Moving the Needle:
Creating Better Career Opportunities and Workforce Readiness
Elgin 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
Elgin ISD encompasses more than 168 square miles in portions of Bastrop, Lee and Travis counties. It is one of the larger districts geographically in the Austin area, providing educational facilities and resources to meet the needs of nearly 4,200 students and 550 employees at six campuses.

Achieving Elgin ISD’s vision, mission, and goals requires a collective effort from all stakeholders. Engaging parents, higher education and extended community to participate in the dialogue is an important step in this process, which allows Elgin ISD to claim its past and reach for its future potential.

In partnership with Austin Community College, Elgin High School has been designated by the Texas Education Agency as an Early High School “College for All” campus beginning with the 2014-2015 school year. This comprehensive “College for All” model will benefit our student population by allowing every student on the Elgin High School campus the opportunity to earn up to 60 college hours, an associate’s degree, and/or career licensures/certifications.

The Path to College for Elgin ISD’s Class of 2012

- 98% applied via ApplyTexas
- 64% took the SAT or ACT
- 45% were college ready
- 58% completed financial aid
- 49% enrolled directly in college by the fall after graduation

Austin Community College (ACC) Elgin Campus
THE ROAD TO HIGH SCHOOL

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.

After two years under the new test, Elgin ISD scores have risen on the STAAR, with the strongest performance in fifth and eighth grade reading, plus fifth grade math.

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

In Elgin ISD, performance on the fifth and eighth grade test has improved somewhat with the second STAAR administration, but there is still work to be done to push students towards a trajectory of career and college readiness. Performance at the career and college readiness level has historically been low, but the district recognizes the challenge and is committed to earlier focused interventions. For example, the district has implemented such programs as “Think Through Math”, i-Station, Reasoning Minds, and First Move to teach critical thinking and problem solving skills. Additionally, EISD will add the research-based college readiness course Advancement Via Individual Determination, or AVID, in 2014-15.

Elgin ISD is a school district in transition. Superintendent Jodi Duron and her team, in their second year, have made strategic instructional changes: an additional focus on professional development; using data to drill down to the success of the individual student; putting the right teachers in the classroom; raising expectations of students and teachers; and investing in and implementing research-based instructional programs.

Strategies to raise performance in Elgin ISD include expanding early education offerings (i.e., full-day Pre-K), aligning the written, taught, and tested curriculum, implementing a district-wide writing initiative and bolstering math programs across the district.

Elgin ISD understands performance gains will mean reprioritizing budget expenditures, and the local chamber expresses support, saying the district is moving in the right direction to see significant gains in academic achievement and career and college readiness.

2007
Passed $44 million bond

Provided funds for new middle school, extra high school classrooms and upgraded computer & science labs for the school district

2008
Built new middle school

Replaces existing facility, capacity for 1,100 middle school students, with former facility renovated for new elementary school

2010
Voters approved tax bill to bring ACC to Elgin

Students gained local access to college courses and no longer have to pay out-of-district fees
2012
Hired new superintendent
Provided new direction and focus for the district on career and college readiness for all students through new initiatives

2013
Opened LSCC@Elgin ISD
School clinic partnership with Lone Star Circle of Care gives all students and staff access to health and medical care.

2014
Elgin High School Designated Early College High School by TEA
The only “College for All” in Central Texas, all students in grades 9-12 enrolled at EHS can earn up to 60 college credit hours and/or an associate’s degree free of charge

Note: Students were allowed two opportunities to take math and reading assessments for passing rate. All other levels based on first administration. 19% of 8th grade students took algebra and 98% passed.
The Task Force Recommends That Elgin ISD

- Strengthen AP/IB and dual credit offerings which are currently being introduced at Elgin High School
- Secure additional support for an Early College High School
- Strengthen compensation policies to reward instructors qualified to teach dual-credit courses, especially in the career-technical education areas
- Continue to increase the percentage of students who are attempting AP/IB and dual credit courses and securing credit from those courses, as a way to decrease college costs. Set a goal to double the percentage of students taking these courses
- Boost the number of students who take the SAT and FAFSA to be more closely aligned to the percentage of students who submit the common state college application
- When addressing career and college readiness standards within the elementary grade levels, increase awareness that Advanced Level indicates a student is fully prepared for junior high and high school work

Source: Texas Academic Performance Report and Pearson Assessment

Note: Students were allowed two opportunities to take math and reading assessment for passing rate. All other levels are based on first administration.
Elgin ISD’s strongest achievement in the career and college readiness area is the school district’s ability in the last two years to close achievement gaps between the economically disadvantaged and the overall student population.

Percentage gaps between student sub-groups when it comes to performance on graduation tests and graduation rates are now in the single digits, with a graduation rate of 94 percent for the Class of 2012. Those double-digit gains are laudable given the fact the percentage of economically disadvantaged has grown from 54 to 70 percent in the last decade.

Elgin is proud of its history as a farming and ranching community and the high school programs around its rural economy. Many local families have farmed and ranched for generations. The community also has a strong base of students who directly enlist in the military.

At the same time, district leadership continues to expand post-secondary options for students by reaching out to new partners such as the new Austin Community College-Elgin campus. That alliance has strengthened dual-credit offerings and will form the foundation of an Early College High School campus in the 2014-15 school year.

The fact 98 percent of Elgin ISD seniors complete an Apply Texas application to go to a Texas college indicates a strong interest in post-secondary education. The actual percentage of those who head off to college or technical schools, however, has remained flat in recent years, with only 49 percent enrolling in college by the fall after they graduate. National trends are also flat.

To boost that number, Elgin ISD will need more students completing college entrance tests and financial aid forms. The school district has seen increases in career and college readiness over the last six years, but the 45 percent readiness rate still has room for gains. It is laudable the district has set goals to bring college readiness closer to 70 percent with the Class of 2014.

Strategies the district has employed to meet these goals include the creation of a complete college and career center at Elgin High School. The district, which pays for all sophomores and juniors to take the PSAT, wants to encourage a “college going” culture on campus, whether it’s an associate’s degree or a bachelor’s degree.

How Many Graduates Went Directly to College Upon Graduation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fall Enrollment</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>51%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>38%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>49%</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: National Clearinghouse Data, UT Ray Marshall Center

Percentages indicate students who have enrolled in at least one credit-bearing course at a community college or degree-granting institution for the first time in the fall following graduation, in Texas or out of state.
How Many Graduates Were Ready for College or a Career?

English Language Arts
- 2007: 29%
- 2008: 32%
- 2009: 34%
- 2010: 35%
- 2011: 32%
- 2012: 29%
- 2013: 45%
- 2014: 48%

Math
- 2007: 40%
- 2008: 48%
- 2009: 55%
- 2010: 55%
- 2011: 59%
- 2012: 59%
- 2013: 54%
- 2014: 59%

Both
- 2007: 29%
- 2008: 32%
- 2009: 34%
- 2010: 35%
- 2011: 32%
- 2012: 29%
- 2013: 45%
- 2014: 48%

Source: Texas Academic Performance Report

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.
How Many Graduated in Four Years?

- 20%
- 40%
- 60%
- 80%

All Students
African American
Hispanic
White
Econ. Disadvantaged

2007
2008
2009
2010
2011
2012

Source: Texas Academic Performance Report

How Many Graduated in Five Years?

- 100%

All Students
African American
Hispanic
White
Econ. Disadvantaged

2009
2010
2011

Source: Texas Academic Performance Report

How Did Students Perform on EOC Tests?

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

Source: Texas Acaemic Performance Report
In addition to the actions on the Road to College, 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. This is not a multiple choice exercise. To ensure the vast majority of Elgin ISD graduates directly enroll in college, we encourage completion of all six actions by seniors before graduation. Below is the percentage of Central Texas seniors last year who reported doing each of the six actions.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussed college plan/process with school staff</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visited college or technical school</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents filled out FAFSA</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan to pay with loans</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took prep class for SAT or ACT</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thought aid process was easy</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Regional Senior Survey, Ray Marshall Center

FROM THE ELGIN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Elgin Chamber of Commerce believes that a strong education system is vital to the success of our community. There must be a partnership between the school administration, businesses and community members. The Elgin Chamber of Commerce, through its Education Advisory Committee and Board of Directors is committed to partnering with Elgin ISD for the betterment of the entire community.

Central in this commitment is the desire to help existing employers in their continual search for quality workforce labor. With the opening of the Austin Community College - Elgin campus in August 2013 and the creation of the Early College High School program in Elgin ISD, these new education opportunities will benefit the students of Elgin ISD and employers seeking educated and trained employees.

The Elgin School District and the community it serves should be very proud of the work the district is doing to accomplish the performance you will see in this report. The recommendations in this report are developed through meaningful discussions with the Elgin business community, Elgin ISD and the Austin Chamber of Commerce. Our hope is this report will demonstrate the exceptional quality of education the district is providing and the continued efforts to educate and prepare our future workforce.

Gena Carter
President
Elgin Chamber of Commerce

“Best Odds” for Direct College Enrollment

Gena Carter
President
Elgin Chamber of Commerce
This is ninth year the Austin Chamber of Commerce has produced the education progress reports. 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.

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For more about Elgin Independent School District: www.elginisd.net

The Elgin Chamber of Commerce is at www.elgintxchamber.com

To learn about the Austin Chamber’s progress reports and download electronic versions of each report, www.austinchamber.com/edureports or call Senior Vice President of Federal/State Advocacy and Education/Talent Development Drew Scheberle at 512.322.5628.