Moving the Needle:

Creating Better Career Opportunities and Workforce Readiness

Round Rock 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 ROUND ROCK ISD PATH TO COLLEGE

84% APPLIED VIA APPLY TEXAS

79% TOOK THE SAT OR ACT

72% OF STUDENTS ARE COLLEGE READY

60% COMPLETED FINANCIAL AID

71% OF THE STUDENTS IN THE CLASS OF 2012 DIRECTLY ENROLLED IN COLLEGE BY THE FALL AFTER GRADUATION

Sources: Available at http://austinchamber.com/edureports
The Road to High School

Initial passing standards on the new State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness, STAAR, were designed to “meet students where they were” three years ago.

The Austin Chamber and its business partners, however, consider the Advanced performance level to be the goal for school district performance. This is beyond the passing rate and the final passing standard. The Advanced level of performance, however, is best aligned to the types of skills that are in high demand in the Central Texas job market.

In Round Rock ISD, at least 31 percent of eighth grade students achieved at the Advanced performance level across the four STAAR subject area tests. Among fifth graders, Advanced performance ranged from 23 percent in science to 41 percent in reading.

The Round Rock Independent School District agrees supporting as many students as possible to meet the highest level of performance, through a multi-faceted approach is important because the goal recognizes the development of critical thinking skills, which are so important in the changing work place.

To jumpstart this goal, Superintendent of Schools Steve Flores has identified early literacy as a focal area. He has pledged to work toward innovative solutions like extending school library hours to advance student literacy skills.

Flores is interested in providing teachers with summer externships as an opportunity to learn current industry standards and incorporate those standards into their instruction.

Flores also sees the development of leadership skills as a key component to keeping students invested in school and preparing them for college and career success. In addition to establishing Student Councils at all elementary schools, Flores has created a 21-member Student Advisory Board with representatives from all Round Rock ISD secondary campuses. The Student Advisory Board meets with Flores monthly to discuss relevant issues and to provide the representatives a unique opportunity to develop their leadership skills.

According to Flores, the measure of a great district is how it improves academic performance for all student groups. He believes that if you raise the bar, everyone will be lifted.
Source: Texas Academic Performance Report and Pearson Assessment

Note: Students were allowed two opportunities to take Grade 8 STAAR Math and Reading assessments for the passing rate. In addition, approximately 47% of students in 8th grade took a high school STAAR end-of-course math exam (Algebra I, Geometry, or Algebra II). Math performance rates above reflect the combination of Grade 8 STAAR Math and STAAR end-of-course results for 8th grade students.

Were 8th Grade Students on the Path to Being Career and College Ready?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Passed the Test</th>
<th>Met Final Passing (College &amp; Career Ready)</th>
<th>Met Advanced Level (Well Prepared for College &amp; Career)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Math Tests Legend
- Passed the Test
- Met Final Passing (College & Career Ready)
- Met Advanced Level (Well Prepared for College & Career)

2013 - Expanded opportunities through Success HS
Success High School is a school of choice, established to meet the unique and individual needs of students — the new building will open in the fall of 2014

2013 - Implemented AVID at all High Schools
The Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) program guarantees that more RRISD students are exposed to the skills and knowledge for college and career success

2014 - Project Based Learning (PBL)
Trained 478 teachers and administrators in Project Based Learning (PBL), through the nationally recognized Buck Institute
Were 5th Grade Students on the Path to Being Career and College Ready?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passed the Test</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met Final Passing</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard (College &amp; Career Ready)</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met Advanced Level (Well Prepared for College &amp; Career)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

The Round Rock ISD Task Force

- Applauds Round Rock ISD’s commitment to move from a First Class to a World Class district, understanding that Superintendent Steve Flores and his team are committed to the success of every child
- Encourages Round Rock ISD to expand its ongoing effort to increase college readiness and enrollment, and supports efforts to survey non-college-going graduates to develop additional strategies to remove obstacles to post-secondary options for all students
- Commends Round Rock ISD’s efforts to increase students’ career focus through continued enhancements to the robust high school academy model
- Appreciates Round Rock ISD directing additional resources to the improvement of writing and literacy across all grade levels
- Supports Round Rock ISD’s efforts to partner with higher education institutions on dual-credit options, which can defray college costs
- Agrees with Round Rock ISD’s focus on academic monitoring and intervention, especially during key transition years, at second, fifth and eighth grades
- Supports Round Rock ISD’s efforts to build leadership capacity in students through academic and non-academic efforts like student advisory councils
College, Career, and Beyond

Round Rock ISD has exceeded the Chamber’s regional goal for direct-to-college enrollment, with 71 percent of the Class of 2012 heading into some type of post-secondary option by the fall after graduation.

The district’s concern, however, is not limited to those who enroll in college immediately. Round Rock ISD makes broad attempts to track and survey graduates who do not immediately enroll in college to identify interventions that might have resulted in immediate enrollment. Post-graduation surveys have indicated the overwhelming majority is academically prepared but financially disadvantaged, say school district officials.

To address that challenge and prepare more students to consider college, the district has begun to identify potential college candidates as early as the eighth grade, with the assistance of college access coordinators.

The district has also shifted the selection of high school academies from ninth to eighth grade. High school academies are small learning communities with a college-prep curriculum and a strong focus on early career training in areas like science, technology, engineering, math, international business, and professional studies. All high school students enroll in an academy and nearly 15 percent earned professional licensure through those programs last year.

The district has an especially strong track record of success on Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exams. In Round Rock ISD, 35 percent of juniors and seniors will take an AP or IB course. Of those, 79 percent scored above criterion and earn college credit.

Among indicators followed in these reports, Round Rock ISD’s college readiness percentage and direct-to-college enrollment are closely aligned, at 72 and 71 percent, respectively. The interest in going to college may be higher, as 84 percent of students submit the common college admissions form and 79 percent take either the SAT or ACT. The final indicator, filling out the federal financial aid form, is at 60 percent in Round Rock ISD.

Superintendent of Schools Steve Flores said his goals include increasing targets for college and career readiness as well as direct-to-college enrollment. He also intends to strengthen the district’s existing dual-credit course offerings, which provide students the option to take courses that earn both high school and college credit.

How Many Graduates Went Directly to College Upon Graduation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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: 68%
  - 2008: 79%
  - 2009: 82%
  - 2010: 83%
  - 2011: 79%
  - 2012: 80%

- **Math**
  - 2007: 71%
  - 2008: 74%
  - 2009: 79%
  - 2010: 79%
  - 2011: 74%
  - 2012: 74%

- **Both**
  - 2007: 57%
  - 2008: 66%
  - 2009: 64%
  - 2010: 72%
  - 2011: 70%
  - 2012: 72%

**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% (2007–2010)
- 40% (2007–2010)
- 60% (2007–2010)
- 80% (2007–2010)
- 100% (2007–2010)

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

2007: Red
2008: Orange
2009: Yellow
2010: Green

2011: Blue

Source: Texas Academic Performance Report

How Many Graduated in Five Years?

2009: Red
2010: Orange
2011: Blue

Graduated in 4 yrs
Add'l graduates in 5 yrs

Source: Texas Academic Performance Report

How Many Completed All Graduation Tests on Time?

2007: Red
2008: Orange
2009: Yellow
2010: Green

2011: Blue

How Did Students Perform on EOC Tests?

- ELA II Writing: 4% (2009), 50% (2009), 72% (2009)
- ELA II Reading: 36% (2009), 82% (2009), 90% (2009)
- ELA I Writing: 5% (2009), 51% (2009), 69% (2009)
- ELA I Reading: 27% (2009), 67% (2009), 82% (2009)
- Biology: 34% (2009), 72% (2009), 94% (2009)
- Algebra I: 35% (2009), 59% (2009), 90% (2009)

Source: Texas Academic Performance Report
**About Round Rock ISD**

Round Rock ISD continues to be a fast-growth district with high expectations. Spanning northwest Travis and southern Williamson counties, the 110-square-mile school district is home to 5 high schools, 10 middle schools and 33 elementary schools. The district also includes a high school of choice and two alternative campuses.

Steve Flores was named Superintendent of Schools in October, 2013 by a unanimous vote of the board of trustees. From humble beginnings in West Texas, where Flores entered elementary school as a non-English speaker, he was inspired by great teachers. Flores began working in public education at 18 and was proud to later become a teacher and coach before going on to campus and district leadership positions.

Flores has brought a renewed sense of passion and dedication to Round Rock ISD to ensure “all students will learn...whatever it takes.”

Committed to financial excellence, Round Rock ISD balances the need for additional facilities and equipment with the ultimate impact on taxpayers. The district enjoys excellent bond ratings and for the fourth year in a row has earned the Gold Leadership Circle Award by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts.

In May, Round Rock ISD will seek a bond election. Three propositions, equaling $299 million, are intended to address various needs: overcrowded classrooms and health and safety concerns, as well as curriculum and technology. The bonds also will address capital renewal and replacement projects.

Round Rock ISD has grown by nearly 5,100 students over the last 6 years, and growth is projected to continue in the school district.

Fast growth has not stalled Round Rock ISD’s commitment to excellence. Flores, the staff, students and community are committed to moving Round Rock ISD from the status of first class to world class as a school district.

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

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 Round Rock ISD graduates directly enroll in college, we encourage completion of all six actions by seniors before graduation. Below is the percent of Central Texas seniors 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.

- **Discussed college plan/process with school staff**: 63%
- **Plan to pay with loans**: 35%
- **Parents filled out FAFSA**: 63%
- **Visited college or technical school**: 57%
- **Took prep class for SAT or ACT**: 32%
- **Thought aid process was easy**: 20%

*Source: Regional results, Student Futures Project Survey*
This is the 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.

**ROUND ROCK ISD**

Steve Flores, Superintendent of Schools

Martha Salazar-Zamora, Deputy Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction

Pat Reddin, Executive Director, Assessment and Audit

Debbie Lewis, Director, Assessment and Accountability

Michelle Jackson, Supervisor, Community Partnerships

**ROUND ROCK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE VOLUNTEERS**

Shontel Mays, Interim President, Round Rock Chamber of Commerce

Writ Baese, Owner, Hill Country Payroll

Lora Kaasch, Sales Associate, GoodLife Realty Team

Jon Sloan, Retired, First Texas Bank

Mike Lipsey, Branch Manager, Wells Fargo Bank

For more information about Round Rock ISD: [www.roundrockisd.org](http://www.roundrockisd.org)

For more information on the Round Rock Chamber of Commerce: [www.roundrockchamber.org](http://www.roundrockchamber.org)

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