

# What's working across the Cradle to Career Network

## Outcome: High School Graduation



**Essential Question:** Are students graduating from high school on time and successfully transitioning into further education, training or employment?

**Indicator:** Equitable discipline practices, positive behavior, consistent attendance, social awareness, mental and emotional well-being

## Impact

Graduating from high school prepared for college and career is a critical milestone on the path to economic mobility. In San Antonio, **UP Partnership** leads the Future Ready Bexar County Plan, a community-wide initiative bringing together more than 100 institutional partners committed to ensuring that 70% of young people enroll in a degree or credential program by 2030. Through this work, UP Partnership aligns systems, strategies and partners so every student has access to the relationships, opportunities and support they need to thrive.

This work builds on more than a decade of momentum. Since 2011, Bexar County's overall high school graduation rate has increased from 84% to 91%. Over the past three years, that rate has held steady — 91% in 2021, a slight dip to 90% in 2022 and a return to 91% in 2023.

## The Landscape

UP Partnership brings together schools, community groups and local leaders to help students in Bexar County graduate high school ready for college or a career. For eight years one network has met quarterly

to guide shared strategy, create safe and supportive learning environments, increase access to quality youth programs and help boys and young men of color gain the skills and confidence to graduate and thrive.

San Antonio advanced this work in 2014 by joining the national My Brother's Keeper Challenge. Two years later UP Partnership launched the city's first My Brother's Keeper action plan to tackle barriers to high school graduation and postsecondary success.

These efforts shaped the Future Ready Bexar County Plan, which now brings together more than 100 partners under UP Partnership's leadership. Centered on the pillars of Healing, Access and Voice, the plan aims to serve over 100,000 young people and ensure 70% enroll in a degree or credential program by 2030.

To support this vision, UP Partnership equips partners with dashboards that track cradle-to-career progress, measure program impact, monitor college and career readiness and map public investments to youth outcomes, helping leaders align decisions with data.

## Key Strategies

A key driver of UP Partnership's work within the Future Ready Bexar County Plan is the My Brother's Keeper San Antonio (MBKSA) network. MBKSA leads strategies that directly advance equity for boys and young men of color, with a focus on removing barriers that can prevent students from graduating high school on time and prepared for their futures. By addressing factors both inside and outside the classroom, MBKSA strengthens the broader goal of improving high school graduation rates. The network anchors three workgroups — restorative justice, postsecondary success and justice-involved youth — each contributing to keeping students engaged in school and on track to graduate.

Recent graduation data highlights the impact of these collective strategies. In 2023, East Central ISD reported an 88.1% graduation rate (739 graduates), Harlandale ISD 90.4% (827 graduates), Judson ISD 86.9% (1,523 graduates) and San Antonio ISD 88.2% (2,594 graduates). Each district improved compared to 2022, with San Antonio ISD showing the largest year-over-year gain, an increase of 1.2%, representing 83 additional graduates.

The Restorative Practices Collaborative began its work by introducing restorative practices in three San Antonio school districts, laying the groundwork for broader adoption across the region. In 2019, this work expanded with the launch of the Restorative Practices Academy in San Antonio. Beginning as a community of practice across three school districts in partnership with UP Partnership, the Academy equips educators, youth workers and justice leaders with tools to move away from punitive discipline toward inclusive, relationship-centered practices. Graduates of the academy train peers, expanding the model's reach across schools and systems. Cohort 3, completed in March 2024, involved over 50 professionals from 36 schools, reaching more than 8,000 students. Participants also led peer-to-peer sessions at their home campuses, training an additional 400 leaders in restorative practices. Cohort 4, now underway, is expanding this reach across additional campuses and organizations.

The Postsecondary Success Workgroup increases access to and success in postsecondary education through a near-peer mentorship model. By working across K–12 and higher education, the group helps ensure students graduate high school prepared for the next step, while also improving readiness and representation in

professions such as teaching. These efforts ensure young men of color are supported from high school graduation through college and into careers.

## Building on Results

UP Partnership's strategy is delivering results and expanding its reach. Graduation rates for the Class of 2024, to be released in January 2026, will provide the next milestone for measuring progress. At the systems level, the Restorative Practices Academy is helping shift school culture away from exclusionary discipline, fostering safer and more supportive learning environments. More than 400 additional educators have now been introduced to restorative practices through peer-led trainings, accelerating this cultural transformation across schools.

These academic gains are being reinforced by new district investments. San Antonio Independent School District, for example, allocated \$1.2 million in its 2024–25 budget to expand student restorative practices and peace rooms. Beyond discipline reform, UP Partnership and its collaborators are now beginning to track broader commitments to social-emotional learning, mental health supports and positive behavior interventions, a signal of deeper buy-in and long-term sustainability of these strategies.

The partnership's work is also informing how partners approach readiness and enrollment. By linking school and community data, UP Partnership helps identify which students are being served and which supports are driving impact. These insights shape targeted interventions to increase graduation and prepare students for success after high school.

