Moving the Needle:

Creating Better Career Opportunities and Workforce Readiness

San Marcos CISD 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 SAN MARCOS CISD PATH TO COLLEGE

85% of CISD seniors say they're going to college.

78% applied via APPLY TEXAS.

71% took the SAT or ACT.

56% completed financial aid.

48% of students are college ready.

40% 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 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, San Marcos CISD’s strongest performance is in fifth grade math and eighth grade reading. Scores range from 56 percent passing eighth grade social studies to 87 percent passing eighth grade reading.

The final STAAR passing standard, which will not arrive before 2016, is considered aligned to post-secondary readiness. The goal of the Austin Chamber with our 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 standard is beyond both the current and final STAAR passing standards for the state, but it is best aligned to Central Texas workforce needs.

STAAR is the most comprehensive test the state has administered, more so than any prior test. This can be a challenge for school districts that serve a high percentage of low-income students such as San Marcos CISD, where 72 percent of the student population is considered economically disadvantaged.

Looking at the performance on final passing standards, which equates to career and college readiness, San Marcos CISD does have a foothold for continuing gains, especially in reading and math at the fifth grade level and reading in the eighth grade.

The district points out half the eighth grade students in San Marcos CISD already take an advanced math and will take the Algebra I high school end of course exam, rather than the eight grade math test. Those students will not be included on the eighth grade chart, but if their scores were equated with Advanced performance on the eighth grade test, half the students would be considered on the path “best prepared” for college and career.

The performance for the Advanced level, which is considered “best prepared” for a college and career trajectory, is more tenuous in science and social studies and best in reading. Passing rates in reading and math are strongest at the fifth grade level.

San Marcos CISD uses a number of instructional strategies to boost performance: hand-held technology in the early grades; a pilot university-constructed Algebra I program at Miller Middle School; and a commitment to improve literacy across the early grades in the school district.

And to make an early meaningful start, the school district is using bond funds to convert the site of the former Bowie Elementary School into a full-day pre-kindergarten program.
Were 8th Grade Students on the Path to Being Career and College Ready?

Source: Texas Academic Performance Report and Pearson Assessment

Note: Students were allowed two opportunities to pass math and reading assessments for the passing rate. All other levels based on first administration.
Task Force Recommendations

- Continue to support strategies that boost career- and college-readiness rates to prepare students to enter post-secondary education
- Support intervention efforts that push students in the fifth and eighth grade to the academic level that best prepares the students for career- and college-readiness
- Applaud efforts to move college readiness testing to the sophomore years in order to provide earlier, more targeted interventions for high school students
- Support the creation of additional career-technical education sequences at the high school that lead to high-quality certifications that match high-demand jobs in the region
- Increase awareness of the Austin Community College and Texas State University co-enrollment program, which can ease the transition to the four-year campus and provide more affordable alternatives for San Marcos CISD students
- Support ACC’s College Connections program, which provides the vast majority of high school graduates with immediate acceptance into post-secondary options
- Continue to support successful strategies at San Marcos High School’s career academies, which focus on Applied Sciences; Arts & Communications; Hospitality, Business and Law; and Health and Human Service pathways for all students
- Increase the opportunity for dual-credit courses as an option to defray the cost of college attendance and increase the percentage of career- and college-ready students in the school district
- Applaud the district’s efforts this year to invite an outside curriculum audit, which will strengthen the district’s instructional capacity
- Support the district’s focus to engage students in profound learning opportunities sustained through the use of emerging technologies, intensive professional development, and quality lesson design
- Continue to strengthen the connection between SMCISD and the San Marcos Chamber of Commerce’s SOAR program, which seeks to match the employer needs with the existing talent pool in the school district

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.
College, Career, and Beyond

San Marcos CISD has taken a number of steps to increase the relevance of high school, taking an academy approach at San Marcos High School to meet student interests.

Direct-to-college enrollment in San Marcos CISD sits at 40 percent. San Marcos CISD, which has the advantage of a partnership with Texas State University, has widely advertised the Bobcat Promise program, which can significantly defray the costs of higher education for students.

The district also has initiated a co-enrollment program that allows students to pick up community college credit that can apply to a degree at Texas State University. The school district also has doubled the opportunity for dual-credit courses at the high school, with the goal that every graduate of San Marcos CISD will have at least 12 credit hours of higher education.

Superintendent Mark Eads and his team also are concerned about earlier intervention. The district is moving toward assessing sophomores, rather than juniors, on the state’s college readiness test. This initially may present lower numbers to the accountability system, but it will provide more information to provide targeted interventions before the junior year.

We also support the setting of academic goals by the school district: an overall graduation rate of 92 percent by 2015; a goal of 92 percent of all three grade students reading on level by 2015; and a goal to meet or exceed the state average on required state assessments.

San Marcos CISD has made sharp gains on college readiness, up roughly 20 percentage points over the last six years. The percentage of students taking the SAT and ACT sits at 71 percent and approximately 78 percent complete the Apply Texas form. That would indicate an interest in college that does not always translate into direct-to-college enrollment.

The percentage of San Marcos CISD seniors last year who would be considered college ready in both English and math — and would avoid remedial placement — sat at 48 percent last year. This is an area where we would support targeted initiatives and expenditures to improve student success.

The Austin and San Marcos chambers support the expansion of Advancement Placement and dual credit courses, which can defray college expenses and provide the motivation and assistance to boost those college-ready percentages. Financial aid packages also are a focus of our chamber’s work with school districts. The percentage of students that fill out the FAFSA financial aid form in San Marcos CISD sits at 56 percent, and we would support and encourage boosting that number, especially in the first quarter of the year, which improves potential financial aid packages.

How Many Graduates Went Directly to College Upon Graduation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>40%</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?

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 Graduated in Four Years?

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

2007: 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%
2008: 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%
2009: 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%
2010: 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Source: Texas Academic Performance Report

How Many Graduated in Five Years?

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

2007: 2007 2008 2009 2010
2008: 2007 2008 2009 2010
2009: 2007 2008 2009 2010
2010: 2007 2008 2009 2010

Source: Texas Academic Performance Report

How Many Completed All Graduation Tests on Time?

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

Source: Texas Academic Performance Report

How Did Students Perform on EOC Tests?

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

2009: Biology 10% 28% 66%
2010: Biology 10% 28% 66%
2011: Biology 10% 28% 66%

Source: Texas Academic Performance Report

How Many Graduated in Five Years?

2009: Graduated in 4 yrs 82%
2010: Graduated in 4 yrs 82%
2011: Graduated in 4 yrs 82%

Source: Texas Academic 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 San Marcos CISD graduates directly enroll in college, we encourage completion of all six actions by seniors before graduation.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>“Best Odds” for Direct College Enrollment</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents filled out FAFSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan to pay with loans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussed college plans with school staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT prep course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thought aid process was easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visited college or technical school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: San Marcos CISD Class of 2013 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.

**SAN MARCOS CISD**

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For more information about San Marcos CISD: www.smcisd.net

The San Marcos Chamber of Commerce: www.sanmarcostexas.com

San Marcos Partnership: www.greatersanmarcostx.com

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