



CLOSING THE  
**Expectations Gap**  
2011

**SIXTH** | 50-STATE  
**ANNUAL** | PROGRESS  
REPORT

on the Alignment of High School Policies  
with the Demands of College and Careers



## About Achieve

Created in 1996 by the nation's governors and corporate leaders, Achieve is an independent, bipartisan, nonprofit education reform organization based in Washington, D.C., that helps states raise academic standards and graduation requirements, improve assessments, and strengthen accountability. Achieve is leading the effort to make college and career readiness a national priority so that the transition from high school graduation to postsecondary education and careers is seamless.

In 2005, Achieve launched the American Diploma Project (ADP) Network. Starting with 13 states, the Network has now grown to include 35 states educating nearly 85 percent of all U.S. public school students. Through the ADP Network, governors, state education officials, postsecondary leaders and

business executives work together to improve postsecondary preparation by aligning high school standards, assessments, graduation requirements and accountability systems with the demands of college and careers.

Achieve partnered with the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative, and a number of its staff served on writing and review teams. More recently, Achieve was selected to manage the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). The 25-state PARCC consortium was awarded Race to the Top assessment funds to create next-generation assessments in math and English aligned to the CCSS. For more information about the work of Achieve, see [www.achieve.org](http://www.achieve.org).

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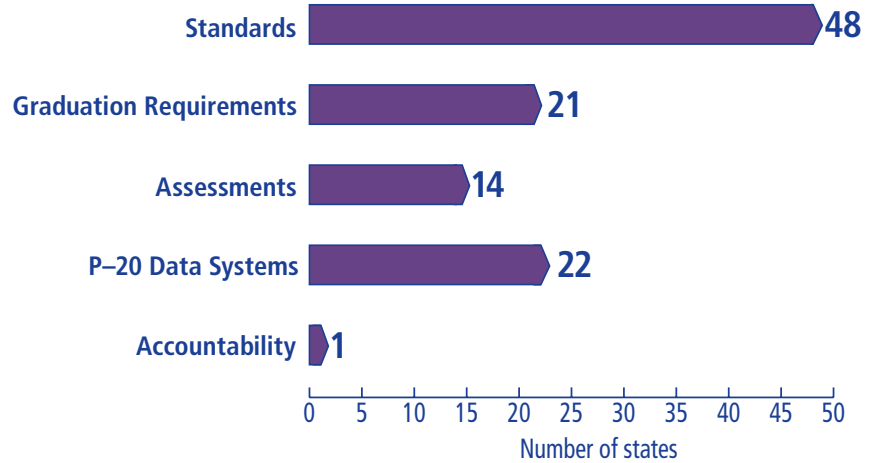
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the 2005 National Education Summit on High Schools, governors from 45 states joined with business leaders and education officials to address a critical problem in American education: Too few students graduate from high school prepared for the demands of college and careers in an increasingly competitive global economy.

To monitor state progress on preparing all students for their next steps after high school graduation, Achieve conducts an annual survey of all 50 states and the District of Columbia on key college- and career-ready policies, including aligning standards, graduation requirements, assessments, and data and accountability systems with the expectations of postsecondary institutions and employers. For each policy area of the college- and career-ready agenda, the story of state — and national — progress is varied.

## State Progress on Adopting College- and Career-Ready Policies

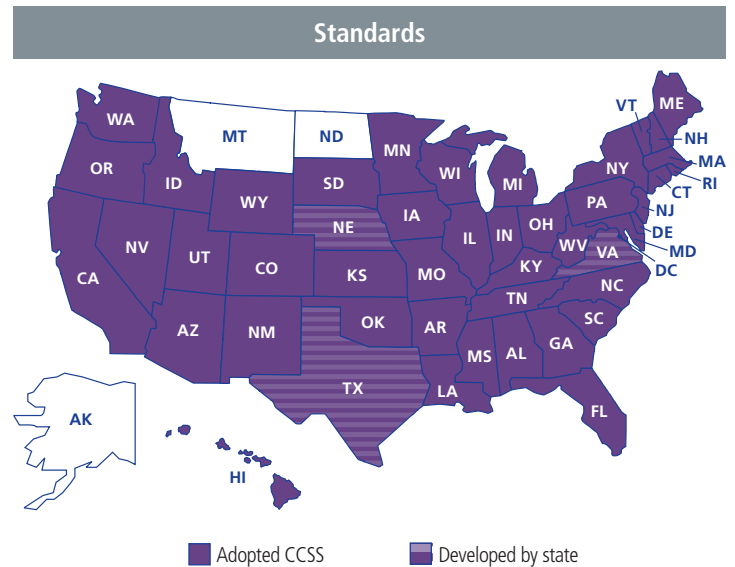


## KEY FINDINGS

### STANDARDS

**Forty-seven states and the District of Columbia** have adopted English language arts and mathematics standards that reflect the knowledge and skills colleges and employers demand of high school graduates. Of these, **44 states and the District of Columbia** adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2010, and **three additional states** independently have developed standards aligned with college- and career-ready expectations (all three have had Achieve verify the alignment). Last year's survey showed that 31 states had adopted college- and career-ready standards in English and mathematics; this solid foundation made the rapid and widespread adoption of the CCSS possible.

With the remaining three states contemplating adopting the CCSS or developing their own college- and career-ready standards, college- and career-ready expectations have become the norm.



## GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

**Twenty states and the District of Columbia** have established requirements that all high school graduates must complete a college- and career-ready curriculum that includes at least mathematics through the content typically taught in an Algebra II course (or its equivalent) and four years of grade-level English to earn a high school diploma. This number remains unchanged since last year, with two new states that have raised their requirements offsetting the same number that have changed or re-evaluated their policies.

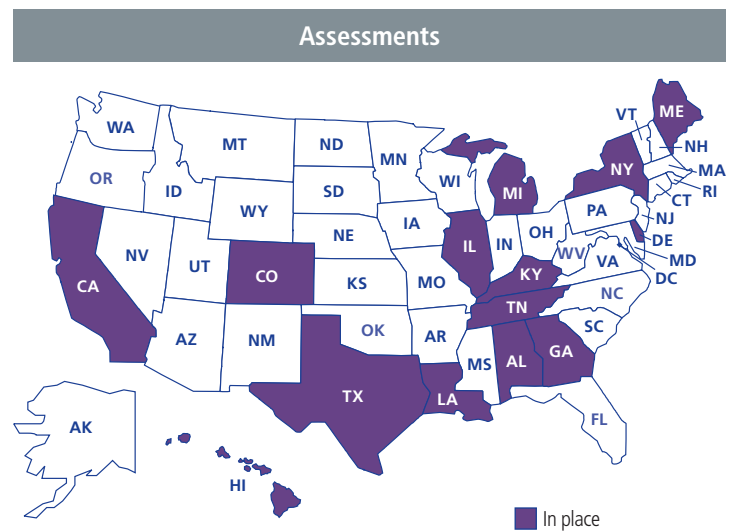
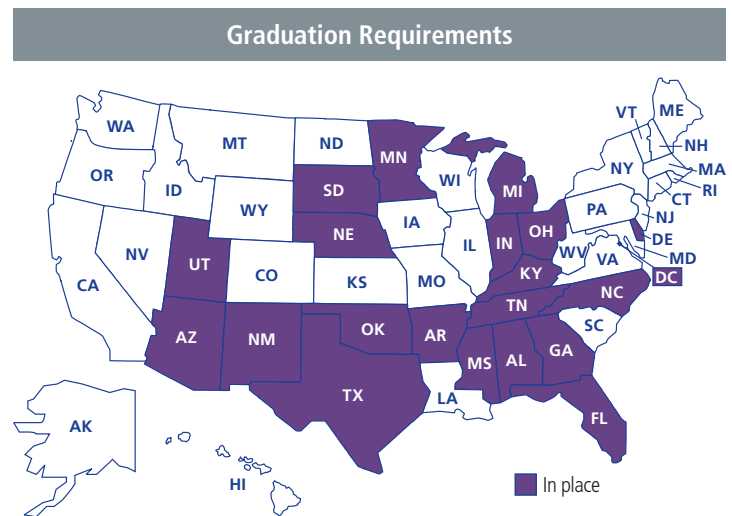
Every state that has raised its graduation requirements to the college- and career-ready level has also adopted college- and career-ready academic content standards. The remaining 27 states that have adopted college- and career-ready standards have not yet raised their graduation requirements to ensure that all students meet those expectations.

## ASSESSMENTS

**Fourteen states** administer assessments to high school students that postsecondary institutions use to make decisions about students' readiness for college. This number remains unchanged since last year, with one new state offsetting another that has delayed the postsecondary use of its assessment.

Any assessment states administer to measure high school students' mastery of college- and career-ready content in English and mathematics must have credibility with postsecondary institutions across the state. Five states with college-ready assessments have developed tests aligned to their state standards, while the remaining nine administer a national college admissions test.

Looking ahead, **45 states and the District of Columbia** are working through two multistate consortia to develop common assessments for grades 3 through high school that are aligned to the new CCSS in English and mathematics. The assessments will be first administered in 2014–15.



## P-20 DATA SYSTEMS

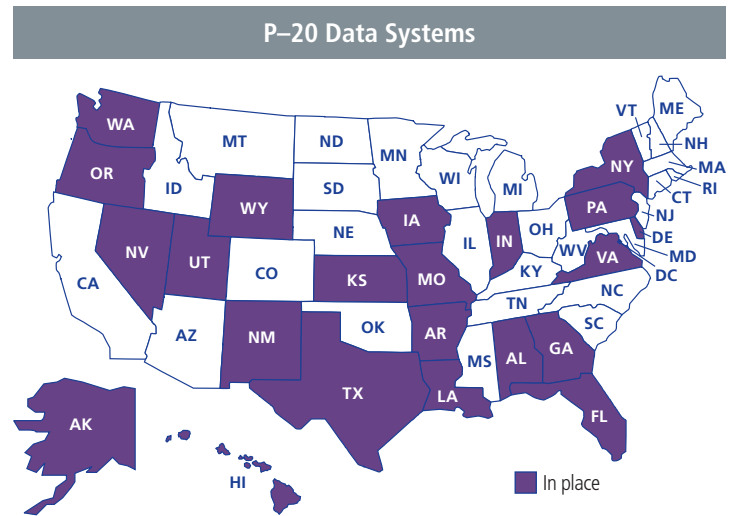
**Twenty-two states** report that they annually match K-12 and postsecondary longitudinal student-level data, including **six new states** that began doing so in the past year. Equally important as aligning expectations at the policy level, states must also strengthen and align their data systems to track and measure student-level progress between the K-12 and postsecondary education systems. College- and career-ready alignment is possible only if the K-12 and postsecondary systems share information that enables data-driven decisionmaking at both levels.

Overall, states have made progress on building complex and multifaceted P-20 longitudinal data systems; in fact, **every state** has or is developing such a system. These systems differ in their design, funding, timeline and governance — as well as in whether and how they track meaningful indicators of college and career readiness. Ultimately, the value of these data systems will be measured by their ability to provide timely data to key stakeholders throughout the education system to make meaningful changes in the preparation of students.

## ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS


Accountability systems ought to reflect the goal of college and career readiness for all students and, in doing so, measure and provide incentives for improvement toward that goal. Designing a system focused on preparing all students for success in postsecondary education and training requires using a rich, comprehensive set of indicators. Achieve's survey asked states about the inclusion of four critical college- and career-ready *indicators* in their accountability systems: the percentage of high school graduates who earn a college- and career-ready diploma, obtain a readiness score on a high school assessment, earn college credit while still in high school, and require remediation upon entering college. Achieve also asked states about the ways they use each indicator, including whether they report publicly at the school level, set statewide goals, provide incentives for improvement and include the indicator in the state's accountability formula. Only **one state** uses all four of Achieve's select college- and career-ready indicators in multiple ways.

**Half of the states** use at least one critical college- and career-ready indicator in their accountability system. For an accountability system to reflect the goal of college and career



readiness for all students, it should use a rich, comprehensive set of indicators in multiple ways. A robust system focused on college and career readiness enables states to evaluate the effectiveness of their schools in preparing all students for success after high school. Generally, progress on valuing college and career readiness in statewide accountability systems has been slow and often piecemeal.

# Overview of Key Survey Results for Each State

State					
	STANDARDS	GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS	ASSESSMENTS	P-20 DATA SYSTEMS	ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS
Alabama	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Alaska				✓	
Arizona	✓	✓			
Arkansas	✓	✓		✓	
California	✓		✓		
Colorado	✓		✓		
Connecticut	✓				
Delaware	✓	✓	✓	✓	
District of Columbia	✓	✓			
Florida	✓	✓		✓	
Georgia	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Hawaii	✓		✓	✓	
Idaho	✓				
Illinois	✓		✓		
Indiana	✓	✓		✓	
Iowa	✓			✓	
Kansas	✓			✓	
Kentucky	✓	✓	✓		
Louisiana	✓		✓	✓	
Maine	✓		✓		
Maryland	✓				
Massachusetts	✓				
Michigan	✓	✓	✓		
Minnesota	✓	✓			
Mississippi	✓	✓			
Missouri	✓			✓	
Montana					
Nebraska	✓	✓			
Nevada	✓			✓	
New Hampshire	✓				
New Jersey	✓				
New Mexico	✓	✓		✓	
New York	✓		✓	✓	
North Carolina	✓	✓			
North Dakota					
Ohio	✓	✓			
Oklahoma	✓	✓			
Oregon	✓			✓	
Pennsylvania	✓			✓	
Rhode Island	✓				
South Carolina	✓				
South Dakota	✓	✓			
Tennessee	✓	✓	✓		
Texas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Utah	✓	✓		✓	
Vermont	✓				
Virginia	✓			✓	
Washington	✓			✓	
West Virginia	✓				
Wisconsin	✓				
Wyoming	✓			✓	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>1</b>





# INTRODUCTION



By 2004, states were becoming increasingly aware that their high schools, which had changed little since the mid-20th century, were not producing the 21st-century graduates needed to compete and succeed after high school in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. Around the same time, Achieve conducted studies of employers and two- and four-year college faculty that confirmed what states suspected: There was a sizeable gap between what students knew leaving high school and the actual knowledge and skills they need to be successful in college and careers. Achieve called this disconnect the “expectations gap” and issued a challenge to national and state leaders to take action to close the gap by adopting and implementing college- and career-ready policies for all high school graduates.

In 2005, Achieve sponsored, in partnership with the National Governors Association, the National Education Summit on High Schools. Forty-five governors attended the Summit, as did corporate CEOs and education leaders from both K–12 and higher education. These leaders confronted alarming statistics about the preparation of high school students for postsecondary success in an increasingly competitive global economy, including low high school graduation rates, high college remediation rates, the increased education and skill requirements of new and growing occupations, and the decrease in well-paying jobs for which a high school education alone is sufficient. The leaders widely acknowledged that if states did not dramatically raise expectations and achievement in their high schools, America’s ability to compete could be at risk. At the end of the Summit, Achieve and 13 states launched the American Diploma Project (ADP) Network and committed to closing the expectations gap by adopting the following college- and career-ready policies:

- Aligning high school academic content standards in English and mathematics with the demands of college and careers;
- Establishing graduation requirements that require all students to complete a college- and career-ready curriculum;
- Developing statewide high school assessment systems anchored to college- and career-ready expectations; and
- Creating comprehensive accountability and reporting systems that promote college and career readiness for all students.

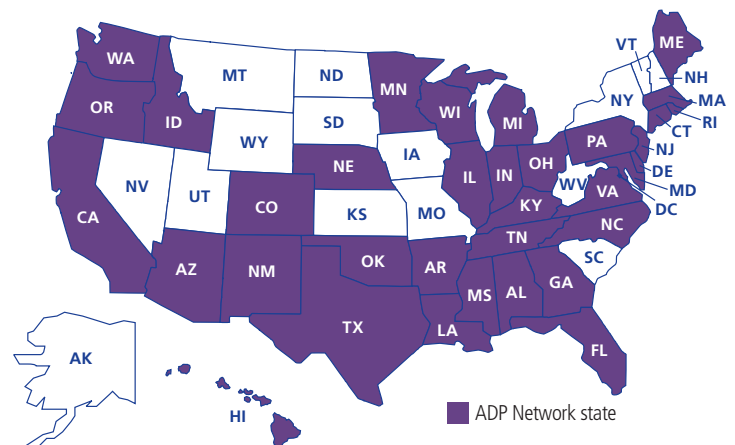
Today, the ADP Network includes 35 states educating 85 percent of the nation’s students.

## THE NEW NORM

In the six years since the Summit — and since Achieve first started reporting on early state success adopting these four policy pillars — progress has been made. Perhaps the biggest change, even beyond policy adoption, is the broad acceptance by not just policymakers but also the public that all students should graduate from high school college and career ready. A nationwide survey of American voters conducted by Achieve this year found broad, deep and fully bipartisan public support for policies aimed at preparing all high school students for college and careers. Moreover, there is widespread agreement that all students need additional education and training beyond high school, whether that means university, community college, technical training or vocational school, to get ahead.

What started with a handful of states just a half a dozen years ago has become the new norm. Nowhere is the new norm of college and career readiness for all more evident than with respect to state K–12 education standards. The growing consensus for raising expectations spurred the state-led Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative, through which 44 states and the District of Columbia in the past year have adopted K–12 college- and career-ready, internationally benchmarked standards. Nearly every other state either is considering adopting the CCSS this year or has developed, in consultation with its postsecondary and employer community, its own college- and career-ready standards.

ADP Network States



This seismic shift was possible because states, often through the ADP Network, had been working together on college and career policies and had created a foundation upon which the development and adoption of common college- and career-ready expectations was possible.

Good standards are important, but they alone will not drive systemic change. Instead, states must also be intentional about not only adopting but also implementing policies that will ensure that their standards are realized in every school and classroom for the benefit of all students. Having graduation requirements that align with state standards is an important — albeit not the only — barometer of whether a system is truly integrating college- and career-ready expectations. This year's survey demonstrates that the progress of states in adopting graduation requirements for all students that match their high standards has stalled at 20 states plus the District of Columbia, with requirements first applying to graduating classes in only eight states as of 2011. Moreover, in many of the states that have raised their graduation requirements to college- and career-ready levels, those policies are often at risk, with frequent attempts to delay or roll them back. States serious about graduating all students ready for their next steps must review and revise their graduation requirements and related policies with the same urgency with which they have raised their standards.

Another important policy pillar that reflects states' commitment to college- and career-ready expectations is the adoption of college- and career-ready assessment systems. On this front, state progress has also been slow but was boosted significantly this past year by the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top assessment competition. Forty-five states and the District of Columbia are participating in one or both of the two winning assessment consortia, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, in developing assessments for grades 3–8 and high school that are aligned to the math and English language arts CCSS. These federal investments to create next-generation assessments will benefit all states since the materials, instructional tools, assessments and other resources created will be available to all schools, districts and states. The work of the consortia has the potential to be not just an accelerator of the college- and career-ready agenda but a game changer.

Another place where state action has lagged is in creating accountability systems that value college and career

readiness. The vast majority of states have made only modest progress on incorporating critical college- and career-ready indicators — and using them — in their accountability systems. This, in part, is a reflection of the role that the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) has played over the past two decades as a driver of state accountability systems and the focus, for the past decade, on accountability primarily for grades 3–8. ESEA has spurred important state accountability changes in the past, but to continue to be a driver of change (rather than an impediment) it must, through its design and use of incentives, reflect the new norm of college and career readiness for all high school graduates. At a minimum that will mean that unlike current law, a reauthorized ESEA must not create perverse incentives for states, such as allowing states to lower the bar to avoid schools being identified as “failing.” Moreover, consistent with the work currently under way with the Race to the Top assessment consortia, end of high school assessments should also signal readiness for college-level work. Including the right kind of incentives for states to have robust college- and career-ready indicators in their accountability systems, such as those that value and reward the number of students who earn a college- and career-ready diploma, score college ready on high school assessments, and enter two- and four-year colleges without the need for remediation, is key.

## MEETING THE PROMISE

Over the years, many commentators have correctly noted that the promise of standards-based education reform has not always been met. Changing policies such as standards, graduation requirements, assessments and accountability is a critical first step, but to fully meet the promise, careful and intentional implementation that provides teachers and students with the tools and support they need to successfully meet the standards is critical. The reform movement is at a critical precipice. The nearly universal adoption of college- and career-ready standards and a majority of states engaged in the development of next-generation assessments are promising. State progress on the rest of the agenda, while more incremental, still suggests a commitment to college and career readiness for all. The next few years will be critical, testing the resolve of policymakers, states, districts, schools and the public. The results could be transformative if we continue to push together to create schools and classrooms in which students are able to reach their full potential over the course of their K–12 education and graduate prepared for the real world they will enter after high school, as well as if we support teachers and leaders in getting there.



# STANDARDS

## Align High School Standards with the Expectations of College and Careers

Academic content standards serve as the foundation of state and district education systems. They communicate to teachers, parents and students the knowledge and skills students are expected to master in each grade and subject. They also provide the underpinning for decisions regarding curriculum, instruction and assessment. Standards alone are not enough to make these decisions, but standards that are not sufficiently clear and appropriately rigorous set a weak foundation for an education system. For states' high school standards to reflect an understanding of the skills and knowledge students need to be successful when they leave high school, the standards must be anchored to the expectations of the real world.

Between the 2004 release of the ADP college- and career-ready benchmarks and the 2010 release of the K–12 CCSS, a national consensus formed: Academic content standards in English language arts and mathematics must be aligned to the expectations of college and careers. The states that participated in the CCSS determined that there are significant benefits to having common standards, rather than having 50 sets of standards. All high school graduates must possess the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in first-year, credit-bearing college courses and/or to qualify for the postsecondary education or training needed for good,

entry-level jobs with clear pathways to advancement.<sup>1</sup> As this year's survey reflects, states, nearly universally, have embraced the importance of establishing college- and career-ready expectations for all students and have collectively laid a foundation for reform built upon those common expectations.

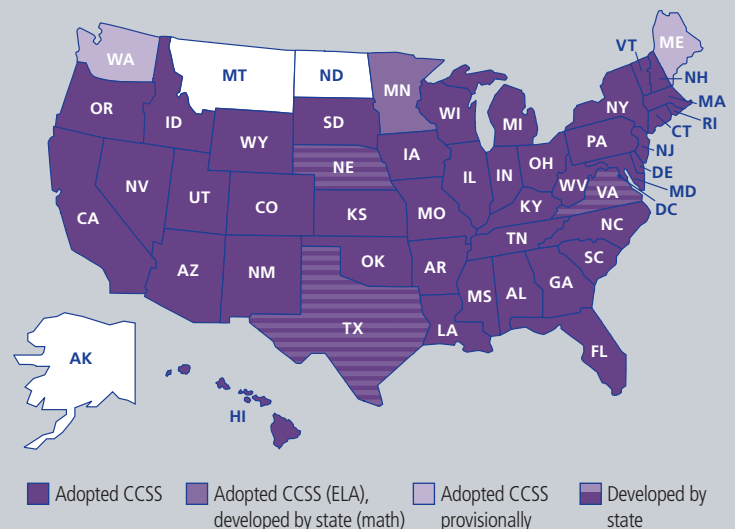
**THE QUESTION:** In the survey, Achieve asked states whether they have adopted high school academic content standards in English and mathematics aligned to college- and career-ready expectations. Achieve also asked states about their process for developing such standards and the additional steps taken to ensure that the resulting standards reflect the real-world expectations that await high school graduates.

**THE CRITERIA:** Achieve considers state standards to be aligned with college- and career-ready expectations if the standards writing process is guided by the expectations of the state's postsecondary and business communities, if those communities verify that the resulting standards articulate the knowledge and skills required for success in college and the workplace, and if an external organization verifies the standards' alignment to college- and career-ready expectations. The CCSS are aligned to college- and career-ready expectations.

### States with Aligned Standards

Today, **47 states and the District of Columbia** have academic content standards in English language arts and mathematics that are aligned to the demands of the real world. Of these, **45 states\*** met Achieve's criteria by adopting the new CCSS in 2010. **Three other states** — *Nebraska, Texas and Virginia* — have adopted their own state-developed, college- and career-ready standards in English language arts and mathematics.

The **remaining three states** reported to Achieve that they are in the process of reviewing the alignment of their current state standards to the CCSS. Both *Montana and North Dakota* anticipate that they will decide this year whether or not to adopt the CCSS. *Alaska* also has begun reviewing its standards against college- and career-ready expectations.



\* *Maine and Washington* provisionally adopted the CCSS in 2010; the state legislatures are expected to take up the question of whether to officially adopt the CCSS in early 2011. In addition, Achieve counts Minnesota among the **45 CCSS adopters**; the state has adopted the CCSS in English language arts but maintains its own verified, college- and career-ready standards in mathematics.

# Implementing the Common Core State Standards

The K–12 Common Core State Standards (CCSS) represent a major advance in standards for mathematics and English language arts. They are grounded in evidence about what it takes for high school graduates to be ready for college and careers and build on the finest state and international standards. They also provide a clear and focused progression of learning from kindergarten to high school graduation that will give teachers, administrators, parents and students the information they need for student success. They were developed by and for states in a voluntary effort led by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. Achieve was a partner in the standards' development and strongly encourages states to adopt the standards and fully implement them.

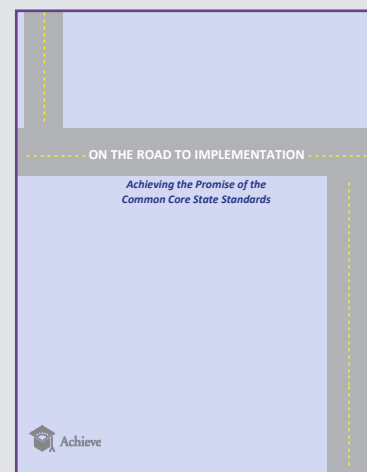
To positively affect student achievement, standards — including the CCSS — must be not just adopted but also implemented. Adopting the standards, as more than 40 states have already done, represents the beginning, not the end, of the process, as the goal is to have content standards that actually affect what happens in the classroom. Unfortunately, there are too many examples of states having fine content standards that bear little resemblance to what is actually being taught and learned in classrooms.

The CCSS offer an unprecedented opportunity for states across the nation to improve upon their education policies and practices and achieve systemwide reform. This will not be easy. States, districts and key stakeholders will need to think carefully about what it will take for the CCSS to become fully operational in every classroom, every year, from kindergarten to high school graduation. This will require a thoughtful and deliberate implementation strategy that takes into account issues such as how the state will integrate the new standards into the state's

college- and career-ready agenda; develop assessment and accountability systems aligned with the new standards and their anchor of college and career readiness; leverage state budgets to support implementation; align instructional materials with the CCSS; implement the Common Core Literacy Standards in history/ social studies, science and technical subjects; and engage key stakeholders around the CCSS.

Many states' implementation efforts have been bolstered by the U.S. Department of Education's state Race to the Top awards and the two winning common assessment consortia, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. The federally funded tools that will aid implementation of the CCSS and classroom instruction — whether through individual state grants or through grant-supported consortia — will be available to all states.

To assist states in their implementation and transition to the CCSS, Achieve developed *On the Road to Implementation: Achieving the Promise of the Common Core State Standards* to identify the key areas that state policymakers will need to consider to implement the new standards with fidelity, available at [www.achieve.org/achievingcommoncore\\_implementation](http://www.achieve.org/achievingcommoncore_implementation).





# GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

## Align High School Graduation Requirements with College- and Career-Ready Expectations

Completing a rigorous course of study in high school aligned to college and career expectations is one of the strongest predictors of whether a student ultimately will meet his or her postsecondary goals. Moreover, requiring students to complete such a course of study is one of the most explicit ways to ensure that college- and career-ready academic content standards reach all students, in all high schools.

A college- and career-ready curriculum is more than just the number or names of required courses; more important are the content and rigor of those courses. Specifically, Achieve considers high school graduation requirements to be at the college- and career-ready level if students are required to complete a curriculum consistent with the expectations of college faculty and employers in mathematics and English language arts. Of course, readiness for college and

careers depends on more than the mastery of English and mathematics content and skills, but these two content areas serve as a foundation for the study of other academic disciplines and contextualized learning.

**THE QUESTION:** In the survey, Achieve asked states whether they require all students to complete a college- and career-ready curriculum to earn a high school diploma. Achieve also asked about the diploma options offered in the state and the specifics for each set of requirements.

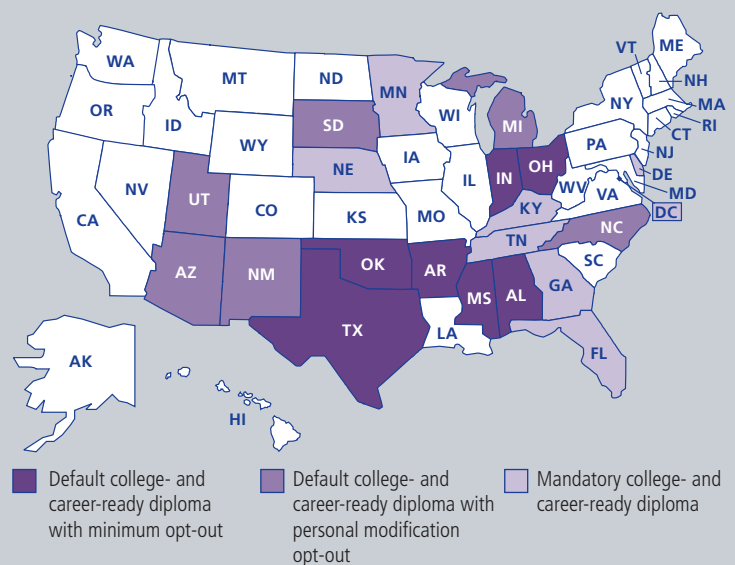
**THE CRITERIA:** Achieve's ADP research shows that for high school graduates to be prepared for success in college and careers, they need to complete a challenging course of study in mathematics that includes the content typically taught through an Algebra II course (or its equivalent) and four years of grade-level English aligned with college- and career-ready standards.<sup>2</sup>

### States That Require a College- and Career-Ready Course of Study To Earn a Diploma

**Twenty states and the District of Columbia** not only have adopted college- and career-ready academic content standards but also have raised their high school graduation requirements to the college- and career-ready level. *Florida* and *Utah* were the only states to raise their graduation requirements to the college- and career-ready level in 2010.

The increase in the number of states requiring students to complete a college- and career-ready curriculum has stalled in recent years, remaining at 21 for the past two years with each new state that added requirements offset by another that changed or re-evaluated its graduation requirements policy.

**Five additional states** have outlined new graduation requirements that, if adopted, would establish new rigorous high school requirements at the college- and career-ready level: *Hawaii*, *Maryland*, *Massachusetts*, *New York* and *Washington*.




All states with college- and career-ready standards — including those that adopted the CCSS in 2010 — should ensure that their course requirements are aligned to their standards. Twenty-seven states with college- and career-ready standards have not raised their graduation requirements to ensure that all students meet the college- and career-ready expectations found in their standards.


## First Cohort of Students to Graduate Under the New Requirements


Though the number of states adopting the policy has slowed, the number of students facing college- and career-ready graduation requirements continues to grow. For the class of 2010, students in four states — *Arkansas, Oklahoma, South Dakota* and *Texas* — were required to meet college- and career-ready expectations to graduate. These four states educate 11 percent of public high school students in the United States. For the class of 2011, students in four additional states will face such requirements — *Delaware, the District of Columbia, Indiana* and *Michigan* — increasing the percentage of high school students nationally to 17 percent. By 2016, 44 percent of America’s high school students will be subject to college- and career-ready graduation requirements.<sup>3</sup>

State	First Cohort
Texas	2008/2011 <sup>4</sup>
Arkansas	2010
Oklahoma	2010
South Dakota	2010/2013 <sup>5</sup>
Delaware	2011
District of Columbia	2011
Indiana	2011
Michigan	2011
Georgia	2012
Kentucky	2012
Mississippi	2012

State	First Cohort
Utah	2012
Alabama	2013
Arizona	2013
New Mexico	2013
North Carolina	2013
Tennessee	2013
Ohio	2014
Minnesota	2015
Nebraska	2015 <sup>6</sup>
Florida	2016

 Default college- and career-ready diploma with minimum opt-out

 Default college- and career-ready diploma with personal modification opt-out

 Mandatory college- and career-ready diploma

## Raising Course Requirements

States raising their course requirements in English and mathematics to the college- and career-ready level have structured the requirements in one of two ways:

- 1. Mandatory:** The most direct approach is to establish **mandatory** requirements that result in students earning a high school diploma only if they complete the required courses. **Seven states and the District of Columbia** have set mandatory course requirements, including *Nebraska*, which requires districts to establish college- and career-ready graduation requirements for all students starting with the graduating class of 2015.
- 2. Default:** An alternative approach to raising graduation requirements is to automatically enroll all students in the **“default”** college- and career-ready curriculum but allow students to opt out of the requirements if their parents sign a waiver. States establish a default diploma in one of two main ways, either with a “minimum diploma” opt-out or a “personal modification” opt-out.

- **Minimum Diploma:** States offer a separate minimum diploma for students who opt out of the “default” college- and career-ready curriculum. It’s important that the **seven states** with a minimum diploma opt-out carefully monitor which students in which schools earn which diploma to ensure that all students have access to a rigorous curriculum.
- **Personal Modification:** States allow students to opt out of individual courses — typically advanced-level mathematics or science courses — but award students the same diploma as those who complete the full set of college- and career-ready graduation requirements. For the **six states** with a personal modification opt-out, tracking student-level course-taking data is critical so they know which students in which schools are completing the courses that prepare them for success in college and the workplace — and how students with and without personal modifications are faring after high school (e.g., remediation rates for recent graduates at two- and four-year postsecondary institutions).



# ASSESSMENTS

## Develop College- and Career-Ready Assessment Systems

Of the high school assessments in place today — including the “high-stakes” tests required for graduation — most measure the knowledge and skills students learn early in high school or even in middle school. These tests fail to assess the advanced high school content all students need to be successful in college and careers. As such, they have limited capacity to signal whether a student will leave high school ready to succeed. More critical for college and career readiness is whether states administer assessments to high school students that postsecondary institutions use to make decisions about students’ readiness for college. With assessments that provide clear signals to students and that produce results actually used by colleges, state assessment systems can be truly anchored to college- and career-ready expectations and become powerful tools to improve instruction and strengthen student preparation.

While state progress on adopting college- and career-ready assessment systems has been slow, recent developments have boosted the prospects for the development of such systems. In September 2010, the U.S. Department of

Education awarded \$330 million in grants to two consortia covering **45 states and the District of Columbia** to develop next-generation assessment systems aligned to the CCSS (see sidebar, page 15). The new assessments will include high school components capable of producing a college- and career-ready score.

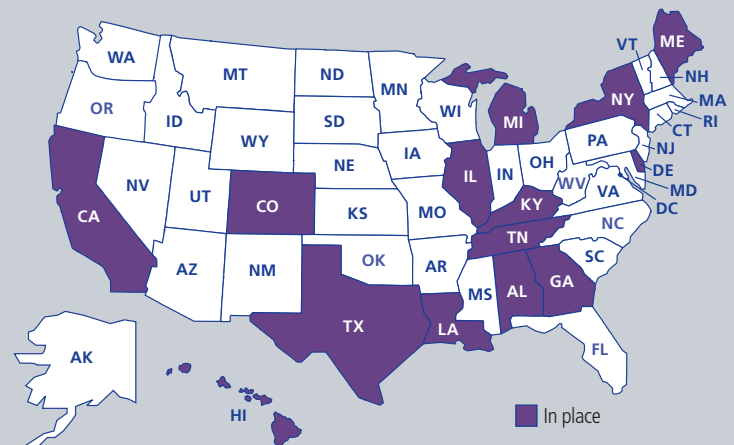
**THE QUESTION:** In the survey, Achieve asked states whether they administer to all students an assessment of college- and career-ready knowledge and skills capable of producing a readiness score that postsecondary institutions use to make placement decisions or that the state’s business community uses for hiring or placement decisions.<sup>7</sup>

**THE CRITERIA:** To meet Achieve’s criteria for having a college- and career-ready assessment, states must have a component of their high school assessment system that measures students’ mastery of college- and career-ready content in English and mathematics. The assessment must have credibility with postsecondary institutions and employers, so that achieving a certain score signals being truly prepared for success after high school.

### States That Administer a College- and Career-Ready Assessment to All Students

**Fourteen states** administer assessments to high school students that postsecondary institutions use to make decisions about their readiness for college, including **one new state** in 2010 — *Delaware*. The count of 14 remains unchanged since last year, with the addition of Delaware offset by another state that has delayed its postsecondary use policy. The number of states administering college- and career-ready assessments is likely, however, to increase over the next several years as several individual states have new tests that are in development or being reviewed for postsecondary use.

- **Five** of the **14 states** measure how well students meet the states’ college- and career-ready standards in English and mathematics using a high school assessment developed in state: *California, Georgia, Hawaii, New York and Texas*.<sup>8</sup> Each of these states has a policy that includes a statewide cut score that indicates readiness for college-level coursework.



- **Nine** of the **14 states** require all students to take a national college admissions exam: *Alabama, Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan and Tennessee* administer the ACT, while *Delaware and Maine* administer the SAT. Of these states, only *Kentucky and Louisiana* have established placement policies that include cut scores on the ACT, while in the remaining states, postsecondary institutions independently establish placement policies.

Beyond the individual state college- and career-ready assessments in English and/or mathematics being developed in *Georgia, Louisiana, Tennessee* and *Texas* that will supplement or replace the tests already in place, **six additional states** have committed to administering college- and career-ready assessments in the coming years. The **45 states and the District of Columbia** participating in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and

Careers and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium assessment consortia are developing assessment systems that will include high school components in English and mathematics capable of signaling college and career readiness. (This change may significantly alter the national assessment landscape. See sidebar on page 15 for details about the states participating in the consortia to create next-generation assessment systems.)

### College- and Career-Ready Assessments

Status	State	Assessment	Administered	Postsecondary Policy	
ASSESSMENTS IN USE	Alabama	ACT (2014)/WorkKeys (2015)	2014*	Institutional	
	California	California Standards Test (CST)/Early Assessment Program (EAP)	In Use	Statewide	
	Colorado	ACT	In Use	Institutional	
	Delaware	SAT	2011*	Institutional	
	Georgia		Georgia High School Graduation Test (ELA)	In Use	Statewide
			Georgia High School Graduation Test (Mathematics)	2011	Statewide (2012)
	Hawaii	ADP Common Algebra II End-of-Course Exam <sup>9</sup>	In Use	Statewide	
	Illinois	ACT/WorkKeys	In Use	Institutional	
	Kentucky	ACT	In Use	Statewide	
	Louisiana		ACT/WorkKeys	2012*	Statewide
			End-of-Course Exam English III	2012	Statewide (TBD)
	Maine	SAT	In Use	Institutional	
	Michigan	ACT/WorkKeys	In Use	Institutional	
	New York	Regents End-of-Course Exams	In Use	Statewide	
	Tennessee		ACT	In Use	Institutional
End-of-Course Exams (Algebra II, English III)			2013	Statewide (2013)	
Texas**		Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)	In Use	Statewide	
		End-of-Course Exams (Algebra II, English III)	Algebra II: 2011 English III: 2012	Statewide (2015)	
ASSESSMENTS UNDER DEVELOPMENT	Florida	FCAT and PERT Exams	In Use	Statewide (2012)	
	Minnesota	Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA)	TBD	Statewide (TBD)	
	Mississippi	ACT (Pilot)	TBD	Institutional (TBD)	
	Oklahoma	End-of-Instruction Exams (Algebra II, English III)	In Use	Statewide (TBD)	
	Oregon	Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (OAKS) <sup>10</sup>	In Use	Statewide (2012)	
	West Virginia	WESTEST	In Use	Statewide (2012)	

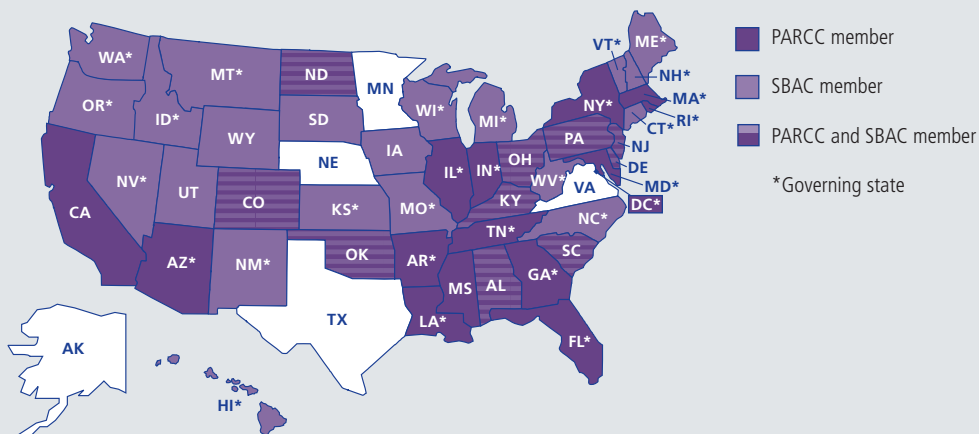
\*Three states have adopted policies to administer national college admissions tests to all 11th graders: *Alabama*, the ACT beginning in 2014; *Delaware*, the SAT in 2011; and *Louisiana*, the ACT in 2012. The ACT/SAT are already recognized by postsecondary institutions in these states.

\*\* *Texas* is developing state end-of-course assessments that will replace the TAKS.



## Consortia Working To Create Next-Generation Assessment Systems

More than most existing high school assessments, the new multistate assessments will be designed to accurately measure the real-world knowledge and skills that students need to be successful after high school. The U.S. Department of Education awarded \$330 million to two multistate consortia to develop next-generation assessment systems to measure student learning against the CCSS from grade 3 through high school. The department subsequently awarded an additional \$30 million to support state transitions to the CCSS and the next-generation assessments. The 25-member Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Career received more than \$185 million, and the 31-member SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium received more than \$175 million. The new assessments will be fully operational by the 2014–15 school year.



## Assessing Career Readiness: Alaska's Use of WorkKeys

ACT developed the WorkKeys assessments as a "real-world" assessment of the skills employers consider essential for career readiness and success. WorkKeys consists of nine assessments of foundational skills organized into three areas: communications, problem-solving and interpersonal skills. ACT offers a National Career Readiness Certification (NCRC) for those who score at specified levels on three of the most commonly taken WorkKeys exams: Applied Mathematics, Reading for Information and Locating Information. Employers are able to select which level — platinum, gold, silver or bronze — they will accept as qualification for hiring and promotion or for training and development around specific job skills.

ACT conducted a statistical concordance between the respective college and workforce training readiness levels in reading and mathematics from both the ACT and WorkKeys assessments. The concordance between the ACT college readiness benchmarks and WorkKeys level 5 (i.e., gold) found that the levels of readiness in reading and mathematics are comparable.

*Alaska, Illinois and Michigan* currently administer the WorkKeys to all students as part of their high school assessment system — and *Alabama and Louisiana* soon will. *Michigan and Illinois* factor students' performance on the WorkKeys into their overall proficiency scores, and a number of employers across the nation factor students' performance into their hiring decisions.

**Alaska** is the only state in the nation that administers the WorkKeys to all students and has adopted state hiring policies that incorporate use of the WorkKeys exams.

Qualifying scores on the WorkKeys meet the occupation-specific minimum mathematics or entry-level requirements for state apprenticeship programs (e.g., Inside Wireman Apprenticeship Program in Anchorage, Associated Builders and Contractors, Alaska Operating Engineers). In addition, the state also accepts scores on the three most common WorkKeys exams toward the qualifications for the state of Alaska accounting clerk and the office assistant job classes.

Beyond qualifying scores for state employment for specific occupations, Alaska also has developed a comprehensive communications and support strategy to undergird its WorkKeys assessment policies. In January 2010, Alaska Career Ready, a partnership between the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (EED) and the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, delivered an informational letter and brochure around the Alaska (National) Career Readiness Certificate (ACRC/NCRC) to more than 18,000 Alaska employers explaining how they could use the NCRC to screen, hire and identify training needs of job applicants. Alaska employers can use Alaska's Labor Exchange System and search the resumes database for candidates with specific career readiness certificates (platinum, gold, etc.) or specific WorkKeys assessments. Additionally, in November 2010 the WorkKeys assessment and corresponding curriculum and instructional materials were placed within the Assessment Unit of EED in an effort to streamline the administration and coordinate WorkKeys with the other Alaska assessments already in place.

More information about the WorkKeys is available at [www.act.org/workkeys/](http://www.act.org/workkeys/).



# P-20 DATA SYSTEMS

## Develop P-20 Longitudinal Data Systems

Critical to the success of the college- and career-ready agenda is the ability of states to collect, coordinate and use secondary and postsecondary data to improve the readiness of graduates to succeed in college and the workplace. At the National Education Summit on High Schools in 2005, state leaders were urged to develop P-20 longitudinal data systems that track meaningful indicators of college and career readiness for individual students.

Collecting data is no longer the only critical focus of state P-20 longitudinal data systems; states also must use the data effectively. The work of the Data Quality Campaign (DQC) — of which Achieve is a managing partner — has expanded beyond helping states implement the 10 Essential Elements of a comprehensive longitudinal data system. The DQC now also has identified 10 State Actions necessary to ensure key stakeholders — including state policymakers and classroom teachers — use longitudinal student-level data effectively.

**THE QUESTION:** In a break with past practice, Achieve included its data system questions in the DQC’s annual survey of states. The DQC asked states whether they annually match student-level records from K-12 with similar data from their postsecondary system(s). Given that P-20 longitudinal data systems require a long-term, sustainable investment from states, the DQC also asked states about their timelines for developing such a data system. Achieve followed up with states, as well as with the DQC, about their responses.

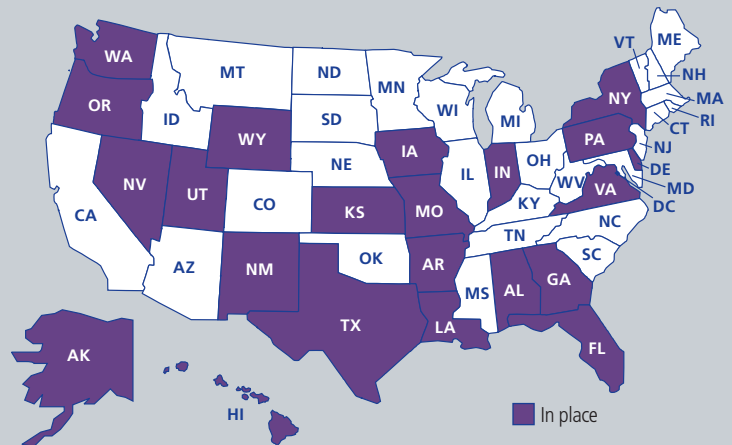
**THE CRITERIA:** Achieve considers a state to have an operational P-20 longitudinal data system when it has unique student identifiers to track each student through and beyond the K-12 system, has overcome all barriers to matching, has the capacity to match longitudinal student-level records between K-12 and postsecondary, and matches these records at least annually.

### States with P-20 Longitudinal Data Systems

Based on Achieve’s criteria, **six new states** — *Hawaii, Indiana, Kansas, New Mexico, New York and Virginia* — reported this year that they now have operational P-20 longitudinal data systems and have begun to match student-level data between the K-12 and postsecondary systems at least annually. This brings the total number of states with P-20 longitudinal data systems to **22**.

Overall, state progress in building P-20 longitudinal data systems has been steady for the past several years. In fact, federal grants to states and support from other sectors have enabled states to make a sustained effort to build technical capacity, while the DQC and others have been working with states to overcome other barriers to the matching of student-level data.

The capacity of state P-20 data systems has been increasing, but too often the indicators included in the system exist in isolation and are not viewed longitudinally. These systems need to track the progress



of individual students toward graduating college and career ready — as well as their success after graduation — and enable analysis of which factors affect their readiness and postsecondary success. Absent this longitudinal view, these data systems will continue to consume resources without providing to individual students and schools the benefits P-20 longitudinal data have long promised.

# Do States Track Meaningful Indicators of College and Career Readiness in Their Longitudinal Data Systems?

States have been slow to fully include and track meaningful indicators of college and career readiness within their longitudinal data systems. Achieve asked states whether they incorporate a select set of college- and career-ready indicators into their data systems. Overall, **40 states** reported that they include at least one of the four indicators. **Seven states** now report that they track all four college- and career-ready indicators as part of their data systems (*Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, New York, Oklahoma, Texas and Utah*).

For states to evaluate and understand the impact of particular policies around graduation requirements, assessments and preparedness for postsecondary, they must follow students through K–12 into postsecondary and the workforce and establish feedback loops to the relevant stakeholders to make informed decisions that improve policies and practices around increasing student preparedness. The value of the college- and career-ready indicators is maximized when they are included as part of a larger, coherent longitudinal system.

Indicators: The percentage of high school students ...	Number of states that include indicators in their data systems
Earning a college- and career-ready diploma	17
Scoring college ready on a high school assessment	19
Earning college credit while in high school	22
Requiring remedial courses in college	25

## Next Phase of Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems<sup>11</sup>

Since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001, state education agencies (SEAs) have made progress in building systems to manage longitudinal student-level data. Considerable time and resources — at the local, state and national levels — have been invested in the development of state longitudinal data systems (SLDSs), primarily centered on the information technology aspects of the data system (i.e., infrastructure, architecture, hardware, software). After the launch in 2005 of both the Data Quality Campaign and the SLDS Grants program of the Institute of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education, the conversation around the need for data systems shifted from NCLB compliance reporting to informing educational policy and improving student achievement through the use of data.\*

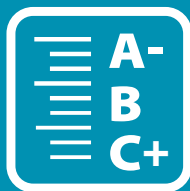
Building robust data systems alone is not enough. The changes in how policy is set, how decisions are made and how data will drive improved student achievement can occur only if states also build a culture that demands and uses the information from these systems.

One challenge for states is to expand beyond compliance based on snapshots of performance to examine trends over time and identify the relationship between early behaviors and eventual outcomes. For example, in addition

to identifying how many students dropped out of high school in a given year, longitudinal data can help identify the relationships between early warning indicators (e.g., excessive absences, discipline problems, course grades and prior test scores) and the likelihood a student will become a dropout. These systems can also be used to study the relationships among high school course enrollment, grades, college readiness tests and statewide assessments, and this information can be used to help assess the college and career readiness of students, identify the types and series of courses that best prepare students for college success, or look for patterns of grade inflation.

Another challenge for states is to engage the end users of these data systems (parents, teachers, administrators and policymakers) in conversations about how information from the SLDSs can and will be used to change policy and practice. State data systems are not static; SEAs regularly make changes in their data systems as a result of changes to federal and state mandates. State agencies must incorporate the needs of the end users as their systems evolve to ensure that they can report the most up-to-date and useful information for educators, policymakers and parents. Based on the knowledge of how stakeholders use the information from the SLDSs, state agencies can then focus, prioritize and generate the data stakeholders need.

\* The SLDS Grants program has, to date, awarded approximately \$500 million to **41 states and the District of Columbia** across four rounds of competition for the sole purpose of helping states build SLDSs. The first two rounds of grants focused on K–12 data systems, but the program has been expanded to address the connection of student-level data systems from early childhood through K–12 into the postsecondary sector and the workforce.



# ACCOUNTABILITY

## Develop Accountability and Reporting Systems That Promote College and Career Readiness

State accountability systems focus the efforts of teachers, students, parents, administrators and policymakers to ensure that students and schools meet established goals. High school accountability systems in place today are largely based on student achievement results from standardized tests that typically measure 8th and 9th grade content and do not fully reflect the demands of college and careers. Such systems set expectations too low for our high schools and fail to reflect the demands of college and careers.<sup>12</sup>

It is important for states to anchor their K–12 accountability systems in the goal of graduating all students on time, ready to succeed in college and careers. To do so, policymakers must fundamentally reformulate the indicators they use to measure progress, and the indicators must be put to good use to be meaningful and drive improvement in the system. Achieve asked states about four separate uses of college- and career-ready indicators as part of a broader view on accountability (*additional information about these uses is available in Appendix B*):

- **Annual school-level public reporting:** Accountability begins with publicly reporting critical information about school performance, allowing parents, students, community leaders and the public to know whether high schools are preparing students for success in college and careers.
- **Statewide performance goals:** Accountability systems must set high expectations for performance to motivate schools to improve.
- **School-level incentives:** Accountability systems should not only lead to sanctions and punitive actions but also include recognition and other positive incentives to drive improvement.
- **Accountability formula:** Accountability systems ought to include a range of indicators and employ metrics weighted most heavily toward the indicators of meeting college and career readiness.

Without a robust and coordinated framework for accountability that sets the right expectations and sends the right signals, educators and school systems may not aim high enough for their students, and as a result, many students will leave our schools unprepared for their next steps.

**THE QUESTION:** In the survey, Achieve asked states whether they collect school-level data on a fundamental set of college- and career-ready indicators and, more important, whether those indicators are used to drive improvement in schools and school systems.

**KEY COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY INDICATORS AND USES:**<sup>13</sup> Following are states that collect each of the key indicators and how they use the information:

**Earning a college- and career-ready diploma:** The percentage of students who graduate from high school with a college- and career-ready diploma. States need to know which students — and which groups of students — are leaving high school with this valuable credential.<sup>14</sup>

State	Annual School-Level Public Reporting	Statewide Performance Goals	School-Level Incentives	Accountability Formula <sup>15</sup>
Alabama	✓			
Arkansas		✓	✓	
California	✓			
Florida	✓			
Georgia	✓			
Hawaii	✓	✓		
Indiana	✓	✓	✓	
Louisiana	✓	✓	✓	✓
New York	✓			
Ohio	✓			
Oklahoma	✓			
Texas	✓	✓	✓	✓
Virginia	✓		✓	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>

**Scoring college-ready on a high school assessment:** The percentage of students who score at the college-ready level on high school assessments anchored to college- and career-ready standards. Such assessments will signal which students are prepared for postsecondary success and which will require additional support before leaving high school.<sup>16</sup>

State	Annual School-Level Public Reporting	Statewide Performance Goals	School-Level Incentives	Accountability Formula
California	✓			
Florida	✓		✓	✓
Georgia	✓	✓		
Kentucky	✓			✓
Louisiana		✓		
Michigan	✓			
Minnesota		✓		
New York	✓	✓		
Oklahoma				✓
Texas	✓	✓	✓	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>

**Earning college credit while in high school:** The percentage of high school students earning college credit through Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and/or dual enrollment. Just as states must know whether students are progressing toward and reaching certain benchmarks of college and career readiness, they also need to know whether high school students are exceeding those goals by taking the advanced courses that further solidify their transition to college and put them a step ahead once they arrive.

State	Annual School-Level Public Reporting	Statewide Performance Goals	School-Level Incentives	Accountability Formula
Colorado	✓			
Connecticut		✓		
Florida	✓		✓	✓
Hawaii		✓		
Indiana	✓	✓		
Kentucky		✓		
Minnesota		✓		
Ohio	✓			
Oklahoma			✓	✓
Texas	✓	✓	✓	
Utah	✓			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>

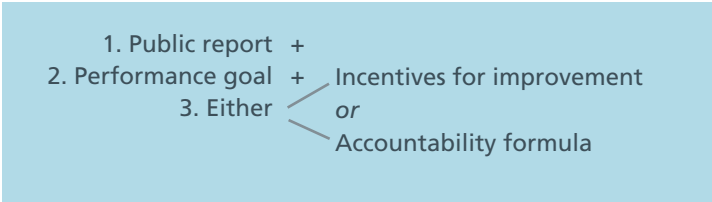
**Requiring remedial courses in college:** The percentage of high school graduates who — upon entrance to a postsecondary institution — are placed into a remedial course in reading, writing and/or mathematics. With the vast majority of high school students intending to pursue postsecondary education and/or training, too many of these same students enter two- and four-year colleges unprepared for college-level work. Students that must take remedial classes are less likely to achieve their goals, including earning a degree.<sup>17</sup>

State	Annual School-Level Public Reporting	Statewide Performance Goals	School-Level Incentives	Accountability Formula
Arkansas	✓	✓		
Colorado	✓			
Florida	✓	✓		
Georgia	✓	✓		
Hawaii	✓	✓		
Indiana	✓	✓		
Kentucky	✓	✓		
Louisiana	✓			
Maryland		✓		
Missouri	✓			
Nevada	✓			
New Mexico	✓			
North Carolina		✓		
Ohio	✓			
Oklahoma	✓			✓
Texas	✓	✓	✓	
Wyoming	✓			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

**THE CRITERIA:** Achieve looks across these indicators and their uses to determine whether any states have a comprehensive approach to college- and career-ready accountability: if a state collects and reports the data in a meaningful way, sets clear targets for schools to improve, and provides clear incentives and consequences that drive schools to improve performance and meet the targets. Following our approach first presented in last year’s report, Achieve established the following threshold for combining indicators and their uses in state accountability systems:

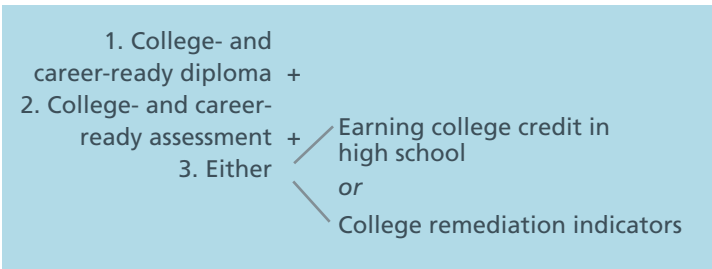
**FOR USES**

For each college- and career-ready indicator, the state publicly reports *and* sets a statewide performance goal *and either* provides incentives for improvement *or* factors improvement into its accountability formula.



**FOR INDICATORS**

The state includes the college- and career-ready diploma *and* a college- and career-ready assessment *and either* uses earning college credit while in high school *or* college remediation indicators in its reporting and accountability system.



**States with College- and Career-Ready Accountability Systems**

Making wide use of the four critical indicators, *Texas* is the **only state** that meets the minimum criteria Achieve believes necessary to measure and provide incentives for college and career readiness.

States’ uses of college- and career-ready indicators have been primarily through public reporting and setting statewide performance goals. Few states have established school-level incentives and/or consequences linked to college- and career-ready indicators. Incentives need not be monetary; they may take the form of school recognition or an award. It is critical that the hard work of schools be recognized when they improve performance

around these indicators. States also must incorporate these indicators into school accountability formulas so that when schools are not performing well, supports and interventions are triggered.

States that do not have policies in place around college- and career-ready diplomas and assessments — and states that do not track college- and career-ready indicators linked to these policies in their P-20 longitudinal data systems — are unable to provide incentives for improvement or evaluate schools. States who use these key policies and tools that establish the foundation for college and career readiness are better positioned to increase the readiness of their students.

## Emerging Best Practices in Accountability

A number of states have incorporated multiple indicators/uses into their accountability systems and are highlighted below.

**Texas:** Texas' school-based incentives, the Gold Performance Acknowledgment Standards, are presented alongside one another and annually updated in the Texas Education Agency Accountability Manual to reflect changes in the minimum thresholds for recognition. Texas' data system (<http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/account/2010/gpa.srch.html>) allows a user to select one or more Gold Performance Acknowledgments (e.g., dual enrollment, Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate results, college-ready graduates, college and career readiness diploma, college and career readiness assessment results, etc.) and view all schools/districts that met the selected Gold Performance Acknowledgments. These designations also appear at the top of school report cards, reinforcing their visibility and importance to parents, teachers and the public.

**Florida:** Florida's annual high school feedback reports feature both pregraduation indicators (cohort graduation rate, percentage of students completing a college-prep curriculum, percentage of students scoring at or above college-level cut scores on SAT/ACT/Florida College Placement Test, percentage of students completing at least one dual enrollment course) and postgraduation indicators (postsecondary enrollment by type of institution and the percentage of graduates who successfully complete entry-level courses in math and reading at the postsecondary level), making them readily accessible and user-friendly. To view these reports, visit <http://data.fldoe.org/readiness/default.cfm>.

**Indiana:** The Indiana Commission for Higher Education has released high school feedback reports that include the number of students matriculating to an Indiana public institution by high school diploma type and the numbers of students requiring remediation in math, language or both math and language by high school diploma type. Understanding the relationship between students' course-taking patterns in high school and need for remedial coursework at the postsecondary level is critical for states, districts and schools to better understand whether they are adequately preparing students to achieve their postsecondary goals. Additionally, Indiana has set statewide performance goals around these indicators to increase the number of students earning a Core 40 with Honors diploma and reduce the need for remediation. To view these reports, visit [www.in.gov/che/2491.htm](http://www.in.gov/che/2491.htm).

**Kentucky:** Beyond requiring all high school juniors to take the ACT, Kentucky publicly reports the percentages of students at the school level who meet the ACT college-ready benchmarks in English, mathematics, reading and science (<http://openhouse.education.ky.gov/ACTBenchmark.aspx>). In addition to publicly reporting results of a college- and career-ready assessment, Senate Bill 1 requires Kentucky to begin a new accountability system in 2011–12, and Kentucky's formula for determining high school accountability will include an ACT High School Index, among other college- and career-ready indicators.

**Louisiana:** Louisiana has incorporated four meaningful uses for one college and career readiness indicator — in this case the college- and career-ready diploma. Louisiana's *Principal School Report Cards* feature disaggregated data around the number of students earning each diploma type — including the LA Core-4 — as well as the points a school earns toward its Cohort Graduation Index (annual school-level public reporting and accountability formula). Louisiana has baseline data and has set a target for increasing the percentage of students graduating with LA Core-4 to 72.5 percent by 2013–14 (statewide performance goals). Finally, Louisiana awards Performance Labels (one to five stars) based on School Performance Scores (school-level incentives).

**Oklahoma:** The Oklahoma Advanced Placement Incentive Program includes a provision for schools to earn \$100 for each score of 3 or better on an AP test or 4 or better on an IB examination. Additionally, AP credit is one of the indicators in the Academic Excellence component of Oklahoma's Academic Performance Index (along with ACT participation rates/scores and college remediation rates in math and reading).

**Virginia:** While students *must opt into* Virginia's Advanced Studies diploma, the state has established school-level incentives to improve and publicly reports the percentage of students earning this diploma on school report cards. Virginia high schools can earn up to one bonus point added to their Virginia Index Performance achievement score if they increase the percentage of students who earn an Advanced Studies diploma or meet or exceed the state goal of 57 percent. The Virginia Department of Education is also leading a College and Career Readiness Initiative and collaborating with the Virginia Community College System and the State Council of Higher Education to use their data on course-taking patterns to identify and validate quantitative indicators of postsecondary readiness. For more information, see [www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/college\\_career\\_readiness/](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/college_career_readiness/).

# CONCLUSION

Since the formation of the ADP Network at the 2005 National Education Summit on High Schools, states have made significant progress on the college- and career-ready agenda. In 2005, only a few states had begun to work on standards, graduation requirements, assessments and data systems aligned to college and career readiness, and no state had made it the focus of its accountability system.

Today, nearly every state has made progress on the agenda. Forty-seven states and the District of Columbia have adopted college- and career-ready high school standards. Twenty states and the District of Columbia have established college- and career-ready graduation requirements that are in effect for current or future high school graduation classes. By the end of 2010, 14 states had adopted policies to incorporate college- and career-ready assessments into their assessment systems. Moreover, 22 states now annually match student-level data from K–12 and postsecondary education systems, and every other state is developing this capacity. While progress on creating accountability systems anchored in college and career readiness has been slowest — with only one state meeting Achieve’s minimum criteria — many more states have added college- and career-ready indicators into their accountability systems.

The goal of college and career readiness for all high school graduates is no longer a radical reform idea promulgated by a handful of states: It has emerged as the new norm throughout the nation. States have made important gains on the agenda, but there is much work to be done. States must now ensure that the higher expectations they have adopted in their standards are carried out in related policies such as graduation requirements, assessments and accountability systems that value college and career readiness and make sure teachers have the tools, time and professional development to teach effectively to the standards. It is through these policies — and their full implementation — that the promise of college- and career-ready standards will be realized. The federal government can do its part by ensuring that college and career readiness is valued and incentivized in a reauthorized ESEA.

Much progress has been made in the six years since Achieve’s annual survey began, but there is much more to do before college- and career-ready policies become a reality in every classroom, for the benefit of every student and the country.



# ENDNOTES

- 1 A good job pays a family-sustaining wage, provides benefits and offers opportunities for advancement. See *Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma That Counts* ([www.achieve.org/ReadyorNot](http://www.achieve.org/ReadyorNot)).
- 2 The research of the ADP provided the foundation for *Ready or Not* and the ADP college- and career-ready benchmarks and was later updated — including with the results of international benchmarking studies — to support the creation of the Common Core State Standards ([www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)).
- 3 Data based on the most recent public high school enrollment figures available in the Digest of Education Statistics [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/09/tables/dt09\\_035.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/09/tables/dt09_035.asp).
- 4 The Texas Recommended High School Program (RHSP) was established as the requirement for all students (as the default diploma option) in 2003 — first affecting the class of 2008 — and included three mathematics credits through Algebra II. In 2006, Texas added a fourth year of mathematics to the RHSP requirements that will first affect the class of 2011.
- 5 South Dakota adopted college- and career-ready graduation requirements in 2005 (taking effect in 2010), creating two pathways — the default college- and career-ready curriculum with a minimum opt-out to a standard curriculum. South Dakota revised its requirements in 2009 (taking effect in 2013), creating a single pathway with a personal modification in which students can opt out of specific mathematics and science courses. The state is developing the capacity to follow a student's curricular pathway via the state's longitudinal data system and a new statewide common course numbering system.
- 6 In 2009, Nebraska mandated that all high schools in the state raise their graduation requirements to the college- and career-ready level. Starting with the class of 2015, the local requirements must ensure that to earn a diploma, students meet Nebraska's new college- and career-ready standards — standards that Achieve has verified reflect college- and career-ready expectations. Through the annual reviews of district assurance statements and periodic on-site reviews, the state department of education will confirm that the local graduation requirements are truly aligned to the state's rigorous standards.
- 7 For Achieve, "all students" means all students eligible to take an assessment — e.g., all 11th graders taking 11th grade assessments or all students taking an Algebra II course taking an Algebra II end-of-course exam.
- 8 Hawaii as a member of the ADP Assessment Consortium helped to develop the ADP Common Algebra II End-of-Course Exam. There is no English language arts counterpart of Hawaii's high school assessment system used by postsecondary institutions.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 The Oregon University System (OUS) Board will establish the OAKS cut scores for the OUS Automatic Admission policy at its February 2011 meeting. Effective for the class applying for admission to the OUS in fall 2012, students who reach the OUS cut scores on all three of the OAKS exams (reading, writing and mathematics) and meet a minimum high school grade point average will be granted automatic admission; students scoring below the cut scores may be eligible for standard admission.
- 11 Prepared in consultation with Nancy J. Smith, DataSmith Solutions.
- 12 Through the *Measures that Matter* initiative ([www.achieve.org/measuresmatter](http://www.achieve.org/measuresmatter)), Achieve and The Education Trust collaborated to address accountability challenges and provide strategic and technical guidance to help states create a coherent set of policies designed to graduate all students ready for college and careers. Informed by a distinguished advisory group of state and national experts representing diverse perspectives, the two organizations developed a set of recommendations designed to provide states with the best possible advice for advancing their reform efforts.
- 13 Achieve recognizes and supports states' efforts to include other meaningful indicators of postsecondary success in their state data systems, high school feedback reports and accountability systems — such as second-year persistence, rate of credit accumulation and ultimate degree attainment. Given this report's focus on high school accountability systems, Achieve decided not to include these postsecondary indicators in our survey.
- 14 States listed include those that offer — but do not require that all students complete — a college- and career-ready diploma/curriculum. For example, Virginia reports the number of students voluntarily completing the Advanced Studies Diploma.
- 15 States that have adopted *mandatory* college- and career-ready course requirements for all students will by default be factoring a college- and career-ready diploma graduation rate into their school accountability formulas once the requirements take effect. These include Delaware (2011), District of Columbia (2011), Georgia (2012), Kentucky (2012), Tennessee (2013), Minnesota (2015), Nebraska (2015) and Florida (2016).
- 16 States listed include those that offer a college- and career-ready assessment that may not be required of all students but that can produce a readiness score recognized by postsecondary institutions. For example, Florida publicly reports the percentage of graduating students scoring at or above the college-level cut score on the SAT/ACT/Florida College Placement Test — but these tests are not required of all students.
- 17 Three-quarters (76 percent) of students who require remediation in reading and nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of those who require one or two remedial mathematics courses fail to earn degrees. In contrast, nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of students who do not require remediation complete associate's degrees or bachelor's degrees. Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *Condition of Education 2004*, Indicator 18.

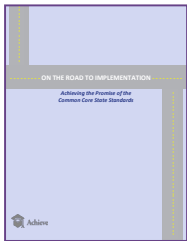
# APPENDIX A: ACHIEVE RESOURCES

In the past six years, Achieve has released a number of hallmark reports on the state of the nation's standards, graduation requirements, assessments and accountability systems, as well as many materials that serve to inform and assist stakeholders as they work to improve America's high schools. The following are available at [www.achieve.org](http://www.achieve.org).

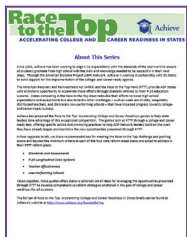


**Achieving the Possible** is Achieve's survey of voters to find out their views on the goal of graduating all students from high school ready for college and careers and the necessary policies to meet that goal.

The poll found support for the college- and career-ready agenda to be broad, deep and fully bipartisan. [2010]

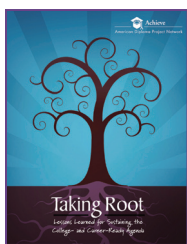


**On the Road to Implementation: Achieving the Promise of the Common Core State Standards** highlights a number of critical issues state leaders will need to consider as they implement the new common standards to ensure they actually reach the classroom level. [2010]



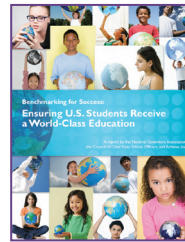
**Race to the Top: Accelerating College and Career Readiness** provides state leaders a look at Race to the Top (RTTT) through a college- and career-ready lens, offering specific advice and promising practices to help ADP Network leaders build on the work they have already begun and maximize the new opportunities presented

through RTTT. [2009]

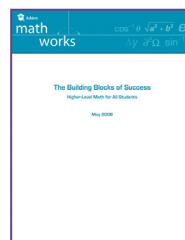


**Taking Root: Strategies for Sustaining the College- and Career-Ready Agenda** aims to help state leaders identify and build strategies for sustaining their education agendas over the long run. The project includes four case studies that examine both the governmental and nongovernmental strategies that were

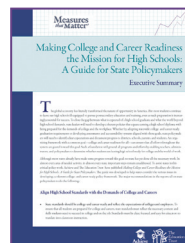
effective in making reform last in Indiana, Massachusetts, South Carolina and Texas; a lessons learned paper that draws on and synthesizes the case studies' 10 overarching lessons and strategies for sustainability; and an audit tool that states can use in their own planning. [2009]



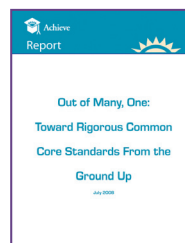
**Benchmarking for Success: Ensuring U.S. Students Receive a World-Class Education** provides states with a roadmap for benchmarking their K–12 education systems against those of top-performing nations. The report, released by Achieve, the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, explains the urgent need for action and outlines what states and the federal government must do to ensure U.S. students receive a world-class education. [2008]



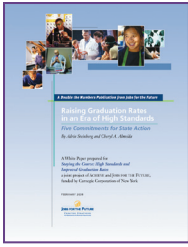
**The Building Blocks of Success: Higher Level Math for All Students** explores the intellectual and practical benefits to all students of taking higher-level mathematics courses in high school, focusing on college access and success, workplace and career readiness, and personal and U.S. competitiveness. [2008]



**Measures that Matter** is a joint effort by Achieve and The Education Trust to provide strategic and technical assistance to states in creating college- and career-ready assessment and accountability systems. Resources include policy guides and briefs. [2008]



**Out of Many, One: Toward Rigorous Common Core Standards From the Ground Up** presents an analysis of the college- and career-ready standards for English in 12 states and mathematics in 16 states. Achieve found that a critical mass of states have arrived at a common core of standards in English and mathematics. [2008]



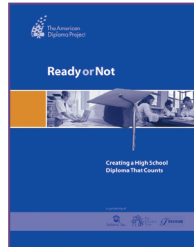
**Raising Graduation Rates in an Era of High Standards** identifies five key outcomes state leaders need to focus on to close the graduation and achievement gaps and suggests strategies policymakers can take to focus their high school reform efforts on ensuring that these commitments are met. [2008]



**Aligning High School Graduation Requirements with the Real World: A Road Map for States** addresses the most frequently cited challenges of policy design, as well as strategies for implementation, communication and coalition building, drawing heavily on the experience of early adopter states. [2007]



**Aligned Expectations? A Closer Look at College Admissions and Placement Tests** examines what admissions and placement tests intend to and actually do measure, with recommendations for K-12 and higher education policymakers. [2007]



**Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma That Counts** found a convergence in the expectations of business and postsecondary leaders; established the ADP benchmarks; and laid out a rigorous policy agenda, which has since become the agenda of the ADP Network. [2004]

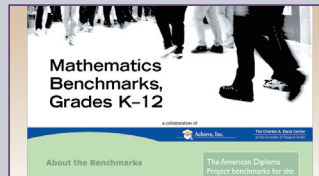
## Achieve's Web-Based Resources

Achieve has also developed Web-based resources to provide information and tools needed to ensure our schools prepare students for college and careers:

**Achieving the Common Core**  
[www.achieve.org/AchievingCommonCore](http://www.achieve.org/AchievingCommonCore)



**Joint Achieve-Dana Center "Mathematics Benchmarks, Grades K-12" Web site**  
[www.utdanacenter.org/k12mathbenchmarks](http://www.utdanacenter.org/k12mathbenchmarks)



**Math Works Advocacy Kit**  
[www.achieve.org/MathWorks](http://www.achieve.org/MathWorks)



**Achieve Communications Resources**  
[www.achieve.org/CommunicationsResources](http://www.achieve.org/CommunicationsResources)



# APPENDIX B: METHODOLOGY

## ACHIEVE'S SIXTH ANNUAL SURVEY OF POLICIES

As in past years, Achieve's 2010–11 50-state survey of high school policies focused on aligned standards, graduation requirements, assessments, and data and accountability systems. The process included an online survey states completed last fall. All **50 states and the District of Columbia** participated in this year's survey. Throughout the winter, Achieve staff followed up with states by phone or e-mail to discuss their responses — either to clarify an answer or to address state questions. Finally, Achieve sent an individual confirmation form to all states indicating how they would appear in this report.

Beyond evaluating every policy states reported as already in place or recently adopted, Achieve also evaluated reported plans, asking questions about where states are in the planning or development process and when they anticipate reaching final adoption. The only plans counted in the report are those that could be verified, i.e., those that are documented and consistent with the minimum criteria for the particular policy area. Achieve applied this approach to all reported accountability indicators and their uses; only verified indicators that met the criteria were included in this report (see Accountability Criteria at right).

Beyond accountability, it is worth noting that a small number of state responses reported this year differ from those in last year's report, resulting from further refinements to Achieve's criteria for analysis, states' new interpretations of the questions and/or changes to states' policy plans. In nearly all cases, however, the differences from last year to this year reflect recent developments in the states.

## ACCOUNTABILITY CRITERIA

### The Indicators

**COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY DIPLOMA:** The percentage of students who graduate having completed the requirements for a college- and career-ready diploma.

#### Minimum criteria:

- The state has set a college- and career-ready diploma as the mandatory/default option for all students or as an honors diploma (at an equivalent college- and career-ready level) that any student can pursue. For any use of this indicator, the denominator should include all students in a graduating cohort.

**COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY TESTING:** The percentage of students who score at the college- and career-ready level on a high school assessment given to all eligible students.

#### Minimum criteria:

- The state administers a college- and career-ready test to all eligible students, either a state-developed test(s) or a national college admissions test (such as the ACT/SAT). Eligible students include those who are enrolled in Algebra II statewide or all 11th grade students.
- The state has adopted or recognized a minimum performance level (cut score) that indicates college readiness.
- Postsecondary institutions factor at least the minimum college readiness cut score into their admissions or placement decisions.

**EARNING COLLEGE CREDIT WHILE IN HIGH SCHOOL:** The percentage of students who earn college credit while still enrolled in high school through AP, IB and/or dual enrollment.

#### Minimum criteria:

- The denominator includes all students in a high school graduation cohort.
- The numerator includes the number of students *earning credit* for their college- and career-ready performance in AP, IB or dual enrollment.

**POSTSECONDARY REMEDIATION:** The percentage of high school graduates who, upon entrance to a postsecondary institution, are placed into a remedial course in reading, writing or mathematics (courses that do not count as English or mathematics credit).

**Minimum criteria:**

- The denominator is the postsecondary enrollment number.
- The numerator includes the number of students enrolled in remedial coursework during their first year of postsecondary education, reported by subject area (e.g., percentage in remedial reading, percentage in mathematics and percentage in writing), or if unavailable, it also would be acceptable to define remedial course-taking as “enrollment in remedial reading, writing and/or mathematics” (e.g., not disaggregated by subject). Achieve does NOT count “any remedial” coursework as an appropriate definition for this indicator.

**The Uses**

**PUBLIC REPORTING:** The state publicly reports the percentage of students who satisfy the requirements of the indicators at the school level.

**Minimum criteria:**

- The denominator for any indicator is “all eligible students.”
- The data are reported annually and are no more than two years old. (NOTE: Current data are judged by whether they are reported year to year or by cohort.)
- The data are reported at the state and school levels.
- K–12 reports its data (e.g., college- and career-ready diploma and testing), and higher education reports its data (e.g., remediation and enrollment rates for high school graduation cohorts).

**GOALS:** The state has publicly set statewide performance goals and defines a date for increasing the percentage of students who satisfy the requirements of the indicators.

**Minimum criteria:**

- The state has established a numerical goal or goal for percentage improved.
- The state has established baseline data for that goal.

**INCENTIVES:** The state has established incentives to reward schools and districts for increasing the percentage of students who satisfy the requirements of the indicators.

**Minimum criteria:**

- The state has established a clear definition of the incentive, e.g., financial reward, public recognition, specific flexibility from regulation, etc.
- The state has established a clear threshold for earning the incentive, e.g., meeting and/or exceeding specific benchmark(s) on specific indicators.

**ACCOUNTABILITY FORMULA:** The state factors the percentage of students who satisfy the requirements of the indicators into its state accountability formula.

**Minimum criteria:**

- Performance/improvement on these indicators leads to any consequences, rewards, interventions or supports — beyond public reporting.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

On behalf of Achieve, I would like to thank the individuals and organizations that contributed to this report.

This report would not have been possible without the cooperation and assistance of the state education chiefs and their agency staff, who responded to Achieve's survey and provided state-specific information.

Achieve would like to thank the members of the staff for their tireless efforts on this report: Marie O'Hara (research associate) led the research and analysis for this year's survey and played a key role in the writing of the report; Molly Ewing (research assistant) provided additional support; and John Kraman (associate director, research) provided the overall direction for Achieve's annual policy survey of states and the writing of this report. Additional thanks to Margaret Horn, Alissa Peltzman, Kate Blosveren, Lesley Muldoon, Allison Barr, JoAnne Eresh and Doug Sovde for their contributions.

Sandy Boyd, vice president of strategic communications and outreach, provided leadership and guidance for this report.

Achieve would also like to thank the staff of the Data Quality Campaign for its assistance as Achieve developed this year's survey and analyzed the state responses.

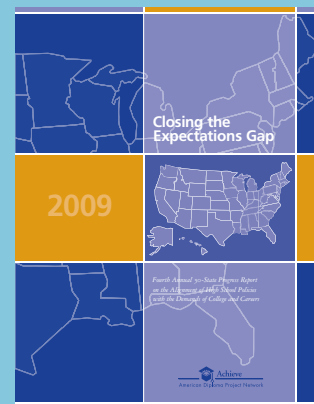
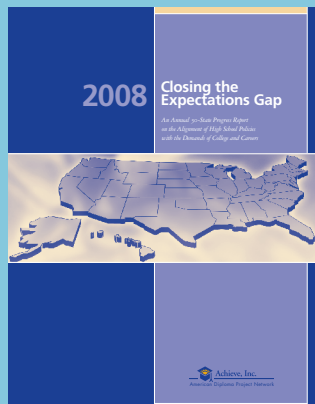
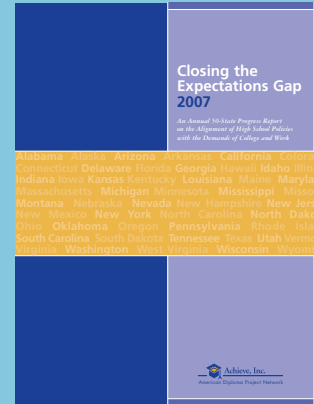
Special thanks to Nancy Smith, principal consultant with DataSmith Solutions, for her assistance in framing the next phase of statewide longitudinal data systems.

In addition, Achieve would like to thank Ted Woodings and his team at ICertainty, Inc., for developing the online version of this year's survey form and the underlying database management system.

Achieve also would like to thank Kathy Ames, Marisa McCrone, Emily Plimpton and the team at KSA-Plus Communications, Inc., for their editorial and design contributions.

Finally, Achieve would like to thank the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for providing generous funding for this report and the broader work of the American Diploma Project Network.

**Michael Cohen**  
*President*  
Achieve



## Closing the Expectations Gap

Closing the Expectations Gap is Achieve's annual report on the progress states are making on aligning high school policies with the demands of college and careers. To download copies of previous years' reports, visit [www.achieve.org](http://www.achieve.org).



Achieve

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