



# Graham High School

Graham, Texas

## SNAPSHOT FROM THE FIELD

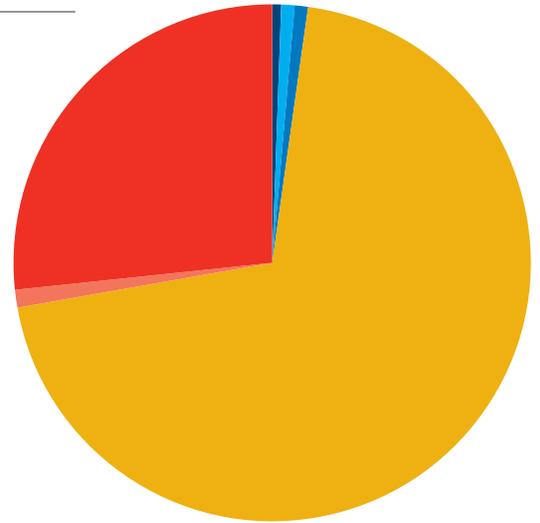
Using the High Reliability Schools™ framework, Graham High School made significant gains in state accountability testing, earning distinctions in all seven categories.



## DEMOGRAPHICS

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- 738 students
- 8.0% Special education
- 6.4% English language learners
- 26.8% Hispanic
- 1.1% African American
- 70.1% Caucasian
- 0.7% Multiracial
- 0.8% Asian
- 0.0% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- 0.5% Native American



Graham High School is part of the Graham Independent School District located in Graham, Texas, a community of approximately 8,700 residents.

## CHALLENGE

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When Graham High School started its journey toward High Reliability Schools (HRS) certification, principal Joe Gordy took an early note of obstacles his school would have to address to succeed. Though a rural school of less than 750 students, Graham’s established offerings of Advanced

Placement, dual-credit, and specialty classes meant available time for PLC collaboration would come at a premium—and the changes would have to be widespread for the entire school to implement the HRS framework.

## IMPLEMENTATION

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As part of the Texas Region 9 Education Service Center area, Graham’s ESC staff secured a grant from the Priddy Foundation, funding the school’s HRS framework goals. District leadership and Graham ISD superintendent Sonny Cruse embraced the challenge, working with teacher teams and parents to establish weekly staff training sessions. Fridays were established as a dedicated collaboration day, with students in good standing released one hour early. As half of the faculty departments gathered in professional learning time, the remaining staff guided

students in need of remediation through tutorials strategically identified through data analysis. Graham also created a Student Activity Leadership Team (SALT) to receive direct student feedback on the optimal functioning of their school. “We were able to discard some things we were doing and strengthen other processes through the professional learning of our whole school community,” Gordy said.

“If you believe in the process and implement the component with validity, it will have positive outcomes for your students.”

— Joe Gordy, principal, Graham High School, Texas

## RESULTS

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With its comprehensive approach involving everyone from students to administrators, Graham was able to achieve Level 1 HRS certification in nine months. Since then, Graham has made significant gains in state accountability testing, receiving all seven possible academic performance distinctions—English/language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, comparative academic growth, post-secondary readiness, and comparative performance in closing learning gaps—demonstrating the high school’s increased efforts in ensuring that all students have an opportunity to master priority standards. Gordy also says that his school’s positive culture has increased “many fold” since implementing the HRS framework, and that building an authentic PLC has helped his teachers foster more meaningful discussions around curriculum, instruction, assessment, and intervention. He also notes that visiting schools frequently comment on the behavior of Graham’s students during passing periods. “I believe that being named Texas High School Principal of the Year for 2019 has a direct correlation to the work we are doing with HRS,” Gordy said.



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