



# Are Harris County Students Prepared for Success After High School?

## TWO MEASURES OF COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS TELL VERY DIFFERENT STORIES

Highlights from the April 2023 Ed Trust policy brief. [View the full policy brief here.](#)

Students in every Harris County community aspire to live out their dreams of becoming teachers, nurses, lawyers, engineers, and more. Eager to learn, many students from diverse backgrounds are working hard to reach their college and career goals and provide a better future for themselves and their families. However, only 22% of Harris County students complete a postsecondary certificate or program within six years of their high school graduation. Without a postsecondary credential, that leaves young adults with just a 13% chance of earning a living wage.

How can school systems better prepare students for success after high school? The answer may depend on how they measure and set goals for College, Career and Military Readiness (CCMR). Texas has two different definitions of college and career readiness, and they reveal very different outcomes for Harris County students.

There is a wide disconnect between students' readiness levels within the state's accountability standards and their actual postsecondary success. About 72% of students who graduated in the class of 2019 met the state's CCMR accountability standards. However, only 31% of these same students met the more rigorous and holistic benchmarks set within the state's CCMR outcomes bonus framework established in 2019 under House Bill 3. That means school systems can use this more predictive measure of postsecondary readiness to better support students in ways that lead to postsecondary success.

**Only 22% of Harris County students complete a postsecondary certificate or program within six years of their high school graduation. That leaves young adults with just a 13% chance of earning a living wage.**

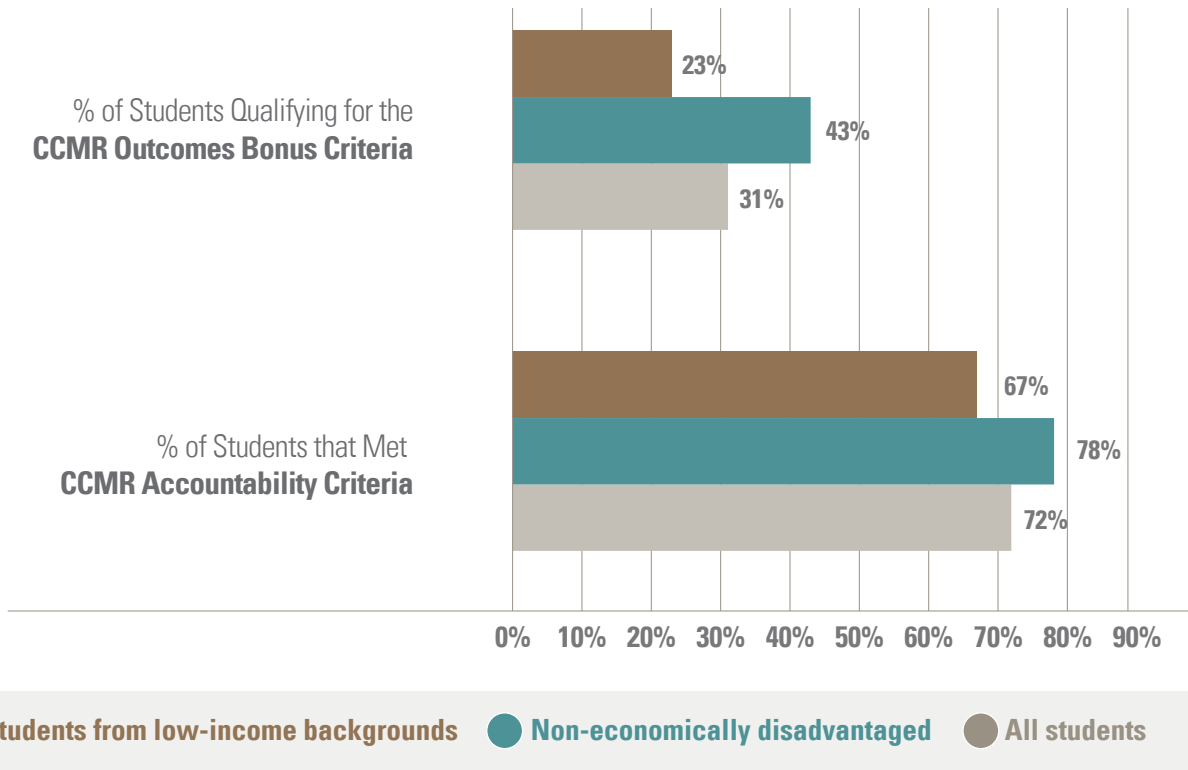


The Education Trust

edtrust.org

2023

**Figure 1: Harris County, Class of 2019 Graduates**



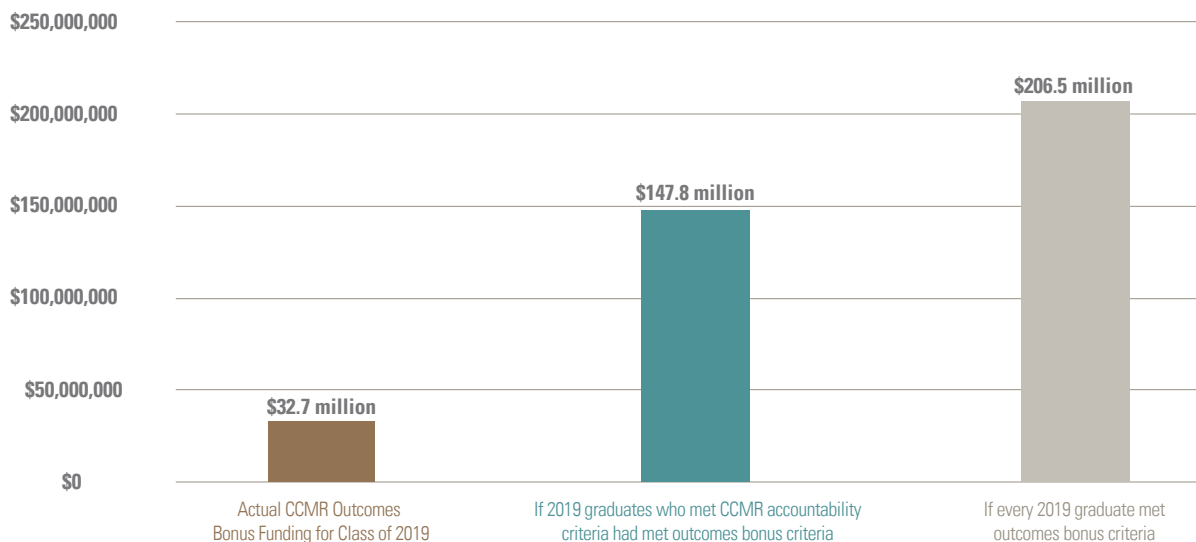
Source: Ed Trust Analysis, TAPR data 2019-2020, TEA CCMR Outcomes Bonus Funding PIR, 2020-2021

The outcomes bonus was also designed to reward school systems for supporting students to demonstrate academic readiness and successfully enroll in a postsecondary institution, complete an industry-based credential, or enlist in the military. That means school systems can receive additional state funding when they support students to reach a more rigorous measure of readiness, especially students from low-income backgrounds and students with disabilities.

**If the graduates of the Class of 2019 who met the CCMR accountability criteria had met the outcomes bonus criteria, Harris County districts would have received \$147.8 million.**



**Figure 2: Harris County, Class of 2019 Graduates – CCMR Outcomes Bonus Funding: Actual and Projection**



Source: Texas Impact Network, TAPR data 2019-2020, TEA CCMR Outcomes Bonus Funding PIR, 2020-2021

Harris County’s future workforce depends on skilled students earning postsecondary credentials of value. If district leaders make strategic investments focused on students with the most need, they can reinvest increased outcomes bonus funding in ways that prepare even more students postsecondary success. Districts should start by:

- Making disaggregated CCMR accountability and outcomes bonus data easily accessible
- Setting and monitoring concrete and timebound goals to improve CCMR metrics, particularly outcomes bonus metrics
- Using CCMR outcomes data to evaluate equity of access and participation in advanced coursework, certification offerings, and advising services
- Investing in targeted, evidence-based initiatives to improve CCMR outcomes, such as increasing the number of college and career advisors
- Incorporating CCMR metrics within their performance evaluations of school and administrative leadership

To read the full report, visit [edtrust.org/txccmr](https://edtrust.org/txccmr)