Moving the Needle:
Creating Better Career Opportunities and Workforce Readiness

Austin ISD Progress Report 2013
A Letter to the Community

More than 150 people move to the Austin area each day because of its dynamic economy, low crime, healthy housing market and quality school options, not to mention the overall great quality of life. That quality of life is reflected in the businesses that grow here, from Whole Foods and Seton Family of Hospitals to Samsung and Hanger Orthopedics to a slew of new entrepreneurial ventures.

But our workforce opportunities can be no stronger than our existing pool of talent. For almost a decade, the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce has partnered with business groups and school districts to encourage more Central Texas graduates to directly enroll in post-secondary education.

Our region has had years of improving scores and higher graduation rates, but direct-to-college enrollment has stalled. That’s a challenge we must address.

Now we’re taking that discussion one step further. Even as we see gains in college readiness in Central Texas, we also see the number of high-demand, high-pay jobs rise in the region. As of mid-January, we had 33,000 Central Texas job openings, in areas like IT and healthcare. One in five jobs were in computer science, even though few students indicate an interest in the field.

The time has come to talk to our students not only about pursuing post-secondary education, but also about choosing fields that can give them life-long careers.

We’ve included two charts in our report that capture the mismatch: One chart shows our regional job openings. The other shows graduating senior aspirations. Our job is to minimize the gap between openings and aspirations.

Catherine Morse
General Counsel and Director of Public Affairs, Samsung
Education Progress Report Task Force Chair
THE AUSTIN ISD PATH TO COLLEGE

83% APPLIED VIA APPLY TEXAS

72% TOOK THE SAT OR ACT

91% OF AISD SENIORS SAID THEY'RE GOING TO COLLEGE

60% OF STUDENTS WERE COLLEGE READY

58% COMPLETED FINANCIAL AID

60% OF THE STUDENTS IN THE CLASS OF 2012 DIRECTLY ENROLLED IN COLLEGE BY THE FALL AFTER GRADUATION

Sources: Available at http://austinchamber.com/edureports
Initial passing standards on the new State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness, STAAR, were set to “meet the students where they were” three years ago but will continue to rise to a final passing standard aligned with a path to career and college readiness.

AISD students’ STAAR passage rates two years ago matched the district’s highest scores on the prior assessment, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, or TAKS. After two years under the new test, AISD students are closer to all students meeting current passing standards, especially in fifth grade reading and math.

The final STAAR passing standard, which will not arrive before 2016, is considered aligned to post-secondary readiness. The Austin Chamber’s goal, however, is to look to the Advanced performance level on STAAR, which is a standard considered best prepared for college and career. This standard is beyond both the current and final STAAR passing standards for the state, but it is best aligned to Central Texas workforce needs.

This year, less than a quarter of Austin Independent School District fifth grade students, and even fewer eighth grade students, met this “best prepared “ college- and career-ready standard.

In 2013, Austin ISD was one of 21 participants in the Trial Urban District Assessment program on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, which is considered the gold standard of standardized testing. Austin ISD’s scores remained stable among top urban peers in fourth and eighth grade, though gaps remain between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students.

This is AISD’s fourth time to participate in TUDA. Notably, the district maintained its position while at the same time including more English language learners and students with disabilities in the assessment than on any prior test.

Austin ISD has made major, laudable progress in student learning under prior tests and can certainly do so again. Austin ISD, however, will require a major, consistent lift in teaching, learning and performance to better prepare its students for success as well as to meet the rising passing standard.
Were 8th Grade Students on the Path to Being Career and College ready?

Source: 2013 STAAR Results

Note: Students were allowed two opportunities to pass Grade 8 STAAR Math and Reading assessments. Students in 8th grade took either the 8th grade STAAR or the end-of-course exam for Algebra I or Geometry. Initial math passing rates above reflect the combination of students who either passed 8th grade STAAR or took the Algebra I/Geometry exams.

2001
Financial Aid Saturdays begin on AISD campuses
Assisted more than 2,000 students over the last six years

2012
AISD revises staff evaluations
College readiness & enrollment and FAFSA values included in principal and counselor evaluations

2013
Trustees choose Distinguished Diploma as default
First district in Central Texas to choose college-ready diplomas as baseline for all students
Were 5th Grade Students on the Path to Being Career and College ready?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Passing the Test</th>
<th>Met Final Passing</th>
<th>Standard (College &amp; Career Ready)</th>
<th>Met Advanced Level (Well Prepared for College &amp; Career)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2013 STAAR Results

Note: Students were allowed two opportunities to pass Grade 5 STAAR math and reading assessments. Passing rates are cumulative.

The Austin ISD Task Force:

- Congratulates Austin ISD’s trustees and administrators for placing incoming ninth-grade students on the Distinguished high school diploma, preserving career and college options for all students
- Encourages Austin ISD to ensure each graduation plan “endorsement” exposes students to content sufficient to graduate career- and college-ready, with the ability to enroll directly in a high-quality post-secondary options
- Recommends the soon-to-be-created college readiness courses required for rising seniors off track for college/career readiness be sufficiently rigorous to guarantee graduates will be capable of credit-bearing college courses, without remediation
- Recognizes the significant gains Austin ISD has made, through its strategic plan and instructional initiatives, in closing the achievement gap between student subgroups and especially between all students and the economically disadvantaged
- Urges the Austin ISD leadership team and trustees to prioritize district resources and strategies around a goal of reaching 70 percent direct-to-college enrollment
- Urges AISD trustees to fulfill their commitment to adopt a facility master plan by June, one that incorporates community engagement and sound fiscal decision-making around campus use
- Supports the continuation of a Human Capital strategy that recruits, retains and rewards educators and school leaders who produce major student learning gains in reading, English, math and science
- Urges professional development opportunities geared to address appropriate writing, math, grammar and science expectations on STAAR, with an emphasis on boosting performance at the Advanced level
- Urges the adoption of a FY 15 budget that stays within Board-adopted budgeting principles and protects, to the greatest extent possible, the school district’s current fund balance
- Supports the creation of career-and-technical sequences across the school district that better match the high-demand workforce needs of the Central Texas region
- Supports the district’s proposed expansion of on-site testing to boost the percentage of students taking the SAT, ACT and TSI college readiness tests
**College, Career, and Beyond**

Austin ISD, among all the school districts in Central Texas, has devoted the most resources to prepare students to make the decision to pursue direct post-secondary education.

This started with Project Advance in 2000, which funded at least one college enrollment counselor at each high school. The district also has a long-term effort to track and recognize student choices, post-secondary outcomes and ways to improve direct enrollment.

Additionally, under the leadership of Austin ISD Chief Schools Officer Paul Cruz and Associate Superintendent of High Schools Edmund Oropez, AISD set campus-by-campus stretch goals in college application, financial aid, readiness and enrollment rates, and tied principal evaluations, in part, to their accomplishment of these goals.

The school district also should be lauded for placing all incoming freshman on the Distinguished course of study. Because of this decision, incoming students will have all options open at graduation to pursue the options of Central Texas’ high-demand workforce.

Postsecondary enrollment in AISD had increased incrementally over the past 10 years for all student groups. Students enrolling in two-year institutions accounted for the overall increase in enrollment. AISD experienced a decline in post-secondary enrollment of two percentage points, consistent with national trends. Economic recovery and concern for rising student debt are considered factors in the recent decline in college enrollment nationwide.

The district and the Chamber’s goal is to improve that rate to 70 percent by the Class of 2015 to align with career opportunities.

College readiness, as measured by test scores and GPA, are strong predictors of postsecondary enrollment. Further, students who complete the FAFSA are 50 percent more likely to enroll in a 4-year college than were those who had not, according to national research. A review of AISD’s FAFSA and postsecondary enrollment data for the Class of 2011 revealed 84 percent of students who were enrolled in a postsecondary institution the year after high school completed a FAFSA. To this end, the chamber and AISD have vastly expand-
ed the Financial Aid Saturdays program and invested $550,000 to tutors seniors who need additional lift to graduate college/career ready.

That investment, and rising graduation rates, means 973 more AISD graduates were career- and college-ready in the Class of 2012 versus the Class of 2006. Additionally, AISD saw a record graduation rate of 85 percent for the Class of 2012, with even higher goals set for the Class of 2013.
How Many Graduates Were Ready for College or a Career?

Career- and college-readiness is measured by the SAT, ACT or the exit-level Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills. Students who fail to meet set standards must enter college taking remedial classes.

Source: Texas Academic Performance Report
How Many Passed All Graduation Tests on Time?

- All Students
- African American
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Hispanic
- White
- Econ. Disadvantaged

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>All Students</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Asian/Pacific Islander</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Econ. Disadvantaged</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Texas Academic Performance Report

How Many Graduated in Four Years?

- All Students
- African American
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Hispanic
- White
- Econ. Disadvantaged

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>All Students</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Asian/Pacific Islander</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Econ. Disadvantaged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Source: Texas Academic Performance Report

How Many Graduated in Five Years?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Graduated in 4 years</th>
<th>Additional graduates in 5 years</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Source: Texas Academic Performance Report

How Did Students Perform on EOC Tests?

- US History
- ELA II Writing
- ELA II Reading
- ELA I Writing
- ELA I Reading
- Biology
- Algebra I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US History</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>95%</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELA II Writing</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>61%</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELA II Reading</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELA I Writing</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELA I Reading</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algebra I</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Texas Academic Performance Report
Confirming findings from an AISD study (2008), the UT-Austin Ray Marshall Center has identified a combination of six student actions which, if completed, indicate that a high school senior has the “best odds” for direct enrollment in some form of postsecondary education. AISD staff monitor student completion of these milestones to increase the likelihood that students enroll in college.

The higher the percentage of students completing these activities, the more likely we will move the needle on college enrollment.

**About Austin ISD**

The Austin Independent School District is one of the highest-performing urban districts in the state and even the nation. We have continued to improve in the face of tougher accountability requirements, dwindling resources and changing demographics.

In our five-year strategic plan, our district set these four goals: All students will perform at or above grade level, achievement gaps for student groups will be eliminated, students will be prepared for college, career and life and all schools will meet or exceed state and federal accountability standards.

Our focus on strategic priorities is paying off. Graduation is the bottom line in measuring the success of our school district. Over the past five years, our graduation rates have increased from its lowest at 74.3 percent in 2008 to an all-time high of 82.5 percent in 2012.

In the first year under the new testing system, 110 of AISD’s 123 schools met the state standard and 55 schools earned academic distinctions under new, stricter expectations. This is being accomplished in spite of a decrease in funding for average daily attendance of $586 per pupil compared to 2011 funding levels.

In 2013, our state legislature restored some of the funding that was cut from public education two years ago, but it didn’t make up for the $60 million that was cut in 2011.

With so little new money from the state, we will need to work together to find a balanced solution to fund our most important priorities, like keeping salaries for teachers competitive so that we can attract and retain the best staff.

We will need to find a long-term, permanent funding stream that’s rock solid, most likely through a successful Tax Ratification Election. Spending down our reserve to fund salaries is not a financially sound solution and certainly not a permanent one.

We appreciate those of you who have invested with a long-term view and encourage others to join us in creating an exceptional educational experience for all students.

**Meria Castarphen**
Austin ISD Superintendent

**“Best Odds” for Direct College Enrollment**

Confirming findings from an AISD study (2008), the UT-Austin Ray Marshall Center has identified a combination of six student actions which, if completed, indicate that a high school senior has the “best odds” for direct enrollment in some form of postsecondary education. AISD staff monitor student completion of these milestones to increase the likelihood that students enroll in college.

The higher the percentage of students completing these activities, the more likely we will move the needle on college enrollment.

- Plan to pay for college with loans: **59%**
- Thought financial aid process was easy: **26%**
- Met with a counselor about college: **56%**
- Took prep class for SAT or ACT: **39%**
- Parents filled out FAFSA: **64%**
- Visited college or technical school: **56%**

Source: Austin ISD Senior Survey
This is the ninth year for the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce’s education progress reports. Over the last school year, leaders from a dozen school districts across the region have met with chambers and economic development boards to focus on the goals of college and career readiness and direct-to-college enrollment. Seniors also are surveyed on their goals and aspirations for the future.

The chair of this year’s task force effort is Catherine Morse, General Counsel and Director of Public Affairs at Samsung. Dawn L Jones, external affairs manager, Intel-Texas, serves as vice chair of the task force and chair of the launch event.

**AUSTIN ISD**

Meria Carstarphen, Superintendent of Schools  
Bill Caritj, Chief Performance Officer  
Lisa Schmitt, Senior Research Associate  
Karen Looby, Senior Research Associate  
Edmund Oropez, Director of Secondary Schools

**CHAMBER VOLUNTEERS**

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Julian Rivera, Partner, Husch Blackwell LLP  
Jim Kelly, Jim Kelly Inc, Financial Consultant  
Robert Thomas, Business Consultant