



REIMAGINING SOCIAL CHANGE

Mid-Plains Region (M.P.)

PREPARED FOR ACCELERATE NEBRASKA | FEBRUARY 2016

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Executive Summary

STATEWIDE AND REGIONAL SUMMARIES

Statewide summary

STATEWIDE FINDINGS

- While the **current population is predominantly white (89.4%)**, **growth in the minority population accounted for two-thirds of Nebraska's overall population growth** in the 2000s
- Overall the **poverty rate has held steady at 12.8% and unemployment is at 2.9%**, however, these **numbers vary drastically for minority populations** with over **28% of the Hispanic population living in poverty** and **unemployment reaching 15% for the black population**
- Nebraska has among the **nation's highest high school graduation rate (90%)**, **but there is a large achievement gap between minority and low income students and their white counterparts**
- There is a **strong college-going culture (69.5% college-going rate)**, but some students **are not college ready** as evidenced by **high developmental education numbers and average completion rates**
- The **majority of Nebraska's jobs are low and middle wage**, which is misaligned with the number of four-year degrees the state produces, leading to **underemployment and brain drain**

FOUR STATEWIDE OPPORTUNITIES & KEY DATA POINTS

Research suggests several opportunities to better align Nebraska's education system with the state's labor market:



Align on expectations for K-12 education outcomes

- Nebraska's average ACT score of 21.5 and 90% high school graduation rate (in 2014) are near or above national averages, yet nearly 40% of all students test below passing on the 11th grade Math NeSA. Nebraska must create clear standards to ensure that it does not continue to pay to teach students the same materials multiple times (e.g., once in high school and again in developmental education courses).



Decrease the achievement gap for Nebraska's low income and growing minority populations

- Minority and low income students are more than twice as likely to test below passing than white students on the 11th grade Math NeSA. Nebraska must provide minority and low income students and their families with additional supports if it wishes to ensure that these individuals will enter the labor market at similar rates and wages as their white counterparts.



Increase persistence and completion rates at the postsecondary level

- Postsecondary completion rates are on par with national averages (Bachelors: 55.1% NE vs. 55.5% U.S.; Associates: 30.3% NE vs. 29.2% U.S. in 2013), but have plenty room for improvement. Nebraska must improve retention and completion to ensure it does not continue to use resources educating students who drop out of college.



Increase the number of high skill, high wage jobs

- A high school diploma or less will be required for almost two-thirds of jobs in 2020. Relative to those needs, Nebraska has more than double the required number of recent graduates (aged 25-34) who attended some college or received an associate's degree. Nebraska must create more high-skill jobs to keep the educated young people who are critical for the state's future success and contribute to the state economy and tax base.

Mid-Plains summary

Mid-Plains is one of the **smallest and racially homogenous regions** in Nebraska. Students in the district graduate at rates near the state average and attend regional **postsecondary institutions that cater to the region's labor force needs**. However, most of the current and future regional jobs are low-wage and low/middle skill that **do not require postsecondary education**

Demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• M.P. is one of the smallest regions in the state consisting of just ~5% of the state's population• The rural nature and employment mix in the region results in a population that has far fewer four year and above degrees than average
K-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In line with regional demographics, M.P. hosts ~5% of all the high school students in Nebraska. North Platte Public Schools (NPPS), the largest district in the region, hosts 26% of all high school students in the region• While regional students test near average on the 11th Grade Math NeSA, student at NPPS are 42% less likely to test proficient on the 11th Grade Math NeSA• Despite the poor NeSA scores in NPPS, the district graduates students at a rate (88% graduation rate) very close to the regional average (93% graduation rate)
Postsecondary education (PSE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• M.P.'s two postsecondary institutions, Mid-Plains Community College and NCTA, cater to regional student and labor force needs• MPCC students are 7% more likely to graduate with an Associate's degree than the statewide average but often end up working in low wage jobs• NCTA's singular focus on the agriculture space in an open-enrollment setting provides its students with career opportunities that are highly relevant to the region
Labor market	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Similar to current educational attainment levels, M.P. projected educational needs will continue to require primarily Associates degrees and below• Meat cutters and laborers are the fastest growing occupations in the region

Demographics

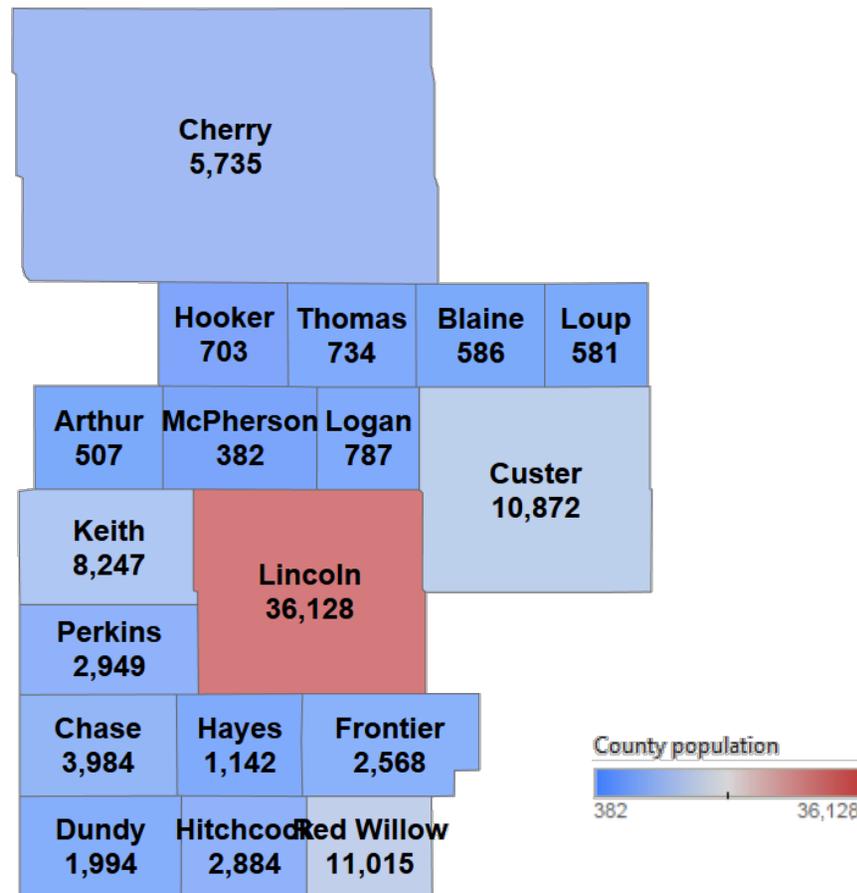
SMALL AND RURAL REGION

M.P. is a rural region characterized by smaller population centers



This region represents approximately **5% of the total Nebraska population**

Population by County

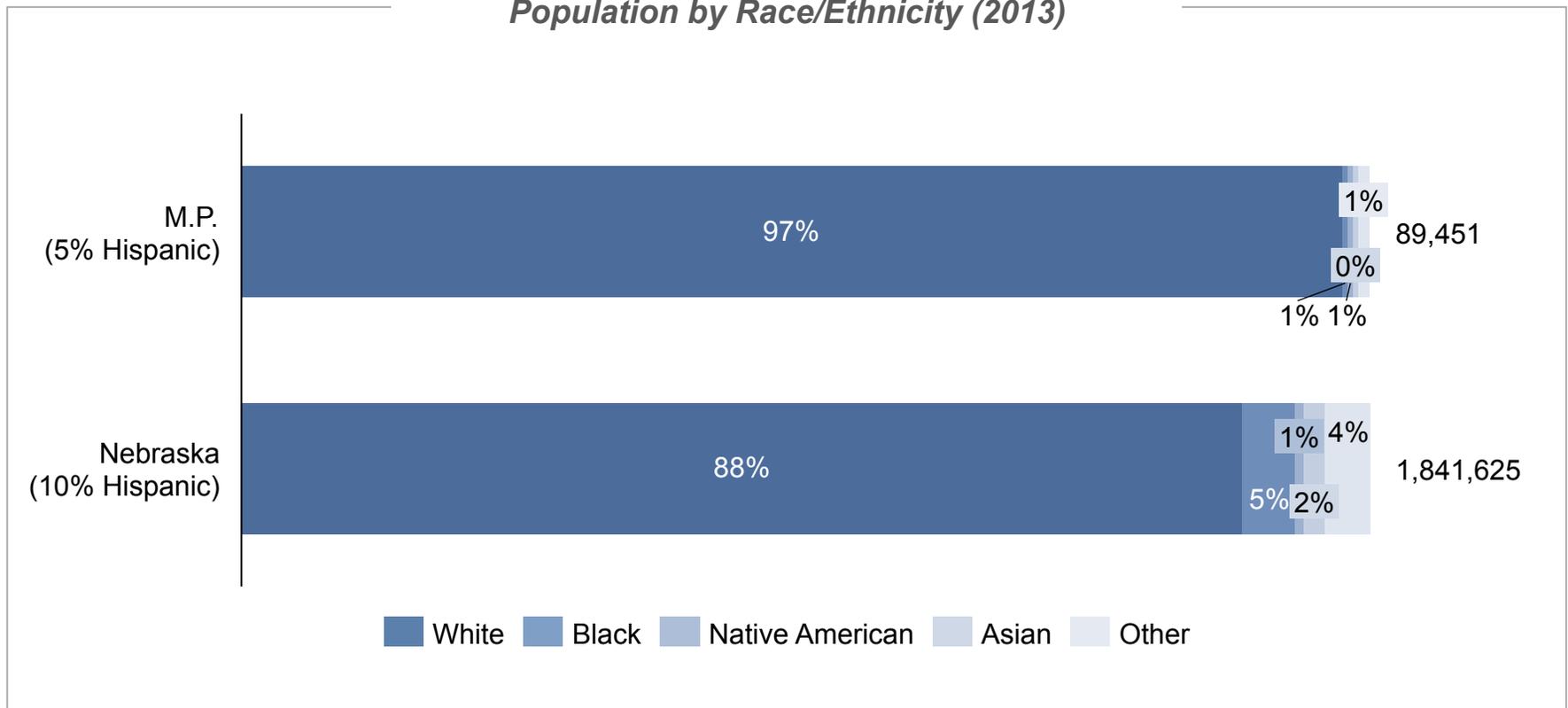


M.P.'s population is primarily concentrated in Lincoln County and is almost entirely white



M.P.'s population is **almost entirely white (98%)** with 5% of the population being ethnically Hispanic

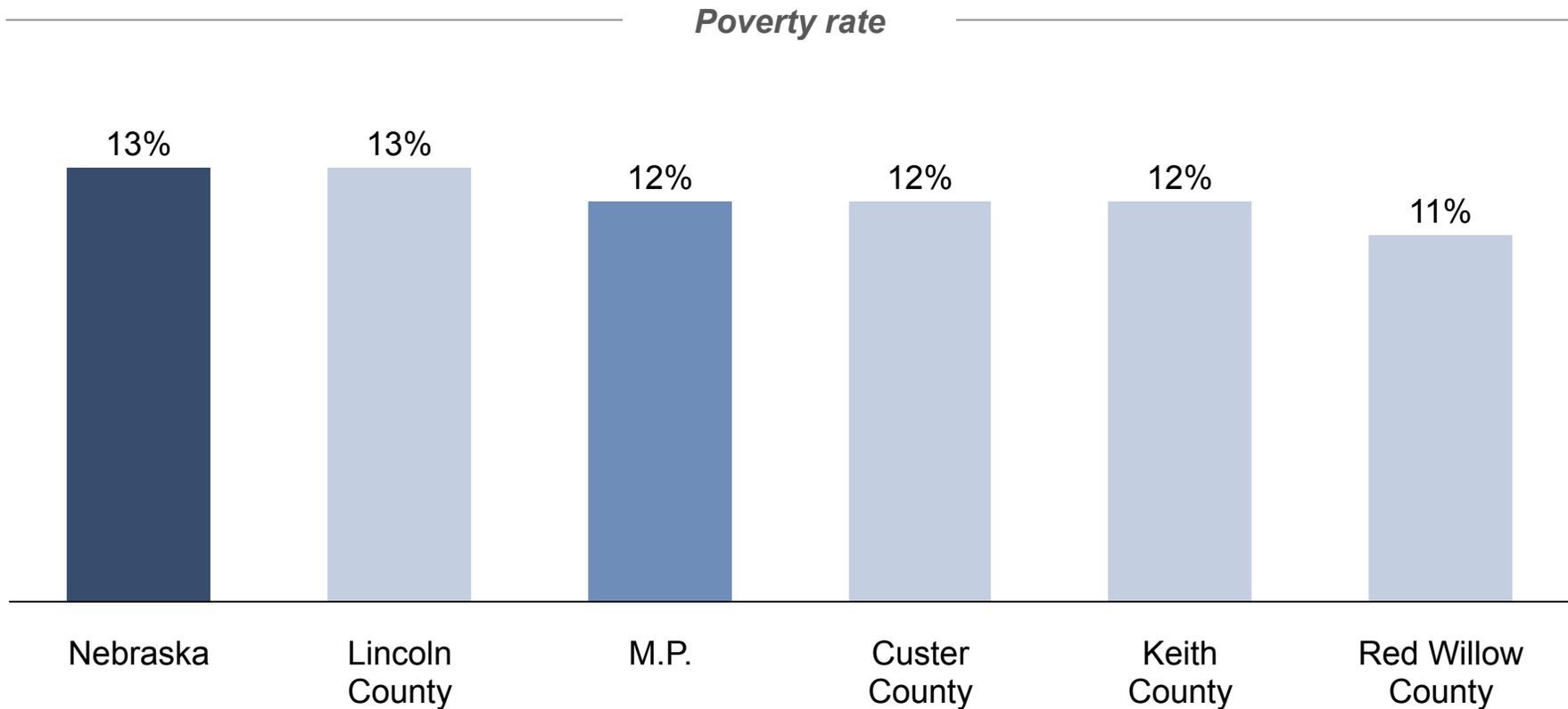
Population by Race/Ethnicity (2013)



Source: American Community Survey

Note: As Hispanic is compiled as an ethnicity, it cannot be calculated in conjunction with race, due to significant data differences, data accounts for "one race alone" population

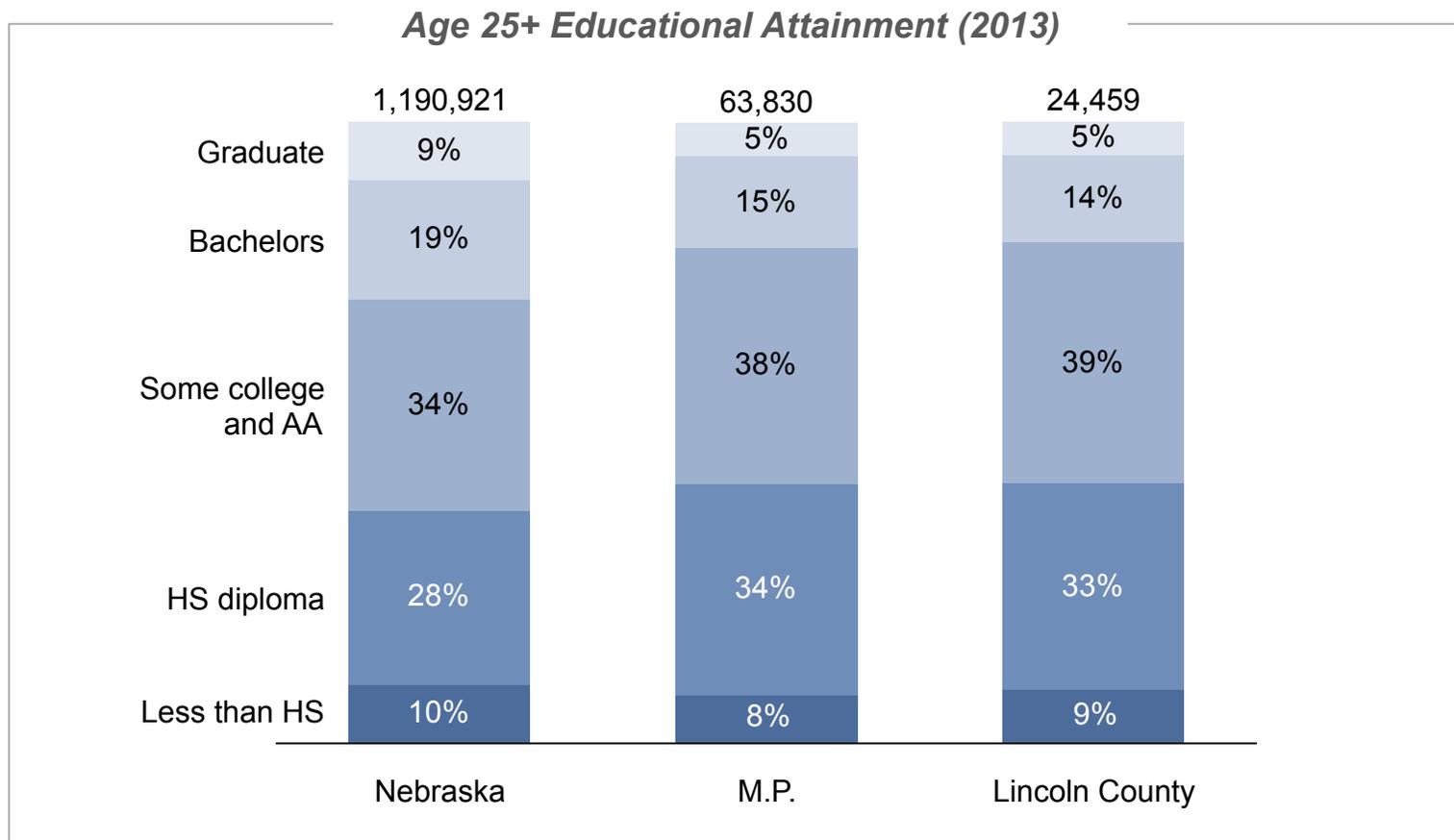
Although median earnings are below state averages, so too are M.P.'s poverty rates



M.P.'s rural nature and employment mix results in a population that has far fewer four year and above degrees than average



M.P.'s rural geography, primary industries of employment, and absence of a major postsecondary institution result in lower levels of **educational attainment than the average**



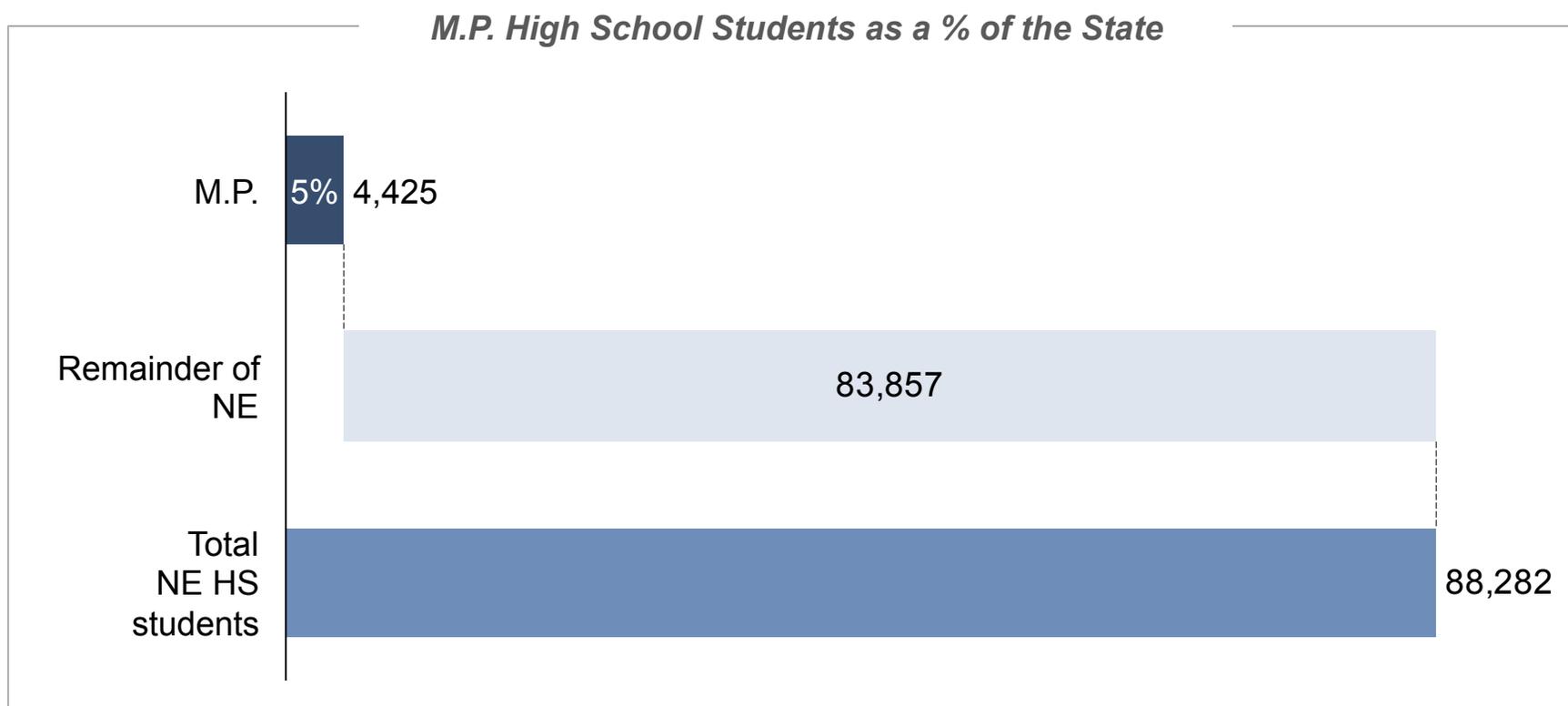
K-12 Education

MISMATCH BETWEEN NESAP PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATION RATES LEADS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT ACADEMIC RIGOR

Only 5% of all Nebraska high school students reside in M.P.



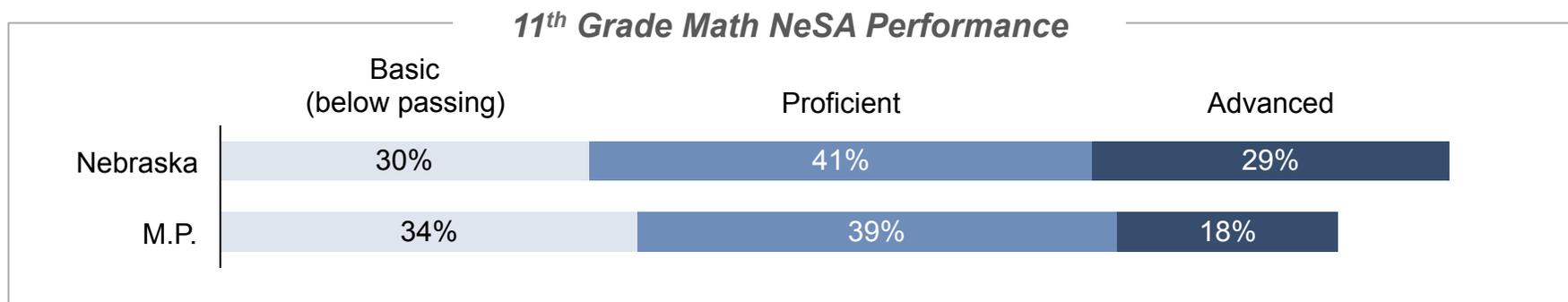
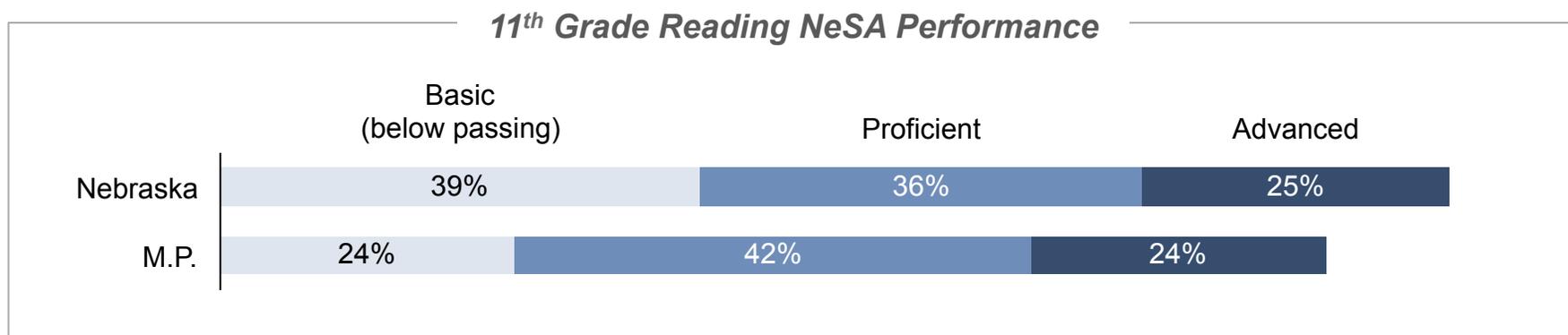
- Only **three of the 18 counties in M.P. have over 400 total high school students**
- In total, North Plate Public Schools (NPPS) is home to over 70% of high school students in Lincoln County and **26% of high school students in the region. McCook Public Schools is the second largest** serving 11% of the region's high school students



M.P. students perform above average on the 11th Grade Reading NeSA and slightly below average on Math



M.P. students **perform below average on the 11th grade Math NeSA**. The low student achievement on Math is primarily fueled by the largest district, NPPS



*“I would say that **math readiness is one of our biggest issues**” – PSE administrator*

Source: 2014-2015 State of the Schools Report

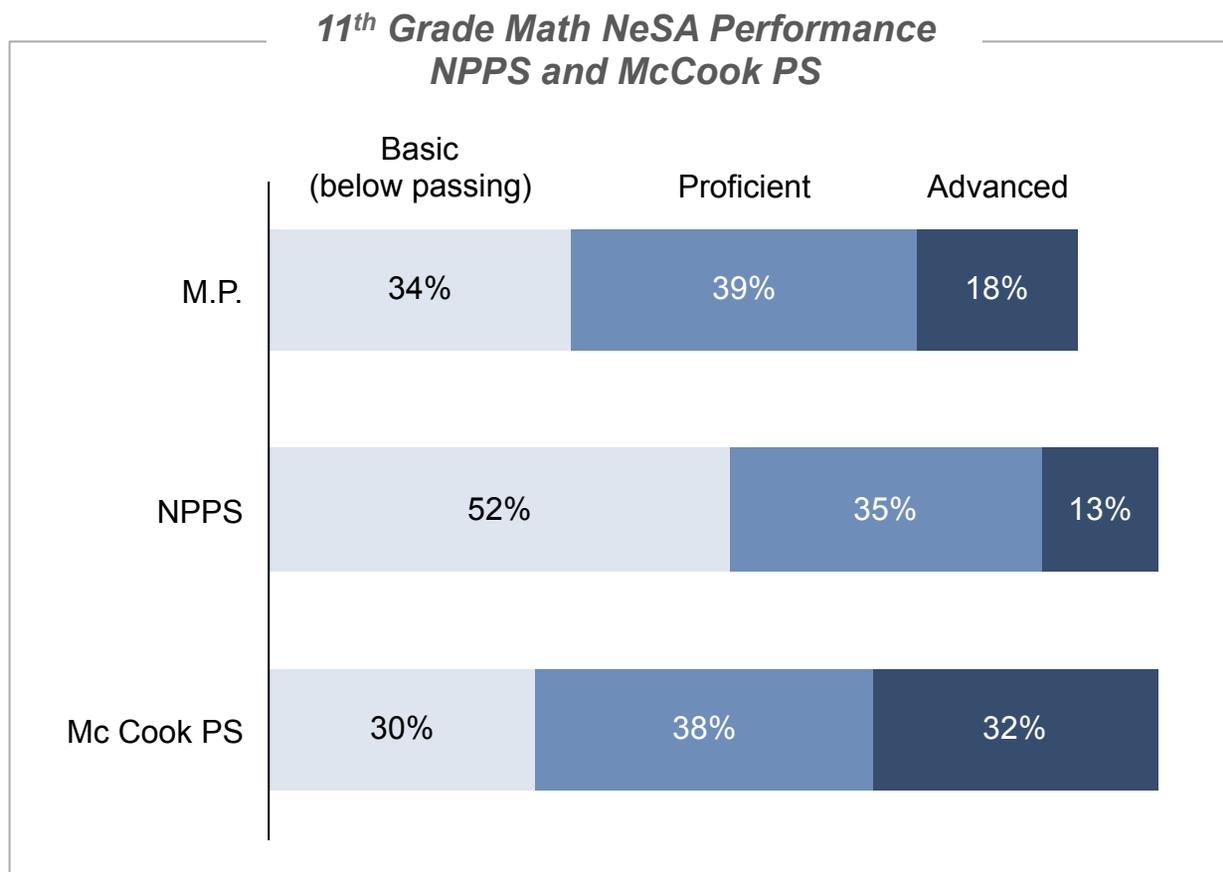
All regional performance data are weighted averages of county level data.

Due to gaps in reporting regional NeSA scores will not add up to 100%. Please refer to regional presentation for additional insights.

NPPS students have Math NeSA scores that are significantly below the regional average

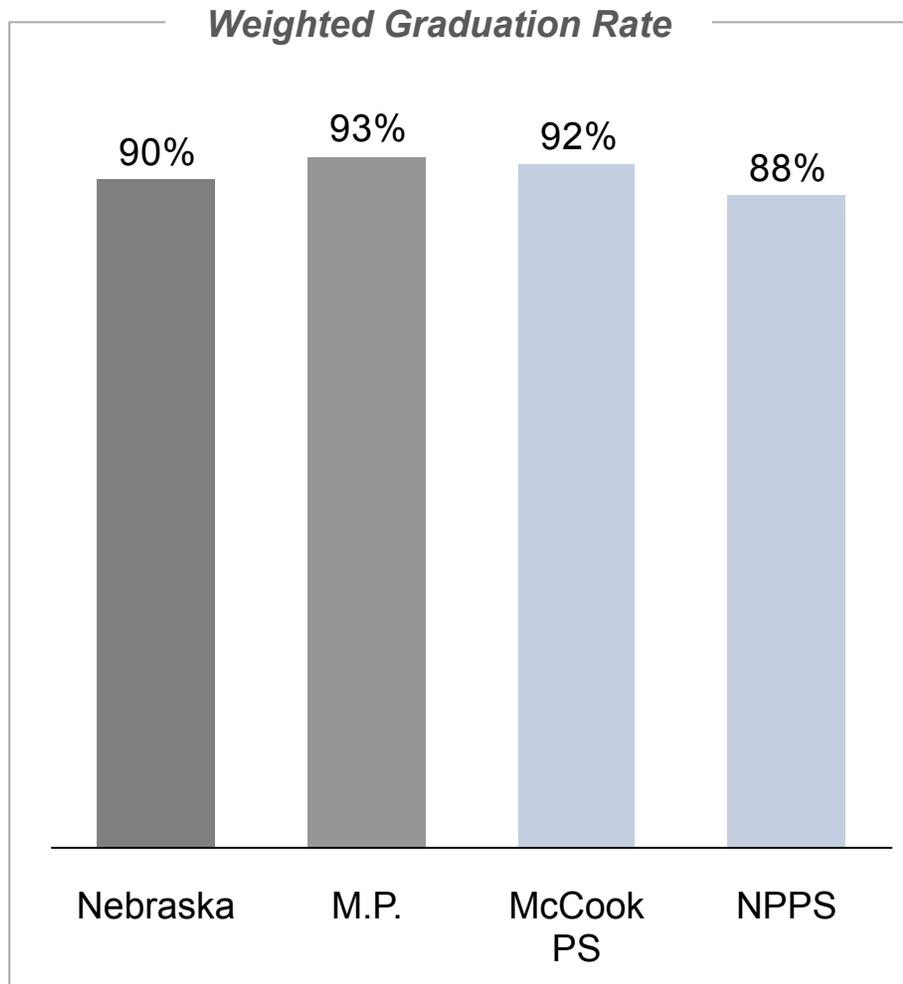


52% of 11th grade students at NPPS tested below passing on the Math NeSA, varying greatly from McCook PS, the second largest district



*“There is a **huge disconnect between the K-12 and the PSE system when it comes to math.** The Department of Education only requires three years of math while UNL says you need four years of math”*
– PSE administrator

Despite poor NeSA scores at NPPS, the district's graduation rate is near the statewide average



NeSA Performance vs. Graduation Rate

	Proficient or above on 11th Grade Math NeSA	vs	Graduation rate
McCook PS	70%	vs	92%
NPPS	48%	vs	88%

Postsecondary Education (PSE)

ENSURE PSE IS RELEVANT TO REGIONAL LABOR AND
STUDENT NEEDS

M.P.'s two postsecondary institutions are relatively small

2014 Snapshot of M.P. Postsecondary Institutions

CC

Community Colleges:
42,005 total



Enrollment (PT + FT)	2,491 (6% of all community college students)
% minority enrollment	11% (20% community college average)
Retention rate	53% (57% community college average)
Completion rate (6 year)	34% (26% community college average)

UN

University of Nebraska:
38,348 total

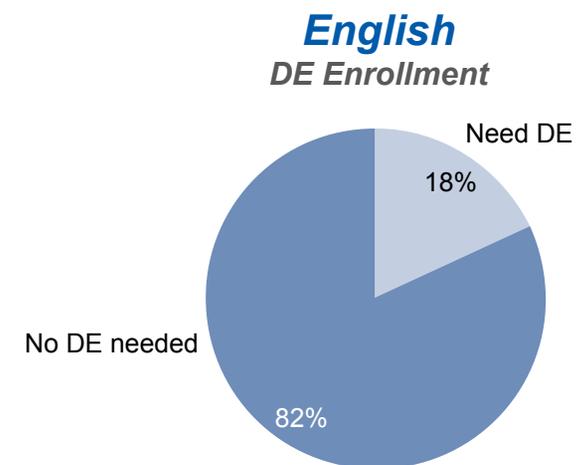
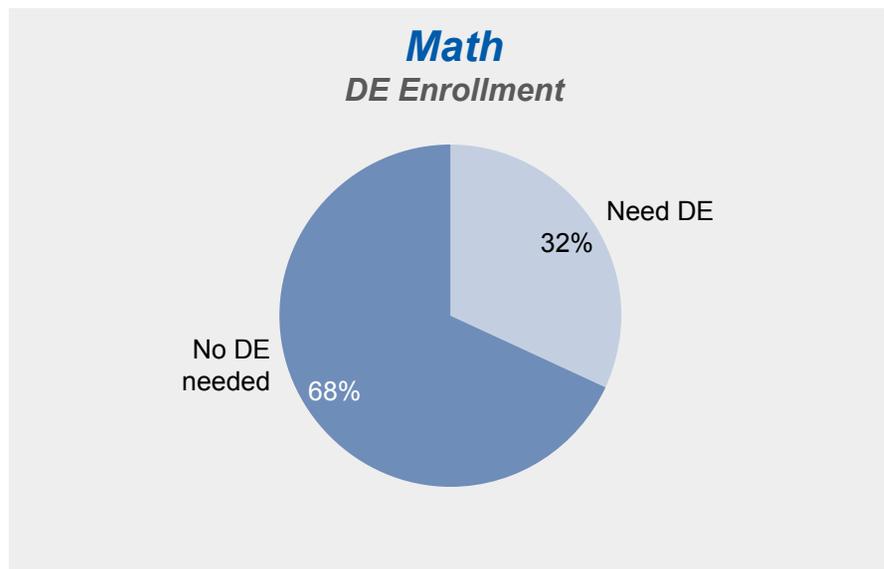


Enrollment (PT + FT)	300 (1% of all university students)
% minority enrollment	3% (14% university average)
Retention rate	67% (78% university average)
Completion rate (6 year)	52% (52% university average)

MPCC has developed accelerated developmental education programs to address college preparedness challenges



Mid-Plains Community College's (MPCC) accelerated developmental education programs allow for students to **enroll in formal developmental education at a lower rate than the state average**



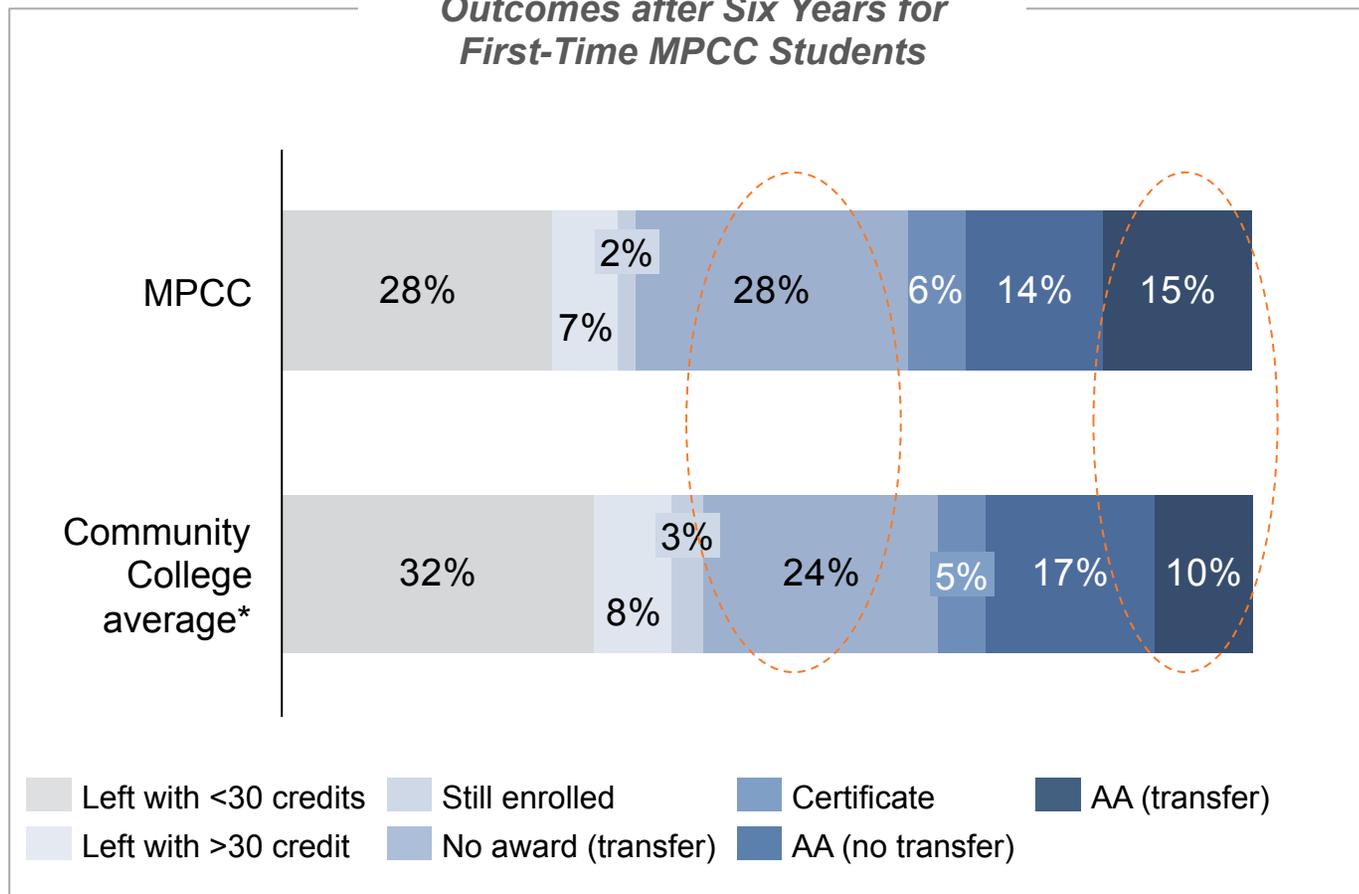
*"We offer [developmental education] as **accelerated courses**, instead of taking 16 weeks, students complete them in eight weeks. **We have seen a lot of success with that**"*
– Postsecondary administrator

An above average number of students complete an Associate Degree and transfer, or transfer before completing at MPCC



MPCC has an above **average number of students who transfer without an award** as well as an above average **number of students that earn an AA and then transfer**

Outcomes after Six Years for First-Time MPCC Students



*“MPCC students who transfer primarily go to **Chadron, Bellevue, or Kearney**”
– Postsecondary administrator*

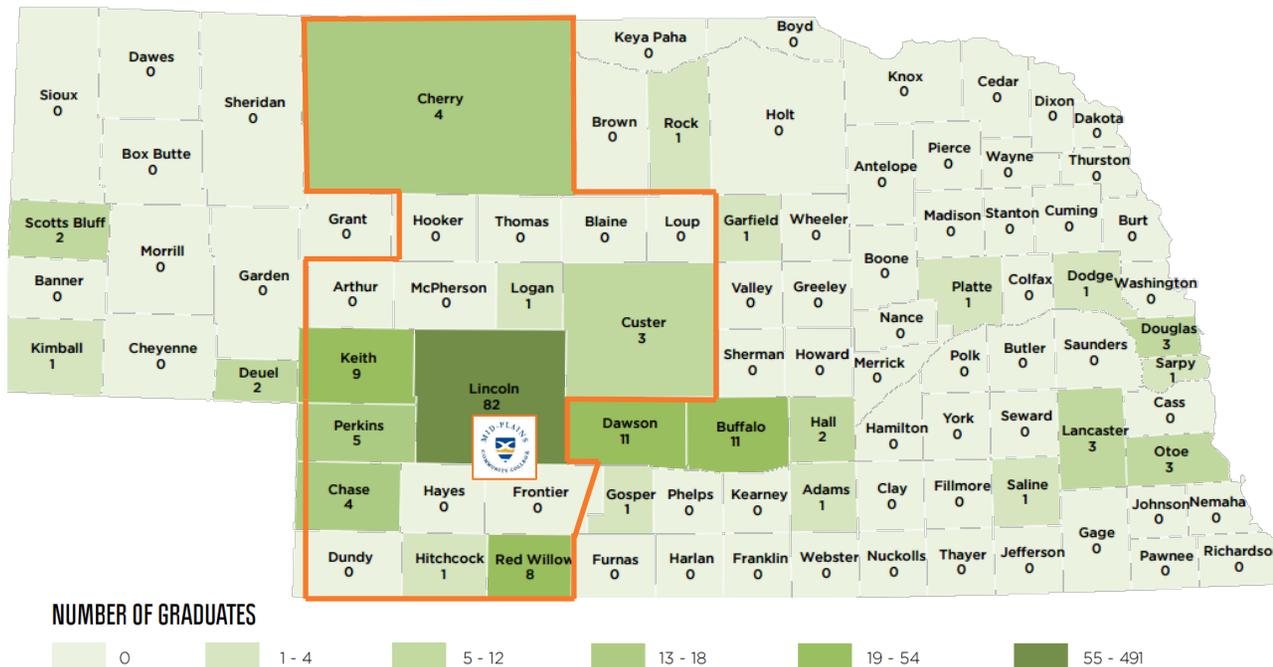
Source: Voluntary Framework of Accountability

*: Does not include Metro Community College as they do not report to the VFA

Most MPCC graduates who stay in Nebraska remain in the region and tend to work low wage jobs



Graduate Employment by County



Of MPCC graduates working in the private sector, 54% of graduates earned less than \$20,500 per year and **26% earned less than \$11,500 per year**

Top Industries of Employed Graduates

Industry	% of MPCC grads working in industry	Avg. annual earnings*
Wholesale Trade	27%	\$26,019
Health Care	27%	\$31,392
Retail Trade	20%	\$14,213

NCTA's focus on the agricultural field provides its students opportunities highly relevant to the local economy

➤ NCTA serves a **niche population** of PSE students who are almost exclusively seeking a **profession in the agricultural field** (e.g., pivot maintenance, agronomy, veterinary technology) in a **two-year, open enrollment setting**

Areas of Study at NCTA



Agribusiness Management



Animal Science & Ag Education



Agronomy & Ag Mechanics



Veterinary Technology
(rated one of top programs in the county)

NCTA Study Body & Graduate Outcomes

*“Due to the location and open enrollment, there’s a **lot of students with significant economic challenges** when they come, they are the rural poor” – PSE administrator*

*“**60-70% of graduates stay and work in Nebraska agriculture** industries, 15% work in agriculture out of state, while 7-10% of students transfer to a four year institution” – PSE administrator*

NCTA partners with local employers to help provide their students a career path after graduation

***NCTA-Reinke pivot
maintenance program***



Reinke, a global leader in irrigation products, had a difficult time recruiting talent to maintain pivots in Mid-Plains. Faced with the need for a sustainable, trained workforce, **Reinke partnered with NCTA to establish a program in pivot maintenance** that put graduates of the program on a pathway to a high paying career immediately after graduation. Reinke offers students \$1,000 in scholarships to match local Reinke dealership support for student’s tuition, room, and board assistance. In return for the scholarships, graduates of the program provide Reinke three years of employment after graduation. The program allows **Reinke to create a sustainable workforce** locally and allows **NCTA to create a quality career pathway for its student**

*“Reinke came to us and said **“we need people to service the pivot industry.”** Reinke said they would hire 200 today if NCTA could produce them”*
– Postsecondary administrator

*“There is very **strong demand for the graduates.** NCTA has 14 enrollees in the program”* – Postsecondary administrator

Labor Market

FEW CURRENT AND FUTURE OCCUPATIONS REQUIRE FOUR YEAR AND ABOVE DEGREES

The majority of employers in North Platte are in the education, health, or transportation industries

North Platte Major Employers	Industry	Employees
Union Pacific Railroad 	Trade, transportation, etc...	3,000
Walmart (retail and distribution center) 	Retail trade and transportation	988
Great Plains Regional Medical Center 	Health care	741
North Platte Public School 	Education	662

Source: American Community Survey, North Platte Area Chamber & Development
 Note: Due to data availability, this analysis used the city of North Platte as a proxy for the region

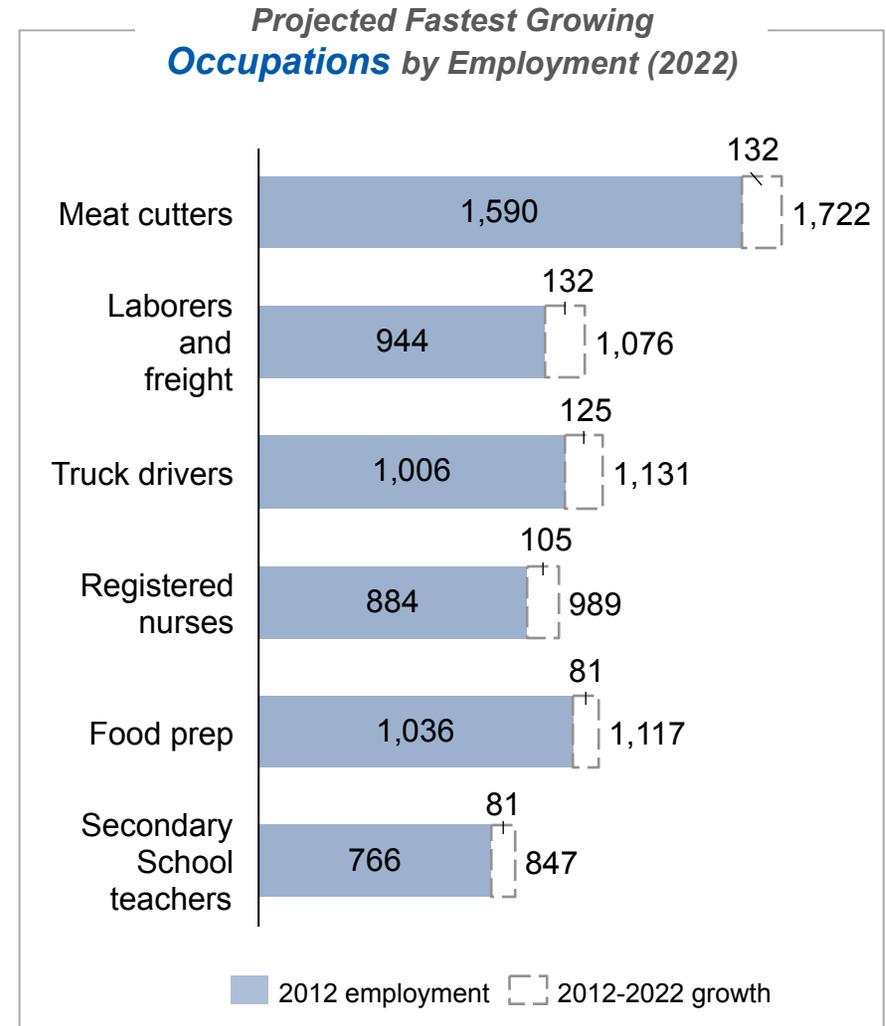
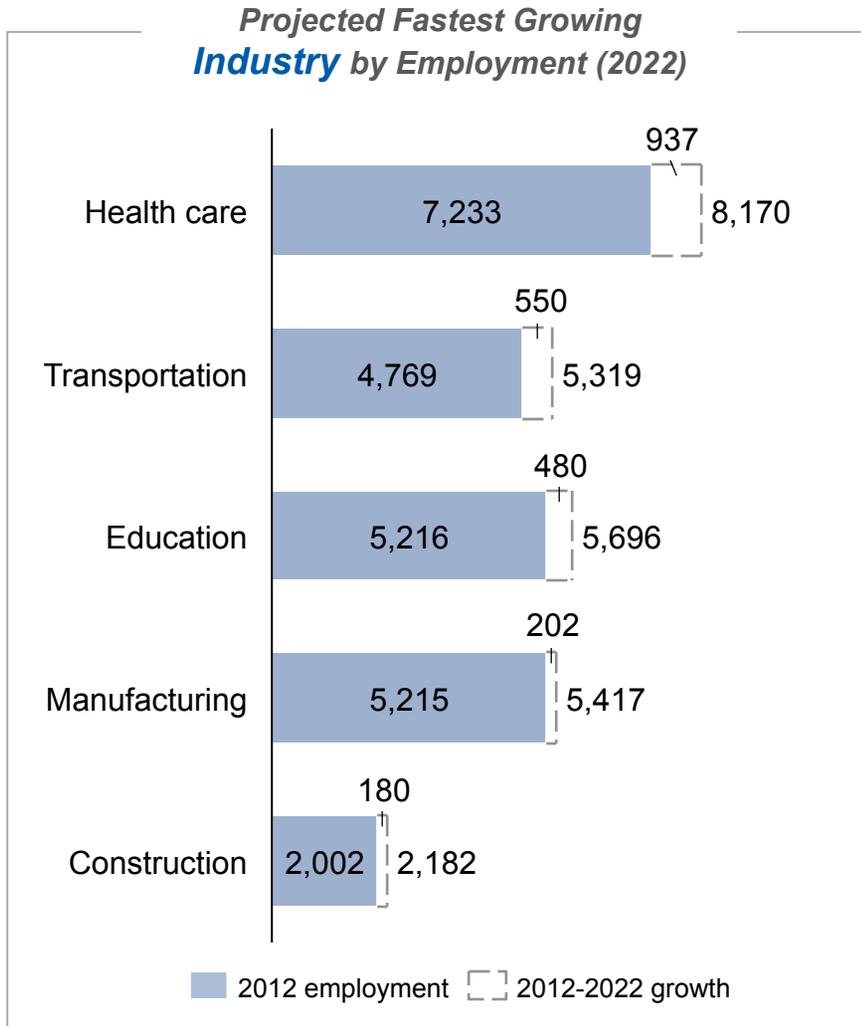
North Platte's median earnings for workers with attainment levels below a four year degree is below the state average

Category	Nebraska	City of North Platte (2014)
Labor force participation	Nebraska: 84%	North Platte: 65.5%
Unemployment rate	Nebraska: 3.1%	North Platte: 2.8%
Major industries (% of population employed in industry)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Education and health care: 24% 2. Retail trade: 12% 3. Manufacturing: 11% 4. Professional services: 8% 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Education and health care: 25% 2. Trade, transportation, warehousing, utilities: 18% 3. Retail trade: 15% 4. Accommodation and food service: 10%
Median earnings by educational attainment (aged 25 and over)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Median earnings: \$34,236 • HS diploma: \$27,605 • Some college or AA: \$32,210 • Bachelor's: \$43,503 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Median earnings: \$31,263 • HS diploma: \$26,268 • Some college or AA: \$29,191 • Bachelor's: \$50,334

Source: American Community Survey, North Platte Area Chamber & Development, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Note: Due to data availability, this analysis used the city of North Platte as a proxy for the region. All city or MSA unemployment data is from December 2014

Growth in M.P. job openings will primarily be in the region's current dominant industries

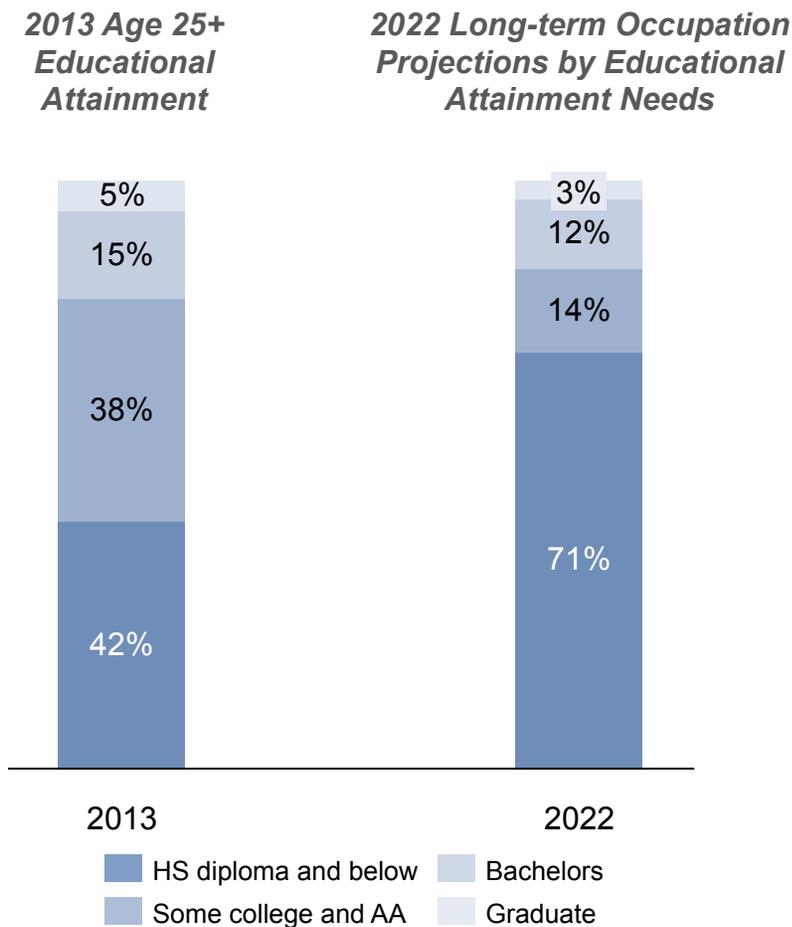


Source: Nebraska Department of Labor, employment includes only growth openings
 Note: Due to research discrepancies, projections do not include Cherry, Arthur, and Loup Counties

M.P.'s projected occupations will continue to primarily require attainment levels below a four year degree



M.P. is expected to see a majority of jobs requiring just a high school diploma or below in 2022. This provides an opportunity for the region to **increase the number of appropriately skilled employment opportunities for the substantial amount of the population with some college or an AA**



“By and large, there are **limited numbers of high skill jobs**” – Funder

“**Most students who do not complete are because they got a job.** They got a good paying job with a semester in college”
– Postsecondary administrator

“We have a cyclical **economy tied to agriculture** and the primary segments within that are beef livestock and commodity grains”
– Business leader

Appendix

Methodology

Research

To compile this report, FSG collected **data from a variety of sources**:

- Interviews with over **50 key stakeholders** (see slide 50 for detailed list):
 - Representatives of each of the six highlighted regions
 - Experts in K-12 education, postsecondary, labor market, and state policy, as well as community leaders
- **Secondary research and data collection**
 - Statewide education and labor data
 - National education and labor data

Regional Breakdown

- The **six community college districts are used as the geographic units of analysis** since each covers a self-contained community, or educational ecosystem, within the state
 - Metro
 - Southeast
 - Northeast
 - Central
 - Mid-plains
 - Western
- The six community college districts correspond to recognized, discrete regions within Nebraska with distinct demographic, geographic, and economic features

Labor Market Data

- Labor projections are based on **NE Works (i.e., Nebraska Department of Labor) data** rather than the Georgetown's Center on Education and the Workforce (CEW) reports. Given the methodology employed, NE Works data likely provides a more accurate estimate
 - **NE Works** makes a determination about the **skill level a given occupation requires** and then builds projections based on the skill required
 - **Georgetown's CEW** starts with the **current representation of workers at each education level in each occupation** and builds its projections from that base
- Both projections are estimates, and actual results will probably be somewhere in the middle. NE Works likely underestimates the PSE credentials and degrees, while CEW likely overstates the projections

Interviewee list

1. Eli Aguilar, AIM
2. John Albin, Nebraska Department of Labor
3. Vinc Aulick, Aulick Industries
4. Richard Baier, Nebraska Bankers Association
5. Barb Bartle, Lincoln Community Foundation
6. Jeff Carstens, Wayne State
7. President Michael Chipps, Northeast Community College
8. Senator Al Davis, Nebraska Legislature
9. David Drozd, Nebraska State Data Center, UNO
10. Paul Eurek, Xpanxion
11. Dr. Vern Fisher, South Sioux City Community Schools
12. Dean Folkers, Nebraska Department of Education
13. Susan Fritz, University of Nebraska Administration
14. Ivan Gilreath, Boys & Girls Club of Omaha
15. Travis Haggard, City of Ogallala
16. Kevin Halle, Wayne State
17. Jon Hansen, Chadron State
18. Senator Burke Harr, Nebraska Legislature
19. Matt Hastings, Nebraska Department of Education
20. Tom Henning, Cash-Wa Distributing
21. Dr. Anne Herman, United Way of the Midlands
22. Brenda Hicks-Sorenson, Former Nebraska Department of Economic Development
23. President Todd Holcomb, Western Nebraska Community College
24. President Paul Illich, Southeast Community College
25. Cindy Johnson, Grand Island Chamber of Commerce
26. Rich Katt, Nebraska Department of Education
27. Chancellor Doug Kristensen, University of Nebraska Kearney
28. Hod Kosman, Platte Valley Companies
29. Phil Kozera, BioNebraska
30. Joel Lemus, Crete Public Schools
31. Dr. Mike Lucas, York Public Schools
32. Steve Martin, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska
33. Dirk Peterson, Nucor
34. Rawnda Pierce, Twin Cities Development
35. Pat Pope, NPPD
36. Carolina Quezada, Latino Center of the Midlands
37. TR Raimondo, Behlen Mfg. Co.
38. President Ryan Purdy, Mid-Plains Community College
39. Laura Redoutey, Nebraska Hospital Association
40. Dave Rippe, Hasting Economic Development Corp.
41. Darren Robinson, Buffalo County Economic Development Corp.
42. Dr. Ron Rosati, Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture
43. President Randy Schmailzl, Metropolitan Community College
44. Chuck Schroeder, Rural Futures
45. Eric Seacrest, Mid-Nebraska Community Foundation
46. Mark Shepard, Fremont Public Schools
47. Senator Jim Smith, Nebraska Legislature
48. President Greg Smith, Central Community College
49. Charles Snare, Chadron State
50. Senator Kate Sullivan, Nebraska Legislature
51. Juli Thelen, Behlen Mfg. Co.
52. Randy Thelen, Greater Omaha Chamber
53. Dr. Rob Winter, Grand Island Public Schools
54. Eric Zeece, Nebraska Department of Economic Development



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