means a student could be counted three times. This is different from our grades 1-3 and 4-8 achievement, where the information obtained from the PIR allows us to count students individually.

Metric and Student Group	Baseline Data Year	Most Recent Year Reported	Data Source	Methodology
Postsecondary Readiness All students who met at least one "College Ready" criteria, as captured by the TEA Definition of College Ready, including: TSI, Dual Credit, AP/IB Passing, Associate's Degree, OnRamps, Ad. Diploma, IBC, IEP/Workforce, Level I/II Certification	2022	2023	Texas Academic Performance Reports	The percentage of annual graduates who demonstrated college readiness divided by the total number of annual graduates.
HS Graduation Rate All students who graduated with their high school cohort in four years	2022	2023	Texas Academic Performance Reports	Use the 4-year Longitudinal Graduation Rate, as reported by TEA.

Metric and Student Group	Baseline Data Year	Most Recent Year Reported	Data Source	Methodology
Postsecondary Enrollment (0-2 Years) All students who enrolled in a Texas postsecondary program within two years of HS graduation.	2020	2021	Original Good Reason Houston research[2] using student-level data from Texas Education Agency, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, National Student Clearinghouse, Texas Workforce Commission[3]	Divide the number of high school graduates who enrolled in a postsecondary program within two years of high school graduation by the total number of high school graduates. Due to data availability limitations, we only include Houston graduates who enrolled in Texas Institutions of Higher Education and those with a social security number. Graduates who enrolled in college out of state are excluded from all analyses.

[2] Good Reason Houston. (2025). Building the future workforce: Connecting pre-K-12 experiences to workforce success in Texas. https://goodreasonhouston.org/wp-content/uploads/GoodReasonHouston_Postsecondary_Report_January2025.pdf

[3] The data for Postsecondary Enrollment, Postsecondary Completion, and Living Wage Attainment were accessed using the University of Houston Education Research Center.

Metric and Student Group	Baseline Data Year	Most Recent Year Reported	Data Source	Methodology
Postsecondary Completion (3-6 Year) All students who completed a Texas postsecondary credential within six years of high school graduation.	2016	2017	Original Good Reason Houston research using student-level data from Texas Education Agency, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, National Student Clearinghouse, Texas Workforce Commission has found that graduates with postsecondary credentials are 3-5x more likely to earn living wages than graduates without credentials.	The number of high school graduates who completed a postsecondary program within six years of high school graduation divided by the total number of high school graduates. Due to data availability limitations, we only include Houston graduates who enrolled in Texas Institutions of Higher Education and those with a social security number. Graduates who enrolled in college out of state are excluded from all analyses.

Metric and Student Group	Baseline Data Year	Most Recent Year Reported	Data Source	Methodology
***North Star Goal:* Living Wage Attainment** All Houston region high school graduates employed in Texas.	2016	2017	Texas Education Agency, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, National Student Clearinghouse, Texas Workforce Commission	The rate of Houston region high school graduates earning a living wage within six years of high school graduation. This data includes reported wages from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) for those earning a W-2 reported wage in Texas. The living wage threshold is set using MIT's living wage calculator for a single earner household with no dependents in Harris County. Our research team utilized the nationally recognized Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) living wage benchmark, which indicates the rate an individual must earn to support themselves and/or their family working full-time by county. This calculation is for basic needs only. Our calculations at the time of this reporting utilize the 2023 threshold in Harris County of $42,158 for a single earner with no dependents.
***Progress Indicator:* Number of Students on a Path to Economic Mobility** All Houston region students in the pre-K to postsecondary pipeline.	Fiscal Year 2024	N/A	N/A	This is the sum of numerators from each North Star Progress Indicator. This allows us to track and monitor the net change and progress to date toward our North Star Goal.

GOOD REASON HOUSTON

Every Child. Every Neighborhood.

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