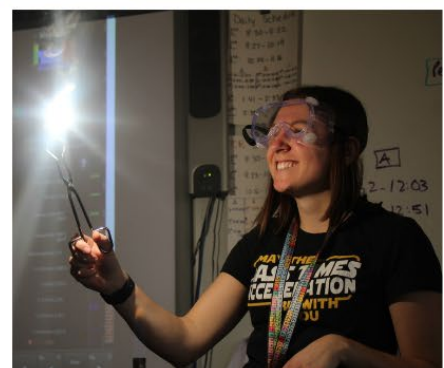


STUDENT PATHWAYS AFTER GRADUATION

How Austin Public Schools Graduates
Pursue College, Careers, and Community
Opportunities

April 2026

At Austin Public Schools, we
are preparing all learners to
make a difference in the
world.



A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Preparing students for life after high school is one of the most important responsibilities of Austin Public Schools. Our goal is not simply graduation, but ensuring that every student leaves our schools with a clear pathway forward, whether that includes college, career training, military service, or entry into the workforce.

This report examines both workforce demand and postsecondary choices to better understand how Austin students are preparing for life after graduation. The data shows that Austin students pursue postsecondary education through pathways that sometimes differ from statewide averages. Many graduates begin their college journey at community and technical colleges, often supported by strong local partnerships such as Riverland Community College and the Hormel Foundation Austin Assurance Scholarship.

These opportunities allow students to pursue higher education in ways that are practical, affordable, and connected to career opportunities in our region. For many students, beginning at a two-year college provides a strong foundation that can lead to transfer opportunities or technical credentials tied directly to workforce needs.

The findings reinforce the goals of the Packer Profile. Our students are developing the knowledge, resilience, and responsibility needed to make thoughtful decisions about their futures and contribute meaningfully to their community.

A special thank you to Amanda Blaschko, Southeast & South Central Regional Analyst with the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, for her support and expertise in providing analysis and data that informed this work.

Sincerely,
Dr. Joey Page, Superintendent

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: STUDENT PATHWAYS AFTER GRADUATION

PURPOSE

This report examines how Austin Public Schools (APS) prepares students for life after graduation by analyzing postsecondary enrollment patterns alongside regional workforce needs.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Austin graduates pursue multiple postsecondary pathways, not just one
- Two-year college enrollment is significantly higher than the state average
- Local partnerships and scholarships expand access to higher education
- Regional workforce demand aligns with technical and two-year pathways
- Students are prepared through an intentional system, not by chance

WHAT THE WORKFORCE DATA SHOWS

- 55%+ of jobs in Southeast Minnesota require a high school diploma or less
- 20%+ of jobs require a vocational credential or associate degree
- 17.4% of jobs require a bachelor's degree (lower than the statewide average)

WHAT THIS MEANS

Many careers in our region are accessible through technical training, certifications, and community college pathways.

WHAT THE POSTSECONDARY DATA SHOWS

- Austin graduates enroll in two-year colleges at higher rates than the state
- Fewer students enroll directly in four-year universities
- Many students begin locally and may transfer or enter the workforce

KEY POINT

Looking only at four-year enrollment does not reflect full college participation.

HOW AUSTIN PUBLIC SCHOOLS PREPARES STUDENTS

Austin Public Schools has built a system that supports student decision-making:

- **Packer Profile** – Develops responsibility, resilience, and communication
- **9th Grade Seminar** – Builds planning, study skills, and career awareness early
- **Riverland Partnership** – Creates accessible college pathways
- **Austin Assurance Scholarship** – Reduces financial barriers
- **CTE Programs** – Connect learning to real careers

KEY MESSAGE

Our students are choosing pathways that align with their goals and the opportunities in our region, and that's the result of intentional preparation.

MOVING FORWARD

Austin Public Schools will continue to:

- Strengthen two-year and technical pathways
- Expand awareness of four-year opportunities
- Increase access for all student groups
- Strengthen family engagement and financial literacy
- Use data and student feedback to improve supports

CONCLUSION

Austin Public Schools is preparing students for college, careers, and life by ensuring they have the skills, knowledge, and direction to succeed in a variety of pathways after graduation.

INTRODUCTION

The decisions high school graduates make about postsecondary education shape their futures and influence the long-term strength of the community and workforce. This report examines trends among Austin Public Schools graduates and compares those patterns with statewide trends in Minnesota.

The analysis uses postsecondary enrollment data from the Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Education System (SLEDs) and workforce information from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED).

Enrollment decisions are influenced by the opportunities available to students in their local community. In Austin, students benefit from strong partnerships with Riverland Community College and access to the Hormel Foundation Austin Assurance Scholarship program.

These opportunities help explain why Austin graduates often pursue postsecondary education through pathways that differ from statewide patterns.

KEY INSIGHTS

Several clear patterns emerge when examining postsecondary enrollment trends for Austin Public Schools graduates.

- Austin graduates pursue postsecondary education through pathways that differ from statewide averages.
- Community and technical colleges serve as the primary entry point into higher education for many Austin graduates.
- Strong local partnerships help shape student opportunities after graduation.
- Community investment expands access to higher education.
- Austin Public Schools prepares students for multiple pathways, including college, career training, military service, and workforce entry.

POSTSECONDARY PATHWAYS AT A GLANCE: AUSTIN PUBLIC SCHOOLS COMPARED WITH MINNESOTA

POSTSECONDARY PATHWAY	MINNESOTA AVERAGE	AUSTIN PUBLIC SCHOOLS	KEY INSIGHT
Public 4-Year Universities	26-28%	11-24%	Austin graduates enroll at lower rates than statewide averages.
Public 2-Year Colleges	26-30%	44-69%	Austin graduates enroll in two-year colleges at significantly higher rates.
Private 4-Year Colleges	12-14%	1-7%	Fewer Austin graduates enroll in private institutions.
Out-of-State Colleges	29-33%	11-26%	Austin graduates are more likely to remain in Minnesota for college.

Source: MN Statewide Longitudinal Education System

Recent program data highlights strong participation in the Hormel Foundation Austin Assurance Scholarship program:

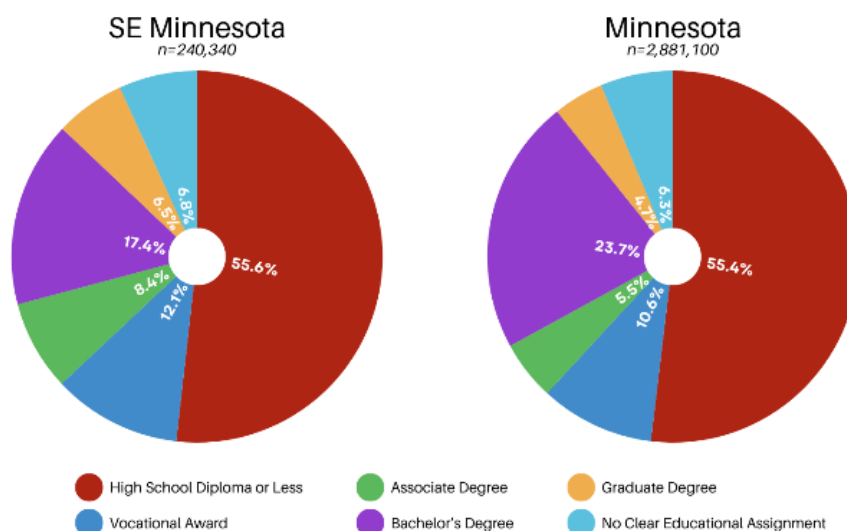
- 248 Austin Assurance students enrolled at Riverland in Fall 2024
- 243 students enrolled in Spring 2025
- 397 total scholarship graduates as of Fall 2025

Source: Hormel Foundation Austin Assurance Scholarship Program. Annual Meeting Report and Program Data, February 2026.

REGIONAL WORKFORCE EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

The regional economy includes a wide range of careers that require different levels of education and training.

MINNESOTA VS SE MINNESOTA FOR A SHARE OF JOBS BY EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS (2024)



Source: MN Statewide Longitudinal Education System

ANALYSIS

Understanding regional workforce needs provides important context when examining the postsecondary pathways students pursue after high school.

In Southeast Minnesota, more than 55 percent of jobs require a high school diploma or less, a share that closely mirrors the statewide labor market. At the same time, a significant portion of jobs require education beyond high school but below a bachelor's degree. Approximately 12.1 percent of jobs require a vocational credential, and 8.4 percent require an associate degree.

Combined, this means that more than one in five jobs in Southeast Minnesota require technical training or a two-year degree, reflecting strong demand for skilled workers in fields such as healthcare, manufacturing, skilled trades, and technical services.

By comparison, 17.4 percent of jobs in Southeast Minnesota require a bachelor's degree, which is lower than the statewide average of 23.7 percent.

These patterns highlight an important regional dynamic: many local careers are accessible through community colleges, technical programs, certifications, and applied training.

WORKFORCE ALIGNMENT

Many of the postsecondary pathways pursued by Austin graduates align closely with the education levels required for jobs in Southeast Minnesota. Community college programs, technical certifications, and applied degrees provide entry points into many high-demand regional careers.

MULTIPLE PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

Success after graduation does not follow a single route. Students may pursue community colleges, four-year universities, apprenticeships, or direct entry into the workforce. Each pathway contributes to the strength of the regional economy and reflects the range of opportunities available to graduates.

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR OPPORTUNITIES IN OUR COMMUNITY AND BEYOND

Austin Public Schools prepares students for a variety of postsecondary pathways, including technical training, college programs, and workforce opportunities. These pathways reflect the skills and education levels required by many employers in Southeast Minnesota.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR AUSTIN STUDENTS

The workforce landscape in Southeast Minnesota includes a mix of occupations that require varying levels of education and training. Programs such as Career and Technical Education (CTE), partnerships with Riverland Community College, and THFAAS help ensure that students have access to education and training aligned with these opportunities.

These efforts support students in exploring career interests, gaining relevant skills, and pursuing pathways that connect education with workforce opportunities.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Preparing students for multiple postsecondary pathways, including technical training, community college, and four-year universities, ensures that graduates are equipped to pursue opportunities that align with both their interests and the region's workforce needs.

KEY MESSAGES TO GUIDE CONVERSATION

Student success after graduation is reflected not only in test scores but in the pathways students pursue and the opportunities available to them. In Southeast Minnesota, many careers require technical training and certifications rather than a four-year degree, which is why preparing students for multiple pathways is so important.

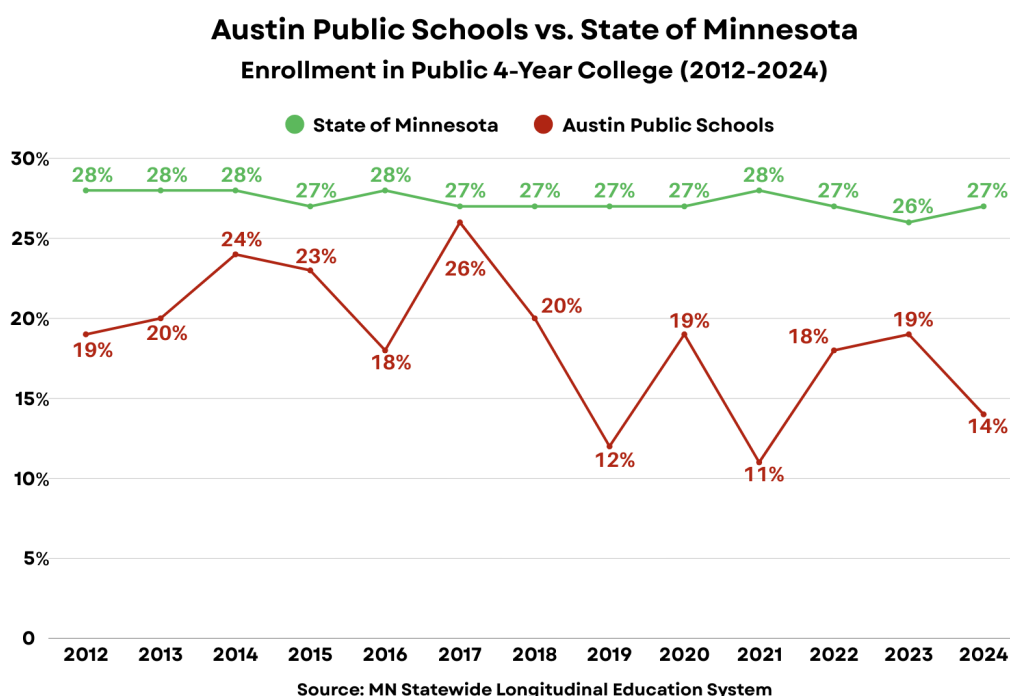
POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT PATHWAYS

The regional workforce data provides important context for understanding the range of pathways available to students after graduation. With many careers in Southeast Minnesota requiring different levels of education and training, students pursue a variety of postsecondary options.

The following series of charts examines where Austin Public Schools graduates enroll after high school. The first chart highlights public four-year college enrollment, but it should be viewed as one part of a broader picture that includes community and technical colleges, private institutions, and out-of-state enrollment. Together, these charts provide a more complete understanding of the pathways students choose after graduation.

PUBLIC FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

Austin graduates enroll in public four-year universities at lower rates than the statewide average.



Analysis

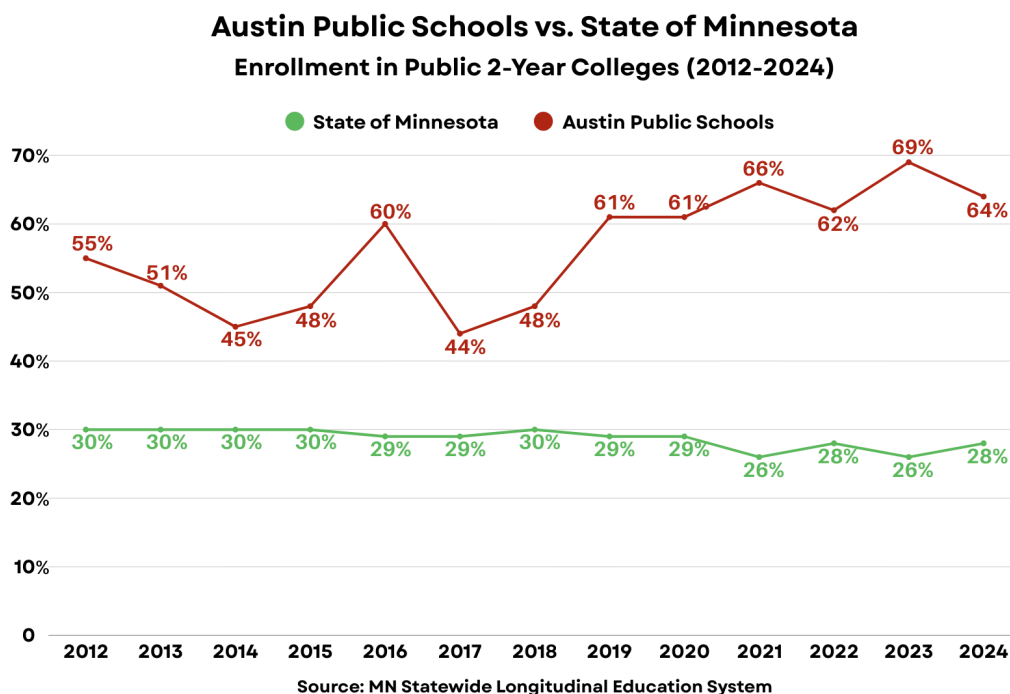
Across Minnesota, approximately 26–28 percent of graduates enroll in public four-year universities each year. Austin Public Schools graduates enroll in public four-year institutions at lower rates, generally between 11 percent and 24 percent across the past decade. When viewed alone, this difference may appear significant. However, the next chart provides important context for understanding how Austin graduates begin their postsecondary education.

Understanding the Data

Looking only at four-year enrollment can give an incomplete picture of college participation. Many Austin students begin their education at community colleges before transferring to universities or entering the workforce with technical credentials.

PUBLIC TWO-YEAR COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

Austin graduates enroll in public two-year colleges at significantly higher rates than students statewide.



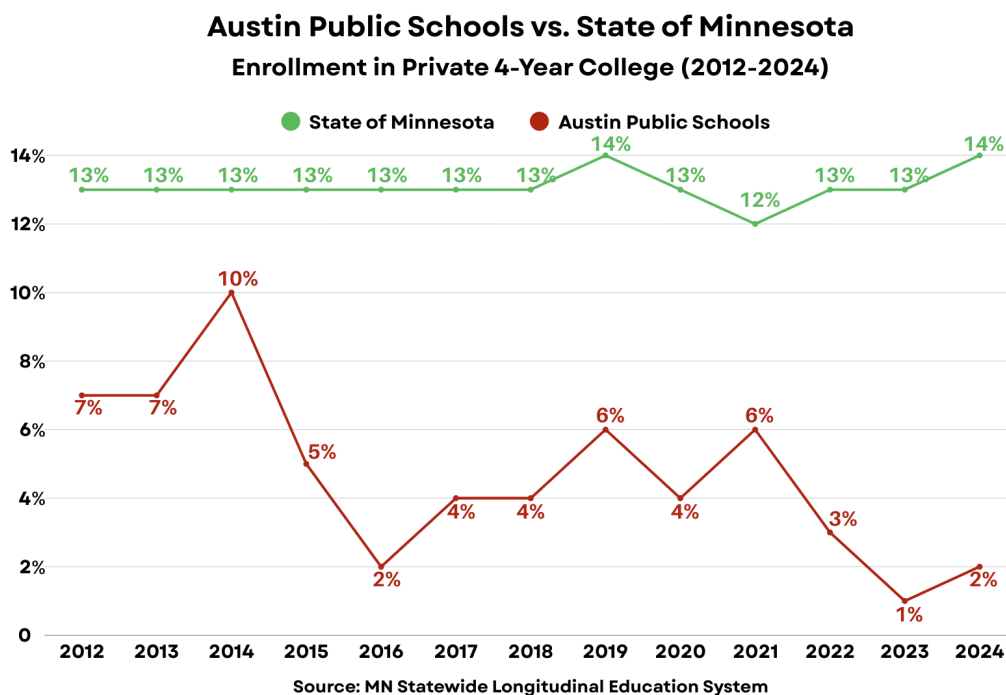
Analysis

Statewide, roughly 26–30 percent of graduates enroll in public two-year colleges. Austin graduates enroll in two-year institutions at much higher levels, often between 44 percent and nearly 70 percent in recent years. Programs such as the Hormel Foundation Austin Assurance Scholarship (THFAAS) provide a clear and affordable entry point into higher education for many students.

Local Opportunities Shape Student Pathways

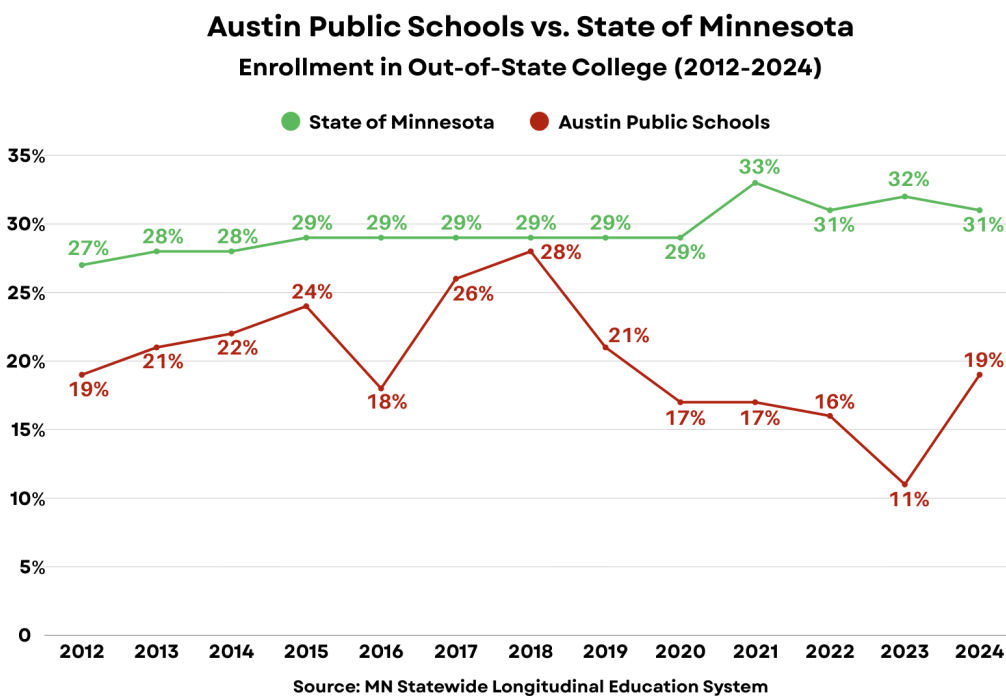
Riverland Community College and THFAAS create strong local pathways that help many students begin college with reduced financial barriers.

PRIVATE FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE ENROLLMENT



Austin graduates enroll in private four-year colleges at lower rates than statewide averages. This pattern may reflect the availability of nearby public institutions and lower-cost options within the region.

OUT-OF-STATE COLLEGE ENROLLMENT



Austin graduates are less likely to enroll in out-of-state colleges than students statewide, suggesting many students pursue accessible local or regional pathways.

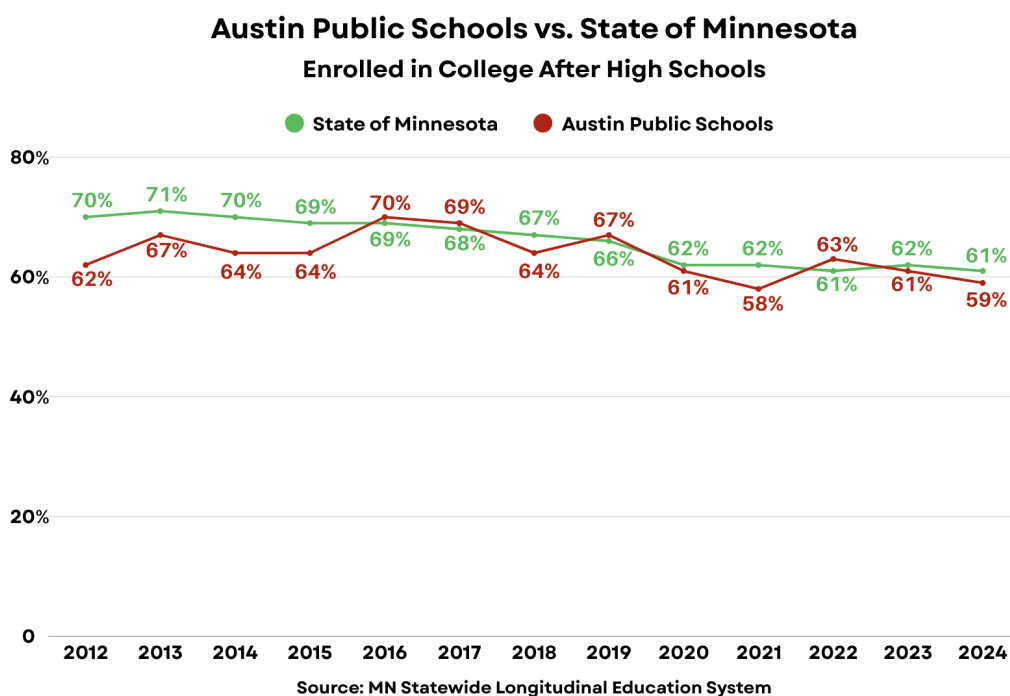
COST AND PROXIMITY INFLUENCE DECISIONS

When strong local educational opportunities exist, many students choose to remain closer to home as they begin their postsecondary education.

REAL WORLD READINESS

Austin Public Schools is delivering results that reflect a clear commitment to real-world readiness for every student. Our graduates consistently transition into employment at strong rates, matching or outperforming the state over time, while college enrollment remains competitive and has moved closer to state levels in recent years. This pattern shows a district that is giving students viable options, whether they choose to enter the workforce, pursue college, or build a path that includes both. With strong local partnerships and expanding postsecondary opportunities, APS is well-positioned to keep strengthening these pathways, so students graduate with direction, confidence, and a next step that fits their goals.

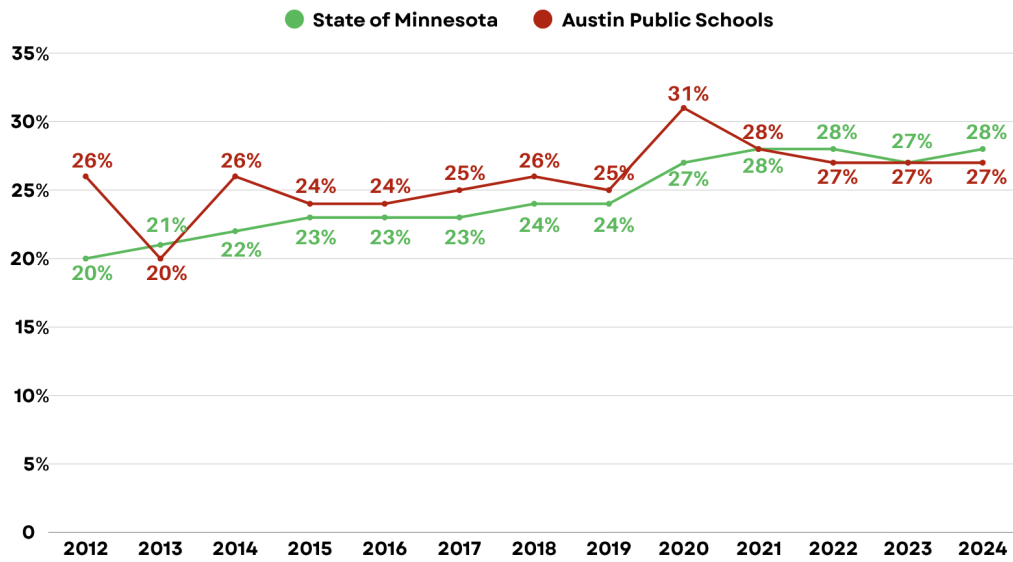
ENROLLED IN COLLEGE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL



EMPLOYED AFTER HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

Austin Public Schools vs. State of Minnesota

Employed After High School Graduation



Source: MN Statewide Longitudinal Education System

EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS

From 2022 to 2032, Southeast Minnesota is projected to create 12,280 new jobs. In addition, due to labor market churn, the region is projected to see 134,631 labor force exit openings and 163,022 transfer openings. Together, new job creation, labor force exit openings, and transfer openings are expected to total approximately 309,933 hires over the same period.

There are two ways to examine this data: by projected new job creation and by projected total hires. This distinction matters because some occupational groups may not generate many new jobs but will still see high turnover, resulting in a large number of total hires.

REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS: SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA 2022-2032

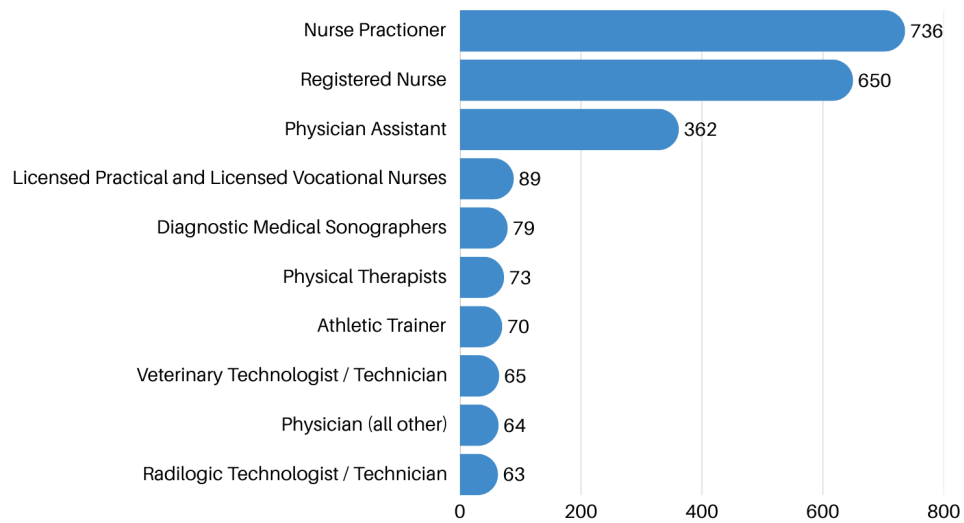
Occupational Group	2022 Estimate	2032 Projection	2022-2032 Percent Change	Total Job Growth Change	Labor Force Exit Openings	Transfer Openings	2022-2032 Total Hires
Total, All Occupations	270,975	283,255	4.5%	12,280	134,631	163,022	309,933
Management	17,837	19,081	7.0%	1,244	5,891	8,289	15,424
Business & Financial Operations	10,528	11,161	6.0%	633	3,369	5,199	9,201
Computer & Mathematical	4,255	4,727	11.1%	472	970	1,652	3,094
Architecture & Engineering	3,696	4,045	9.4%	349	1,100	1,420	2,869
Life, Physical, & Social Science	2,517	2,690	6.9%	173	550	1,504	2,227
Community & Social Service	6,085	6,519	7.1%	434	2,488	2,997	5,919
Legal	932	965	3.5%	33	264	272	569
Education, Training, & Library	15,626	16,142	3.3%	516	7,202	6,978	14,696
Arts, Design, Entertainment, & Media	4,325	4,437	2.6%	112	1,976	2,404	4,492
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	32,610	35,639	9.3%	3,029	10,264	7,637	20,930
Healthcare Support	15,423	16,902	9.6%	1,479	10,950	11,887	24,316
Protective Service	4,251	4,332	1.9%	81	2,086	2,407	4,574
Food Preparation & Serving Related	20,490	21,366	4.3%	876	17,736	21,649	40,261
Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maint.	8,466	8,860	4.7%	394	5,488	6,116	11,998
Personal Care & Service	6,960	7,449	7.0%	489	4,689	7,301	12,479
Sales & Related	21,072	20,838	-1.1%	-234	13,340	15,722	28,828
Office & Administrative Support	29,750	28,886	-2.9%	-864	15,752	17,463	32,361
Farming, Fishing, & Forestry	2,022	2,060	1.9%	38	1,144	1,837	3,013
Construction & Extraction	11,207	11,926	6.4%	719	3,973	5,719	10,411
Installation, Maintenance, & Repair	9,366	9,983	6.6%	617	3,748	4,649	9,014
Production	23,228	23,595	1.6%	367	10,382	14,776	25,525
Transportation & Material Moving	20,329	21,652	6.5%	1,323	11,259	15,150	27,732

Source: DEED 2022-2032 Employment Outlook

NEW JOB CREATION

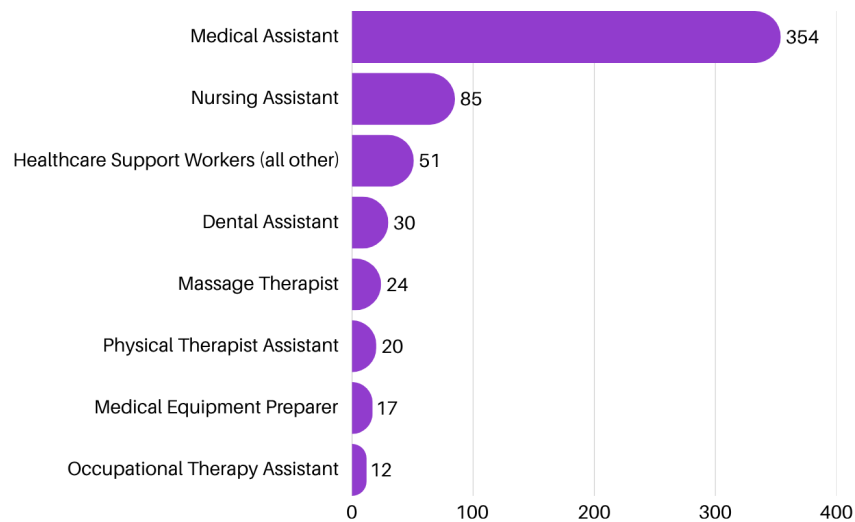
When examining occupational groups, Healthcare Practitioners & Technical (3,029 new jobs), Healthcare Support (1,479 jobs), Transportation & Material Moving (1,323 jobs), Management (1,244 jobs), and Food Preparation & Serving Related (876 jobs) are projected to create the most new jobs in the region, together accounting for 64.7% of all projected new job creation. In terms of individual occupations, here are the top new job creators within each occupational group:

**NEW JOB CREATION:
HEALTHCARE PRACTITIONER & TECHNICAL OCCUPATIONS PROJECTED JOB GROWTH
2022-2032**



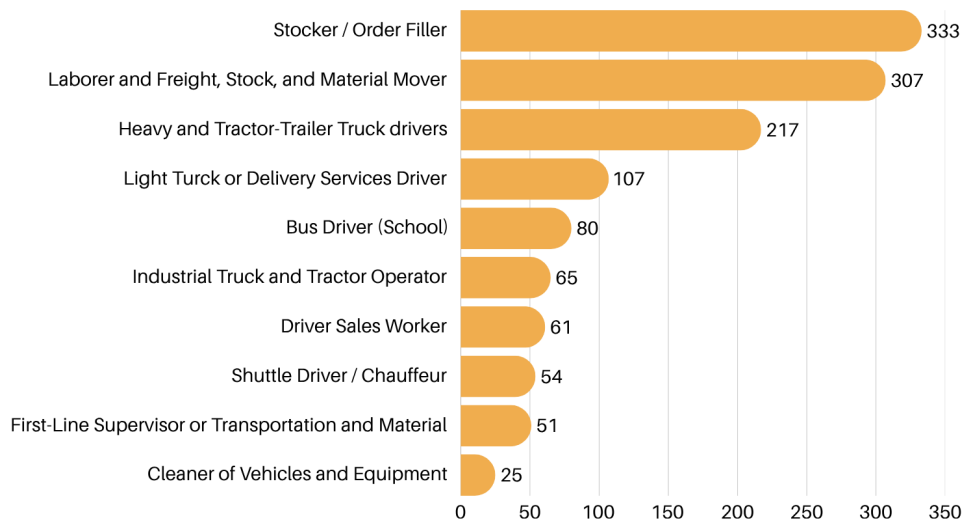
Source: DEED 2022-2032 Employment Outlook

**NEW JOB CREATION:
HEALTHCARE SUPPORT PROJECTED JOB GROWTH
2022-2032**



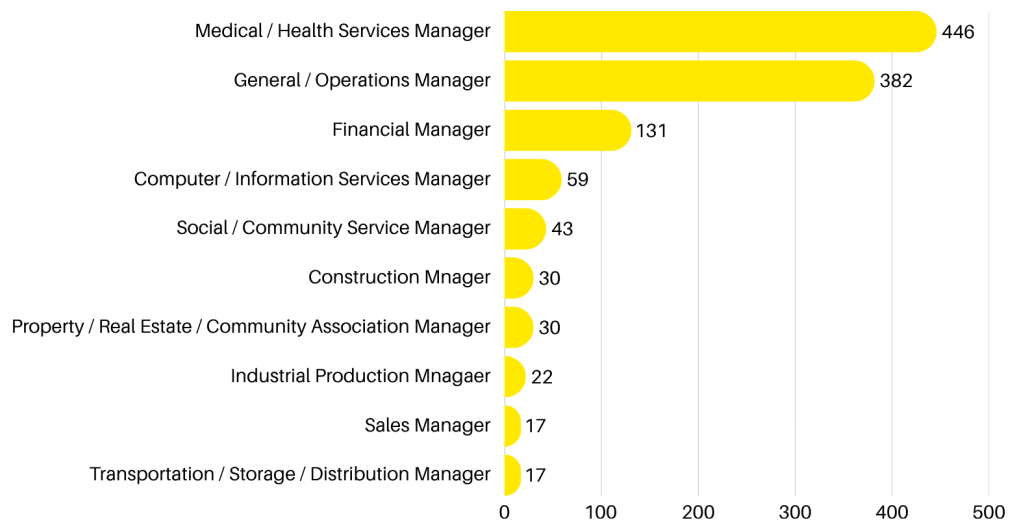
Source: DEED 2022-2032 Employment Outlook

**NEW JOB CREATION:
TRANSPORTATION & MOVING OCCUPATIONS PROJECTED JOB GROWTH
2022-2032**



Source: DEED 2022-2032 Employment Outlook

**NEW JOB CREATION:
MANAGEMENT OCCUPATIONAL GROUP PROJECTED JOB GROWTH
2022-2032**

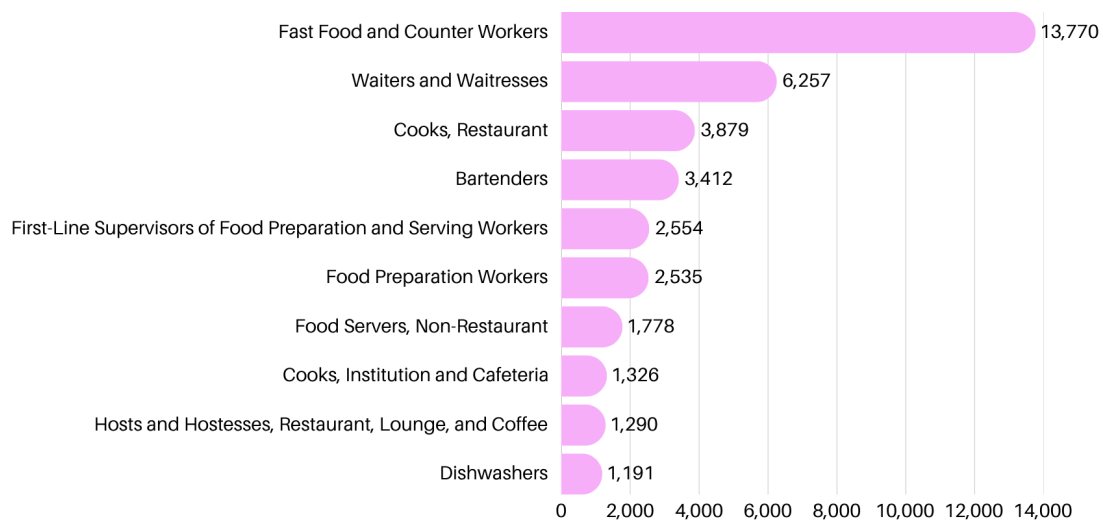


Source: DEED 2022-2032 Employment Outlook

TOTAL HIRES

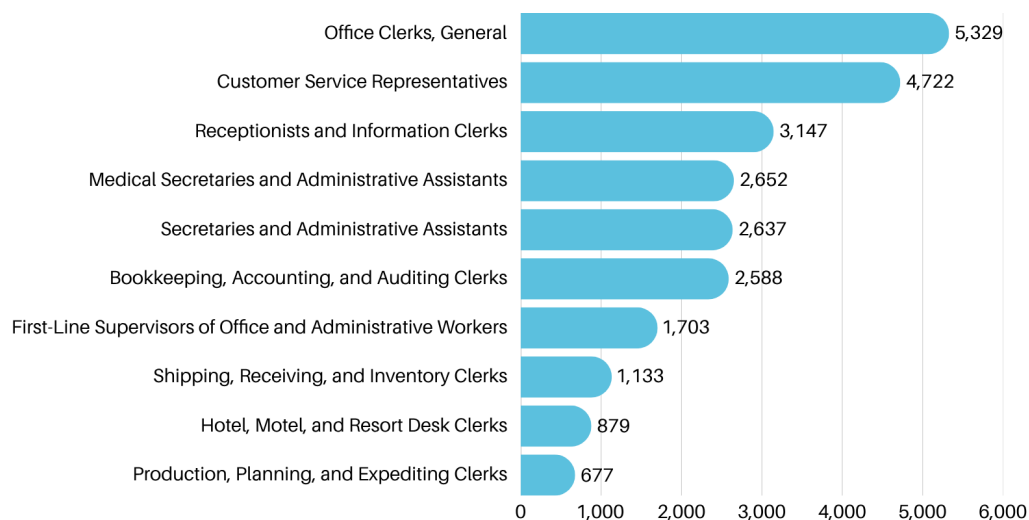
In comparison, the occupational groups projected to have the most total hires from 2022 to 2032 are Food Preparation & Serving Related (40,261 hires), Office & Administrative Support (32,361 hires), Sales & Related (28,828 hires), Transportation & Material Moving (27,732 hires), and Production (25,525 hires), together accounting for 49.9% of total projected hires in the region. In terms of individual occupations, here are the top total hires within each occupational group:

TOTAL HIRES: FOOD PREPARATION & SERVING RELATED OCCUPATIONS 2022-2032



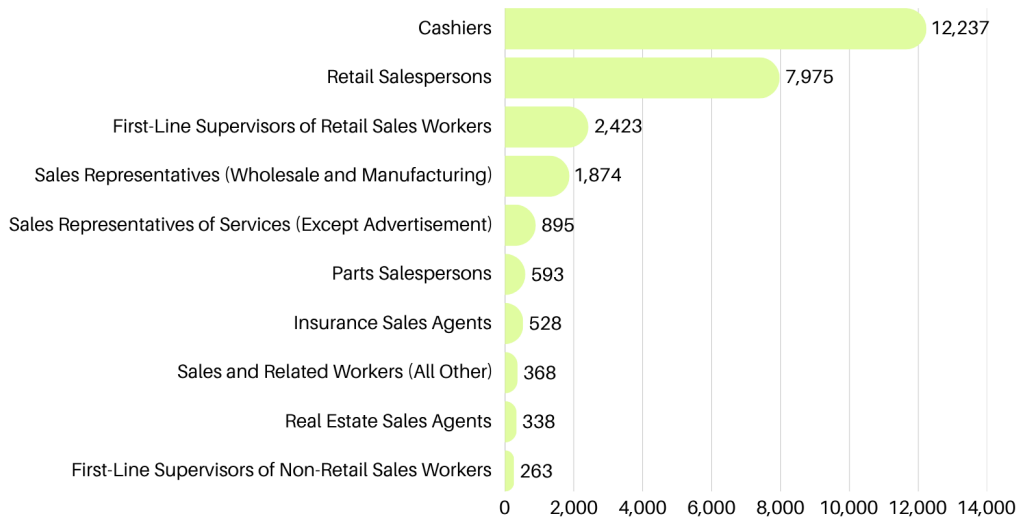
Source: DEED 2022-2032 Employment Outlook

TOTAL HIRES: OFFICE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT OCCUPATIONS 2022-2032



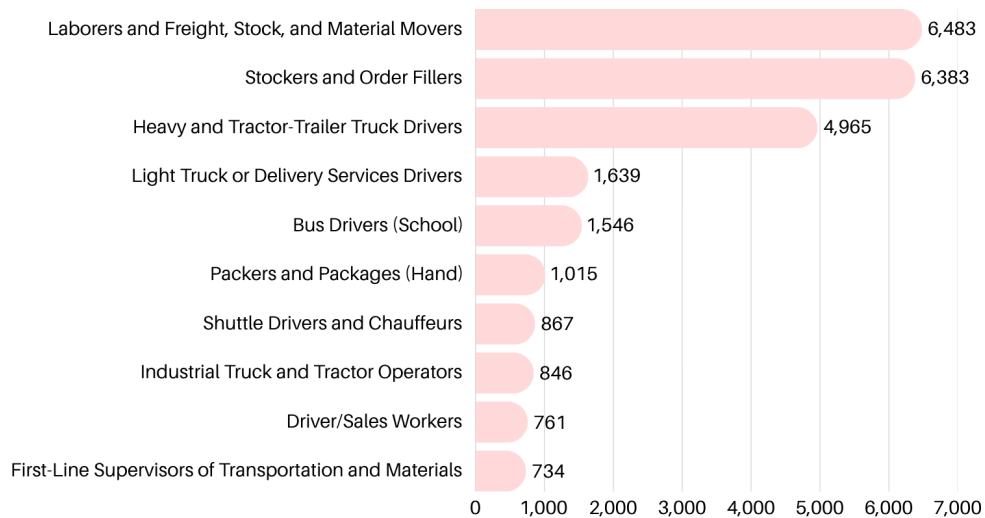
Source: DEED 2022-2032 Employment Outlook

**TOTAL HIRES:
SALES & RELATED OCCUPATIONS
2022-2032**



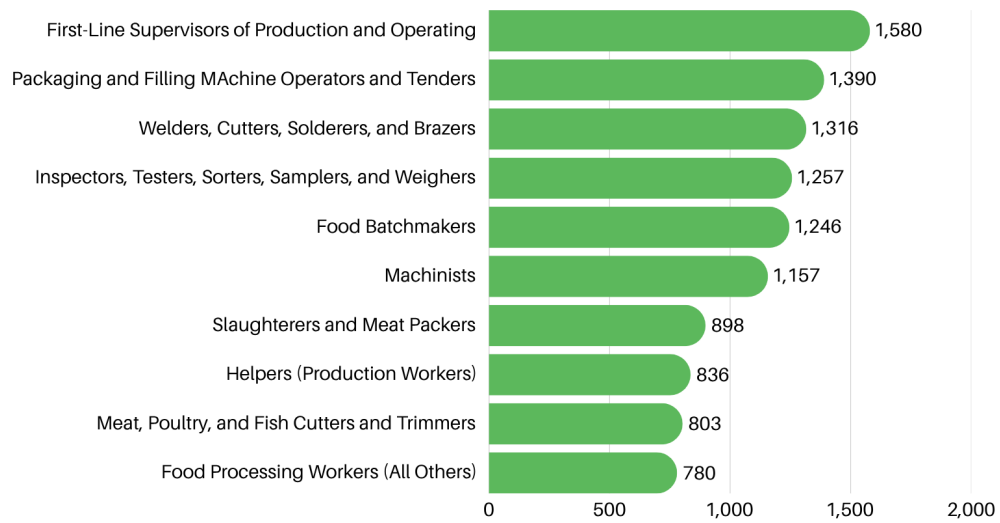
Source: DEED 2022-2032 Employment Outlook

**TOTAL HIRES:
TRANSPORTATION & MATERIAL MOVING OCCUPATIONS
2022-2032**



Source: DEED 2022-2032 Employment Outlook

**TOTAL HIRES:
PRODUCTION OCCUPATIONS
2022-2032**



Source: DEED 2022-2032 Employment Outlook

POSTSECONDARY PATHWAYS BY STUDENT GROUP

In addition to overall trends, it is important to understand how these pathways are experienced across student groups.

ANALYSIS

Postsecondary enrollment patterns show that students across groups pursue a range of pathways after graduation, including community and technical colleges, four-year institutions, and other postsecondary options.

In Austin Public Schools, students of color are participating in community and technical college pathways at strong levels, consistent with overall district trends. At the same time, variation exists in how students access different postsecondary options, including four-year institutions.

These patterns reflect differences in access, awareness, and exposure to opportunities. They highlight the importance of continuing to strengthen systems that support all students in exploring and pursuing the full range of postsecondary pathways available to them.

ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY

Differences in postsecondary enrollment patterns often reflect access to information, financial resources, and exposure to opportunities, not differences in student potential.

BUILDING ON STRENGTHS

Strong participation in community and technical colleges provides a foundation to expand access to additional pathways, including transfer opportunities and career advancement.

CONNECTION TO OUR WORK

Through efforts such as the 9th Grade Seminar, expanded counseling and guidance, and partnerships with Riverland Community College, Austin Public Schools is continuing to strengthen how students explore, plan, and pursue postsecondary opportunities.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Ensuring that every student has access to the full range of postsecondary pathways remains an important focus as the district continues to build on its strengths.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE PACKER PROFILE

The pathways highlighted in this report are consistent with how Austin Public Schools has designed the Packer Profile to prepare students for life after graduation. Rather than focusing on a single outcome, the Packer Profile emphasizes developing students who are Responsible, Resilient, Learners, Communicators, and Contributors, and who can pursue a range of postsecondary options.

The enrollment patterns in this report, particularly the strong participation in community and technical colleges, reflect a system in which students are making decisions based on access, affordability, and alignment with their career interests. These are not accidental outcomes; they are connected to how students are prepared throughout their time in Austin Public Schools.

A key example of this work is the 9th Grade Seminar, which provides a structured starting point for students as they enter high school. The seminar focuses on building the academic, social, and transferable skills students need to succeed, including organization, time management, study strategies, self-advocacy, and digital literacy. Students also begin developing a four-year plan, exploring career interests, and identifying their personal strengths and aptitudes.

This early foundation is reinforced through continued access to Career and Technical Education (CTE), partnerships with Riverland Community College, and ongoing counseling and guidance. Students are not only exposed to different pathways, they are given the tools to evaluate them and make informed decisions.

The Packer Portfolio further supports this process by helping students document their experiences, reflect on their growth, and build a clear narrative of their readiness for next steps after graduation.

Taken together, these elements create a system where postsecondary outcomes reflect intentional preparation. Students leave Austin Public Schools with both the skills and the direction needed to pursue college, career training, or workforce opportunities that align with their goals.

STRENGTHENING POSTSECONDARY PATHWAYS

The data in this report highlights a clear pattern: Austin Public Schools graduates are pursuing postsecondary pathways that align with both their individual goals and the opportunities available within our region. Strong participation in community and technical colleges, combined with lower rates of direct four-year enrollment, reflects the impact of local partnerships, affordability, and workforce demand.

At the same time, this analysis points to opportunities to further strengthen how we support students in exploring and accessing the full range of postsecondary options. Building on the foundation established through the Packer Profile, the 9th Grade Seminar, and our existing partnerships, the following strategies are designed to expand access, increase awareness, and ensure every student is equipped to make informed decisions about their future.

1. Strengthen Two-Year College Pathways

Partnerships with Community Colleges. Continue strengthening partnerships with Riverland Community College to support seamless transitions from high school to college. Opportunities may include expanded dual enrollment programs, early college coursework, and clearly defined transfer pathways that allow students to begin locally and continue their education at four-year institutions if they choose.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Alignment. Further develop and align CTE programs with Riverland academic offerings and regional workforce needs. This alignment ensures students gain relevant skills, certifications, and industry experience that prepare them for either immediate employment or continued postsecondary education.

2. Expand Awareness and Access to Four-Year College Opportunities

College Counseling and Guidance. Strengthen comprehensive college counseling services to ensure students and families understand the full range of postsecondary options, including four-year universities. Guidance should support students through the application, financial aid, and program selection processes.

Scholarships and Financial Aid Support. Continue promoting scholarship opportunities and assisting students in navigating financial aid resources to reduce financial barriers and expand access to four-year institutions.

3. Support Postsecondary Access for Students of Color

Targeted Programs. Expand mentoring, tutoring, and college readiness initiatives designed to support students of color in exploring and preparing for postsecondary education opportunities.

Community Engagement. Collaborate with families and community organizations to build strong support networks that encourage higher education aspirations and provide resources for students navigating postsecondary pathways.

4. Encourage Broader College Exploration

College Fairs and Campus Visits. Provide opportunities for students to explore a wide range of institutions through college fairs, campus visits, and virtual exploration experiences.

Postsecondary Information Sessions. Offer informational sessions highlighting various educational pathways, including public universities, private institutions, and specialized academic programs available both in Minnesota and beyond.

5. Strengthen Data-Informed Decision Making

Ongoing Data Analysis. Continue to review postsecondary enrollment data regularly to monitor trends, identify gaps, and guide program development.

Student Feedback. Collect and incorporate student feedback to better understand their interests, concerns, and perceived barriers to postsecondary education.

6. Promote a College-Going Culture

Early College Awareness. Introduce college and career awareness initiatives beginning in middle school so students develop early exposure to postsecondary opportunities and begin planning for their futures.

Alumni and Community Mentorship. Invite alumni and community leaders who have successfully navigated various postsecondary pathways to share their experiences and mentor current students.

7. Strengthen Family Engagement

Parent Workshops. Offer workshops to help families understand the college application process, financial aid opportunities, and available postsecondary pathways.

Communication. Maintain consistent communication with parents and guardians to keep them informed and engaged in their children's educational planning.

8. Reduce Financial Barriers

Financial Literacy Education. Provide financial literacy programs that help students and families understand college costs, budgeting, financial aid, and long-term financial planning.

Local Scholarship Opportunities. Continue building partnerships with local businesses, community organizations, and philanthropic partners to expand scholarship opportunities for Austin students.

LIMITATIONS OF THE DATA

The data used in this report comes from the Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Education System (SLEDs). While the data provides insight into college enrollment patterns, it does not capture all postsecondary pathways, including military service, apprenticeships, or direct workforce entry. The charts also reflect initial enrollment decisions rather than long-term outcomes such as transfers or degree completion.

UNDERSTANDING THE DATA

MYTH VS REALITY

Myth: Lower four-year enrollment means Austin students are not pursuing higher education.

Reality: Austin graduates enroll in two-year colleges at significantly higher rates than the statewide average. Many students begin their education locally before transferring to universities or entering the workforce with a credential.

CONCLUSION

Austin Public Schools is delivering on its responsibility to prepare students for life after graduation with clarity, purpose, and results that stand up to scrutiny.

The data in this report shows that our graduates are pursuing a range of postsecondary pathways that reflect informed decision-making and strong preparation. While fewer students enroll directly in four-year universities compared to statewide averages, a significantly higher number begin at community and technical colleges, pathways that are affordable, accessible, and closely connected to both transfer opportunities and high-demand careers.

This is not a gap in performance. It reflects alignment.

In Southeast Minnesota, most careers require education beyond high school but not necessarily a four-year degree. Our students are responding to that reality. They are choosing pathways that position them for success in the regional economy while keeping doors open for continued education and advancement.

Just as important, these outcomes are not accidental. They are the result of a system intentionally designed to support students in making informed, forward-looking decisions. From early planning in the 9th Grade Seminar to meaningful Career and Technical Education experiences to strong partnerships with Riverland Community College and the Hormel Foundation Austin Assurance Scholarship, the district has created clear, well-supported pathways for students to follow.

At the center of this work is the Packer Profile. It defines what we expect our graduates to know and be able to do, not tied to a single destination, but to a set of skills and dispositions that transfer across any path. Our students are leaving as responsible, resilient learners and communicators who can evaluate options, adapt, and contribute. That is what readiness looks like.

The data also reinforces where we continue to focus. We will continue to expand awareness of four-year opportunities, strengthen access for all student groups, and ensure every student has the information and support needed to choose from the full range of postsecondary options.

The direction is clear and grounded in evidence: Austin Public Schools is not preparing students for one path; we are preparing them for the reality they will enter. Our graduates are leaving with a plan, a skill set, and the confidence to move forward. That is the outcome our community expects, and it is the outcome our system is producing.

SOURCES

Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Education System (SLEDs). Postsecondary Enrollment Data for Austin Public Schools and the State of Minnesota, 2012–2024.

Hormel Foundation Austin Assurance Scholarship Program. Annual Meeting Report and Program Data, February 2026.

Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). Workforce and Postsecondary Data Resources.

METHODOLOGY NOTE

Workforce projection data in this report was obtained through the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) Employment Outlook tool. Occupational projections for 2022–2032 are developed using national trend analysis models and adjusted to reflect Minnesota's industry and occupational employment patterns, based on Current Employment Statistics (CES) and Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) data.

The analysis of educational requirements by occupation was based on Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) data. Estimated employment across occupations is matched to the typical education requirements for those occupations to determine the distribution of jobs by educational attainment level.

Postsecondary enrollment data were obtained through the Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Education System (SLEDs), which links student records from pre-kindergarten through postsecondary education and into the workforce through administrative records. SLEDs provides a comprehensive view of student enrollment and workforce outcomes over time.

Source: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), Regional Labor Market Information Office.