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P-TECH in Texas

What Happens After High School?

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mdrc
BUILDING KNOWLEDGE TO IMPROVE SOCIAL POLICY

Across the country, educators and policymakers are seeking ways to better prepare young people for both college and careers. One promising approach is P-TECH (Pathways in Technology Early College High School). The distinguishing feature of the P-TECH model is a partnership among a high school, a community college, and one or more employer partners. P-TECH schools collaborate with local colleges to provide students with an opportunity to earn a high school diploma and a cost-free, industry-recognized associate's degree. During the program, employer partners provide students with work-based learning experiences such as internships, mentoring, and job shadowing, and the credentials students can earn are in the field of industry partners. The model has proliferated rapidly both nationally and internationally since the first school was opened in New York City in 2011. This brief shares findings from a study funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies to explore early outcomes of P-TECH students in Texas, where the model has been broadly implemented.

P-TECH in Texas: Expanding the Model

The Texas Legislature established a P-TECH Advisory Council in 2017, and the state then began rapidly implementing new P-TECH programs. Today, there are nearly 250 P-TECH schools and programs operating across Texas, making it the largest statewide expansion of the model.[1]

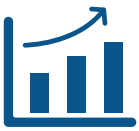
A recent, rigorous random assignment study conducted by MDRC found that students who attended the original seven P-TECH schools in New York City were 5 percentage points more likely to have earned associate's degrees seven years after they entered high school. Notably, those impacts came disproportionately among young men, who received associate's degrees within that time frame at three times the rate of male students in the comparison group.[2] The study also found that students in P-TECH schools were more likely to engage in program-related opportunities in high school, including dual enrollment (earning college credit while in high school) and internships, suggesting that P-TECH students had substantively different experiences of high school than other students did.

Texas's approach to P-TECH reflects both the core elements of the original model and important adaptations. Unlike the six-year, stand-alone P-TECH schools in New York City, many P-TECH programs in Texas are embedded within larger comprehensive high schools and are typically designed to be completed within four or five years. Students can earn college credits, industry-recognized credentials, and, depending on the program, associate's degrees while still in high school.

The state has also developed a set of formal benchmarks to guide implementation and ensure consistency across programs.[3] These benchmarks outline expectations for school design, partnerships with colleges and employers, academic instruction, student support services, and work-based learning opportunities. In addition, Texas tracks measures related to student access, academic achievement, and credential attainment, which programs must meet to maintain their P-TECH designation.

This level of scale and standardization makes Texas a unique setting to assess whether P-TECH can improve outcomes for students, as well as to examine how those outcomes may vary across different regions, schools, and student groups.

Requirements for P-TECH Designation Under the Texas P-TECH Blueprint

 **Strategic Partnerships**	• Formal articulation agreement with a Texas institution of higher education outlining curriculum alignment and credit transfer • Memorandum of understanding with industry partners guaranteeing work-based learning and priority job interviews
 **Targeted Student Recruitment and Enrollment**	• Open enrollment that aims to recruit students least likely to attend college • Transparent admissions information published online (for example, program benefits, pathways)
 **Curriculum and Postsecondary**	• Sequences for grades 9-14 integrating high school and college coursework at no cost • Clear map showing how students earn up to 60 college credits or an associate's degree
 **Work-Based Learning**	Progression in every grade: • Career awareness (Grade 9) • Career preparation (Grade 10-11) • Internships/apprenticeships (Grade 12-14) • Industry advising (mentors, site visits, and councils)
 **Student Support and Advising**	• Dedicated advising for college readiness, academic planning, and career guidance • Required publication of advising-related artifacts (for example, student support plans)
 **Data and Continual Improvement**	• Annual reporting on access, attainment, and achievement indicators • Required posting of documentation showing progress and program fidelity

SOURCE: Texas College and Career Readiness School Models (2026).

About This Study

This brief draws on a new analysis of student outcomes using Texas's state longitudinal data systems. The study focuses on students who enrolled in P-TECH programs across Texas between the 2018–2019 and 2023–2024 school years, following cohorts (entering classes) of ninth-graders over time as they progress through high school and into postsecondary education and the workforce.[4] These students are compared with students enrolled in the same schools who did not engage in the P-TECH program.[5]

The goal of this research is to provide a clear, descriptive picture of how students in P-TECH programs are faring at milestones along their educational and career pathways. Specifically, the study examines a set of outcomes aligned with the model's theory of change:

- High school completion within four years
- Immediate enrollment in postsecondary education after high school
- Completion of associate's degrees or higher, certificates, or other credentials[6]
- Early labor market outcomes, including earnings in the years immediately following high school

The figures that follow present outcomes for students who enrolled in P-TECH programs alongside those of other students who attended the same schools but did not participate in P-TECH.[7] While this comparison cannot determine whether differences between groups were caused by participation in P-TECH, it provides early descriptive evidence about P-TECH on a large scale. The study also explores how outcomes vary across student characteristics and school contexts.

These findings provide a snapshot of how these two groups of students compare across high school, postsecondary, and early workforce outcomes and provide an important first look at P-TECH outcomes that can help inform programs and motivate future research.

Student Characteristics

Students do need to apply to attend P-TECH programs before they enter ninth grade, but the programs are meant to be open to all applicants; schools may not use grade point averages, teacher recommendations, application essays, or other criteria that would create a barrier to entry. State law also specifies that P-TECH programs need to target for recruitment and enrollment students who are considered "at risk," which includes students who have limited English proficiency, students with disabilities, and students who have not passed state standardized tests.[8]

P-TECH and non-P-TECH students look similar across several demographic measures. In both groups, students are predominantly Hispanic (68 percent of P-TECH students and 66 percent of non-P-TECH students) and economically disadvantaged (80 percent of P-TECH

students and 79 percent of non-P-TECH students).[9] The groups also have similar proportions of students who have ever been classified as having limited English proficiency (45 percent of P-TECH students and 46 percent of non-P-TECH students).

There are also some differences between groups. P-TECH students are more likely to be female (54 percent of P-TECH students and 46 percent of non-P-TECH students) and less likely to receive special education services (6 percent of P-TECH students and 11 percent of non-P-TECH students).

Student Outcomes

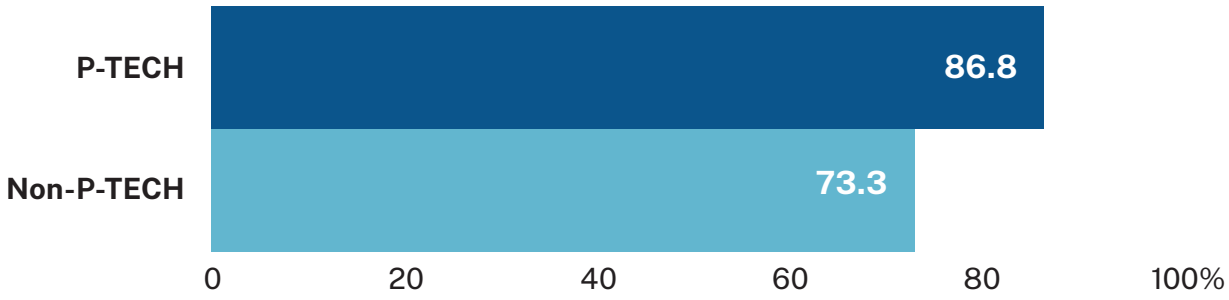
P-TECH Students Have Better Outcomes After High School Than Non-P-TECH Students

In this brief, postsecondary outcomes are highlighted for two cohorts of students for whom data were available up to five years after entering ninth grade. These two cohorts total 34,941 students (7,744 who ever enrolled in P-TECH and 27,197 who enrolled in the same schools, but not in P-TECH) in 65 schools across Texas.[10] Earnings outcomes were measured for a subset of students who could be followed for up to six years after entering ninth grade. This subset has 14,868 students, of whom 3,250 had been in P-TECH programs.

▶ High School Graduation

P-TECH Students Graduate High School at Higher Rates Than Non-P-TECH Students in the Same School

Percentage of students who have graduated high school five years after entering ninth grade

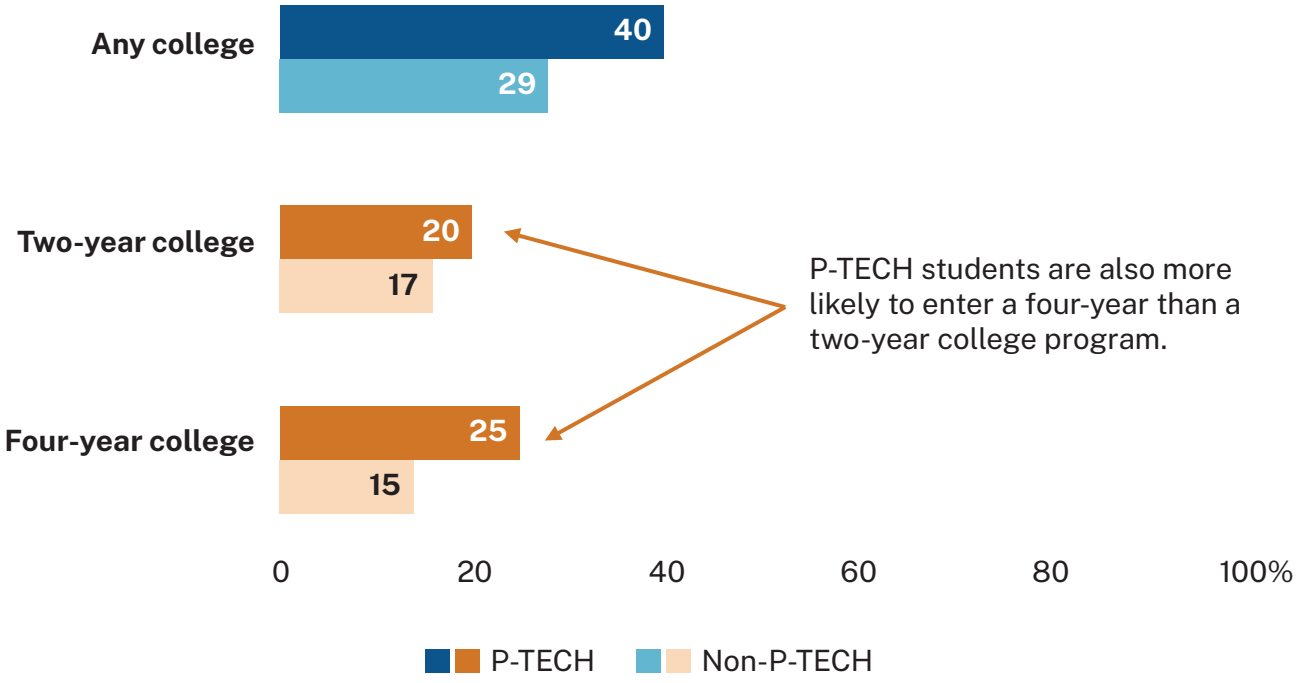


SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from the Texas Education Agency, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and Texas Workforce Commission via the University of Houston Education Research Center.

College Enrollment and Postsecondary Credentials

P-TECH Students Enroll in Two-Year and Four-Year Colleges at Higher Rates

Percentage of students who have enrolled in college five years after entering ninth grade



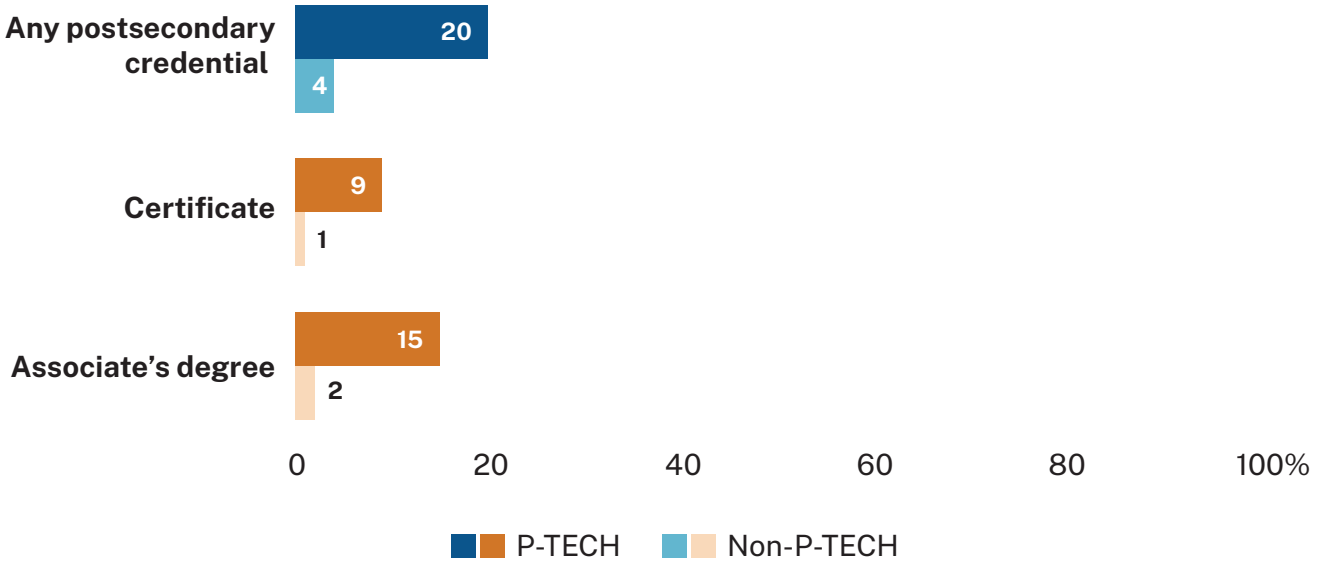
SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from the Texas Education Agency, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and Texas Workforce Commission via the University of Houston Education Research Center.

NOTES: These enrollment measures combine data across all terms in the academic year, meaning students may appear in multiple categories if they attended different institution types during any included semester or session.

Four-year colleges include public universities and independent colleges and universities. Two-year colleges include community, technical, and state colleges; career schools and colleges; and health-related institutions.

P-TECH Students Are More Likely to Earn Postsecondary Credentials

Percentage of students who have earned a postsecondary credential five years after entering ninth grade



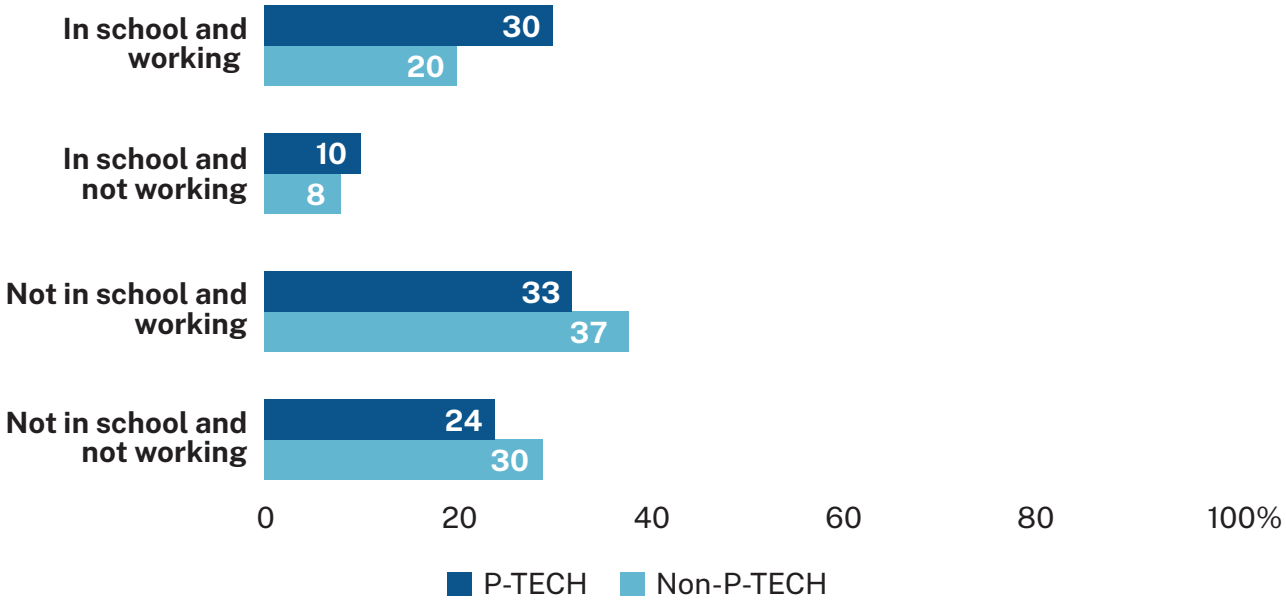
SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from the Texas Education Agency, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and Texas Workforce Commission via the University of Houston Education Research Center.

School and Work Status in Year 5

Five years after entering ninth grade, P-TECH students were 10 percentage points more likely to be in school and working and 5 percentage points less likely to be out of school and not working. (This latter group of young people is sometimes called "opportunity youth.") These differences suggest that P-TECH may be a successful model for keeping young people connected to school or the workforce. Disconnection from school and work during these transformative years can have negative, long-term consequences for a range of outcomes including earnings, incarceration, and physical and mental well-being, and these negative consequences result in high costs for these young people, their communities, and society at large. By keeping students connected to school and work, P-TECH may improve their longer-term outcomes.

P-TECH Students Were More Likely to Be in School and Working and Less Likely to Be out of School and Not Working

Percentage of students in each group five years after entering ninth grade

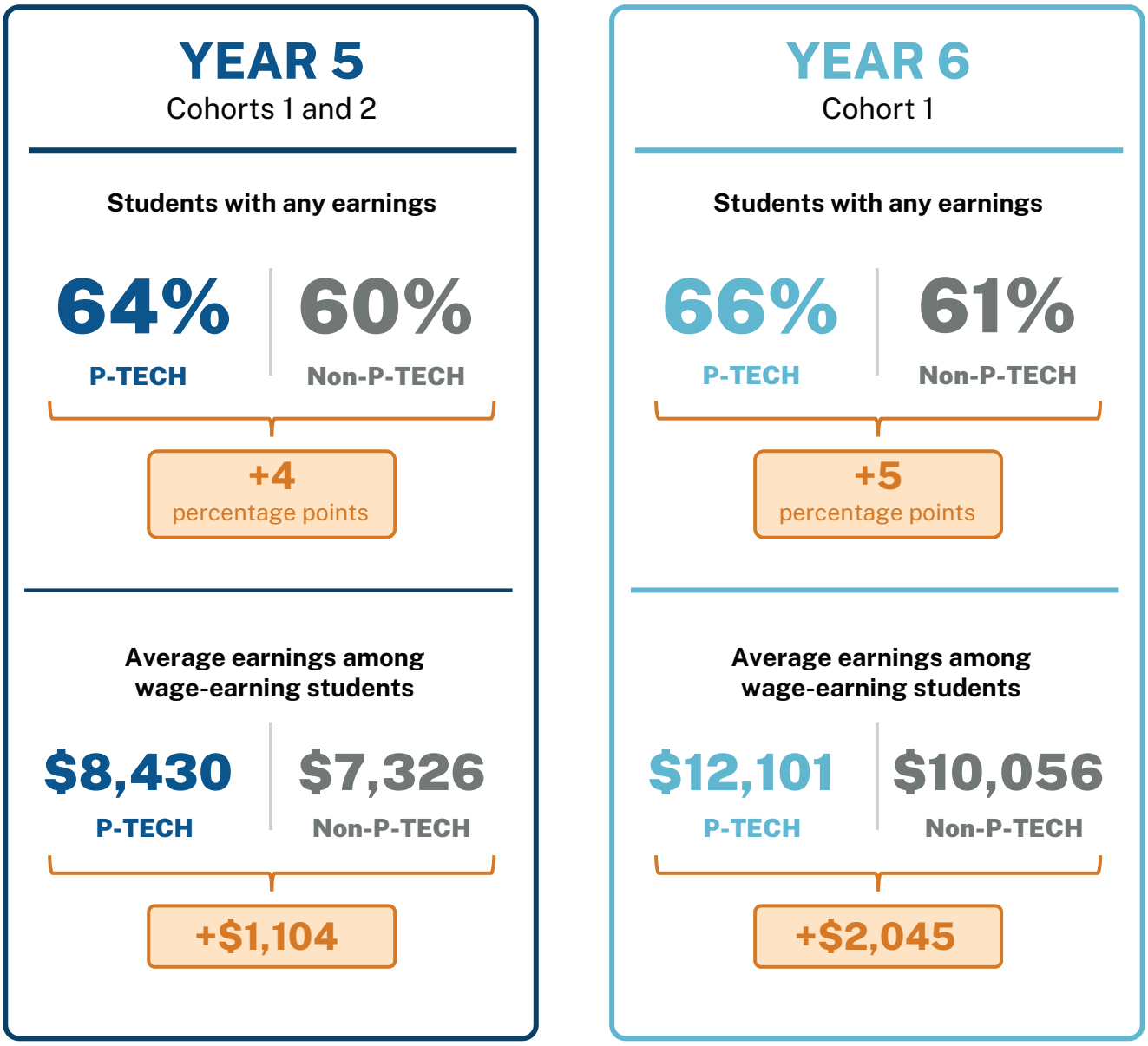


SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from the Texas Education Agency, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and Texas Workforce Commission via the University of Houston Education Research Center.

NOTE: Because students still enrolled in high school five years after ninth grade are excluded, results do not add to 100.

Early Employment and Earnings

More P-TECH students have reported wages. Wages look similar five years after ninth-grade enrollment but begin to diverge by six years after ninth-grade enrollment, with P-TECH students earning more.



SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from the Texas Education Agency, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and Texas Workforce Commission via the University of Houston Education Research Center.

If these patterns continue, the earnings gap between P-TECH and non-P-TECH students could continue to expand.

Subgroup Analyses

P-TECH students of different races and genders, and from different geographic locations across Texas, are all performing better than similar students who did not enroll in P-TECH.

Observed Year 5 Differences Between P-TECH and Non-P-TECH Students

Subgroup	Postsecondary Enrollment (Percentage Points)	Any Postsecondary Credential (Percentage Points)	Earnings	Subgroup Highlights
All Students	+11.4	+16.8	+$1,104	
GENDER				
Men	+10.3	+15.4	+$1,082	**Gender** Both male and female students showed sizable differences in credential attainment.
Women	+13.3	+18.1	+$979	
RACE/ETHNICITY				
White	+9.4	+9.5	+$982	**Race** The largest observed enrollment difference was for Black students. The largest difference in credential attainment was for Hispanic students.
Black	+12.4	+10.0	+$370	
Hispanic	+10.5	+19.5	+$1,197	

(continued)

Observed Year 5 Differences (continued)

Subgroup	Postsecondary Enrollment (Percentage Points)	Any Postsecondary Credential (Percentage Points)	Earnings	Subgroup Highlights
LOCALE				 **Locale** Rural P-TECH students had only a modest enrollment difference but a particularly large difference in credential attainment and earnings.
Urban	+12.5	+17.2	+$892	
Suburban	+8.5	+9.5	+$702	
Rural	+3.8	+21.3	+$2,840	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from the Texas Education Agency, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and Texas Workforce Commission via the University of Houston Education Research Center.

Why These Results Matter

Texas's investment in P-TECH represents a major policy commitment to preparing high school students for college and careers, and serves as a model for other states looking to invest in similar programs. Capturing evidence about outcomes from P-TECH can help policymakers make informed decisions about expanding, improving, and sustaining similar models. This brief provides descriptive evidence on the outcomes of students in P-TECH schools and illustrates that these programs may promote improved outcomes for students in postsecondary enrollment, attainment, and early career earnings. In addition, these findings also suggest that the model may be effective at reducing the incidence of students becoming opportunity youth. Overall, these findings provide promising evidence that the Texas investment in P-TECH is paying off, and provide a potential roadmap for other states or districts looking to implement similar models on a large scale.

See the supplemental tables posted with this brief for more details.

Notes and References

1. The P-TECH model currently operates in 12 U.S. states. The number of schools with P-TECH programs varies considerably across states, with New York (51 schools), Colorado (22 approved schools/programs), and Maryland (9 schools) having the most programs; other states operate 5 or fewer P-TECH schools or programs.
2. Rachel Rosen, Elizabeth Alterman, Lashawn Richburg-Hayes Treskon, Leigh Parise, Melissa Dixon, and Charles Wuest, *P-TECH 9-14 Pathways to Success: Implementation, Impact, and Cost Findings from the New York City P-TECH 9-14 Schools Evaluation* (MDRC, 2023).
3. Texas College and Career Readiness School Models, "P-TECH Blueprint" (website: https://texasccrsm.org/ptech/blueprint/, 2026).
4. The analysis in this brief presents only students with at least four full years of data (that is, who entered ninth grade at least four years before the brief was written). Note that all cohorts experienced some level of disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. Data speaking directly to student experiences (for example, work-based learning experiences or college courses taken during high school) were not available.
6. "Other credentials" include course-completion certificates and field-of-study certificates, which are used to facilitate transfer to four-year institutions.
7. The model controlled for sex, race (Black, Hispanic, White, or "other race," which comprised American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander), economic disadvantage status, special education designation, whether a student was ever classified as having limited English proficiency, z-scored eighth-grade state math and English language arts tests (seventh-grade tests were used for the 2020-2021 cohort, who did not test in eighth grade), and an indicator for whether students took the STAAR Alternate 2 test (a state test for students with cognitive disabilities), and for ninth-grade school and cohort.
8. Texas law requires any P-TECH program that has more applicants than it can admit to determine admission using a randomized lottery.
9. "Economically disadvantaged" is defined as "an indication of an inadequate financial condition of an individual's family, as determined by family income, number of family members/dependents, participation in public assistance programs, and/or other characteristics considered relevant by federal, state, and local policy." The specific categories combined into "economically disadvantaged" for this brief are "eligible for free lunch," "eligible for reduced-price lunch," and "Other Economic Disadvantage, Including: a) from a family with an annual income at or below the official federal poverty line, b) eligible for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) or other public assistance, c) received a Pell Grant or comparable state program of need-based financial assistance, d) eligible for programs assisted under Title II of the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), or e) eligible for benefits under the Food Stamp Act of 1977." See Texas Education Agency, "TEA Documentation" (website: https://ercdocs.atlassian.net/wiki/spaces/TD1/pages/161546246/p_enroll_demog#E0785-%E2%80%93-Economic-Disadvantage-Code, 2025).
10. These measures reflect cumulative outcomes within the specified time frames. They exclude the small proportion of students who remained enrolled in high school five years after entering ninth grade (4 percent of P-TECH students and 5 percent of non-P-TECH students). The sample includes students in P-TECH programs started during or before the 2020-2021 school year.

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