

# Together We Educate Round Rock



ROUND ROCK **I S D**



Austin  
Chamber



THE CHAMBER  
ROUND ROCK TEXAS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

# Letter to the Community

Central Texas is at a critical juncture. Despite our booming economy, a wide gap exists between available jobs and local workforce talent. Approximately 50% of our current job openings require a bachelor's degree, 12% require an associate degree and 85% of our unemployed lack either.<sup>1</sup> Over the last decade, nearly 100,000 Central Texas students, a majority of our high school graduates, directly enrolled in college. Our direct-to-college enrollment rates increased by ten percentage points between 2003 and 2008, but leveled off at 60% over the last five years and now sits below the national average.<sup>2</sup>

When Central Texans lack the skills and education to participate in the economy, the health and prosperity of our community is threatened.

As Chair of the Chamber's 2015 Education Progress Report Taskforce, I believe we can work together as a community to close this opportunity gap. Our progress reports now unite 11 school districts, 11 regional chambers and dozens of business leaders to track regional challenges, successes and identify ways to improve student educational and

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, College Enrollment and Work Activity of 2013 High School Graduates, April 2014

career opportunities. These school districts and partners have worked to improve college readiness rates from 47% in 2007, to 64% in 2013.<sup>3</sup> In partnership with Central Texas school districts, the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce has also set a 70% regional direct-to-college enrollment goal for 2015, to ensure our students are prepared for college and 21st century careers.

So, to all of you who are engaged in this collective work—whether as educators, business and non-profit leaders or activists, thank you. Educating a child takes a community, and I am so proud to live in a community that comes together to put kids first.

Thank you,



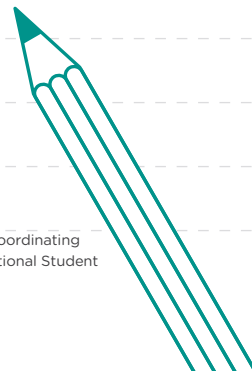
Dawn Jones

External Affairs Manager, Intel

Education Progress Report Taskforce Chair

<sup>2</sup> The Conference Board Help Wanted OnLine® (HWOL) and Travis County Workforce board. Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, High School to College Linkages 2002-2013, and The University of Texas at Austin, Ray Marshall Center and National Student Clearinghouse Higher Education Enrollment Outcomes for Central Texas High School Graduates 2009-2014.

<sup>3</sup> Academic Excellence Indicator System 2007 and Texas Academic Performance Reports 2013



# A Snapshot of Round Rock ISD

Round Rock Independent School District (RRISD) is a fast-growing district located in Travis and Williamson County. Since 2002, RRISD student enrollment experienced a 43% increase and low-income student enrollment swelled from 16% to 29% in 2014.<sup>4</sup>

**46,535**

Students

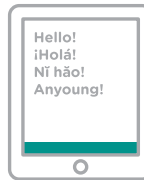
**29%**

Economically Disadvantaged



**9%**

English Language Learners



## Demographic summary

- Caucasian: 43%
- Hispanic: 30%
- Asian: 13%
- African-American: 9%
- Two or more races: 4%



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# 5,798

Employees



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# \$1.37

2013–2014 Tax Rate  
(\$ per \$100 valuation)

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# \$50K

Average Teacher Annual  
Salary

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# \$339M

Operations Budget

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# 10.9

Average Teacher Years of  
Experience

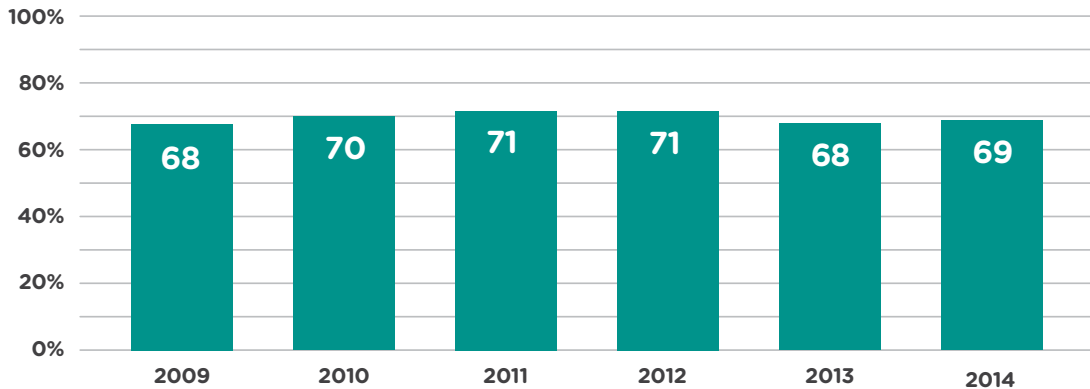
The Round Rock Board of Trustees approved a balanced budget for 2014/15 that included raises for staff to honor their hard work, as well as several additional positions to help implement new legislative requirements. Due to school funding cuts made by the legislature, RRISD will face a challenging budget cycle in 2015/16 unless legislative adjustments provide additional funding to support quality public education.

# What Share of RRISD Students Directly Enroll in Higher Education?

Recognizing that higher education is the key vehicle for economic mobility, Round Rock is committed to supporting students on their path to college. While RRISD maintained a strong direct-to-college rate, the district has continued to make decisions that impact student success in response to a leveling in college going rates. First, an additional counselor was hired at each high school to lower the counselor-to-student ratio to approximately 1:350. Also, the district is participating in a regional digital messaging project enabling students to receive text messages on their cell phones about upcoming college readiness activities. Finally, a district College Access Coordinator devotes special attention to at-risk and economically disadvantaged students in building their dreams for post-secondary education.

## Percentage of Graduates Who Directly Enroll in Higher Education

Percentage of high school graduates who enrolled in community college or four-year, degree-granting institutions, in Texas or outside of the state, for the first time no later than the fall following graduation.



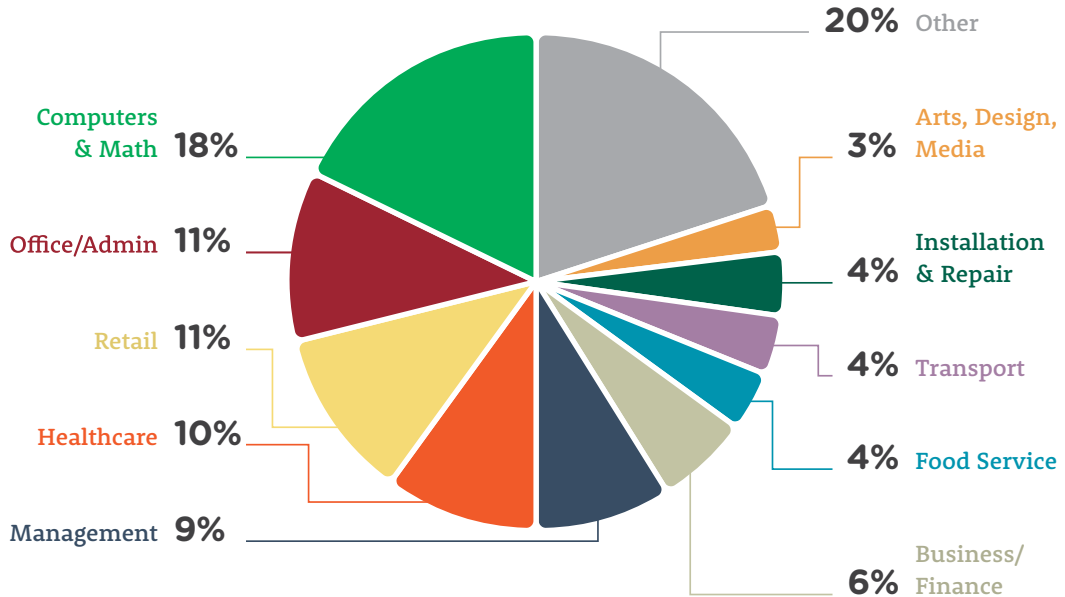
 College enrollment rates have remained level since 2009.


# How Do RRISD Student Career Interests Align with Job Market Demand?

Round Rock ISD is working to ensure their graduates have the skills required to pursue 21st century careers. In Central Texas there are 44,000 open jobs and 41,000 unemployed.<sup>6</sup> RRISD is working to solve this mismatch in skills, interests and job market demand by continuously monitoring employment trends and encouraging coursework that excites and engages students in high-need fields. One example of this commitment to targeting high-demand fields is the OnRamps Computer Science project, a dual credit opportunity in partnership with the University of Texas. In addition, RRISD has expanded their Health Sciences Academies to all 5 high schools, providing students greater access to health science course content and certifications that prepare them for the workforce.



## Top 10 Current Job Openings in Central Texas



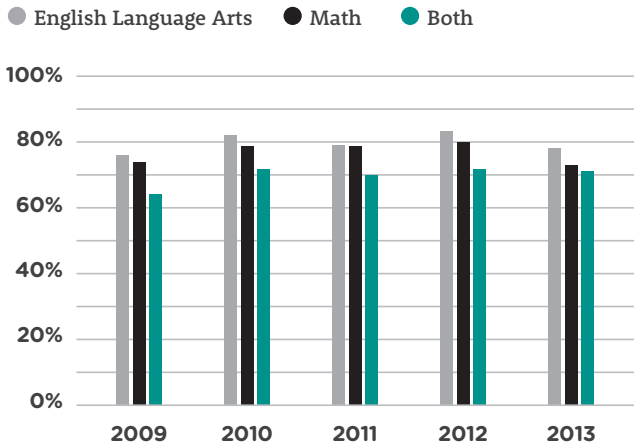


In order to reach the regional target of enrolling 70% of our students in higher education, we are focusing on

**3 primary activities.**

# Bolster Student College and Career Readiness

Percentage of high school graduates who met the state college and career readiness standard in:



- RRISD funds the PSAT for 10th and 11th graders.
- RRISD added the School Day SAT to enable juniors to take the SAT exam at district expense during school hours.
- Through the School Day SAT, juniors will also have free access to the online Official SAT prep course.

# Increase Student Participation in College Prep Activities

- RRISD and The Austin Chamber have hosted Financial Aid Saturdays since 2008 that have resulted in an estimated \$9 million in aid awarded to over 1600 families served.<sup>1</sup>
- RRISD's Celebration of Families event has middle and high school counselors respond to parent inquiries and help families realize that college is an attainable goal.



**94%**

**Aspire to  
Attend College**

79% of those enrolled.



**82%**

**Applied via  
ApplyTexas**

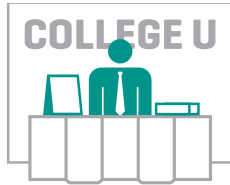
78% of those enrolled.

Source: RRISD High School Exit Survey

<sup>1</sup> Economic impact estimated from the NCES National Postsecondary Aid Study (NSPAS) 2013

Source: Round Rock ISD High School Exit Survey, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (ApplyTexas) In-State Filing Data

## Participation in College Prep Activities



**45%**

**Attended a  
College Fair**

82% of those enrolled.



**30%**

**Took SAT/ACT  
Prep Course(s)**

83% of those enrolled.



**34%**

**Plan to Use Loans**

81% of those enrolled.



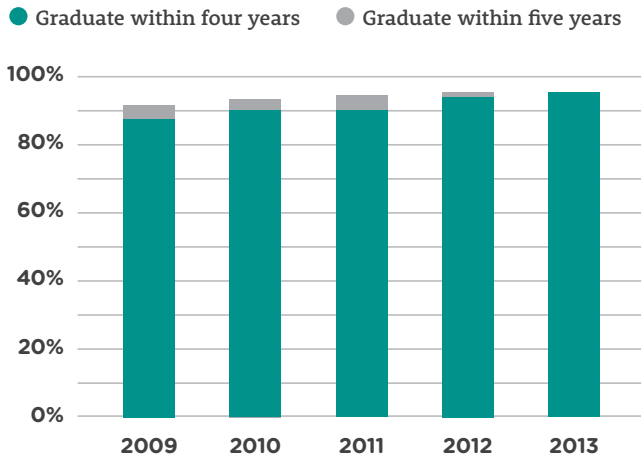
**55%**

**Completed FAFSA**

85% of those enrolled.

# Continue to Improve High School Graduation Rates

Percentage of students who graduate within four or five years:



RRISD's Success High School opened in 2014 to provide students at-risk of dropping out the opportunity to earn a diploma via a non-traditional high school program. With this new facility, RRISD is able to serve nearly 400 students, increasing the likelihood that even more students will successfully graduate.

A grayscale background image of a graduation ceremony. Graduates in black gowns are seen from the chest up, with their arms raised in celebration. Numerous black mortarboards are captured in mid-air, falling from the top of the frame. The overall atmosphere is one of joy and achievement.

**If we accomplish these goals,  
RRISD will prepare students  
for higher education and**

**21st-century  
careers.**

# Recommendations

## Direct to College Enrollment

Provide year-round support to college-bound seniors

- Applaud RRISD for hiring additional counselors to help students with the college application process.

## Job Market/Career Aspirations

Expose students to high-demand careers

- Praise RRISD for partnering with the University of Texas to provide the OnRamps Computer Science dual credit opportunity.

## College or Career Ready

Prepare students for the rigors of higher education

- Assess non-college and career ready juniors/seniors and enroll them in a course which prepares them to graduate college and career ready.

Expand access to & affordability of college readiness exams

- Expand on-site testing within RRISD to improve access to TSI college readiness tests.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Passage of the TSI college readiness test allows students to enroll in credit bearing college level courses for dual enrollment and after high school graduation.



- Congratulate the district for implementing School Day SAT, providing juniors with the opportunity to participate in the SAT exam (as well as the official SAT prep course) at no cost to the student, allowing all students the opportunity to demonstrate preparedness for higher education.

#### College Prep Activities

Ensure that cost is less of a barrier to college enrollment

- Use technology resources to target FAFSA, ApplyTexas and College Career Readiness support to improve timely resolution of college enrollment requirements.

#### 4/5 Year Graduation

Set high expectations for all students

- Applaud RRISD for making the Distinguished Graduation Plan the default. This graduation plan is better aligned to postsecondary admissions requirements and is better preparation for students to succeed in higher education and the high performance workplace.

Maintain focus on outcomes during assessment transitions

- Focus on outcomes during the transition from TAKS to STARR exit level assessments by closely monitoring student performance on EOC tests.

# Acknowledgments

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## **Round Rock ISD**

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**Michelle Swain**

**Christina Wiswell**

## **Austin Chamber Staff**

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Rollins, CCE**

**Drew Scheberle**

**Gilbert Zavala**

**Isabel Shelton**

## **Round Rock Business Volunteers**

**Mike Odom**  
Round Rock Chamber

**Jon Sloan**

**Kris Whitfield**  
City of Round Rock

**Writ Baese**  
Hill Country Payroll

**Rick Villarreal**  
State Farm

# How to Get Involved in Round Rock ISD

## Get to Know Round Rock ISD

### Website

[roundrockisd.org](http://roundrockisd.org)

### Twitter:

[@RoundRockISD](https://twitter.com/RoundRockISD)

### Facebook

[Facebook.com/roundrockisd](https://www.facebook.com/roundrockisd)

### Instagram

[@roundrockisd](https://www.instagram.com/roundrockisd)

## Volunteer

Help Prepare Students for  
Careers as a High School  
Academy Volunteer

Mentor a Student

Support a School

Join PTA as a Community  
Member

Learn more at

[roundrockisd.org/partner](http://roundrockisd.org/partner)

## Donate

The Round Rock ISD  
Partners in Education  
Foundation Website

[rrisdeducationfoundation.org/](http://rrisdeducationfoundation.org/)

### Twitter

[@RRISD\\_PIEF](https://twitter.com/RRISD_PIEF)

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