Closing the Expectations Gap 2007

An Annual 50-State Progress Report on the Alignment of High School Policies with the Demands of College and Work

Alabama Alaska Arizona Arkansas California Colorado
Connecticut Delaware 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

Achieve, Inc.
American Diploma Project Network

About Achieve

Created by the nation's governors and business leaders, Achieve, Inc., is a bipartisan, non-profit organization that helps states raise academic standards, improve assessments and strengthen accountability to prepare all young people for postsecondary education, work and citizenship. Achieve has helped more than half the states benchmark their academic standards, tests and accountability systems against the best examples in the United States and around the world. Achieve also serves as a significant national voice for quality in standards-based education reform and regularly convenes governors, CEOs and other influential leaders at National Education Summits to sustain support for higher standards and achievement for all of America's schoolchildren.

In 2005, Achieve co-sponsored the National Education Summit on High Schools. Forty-five governors attended the Summit along with corporate CEOs and K–12 and postsecondary leaders. The Summit was successful in making the case to the governors and business and education leaders that our schools are not adequately preparing students for college and 21st-century jobs and that aggressive action will be needed to address the preparation gap. As a result of the Summit, 29 states joined with Achieve to form the American Diploma Project Network — a coalition of states committed to aligning high school standards, assessments, graduation requirements and accountability systems with the demands of college and the workplace.

For more information, visit Achieve's Web site at www.achieve.org.

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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 high school students graduate prepared for the demands of postsecondary education and 21st-century jobs. At the Summit, it was widely acknowledged that if states do not dramatically raise expectations and achievement in their high schools, America's competitive position in the global economy could be at risk.

The Summit has sparked real action. During the past two years, a majority of governors have made it a top priority to raise standards and improve the preparation of high school students. States have taken concrete steps to align standards, raise graduation requirements and increase the value of the high school diploma so that all students graduate better prepared for college and careers. One illustration of this commitment is the rapid growth in the number of states in the American Diploma Project (ADP) Network, an alliance of states launched at the Summit to close the gap between the expectations students are held to in high school and those they will face in college and the workplace. The Network began with 13 states; it has now grown to 29 states that together educate nearly 60 percent of the nation's public school children.

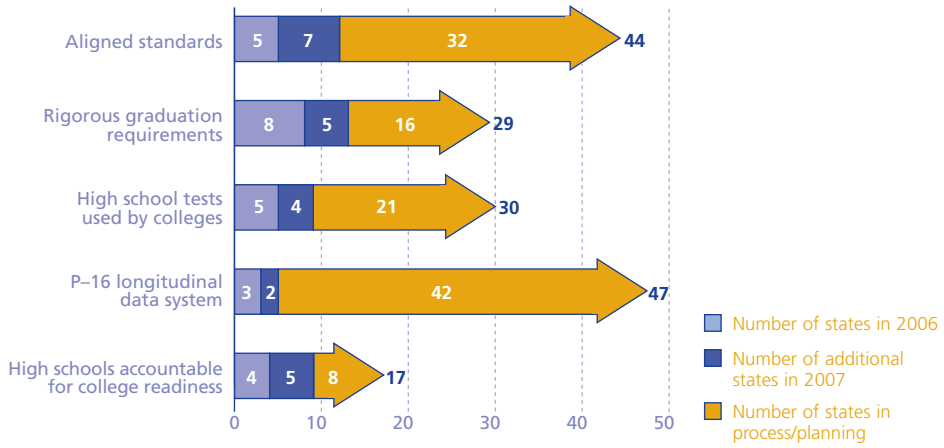
Achieve is committed to helping states on this important agenda and monitoring progress nationwide. Prior to the second anniversary of the Summit, Achieve surveyed all 50 states about the status of their efforts to align high school standards, graduation requirements, assessments and accountability systems with the demands of college and work.

The results are promising: States have made steady progress over the past year, and a greater number have made high school reform a priority this year.

Highlights from This Year's Survey

- **STANDARDS** — **Twelve states** report that their high school standards are aligned with postsecondary expectations, more than doubling the number from a year ago. **Thirty-two additional states** report that they are in the process of aligning their standards or plan to do so.
- **GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS** — **Thirteen states** require students to complete a college- and work-ready curriculum to earn a diploma, 11 more than in 2005. **Sixteen others** report plans to adopt college- and work-ready diploma requirements for all students in the future.
- **TESTING** — **Nine states** currently administer college readiness tests to all high school students as part of their statewide assessment systems. **Twenty-one other states** report plans to do so in the future.

A Growing Number of States Have Policies To Help Ensure that High School Students Graduate College and Work Ready



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2007

Note: For an overview of the policies in place in each state, see page 14.

- **P–16 DATA SYSTEMS — Five states** report that they have longitudinal data systems capable of tracking an individual student's progress from kindergarten through college graduation. **All but three others** have plans to develop such data systems.

- **ACCOUNTABILITY — Nine states** factor college and work readiness into the high school accountability systems, providing incentives for improving college-ready graduation rates. **Eight other states** plan to move in this direction in the future.

The most progress has occurred in the areas of standards and graduation requirements. Nearly every state has aligned — or is in the process of aligning — their high school standards with the expectations of college faculty and employers. One-quarter of the states are requiring all students to complete a college- and work-ready curriculum to earn a diploma; only two states had such requirements in place in 2005. Most states also are working to develop data systems that can track the progress of individual students from kindergarten through postsecondary education, an essential component of a strong accountability system.

There has been less progress in high school testing and accountability. Very few states are measuring whether their high school students are ready for college and work, and few are making college and work readiness part of their high school accountability formulas. Without better assessments and incentives for schools to improve student readiness, necessary dramatic changes in U.S. high schools are not likely to occur. Good standards simply are not enough; these other integral policies must be in place, too.

Given the complexity of this policy agenda and the multiyear effort it will take to implement fully, state leaders must maintain a sense of urgency. If states are to succeed, this is what it will take:

Gubernatorial Leadership. For the past five years, No Child Left Behind has had an impact on standards and accountability reforms in elementary and middle schools. At the high school level, governors have claimed the leadership mantle. The states that have made the most progress almost always have had the governor leading the charge. If states are going to continue to make progress, governors must continue to make this a top policy priority, bringing key stakeholders into the conversation and enlisting their support. Business leaders — longtime champions for standards-based reform — are critical allies. They have a unique ability to help students, parents, educators and the public understand the demands of the global economy.

The Ability To Move on Multiple Fronts. Developing and implementing good policies takes time. Traditionally, states have taken them on one by one, starting with standards and then moving to assessments, curriculum and, finally, accountability. As sensible as this progression may be, states will need to find ways to move multiple pieces of the policy agenda simultaneously if they are going to respond to the growing pressures of the wider world.

Addressing Challenges. To implement the new expectations states are setting for high school students successfully, states must take greater responsibility for providing teacher and student supports. States need to take on a new role and create new types of partnerships with local districts to meet capacity and student support challenges.

Cross-State Partnerships. Whether they are improving standards, raising graduation requirements or working on other challenges, states have discovered that the issues they face are remarkably similar. They have much to learn from each other. Increased opportunities for networking and more formal partnerships — such as the ADP Algebra II exam initiative — will quicken the pace of reform.

Introduction

Our economy increasingly depends on high-skill jobs that require education and training beyond high school, but too few high school students graduate prepared for the demands of postsecondary education and the world of work.

The statistics are alarming. Nationally, 30 percent of high school students (and nearly 50 percent of black and Latino students) fail to earn a diploma.[1] Of those students who do graduate and enroll in college or enter the workforce, too many find they lack the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed. Nearly 30 percent of incoming first-year college students are required to enroll in remedial courses in reading, writing or math. Only a minority of these students end up earning a degree.[2]

This lack of preparation will have significant and long-lasting effects on individuals and the economy. About 67 percent of today's new jobs require some postsecondary education or training, and that percentage is expected to rise.[3] The result is that employment opportunities for individuals without education and skills are quickly disappearing, while jobs that pay well and support a middle-class lifestyle now require higher-level skills than ever before. If U.S. workers cannot meet the demand, U.S. competitiveness will diminish, negatively affecting the living standards of millions of citizens.

But even more is at stake. To become engaged and productive citizens in this increasingly knowledge-based world, students will need to comprehend complex written and mathematical information to make important decisions about issues such as their finances and health care. They will need to communicate in sophisticated ways and use technology in their daily lives. Individuals who lack these skills will be left behind with few opportunities for civic engagement. States have a moral imperative and an economic incentive to better prepare young people for the world they will enter after high school.

All students must complete a rigorous curriculum that prepares them for success at two- and four-year colleges and in training programs necessary for jobs in the high-performance workplace. Unfortunately, states and school districts too often do not require all students to complete a college- and work-ready curriculum and routinely hand out diplomas to students who lack the knowledge and skills they need for success after high school. Achieve's American Diploma Project (ADP) research identified an "expectations gap" — a gap between the requirements for earning a high school diploma and the must-have knowledge and skills needed for college and careers.

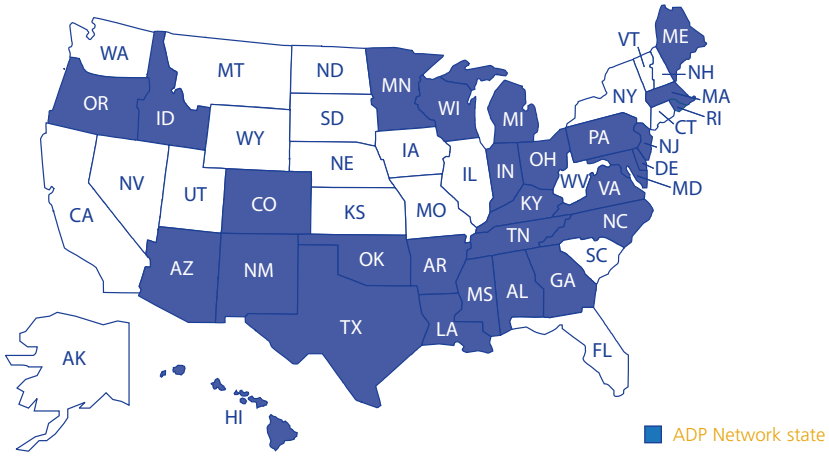
Closing the Expectations Gap

To address this gap, the leaders at the 2005 National Education Summit on High Schools committed to a multi-pronged action agenda to raise academic standards and graduation requirements, build stronger data and assessment systems, better prepare teachers, redesign high schools, and hold K–12 and postsecondary schools accountable for improved performance.

Twenty-nine states — which together educate nearly 60 percent of the nation's children — are working with Achieve in the ADP Network on a core subset of these goals: to strengthen high school standards, curricula, assessments, and data and accountability systems so that more students graduate ready for college and 21st-century jobs.

Achieve launched the Network at the Summit in partnership with governors and education and business leaders from 13 states. Since then, an additional 16 states have joined. In these 29 states, governors, state education officials, business executives and higher education leaders are working together to improve the preparation of all students for success in college and the workplace. Leaders in these states are committed to:

American Diploma Project Network



- Aligning high school standards with the demands of college and work;
- Requiring students to complete a college- and work-ready curriculum so that earning a diploma ensures that a student is ready for post-secondary opportunities;
- Building college- and work-ready measures into statewide high school assessment systems; and
- Holding high schools and post-secondary institutions accountable for student preparation and success.

A growing number of organizations also are working to help states accomplish the goals of the 2005 Summit. Increasingly, these organizations and others are speaking with one voice about the critical need to strengthen America's high schools and improve the readiness of its graduates.

Achieve's Second Annual Survey of State Policies

To monitor state progress in closing the expectations gap, Achieve surveys all 50 states each year on the key subset of policies from the Summit action agenda that form the basis for the ADP Network.[4] The survey specifically asks about the progress states have made in aligning standards with post-secondary and workplace expectations; requiring a college- and career-ready curriculum for graduation; developing college- and career-ready assessments; and holding high schools and post-secondary institutions accountable for students' success in high school, college and beyond. Following is a closer look at results from Achieve's second annual survey.

Align High School Standards with Real-World Expectations

For the past 15 years, states have been developing and revising academic standards intended to articulate the core knowledge and skills that students should learn from kindergarten through grade 12. These standards play an important role in the U.S. education system: They provide a foundation for decisions on curriculum, instruction and assessment, and they communicate core learning goals to teachers, parents and students. Unfortunately, very few states anchored their K–12 standards in the skills necessary for postsecondary success, so these "first generation" standards have had a limited impact on the preparation of high school students for college and careers.

Aligning high school standards with college and workplace expectations can be accomplished only with the formal involvement of the postsecondary and business communities. Working with K–12 educators, postsecondary systems must clearly define the skills that high school graduates need to be ready to take and succeed in credit-bearing, non-remedial courses; business leaders, likewise, must articulate the skills that graduates need to be successful and advance in their careers. High school standards then need to be anchored in these real-world expectations.

Progress Since the Summit

Since 2005, 44 states have committed to re-examining the alignment of their high school standards to ensure that they reflect the knowledge and skills that high school graduates need to be successful in college and the workplace. Among these are the 29 states in Achieve's ADP Network.

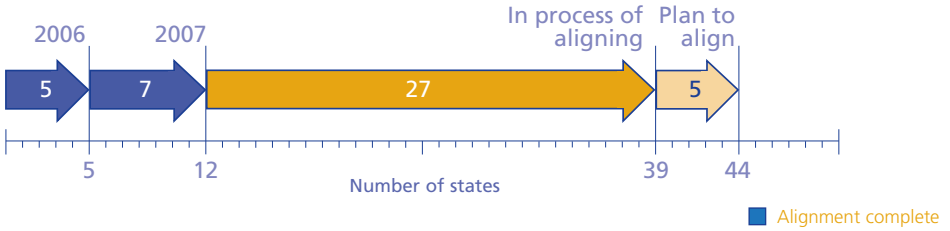
- **Twelve states** report that their high school standards are aligned with real-world expectations, more than doubling the number from a year ago, on the first anniversary of the 2005 Summit. Then only five states — *California*, *Indiana*, *Nebraska*, *New York* and *Wyoming* — reported that they had aligned their high school standards. This year, seven new states — *Arkansas*, *Delaware*, *Kentucky*, *Louisiana*, *Michigan*, *Rhode Island* and *West Virginia* — report having aligned and adopted college- and career-ready high school standards. Achieve has reviewed formally or verified the standards in *Arkansas*, *California*, *Indiana*, *Kentucky*, *Louisiana*, *Michigan* and *Rhode Island* and found that they are well aligned with the college- and career-ready knowledge and skills defined in the ADP benchmarks.[5]

- **Twenty-seven states** report that they are in the process of aligning their standards. Ten of the 27 states report that their alignment process is expected to conclude some time this year.

- **Five additional states** report plans to align their standards with college- and career-ready expectations: *Connecticut*, *Mississippi*, *Montana*, *South Dakota* and *Utah*.

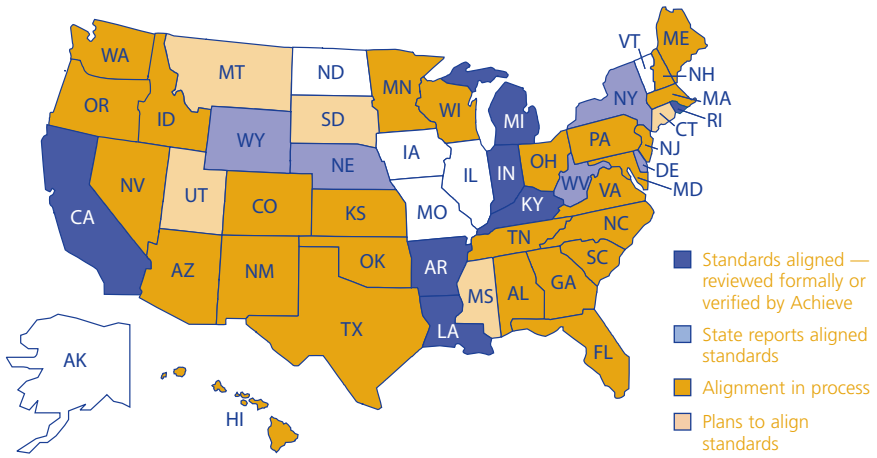
- Only **six states** — *Alaska*, *Illinois*, *Iowa*, *Missouri*, *North Dakota* and *Vermont* — report that they have no

Many States Are Aligning College- and Work-Ready High School Standards



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2007

Standards Alignment by State



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2007

plans to re-examine their high school standards to ensure that they align with the expectations of the higher education and business communities.

Challenges

Postsecondary and Business Engagement

For the alignment process to be successful, states' postsecondary and business communities must play a formal role. The value of their role hinges on the ability of postsecondary and business representatives to ensure that the standards produced reflect the demands of higher education and employers and engender real buy-in from those communities. Achieve has worked with — or is currently working with — 23 states to align their standards, and each state has made higher education and business involvement a top priority.

In *Georgia* and *Louisiana*, for instance, postsecondary representatives are equal partners at the table with K–12, defining their expectations for incoming students and helping to shape the new high school standards. They understand the necessity of adopting a single set of college-ready standards across all postsecondary institutions, rather than different standards for each institution. As part of the process, postsecondary representatives have reviewed syllabi and student work from freshman courses to clarify expectations for success in those courses. They also have analyzed data on high school course-taking and postsecondary success. The higher education systems in these states view this work as part of a larger strategy for increasing the number of students who can enter their institutions prepared to succeed. Not only have they helped shape the high school standards, but they also plan to use those standards in teacher training programs and as part of the process for placing students in credit-bearing courses.

Engaging employers in the alignment work has proven more challenging for states. Unlike colleges, employers are not in the business of defining education standards. During the original research phase of ADP, Achieve and its partners brought together focus groups of employers from across the participating states to review drafts of the readiness benchmarks as they were being developed. The goal was to ensure that the standards reflected the core set of skills necessary for work readiness and to identify specific standards that are especially critical for particular jobs. It was more efficient and effective to ask employers to react to draft standards than to create their own from scratch.

Vertical Alignment

Once expectations at the end of high school are aligned with the expectations of colleges and employers, states must then back-map their standards from the end of high school all the way down through the lower grades to ensure that their K–12 standards are vertically aligned. This may require revising high school standards as well as standards for elementary and middle school. The goal is to have a system of standards that reflects a steady progression of knowledge and skills culminating in college and work readiness. To assist states in this work, Achieve is creating a set of model standards in English and mathematics that are anchored in the ADP end-of-high-school benchmarks. The math standards will be grade by grade from kindergarten through grade 8 and course by course in high school. The English standards will reflect a continuum from middle school through high school.

Lessons from Aligning High School Standards with the Demands of College and Work

The 29 states in Achieve's ADP Network are committed to aligning their high school standards with what it takes to succeed in postsecondary education and the workplace. The goal of this effort is to ensure that students who meet high school standards are prepared to enter and succeed in credit-bearing courses in two- or four-year colleges or gain entry-level positions in high-skill jobs that offer opportunities to advance.

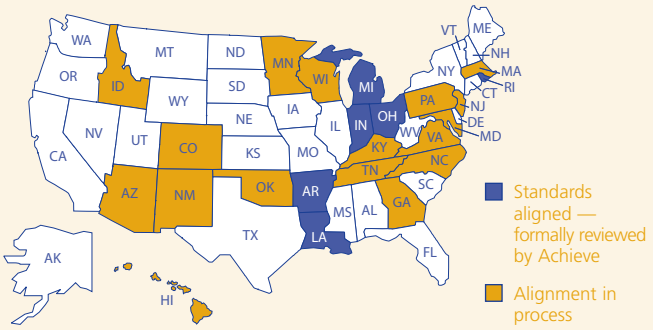
An important step in this process is for K–12 leaders to work with a broad spectrum of postsecondary and business leaders to define the core reading, writing and mathematics knowledge and skills graduates need to be ready for college and work. When actively engaged in determining the standards for readiness, postsecondary and business leaders can help ensure that students are better prepared for what awaits them after high school. Since February 2005, Achieve has worked with — or is currently working with — 23 ADP states in their efforts to create standards that meet this goal.

Already, important lessons are emerging:

English Language Arts

- Although high school English standards and courses tend to emphasize literature, most of the reading students will encounter in college or on the job is informational in nature (e.g., textbooks, manuals, articles, briefs and essays).
- Most of the writing students will do in college and work is to inform or persuade, often requiring students to use evidence to support a position. Research also is cited as an important skill for college and work. State standards tend to give these types of writing short shrift, emphasizing narrative writing instead.
- The ability to work in teams and orally present one's work is cited by professors and employers as critical for success. State standards do not always sufficiently cover these skills.

States Participating in Achieve's Formal Alignment Review Process



Mathematics

- College faculty and employers cite a broad range of mathematics content as important, including number concepts, geometry, algebra, data analysis and statistics. State standards sometimes fall short on data analysis and statistics and often give only superficial treatment to important geometric concepts, such as proofs.
- Reasoning and solving mathematical problems are often cited as the most important skills for incoming freshmen and employees. Yet state standards do not always cover them explicitly.

K–12 leaders in ADP states — in partnership with postsecondary and business leaders — are working to fill these gaps. Successful efforts result in standards that are:

- Adopted by the state board of education as defining the knowledge and skills in math and English that all students should meet by the end of high school;
- Adopted, endorsed or otherwise recognized by state postsecondary systems and institutions as defining the knowledge and skills necessary for placement into credit-bearing courses; and
- Verified or endorsed by employers and the business community as constituting skills necessary to enter and succeed in the 21st-century workplace.

Over time, these new college- and work-ready standards will be incorporated into a range of state policies and practices, such as high school graduation requirements, course descriptions, high school assessments, and postsecondary placement policies and assessments.

Align High School Graduation Requirements with College and Workplace Expectations

Research by Achieve and others indicates that whether students go directly into college or the workforce after graduation, they need a common core of knowledge and skills in English and mathematics.

For high school graduates to be prepared adequately, they need to take four years of challenging mathematics — at least through Algebra II or its equivalent — and four years of rigorous English aligned with college- and work-ready standards. Although the most commonly used criterion for awarding a high school diploma continues to be course-taking requirements, until recently, few states set their requirements at the appropriate level to ensure that graduates are prepared for success in college and the workplace.

Progress Since the Summit

In late 2004, Achieve first reviewed high school course requirements and concluded that only two states — *Arkansas* and *Texas* — had set their requirements at a level that would ensure graduates are prepared for success in college and the workplace. Since then, states have been moving rapidly to enact more rigorous requirements.

- **Thirteen states** require students to complete a college- and work-ready curriculum, 11 more than in 2005. By the first anniversary of the Summit a year ago, eight states — *Arkansas*, *Indiana*, *Kentucky*, *Michigan*, *New York*, *Oklahoma*, *South Dakota* and *Texas* — had raised their graduation requirements to the college- and work-ready level. In the past year, an additional five states — *Delaware*, *Minnesota*, *Mississippi*, *New Mexico* and *Ohio* — have adopted college- and career-ready diploma requirements for all students. Another **16 states** report plans to adopt such curriculum requirements for all students in the next few years.

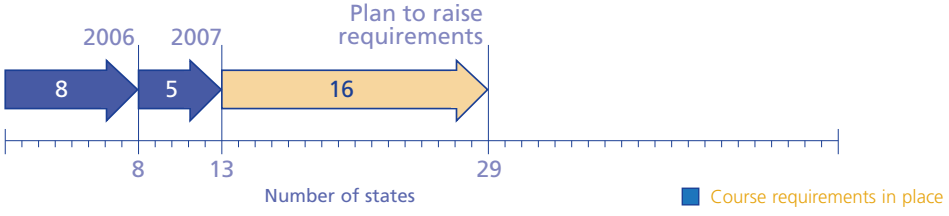
- An additional **five states** — *Florida*, *Idaho*, *Iowa*, *Oregon* and *Utah* — have raised their graduation requirements in the past year, but not to the level recommended by ADP in mathematics. Although all five of these states will now require at least three years of math, none explicitly requires all students to complete a math course beyond Algebra I and Geometry.

Challenges

Mandatory versus Default

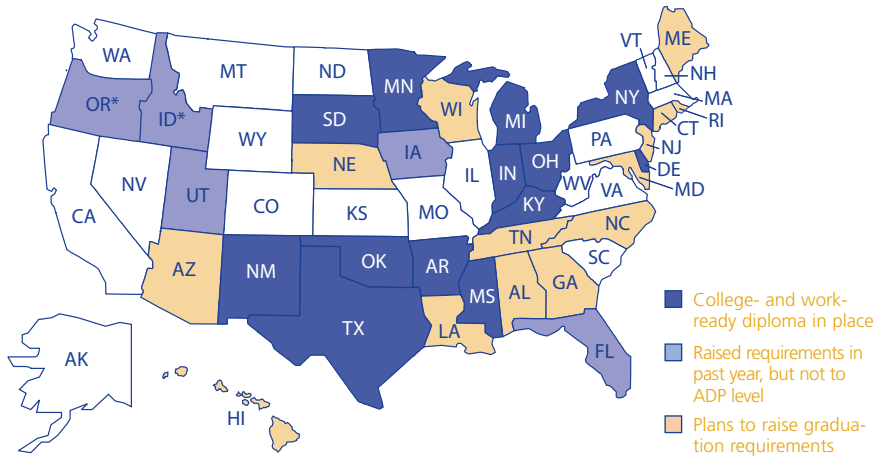
States raising their course requirements to the level recommended by the ADP have taken two different approaches. Many of the earlier states to adopt college- and work-ready course requirements for all incoming high school students — including *Arkansas*, *Indiana*, *Oklahoma*, *South Dakota* and *Texas* — set the curriculum as the "default" diploma option. With the default option, students automatically enroll in the college- and work-ready curriculum but may "opt out" of the requirements if their parents sign a waiver. Four of the states that have adopted a college- and work-ready curriculum in the past year — *Delaware*, *Minnesota*, *Mississippi* and *Ohio* — have made the course requirements mandatory for all students without any opt-out provisions. *Ohio* will have a four-year period during

More States Have College- and Work-Ready Graduation Course Requirements



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2007

Status of Graduation Course Requirements by State



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2007
*Plan to raise requirements to ADP level.

which students may opt out of the new Ohio Core requirements with parental consent, but then the Core will become the mandatory curriculum.

As states decide whether to create a policy that permits students to opt out of the college- and work-ready curriculum, they must confront two competing concerns. On one hand, some students arrive in high school unprepared for rigorous courses, and an opt-out provision provides a safety valve for those students, allowing them to take a different set of courses and still earn a diploma. On the other hand, policymakers worry that an opt-out provision may encourage some schools or educators to counsel struggling students out of the rigorous courses rather than provide them with the support and encouragement they need to aim higher and succeed. This is particularly a concern with disadvantaged students and others who traditionally have been held to lower expectations.

It is important for states with opt-out provisions to watch carefully to see which and how many students opt out as they enter high school. In *Oklahoma*, 13 percent of incoming 9th grade students opted out of the college-prep track the first year it counted. In *Arkansas*, 10 percent did the same.

Providing Student Supports

Even as states raise their graduation requirements to meet 21st-century needs, significant proportions of students enter high school substantially behind in their basic literacy and math skills. More than two-thirds of 8th graders score below proficient on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading and math tests. Students who are furthest behind tend to be concentrated in high-poverty schools and districts. It will be much more difficult for poorly prepared students to meet higher expectations and complete high school than their better-prepared peers.

This is not a reason to lower expectations, however. It is a reason to provide the necessary support to struggling students. Adolescent literacy programs will be required to help students succeed by strengthening their literacy skills. Some students need help with the basics, while many more need help developing comprehension and writing skills, particularly in academic content areas. Students entering high school with weak math skills will need extra help to succeed in Algebra I. Schools and districts are using a variety of strategies to provide this support. For example, *Chicago* is offering summer bridge programs between 8th and 9th grades that provide opportunities for review and acceleration, ideally with the teacher that students will have in the fall. *Patterson High School* in Baltimore uses double periods of math to provide students time to catch up and offers courses to ease the transition to high school.

Skill development is necessary but will not be sufficient for every student by itself. Schools should use early warning indicators to identify students who are at risk of dropping out, such as students with precipitous drops in attendance and grades during the transitions into middle and high school or who do not earn enough credits to be promoted from 9th to 10th grade.[6] These types of indicators can be used to target interventions for at-risk students and can lead to programmatic changes at the school or district level to create more supportive and effective learning environments.

Struggling students need these and other supports, such as extended learning time and services, to address non-academic needs. They also need well-prepared and effective teachers. There is growing evidence that schools with the greatest concentrations of disadvantaged students are most likely to have the least-prepared, least-experienced teachers.[7] States, districts and teachers' organizations need to work together to develop and implement the policies, contract provisions, incentives and working conditions that help get the best-prepared teachers to the schools where they are most needed.

States alone cannot deliver all of the needed services, and rarely is there a single agency or level of government responsible for providing all of these supports within a state. But that should not be an excuse for inaction. The combined and coordinated efforts of state and local education agencies, institutions of higher education, and community-based organizations are necessary to provide students with the support they need. States must provide the leadership and resources to ensure that this happens.

Ensuring Consistent Course Rigor

As states raise course requirements, they will need to put safeguards in place to ensure that courses taught in high schools throughout the state are consistently rigorous and aligned with the state standards. Otherwise, the content or instruction in the more advanced courses may become watered down as more students are required to take them.

Recognizing this problem, states are taking different approaches to ensure consistent course content and rigor:

- **Twenty-nine states** are pursuing end-of-course testing. Thirteen states already have end-of-course tests in place, and 16 more plan to develop end-of-course tests to measure whether students have mastered the essential knowledge and skills in core courses. Roughly half of these states currently have or plan to have end-of-course tests in advanced courses such as Algebra II and 11th grade English.

- **Thirty-eight states** produce course-level standards, model curricula or other instructional materials for schools to guide classroom instruction. As states revise their high school content standards, they should ensure that these tools accurately reflect those expectations and that they are broadly accessible.

Rhode Island has created a statewide approach to validating local district courses' alignment with the state high school standards. Beginning this spring, the state will review all district high school curricula to determine whether they are adequately aligned with the state standards. The state will endorse diplomas only in districts where curricula meet state standards. *Delaware* also plans to require all districts to submit their course content for review. This approach may be more practical in smaller states. Larger states may consider conducting targeted audits or creating tools to allow districts to conduct their own review of course content in their high schools.

Moving Beyond Carnegie Units Toward Credit by Proficiency

Carnegie units measure seat time, not performance. Performance is what matters. Some states are beginning to look beyond Carnegie units at other ways for students to demonstrate proficiency and satisfy college- and work-ready graduation requirements. The goal in these states is to ensure that all students master the college- and work-ready content defined in state academic standards, while also providing districts the flexibility to design and implement courses and curricula as they choose.

In 2003, the *Rhode Island* Board of Regents ushered in a new high school diploma system, requiring all students to demonstrate proficiency in "core content knowledge" and "applied learning skills" in English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, the arts and technology aligned with state standards. Core content knowledge proficiency will be determined mainly through performance on assessments, but students may also use projects, portfolios and course grades. Proficiency in the applied learning skills will be determined by an even wider array of demonstrations, including speeches, projects, performances, essays, collections of short stories or journals.

Another example is *Pennsylvania*, where the Governor's Commission on College and Career Success recently issued its final report of high school reform recommendations designed to raise

achievement for all students within a traditional local control framework. The first recommendation would require all students to demonstrate proficiency on the state's academic standards in the core subjects by either passing a series of state-developed, end-of-course tests — the Graduation Competency Assessments (GCAs) — or scoring proficient or above on the 11th grade Pennsylvania System of School Assessment. Although students would be able to decide which assessment system to use to demonstrate proficiency, all districts would be required to administer the GCAs in the core subjects.

As States Raise High School Graduation Requirements in Math, Do Other Subjects Get Squeezed from the Curriculum?

Each of the 13 states that have raised graduation course requirements to the level recommended by ADP has raised the requirements primarily in math because deficiencies in high school graduates' math performance are most glaring to employers and postsecondary institutions. Many also have raised requirements in science. None of the states has cut back on requirements in the humanities to make room for more math and science. Because students need a well-rounded education, each of these states also established course-taking requirements in English, history/social studies and civics, and most specify requirements in foreign languages and the arts.

College- and Work-Ready High School Graduation Course Requirements

	AR	DE	IN	KY	MI	MN	MS	NM	NY	OH	OK	SD	TX
English	4.5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4.5
Mathematics (through at least Algebra II)	4	4	3	3	4	3	4	4	3	4	3	3	4
Science	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	4
Social studies	3	3	3	3	3	3.5	4	3.5	4	3	3	4	4
Fine arts*	0.5	0	7	1	1	1	1	0	1	6	1	1	1
Foreign language*	0	2		0	2	0	0	9.5	1		9	7	2
Career tech, electives and other courses*	7	8		8	1	7	7		6				6.5
Total required courses	**22**	**24**	**20**	**22**	**18**	**21.5**	**24**	**24**	**22**	**20**	**23**	**22**	**26**
First graduating class affected	2010	2011	2011	2012	2016	2015	2012	2013	2010	2014	2010	2010	2011

Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2007

* States approach elective requirements in a variety of ways. They may specify that students complete electives chosen from a set of prescribed courses or subjects that in some states includes fine arts and foreign language. They also may bundle electives into various course sequences or concentrations from which students choose. Finally, states simply may require students to take a number of electives without any structure of specificity. A number of states combine these options, requiring several prescribed elective courses or a choice from among several elective concentrations, while also providing students with flexibility in how they fulfill the remaining electives.

"Other courses" include health, physical education and other required non-academic courses.

Overview of Key Survey Results for Each State

State	Align high school standards with college and workplace expectations	Align high school graduation requirements with college and workplace expectations	Use high school tests for college placement	Develop a P–16 longitudinal data system
AL				
AK				
AZ				
AR				
CA				
CO				
CT				
DE				
FL				
GA				
HI				
ID				
IL				
IN				
IA				
KS				
KY				
LA				
ME				
MD				
MA				
MI				
MN				
MS				
MO				
MT				
NE				
NV				
NH				
NJ				
NM				
NY				
NC				
ND				
OH				
OK				
OR				
PA				
RI				
SC				
SD				
TN				
TX				
UT				
VT				
VA				
WA				
WV				
WI				
WY				
TOTAL YES	12	13	9	5
TOTAL PLAN/PROCESS	32	16	21	42

Hold high schools accountable for graduating students college and work ready	Policies in place 2006	Policies in place 2007	State
	○○○○○	○○○○○	AL
	○○○○○	○○○○○	AK
	○○○○○	○○○○○	AZ
	●○○○○	●●●○○	AR
	●●○○○	●●○○○	CA
	●○○○○	●○○○○	CO
	○○○○○	○○○○○	CT
	○○○○○	●●●○○	DE
	●○○○○	●○○○○	FL
	○○○○○	●○○○○	GA
	○○○○○	○○○○○	HI
	○○○○○	●○○○○	ID
	●○○○○	●○○○○	IL
	●●●○○	●●●○○	IN
	○○○○○	○○○○○	IA
	○○○○○	○○○○○	KS
	●○○○○	●●●○○	KY
	●○○○○	●●○○○	LA
	●○○○○	●○○○○	ME
	○○○○○	○○○○○	MD
	○○○○○	●○○○○	MA
	●○○○○	●●●○○	MI
	○○○○○	●○○○○	MN
	○○○○○	●○○○○	MS
	●○○○○	●○○○○	MO
	○○○○○	○○○○○	MT
	●○○○○	●○○○○	NE
	○○○○○	○○○○○	NV
	○○○○○	○○○○○	NH
	○○○○○	○○○○○	NJ
	○○○○○	●○○○○	NM
	●●●○○	●●●●○	NY
	●○○○○	●○○○○	NC
	○○○○○	○○○○○	ND
	○○○○○	●○○○○	OH
	●●○○○	●●○○○	OK
	○○○○○	○○○○○	OR
	○○○○○	○○○○○	PA
	○○○○○	●●○○○	RI
	○○○○○	○○○○○	SC
	●○○○○	●○○○○	SD
	○○○○○	○○○○○	TN
	●●●○○	●●●●○	TX
	○○○○○	○○○○○	UT
	○○○○○	○○○○○	VT
	○○○○○	○○○○○	VA
	○○○○○	○○○○○	WA
	○○○○○	●○○○○	WV
	○○○○○	○○○○○	WI
	●○○○○	●○○○○	WY
9	15	21	1 OR 2 POLICIES IN PLACE
8	3	7	3 OR MORE POLICIES IN PLACE

Policy in place

In process of aligning standards

Plans to implement

ADP Network state

Align High School and Postsecondary Assessments

As states align their high school standards and graduation requirements with the demands of college and work, they also must build assessments rigorous enough to measure college and work readiness. Achieve's research suggests that few states have such assessments in place today. Most high school tests, particularly those used for graduation, measure knowledge and skills students learn early in high school. Without sufficient emphasis on the advanced high school content that students will need to be successful in college, state assessments will fall short of measuring readiness for postsecondary pursuits.

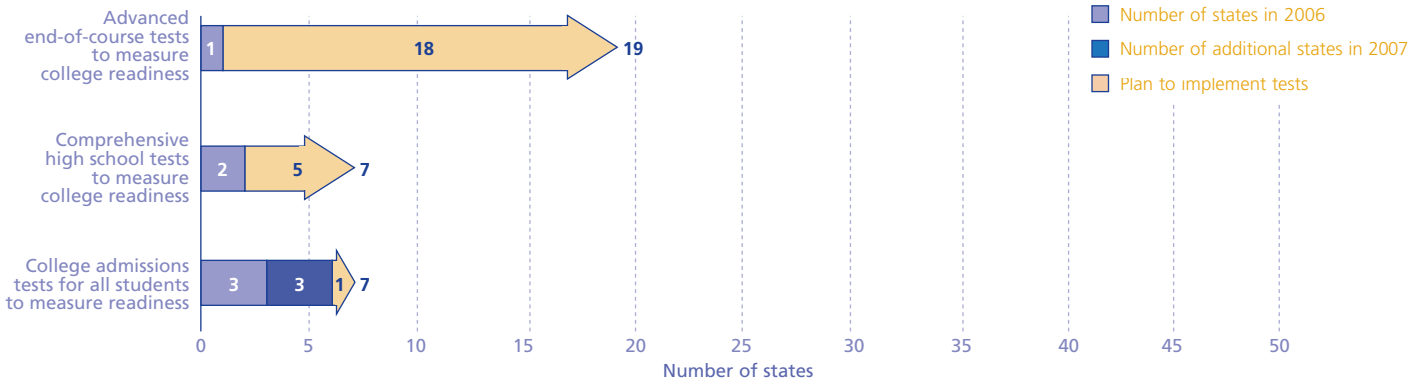
To help prepare students academically for a successful transition from secondary to postsecondary education and the workplace, states need to go beyond their existing tests. They need a component of their high school assessment systems that measures the more advanced skills valued by postsecondary institutions and employers. If states build more rigorous assessments into their high school testing systems, postsecondary institutions can use these exams to make placement decisions. This will send a powerful and consistent signal to students and schools about what it takes to be ready.

Progress Since the Summit

Although states have made significant progress in aligning high school standards and course requirements with college and work, they have made less progress in upgrading high school assessments. A growing number of states, however, are planning to build college- and work-ready assessments into their high school testing and accountability systems. Thirty states report that they either have or plan to have such an assessment in place in the near future.

- **Nine states** currently administer tests as part of their statewide high school assessment systems that also are used by higher education to place incoming students.
  - *New York* administers end-of-course Regents Exams that are used for high school accountability and college placement.
  - *California* and *Texas* have comprehensive high school assessments, taken by students in the 11th grade, that are used for freshman course placement in higher education.
  - *Colorado*, *Idaho*, *Illinois*, *Kentucky*, *Maine* and *Michigan* all have incorporated a national college admissions test — the ACT or SAT — into their state's assessment systems. *Kentucky* and *Michigan* have both adopted the ACT into their assessment systems in the past year, while *Idaho* requires all students to take the SAT, ACT or COMPASS.
- **Twenty-one** other states report plans to build college- and work-ready assessments into their statewide testing systems.

State Strategies for Assessing College Readiness of High School Students Vary



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2007

State Strategies for College- and Work-Ready Testing

A number of strategies are emerging as states work to build college-ready tests into their high school assessment systems. The most widely pursued strategy is end-of-course tests. Other states are considering modifying their existing high school tests to make them better measures of postsecondary readiness. Finally, a number of states are incorporating the ACT or SAT into their assessment systems and requiring all students to take those exams.

It is too early to tell which strategies hold the most promise. Whichever path states pursue, the assessments must meet two important goals: They must measure college and workplace readiness adequately, and they must align well with the state high school standards. If either goal is sacrificed, the value of the assessments will be compromised, and their impact on student preparation will be limited.

Using High School End-of-Course Exams To Signal College Readiness

Eighteen states are planning to develop end-of-course assessments in advanced high school courses that will measure college readiness. One state — *New York* — already has such exams in place. New York is the only state in which postsecondary institutions find the state's end-of-course high school tests — the Regents Exams — challenging enough to determine whether incoming students are prepared to enroll in credit-bearing courses. For several years, the City University of New York (CUNY) has used scores on the Regents Exams for admissions and course placement decisions at its four-year institutions.[8] According to state officials, the State University of New York system (SUNY) likewise has adopted the use of the Regents Exams as a placement measure. This approach signals to high school students interested in attending CUNY or SUNY that performance on the Regents Exams will have a direct impact on their chances for success in college.

The 18 other states that are planning to create end-of-course exams will need to administer the tests in higher-level courses, such as Algebra II and 11th grade English. Unfortunately, most states with end-of-course exams

Strategies for Assessing College Readiness by State

In place | Plans to have in future

State	End-of-course tests used for college placement	Comprehensive high school tests used for college placement	College admissions tests given to all high school students
AZ	Plans to have in future		
AR	Plans to have in future		
CA		In place	
CO			In place
CT		Plans to have in future	
FL		Plans to have in future	
GA		Plans to have in future	
HI	Plans to have in future		
ID			In place
IL			In place
IN	Plans to have in future		
KY	Plans to have in future		In place
LA	Plans to have in future		
ME	Plans to have in future		In place
MD	Plans to have in future		
MA	Plans to have in future		
MI			In place
MN		Plans to have in future	
MS	Plans to have in future		
NJ	Plans to have in future		
NM	Plans to have in future		
NY	In place		
OH	Plans to have in future		
OK	Plans to have in future		
OR		Plans to have in future	
PA	Plans to have in future		
RI	Plans to have in future		
TX	Plans to have in future	In place	
VA	Plans to have in future		
WV			Plans to have in future

Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2007

do not currently have tests at this level. For the tests to serve as true college readiness measures, higher education must help develop and/or review these exams to ensure they reflect the skills needed for college success.

One reason end-of-course tests are growing in popularity is that they can be tied to the curriculum standards and courses students are required to take to graduate. The tests also are more sensitive to instruction because they are taken right after a student completes a course. End-of-course tests also allow states to monitor rigor consistency in courses taught statewide.

There are challenges associated with end-of-course testing, however. First, this approach could increase the amount of testing required by a state, depending on the number of courses for which the state develops an assessment. Second, the content of end-of-course tests for advanced courses might be right but the timing might not be from higher education's perspective. For example, if students take Algebra II in the 10th grade — two years before entering college — higher education institutions would need to determine whether results on that test could be used for placement or whether additional information (e.g., evidence of continued course-taking in advanced mathematics or additional measures later in high school) would be needed.

Setting a College-Ready Cut Score on Comprehensive High School Exams

Two states use their comprehensive high school assessments as college-ready measures; **five other states** are considering this strategy.

- *California* has amended its 11th grade assessments to make them sufficient for signaling college readiness. As a result, the California State University (CSU) system uses these tests for course placement.

- *Texas* uses the same assessment — the 11th grade Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) — as both the high school graduation test and a college placement exam.[9]

- Five additional states — *Connecticut*, *Florida*, *Georgia*, *Minnesota* and *Rhode Island* — plan to review their existing comprehensive high school assessments to determine whether they are capable of signaling college readiness.

Building on the state's 11th grade standards-based tests in English and mathematics, the CSU system and California's education department worked together to design additional test questions that are aligned to the state's 11th grade standards and assess the advanced skills incoming freshmen need to be successful in entry-level courses. Students who score well on that 11th grade test and continue to take challenging courses in their senior year of high school are exempt from the CSU-required mathematics and English placement tests. The amended 11th grade exams also serve to alert high school students in time to adjust their senior-year coursework if they need additional preparation for college.

Through the Texas Success Initiative, Texas set a college-ready cut score on the 11th grade TAKS that, if reached, indicates that the student will not require remediation at a state institution of higher education. Texas sets one passing score for high school graduation and a higher cut score to determine whether students are ready for credit-bearing college courses.

Georgia plans to move in a similar direction. The state is working to modify the Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHSGT) to bring it into alignment with the new high school standards and course requirements the state expects to adopt in the next two years. The goal is for the GHSGT to be rigorous enough and have a college- and work-ready cut score that higher education institutions can factor into placement decisions.

This strategy holds the most potential in states that give their standards-based assessments in the 11th grade because those tests have the ability to tap higher-level knowledge and skills and because they are taken closer to the end of high school when colleges are more likely to honor scores for placement. This strategy would be much more difficult to pursue in states with 10th grade tests.

Incorporating College Admissions Tests into High School Testing Systems

Six states are incorporating national college admissions tests (the ACT and SAT) into their high school assessment systems, requiring all students — not just the college bound — to take them.

- Four states — *Colorado*, *Illinois*, *Kentucky* and *Michigan* — have incorporated or are in the process of incorporating the ACT into their high school assessment systems.
- One state — *Maine* — has incorporated the SAT into its high school assessment system.
- *Idaho* will now require all high school students to take the ACT, SAT or COMPASS placement test.
- *West Virginia* reports that it plans to adopt a policy that builds college admissions tests into its high school assessment system.

Given the widespread use of the ACT and SAT for college admissions and the credibility these tests have in the postsecondary community and the broader public, it is understandable that states would consider them for use in high schools. Giving all students the opportunity to take these tests may encourage students who did not view themselves as college material to pursue that path. Also, because most college-bound students already take one of these tests in high school, incorporating them into an assessment system will not increase the number of tests these students need to take.

There are, however, challenges associated with this strategy. In a recent report, Achieve analyzed the most commonly used college admissions and placement tests with an eye toward their use in statewide high school assessment systems. The analysis revealed that although admissions tests do some things very well, there are gaps in what they measure.[10] Neither the ACT nor the SAT includes the full range of advanced concepts and skills reflected in the ADP benchmarks and, increasingly, in state high school standards. Therefore, simply incorporating these tests as they are into state high school testing systems is an insufficient strategy.

To be effective, states need to augment the ACT and SAT with additional questions or performance measures to ensure stronger alignment with state standards and to assess the more advanced concepts and skills that college faculty say are important. States are approaching augmentation in different ways. *Maine*, for example, is administering an augmented form of the SAT to all 11th grade students. The state worked with the College Board to develop supplemental items in data and statistics — an area of mathematics that is covered in the state standards but not extensively assessed on the SAT. Similarly, *Michigan* administers the ACT and WorkKeys to all 11th graders, along with 15 additional mathematics items that measure content not covered on either test. *Kentucky* plans to administer both the ACT *and* the state assessment to all students. To reduce testing time, the state has analyzed both tests and will eliminate items from the state test that cover content measured by the ACT.

Common Algebra II Test

Achieve is working with nine states to develop and administer a common Algebra II end-of-course test. The nine states — *Arkansas*, *Indiana*, *Kentucky*, *Maryland*, *Massachusetts*, *New Jersey*, *Ohio*, *Pennsylvania* and *Rhode Island* — are partners in the ADP Network.

The test is being developed based on a set of content specifications that were created jointly by the states — and are aligned with the ADP benchmarks. The specifications include a common core of content that will be given across all states, plus a few modules that give states the flexibility to go beyond the core.

This collaborative effort provides participating states with a number of benefits. First, the test will promote consistency and rigor in Algebra II courses within and among the states, which is important for equity across diverse schools. Second, the test will serve as an indicator to students that they are prepared for college-level work and can be used by postsecondary institutions to place students into credit-bearing mathematics courses. Third, the test will allow the public to compare the performance of students across states. Achieve anticipates that, over time, additional states will administer the Algebra II end-of-course test, making comparisons even more powerful.

Hold High Schools and Postsecondary Institutions Accountable for Student Success

The mission of high schools is to prepare all students for college, careers and citizenship. Unfortunately, preparedness is barely a factor in high school accountability systems — if it is even measured at all. In most states, accountability models are driven by attendance, graduation rates, and performance on high school assessments that often are not adequate measures of college and work readiness.

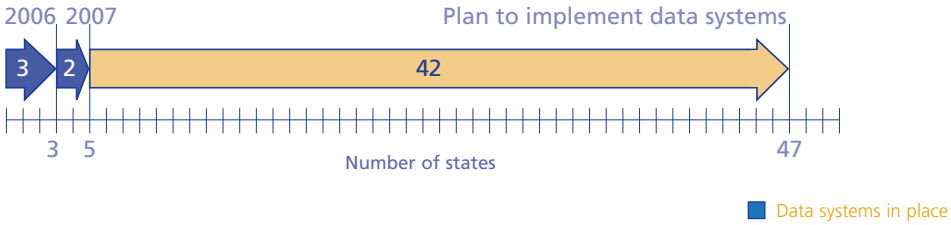
The ability of states to hold high schools accountable for improving student transitions to college and work depends on the quality of their assessments and data systems. States need more reliable measures of college and work readiness, including more robust high school assessments, as already discussed. They also need a longitudinal data system with the capacity to track student progress from high school through postsecondary education. With such capacity, states will be able to trace a student's postsecondary success (or failure) back to his or her high school experience and use that information to strengthen the experience for the next class of students. An effective longitudinal data system would enable policymakers to compare high school course-taking, grades and assessment results with college course-taking patterns, success in first-year college courses, and persistence and completion rates.

Progress Since the Summit: P–16 Longitudinal Data Systems

Last year, only **three states** reported having a P–16 longitudinal data system in place, with 31 states reporting that they were working to establish such systems. This year — based on the responses to Achieve's survey and data from the Data Quality Campaign and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems — **two additional states** report having operational longitudinal data systems capable of connecting student-level cohort data from K–12 and higher education.[11] An **additional 42 states** report plans to have data systems with this capacity operational in the next few years, bringing the total number of states that have or plan to build P–16 data systems to 47.

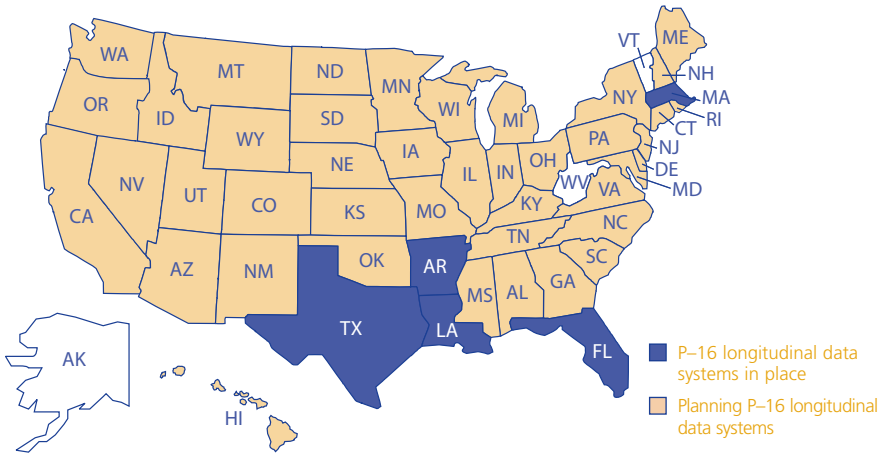
- **Five states** report that they have online P–16 longitudinal data systems capable of tracking an individual student's progress from kindergarten through college graduation. One year ago, only *Florida*, *Louisiana* and *Texas* had such systems in place; this year two new states — *Arkansas* and *Massachusetts* — report that they have new operational P–16 longitudinal data systems. Florida's P–20 data system also includes employment data, providing a body of data linking success in school to success in the workplace.

Almost All States Plan To Implement P–16 Longitudinal Data Systems



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2007

Status of P–16 Longitudinal Data Systems by State



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2007

- **Eight additional states** — *Alabama*, *Delaware*, *Georgia*, *Hawaii*, *Nevada*, *Tennessee*, *Utah* and *Wisconsin* — report that they can match individual student records from K–12 longitudinal data systems with those students' records in the higher education data systems, giving them the capacity to trace student achievement in higher education back to the feeder high schools. Each of these states has plans to build seamless longitudinal data systems that will include K–12 and higher education data.

- **Thirty-four more states** have plans to develop or make operational P–16 longitudinal data systems that monitor individual students' progress through elementary, secondary and postsecondary education.

- The remaining **three states** — *Alaska*, *Vermont* and *West Virginia* — report having no plans to adopt P–16 longitudinal data systems.

Challenges

Working in the Context of Privacy Laws

As states continue to develop P–16 longitudinal systems that focus on individual students' growth and success, care must be taken to ensure this work can be done in accordance with the federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) to protect student privacy. Although FERPA limits a state's ability to disclose individual students' records in some cases, the law does permit states to use student-level data to evaluate and audit state and local programs for school and district accountability; monitor and analyze assessment, enrollment and graduation data; perform studies to improve instruction; share student records among schools; and maintain teacher identification systems that link teachers and students. Although FERPA safeguards student privacy, it by no means prohibits states from building robust P–16 longitudinal data systems and using them to improve teaching and learning in high schools.[12]

Using Data To Raise Achievement and Graduation Rates

As states raise standards in high school, they must pay close attention to the most vulnerable students — those at the greatest risk of dropping out — so that they receive the support necessary to meet the higher standards and graduate from high school. A growing body of research suggests that well-designed early warning data systems that incorporate a variety of indicators from test scores and course grades to attendance and classroom engagement are effective tools for identifying students at risk of dropping out as early as 4th or 6th grade.[13] Such systems would provide ample time for schools to intervene with supports and programs designed to help students get back on track. Additionally, analyzing teacher-level data can allow states, districts and schools to identify the strengths and weaknesses of individual teachers and to develop more tailored professional development to improve instruction. *Florida*, for example, recently developed a new data-driven teaching tool called Sunshine Connections. Teachers have access to student performance data; classroom management tools; and interactive connections to other teachers, curricular materials and professional development opportunities. With proper training, teachers are able to use these data to improve student learning.

Progress Since the Summit: Accountability Systems

As more states begin to administer college- and work-ready assessments to all students and develop the capacity to track student progress from high school through postsecondary education, they also need to create meaningful accountability systems that hold high schools responsible for graduating students ready for college and the workplace. At a minimum, an accountability system that measures college and work readiness should take into account an accurate graduation rate and whether students have completed a college- and work-ready curriculum; have demonstrated proficiency on a college- and work-ready assessment; have enrolled in college; and have been placed into credit-bearing, non-remedial courses in reading, writing and mathematics.

Measuring an Accurate High School Graduation Rate

In 2005, the National Governors Association (NGA) convened a task force to create a more valid, reliable and consistent measure of the high school graduation rate. All 50 governors signed the NGA Graduation Rate Compact, agreeing to develop a common, four-year, adjusted-cohort graduation rate.[14] Rather than rely on estimated graduation rates, the agreed-upon rate tracks the progress of each student, measures the percentage of students who graduate within four years of entering 9th grade and measures the percentage of dropouts. This is an extremely important step. For the first time, it allows each state to have an accurate picture of its performance. Governors who have taken office since the Compact was signed should review their state's efforts and provide the necessary leadership to ensure the development and use of this measure.

Two-thirds of states factor or plan to factor the NGA Compact graduation rate into their state high school accountability formulas. This demonstrates significant progress from last year when only a few states had adopted or finalized plans for its use.

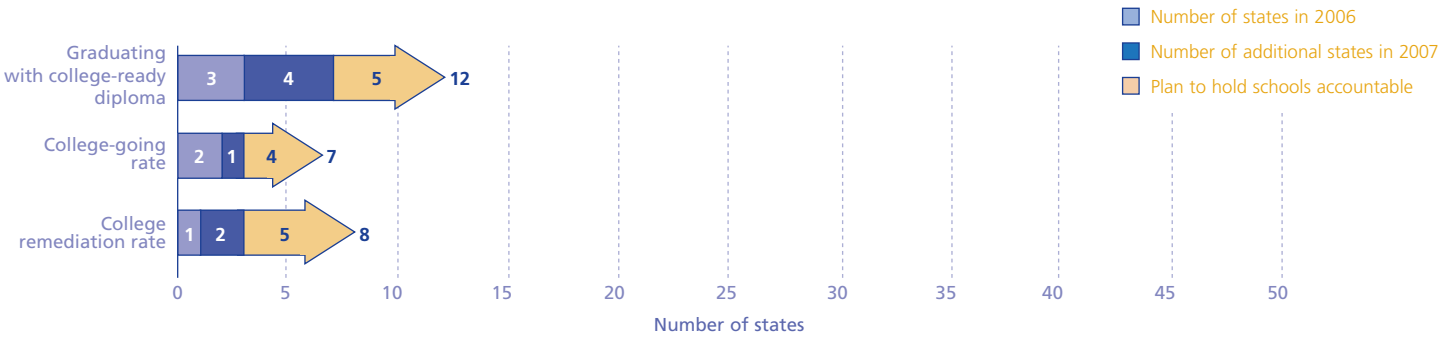
This summer, the NGA will publish its annual report on the 50 states' progress in adopting and implementing this graduation rate into their reporting and accountability systems, providing comparable, up-to-date information.

Holding High Schools Accountable for Whether Students Earn College- and Work-Ready Diplomas

Because the mission of high school is to graduate all students ready for college and work, states must factor the percentage of students who graduate having completed a college- and work-ready curriculum into their accountability systems.

- **Seven states** — *Delaware*, *Georgia*, *Indiana*, *New York*, *North Carolina*, *Oklahoma* and *Texas* — hold high schools accountable for increasing the percentage of graduates who complete a college- and work-ready curriculum. In last year's survey, only three states reported this as part of their high school accountability systems.
- **Five additional states** have plans to factor this indicator into their accountability systems.

Few States Factor College Readiness into High School Accountability Systems



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2007

- **Another dozen states** publicly report the percentage of high school students taking a college- and work-ready curriculum.

Holding High Schools Accountable for the College-Going and Remediation Rates of Their Graduates

A strong accountability system should provide incentives to high schools to increase the percentage of students who enroll in college and are placed into credit-bearing courses that count toward a degree. All too often, first-year college students are required to enroll in remedial courses, and a large percentage of those students will never earn their postsecondary degrees.

- **Three states** — *Georgia*, *Missouri* and *Rhode Island* — report that they hold high schools accountable for the college-going rates of their graduates.
- **Three states** — *Georgia*, *Oklahoma* and *Rhode Island* — factor college remediation rates into their high school accountability systems.
- **Five others** plan to factor college-going and remediation rates into their accountability systems.
- An additional **21 states** publicly report their college remediation rates but do not factor them into their high school accountability systems.

How States Hold Schools Accountable for Students' College Readiness

In place
Plans to have in future

State	Graduating with college-ready diploma	College-going rate	College remediation rate
AR	Plans		
DE	In place		
GA	In place	In place	In place
HI	Plans	Plans	Plans
IN	In place		
LA	Plans		
ME		Plans	Plans
MN		Plans	Plans
MO		In place	
NJ	Plans		Plans
NY	In place		
NC	In place		
OK	In place		In place
PA	Plans		
RI		In place	In place
TX	In place		
WI		Plans	Plans

Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2007

Factoring College and Work Readiness Tests into Accountability Systems

Achieve was interested in learning which states, if any, factor the percentage of high school students scoring "college and work ready" on a state assessment into their high school accountability systems. However, because few states have high school assessments in place that are capable of measuring college and work readiness, this is difficult if not impossible for most states to accomplish right now. Achieve intends to return to this issue in the future and hopes to find examples of states taking this important policy step.

Challenges

For states to implement effective accountability systems that hold schools accountable for preparing all students for college and work, they will need better assessments and more sophisticated data systems. These will take time to develop. But states should not wait for them to be in place before addressing the problems in high schools and providing incentives for schools to improve.

First Things First: Reduce the Dropout Rate

Regardless of what formula a state currently uses to measure graduation rates, every state knows which high

schools have the largest numbers of dropouts. Those schools need immediate attention. One study estimates that half of the nation's dropouts come from just 15 percent of America's high schools.[15] States should target supports and interventions in these schools.

States also need to create incentives for schools and districts to reduce the dropout rate by factoring it more significantly into their high school accountability formulas. *Louisiana's* Accountability Commission, for example, has planned an accountability system that encourages schools to focus on dropout prevention and recovery and to produce graduates who are college and career ready. Trying to correct the fact that schools often score higher on test-driven accountability ratings when they push low-performing students out, Louisiana will hold schools accountable for dropout rates and student achievement on the state assessments. Each student outcome — from dropping out of high school to graduating with academic or career/technical endorsement — will be worth a certain amount of points on the "graduation index" that goes into a school's accountability rating. When students drop out, schools will lose points. The system also will encourage schools to continue working with students who fail to graduate within four years. If a student upgrades his or her "outcome" after four years, the school's accountability rating will reflect that increase in a student's status.

Provide Incentives for College and Work Readiness

All students should complete a college- and work-ready curriculum. States that have not yet raised their diploma requirements to the college- and work-ready level must find other ways to encourage both students and schools to aim higher.

One strategy is to factor the percentage of graduates who complete a college- and work-ready curriculum into the high school accountability formula and reward schools that increase those numbers. Only seven states do this today. States also can provide incentives for school districts to raise their local graduation requirements in the absence of a state college- and work-ready requirement.

It also is important to provide students with incentives to aim higher. State postsecondary systems have an important role to play here. In *Indiana*, the state four-year institutions require students to complete the Core 40 (Indiana's version of the college- and work-ready curriculum) to be admitted. Last year, the federal government began providing additional money — the Academic Competitiveness Grants — to low-income students who are eligible for federal Pell grants and take a college-preparatory curriculum in high school. States that have defined a college- and work-ready curriculum should use it to determine eligibility for these grants. Over time, this will both encourage low-income students to take a more rigorous curriculum and reward them financially for doing so.

Conclusion

The world that today's high school students will encounter is vastly different from the one their parents faced. The economy has changed, along with the skills young people need to be successful. Yet as demands in postsecondary institutions and the workplace have grown, the expectations for high school graduates have not kept pace. The result is that the American high school diploma has lost its currency.

At the second anniversary of the 2005 National Education Summit on High Schools, it is encouraging that states are taking action to close the expectations gap and restore value to the high school diploma. During the past two years, states have made substantial progress in some areas, but overall, much work remains.

Momentum is strongest in standards and data systems. Most states have recognized that those areas need to be strengthened first because they create the foundation for the rest of the policies. A growing number of states also have raised graduation requirements for all students, including some that have had to work through a complex set of local control issues. Less progress has been made in putting rigorous high school assessments in place and developing systems in which high schools are accountable for preparing students for college and work.

Given the complexity of this policy agenda and the multiyear effort it will take to implement fully, state leaders must maintain a sense of urgency. If states are to succeed, this is what it will take:

Gubernatorial Leadership

For the past five years, No Child Left Behind has had an impact on standards and accountability reforms in elementary and middle schools. At the high school level, governors have claimed the leadership mantle. The states that have made the most progress almost always have had the governor leading the charge. If states are going to continue to make progress, governors must continue to make this a top policy priority. Not only do they need to push for the right legislation, but they also need to use the bully pulpit to educate parents, educators and the public on the urgent need for higher standards. Raising standards is always met with some degree of apprehension and cynicism. Governors and other state leaders have a responsibility to bring key stakeholders into the conversation and enlist their support. Business leaders — longtime champions for standards-based reform — are critical allies. They have a unique ability to help students, parents, educators and the public understand the demands of the global economy.

The Ability To Move on Multiple Fronts

Developing and implementing good policies takes time. Traditionally, states have taken them on one by one, starting with standards and then moving to assessments, curriculum and, finally, accountability. As sensible as this progression may be, states will need to find ways to move multiple pieces of the policy agenda simultaneously if they are going to respond to the growing pressures of the wider world. For example, states in the process of aligning high school standards with college and workplace demands or tackling the implementation of new graduation course requirements should be working on parallel tracks to put new high school assessments in place and to factor college- and work-ready expectations into their high school accountability systems.

Addressing Challenges

To implement the new expectations states are setting for high school students successfully, states must take greater responsibility for providing teacher and student supports. It is critical for states to ensure that teachers

are qualified to teach more rigorous courses and for states to provide the supports teachers and students need to be successful. For students to be successful in a college- and work-ready curriculum, they need to enter high school well prepared and be supported throughout. Most states do not have strong track records in these areas; they typically focus on standards, testing and accountability and leave the rest to local districts. This must change. States need to take on a new role and create new types of partnerships with local districts to meet capacity and student support challenges.

Cross-State Partnerships

Whether they are improving standards, raising graduation requirements or working on other challenges, states have discovered that the issues they face are remarkably similar. Although local sensibilities and unique political challenges may lead states to pursue their own timelines and solutions, learning from other states that have overcome tough obstacles is often an important starting point. No one should have to re-create the wheel. States have much to learn from each other, and increased opportunities for networking and more formal partnerships — such as the ADP Algebra II exam initiative — will quicken the pace of reform and lead to more consistent policies and expectations nationwide.

APPENDIX: Key Questions Asked in Achieve's Survey

Achieve's 2007 50-state survey of high school policies is an updated version of the previous year's survey, with a continued focus on aligned standards, graduation requirements, assessments, and data and accountability systems. The questions from this year's survey are paraphrased below.

Section I — High School Academic Standards

- Has your state gone through a formal process to align high school academic standards in mathematics and English with the skills necessary for success in both credit-bearing college courses and entry-level, well-paying jobs?
- Describe or document the role played by your state higher education institutions and business community in the creation of your current high school academic standards.

Section II — Course-Taking Requirements

- Has your state in the past year created a requirement that all students complete a college- and work-ready curriculum as defined by the American Diploma Project (ADP)? Has your state otherwise raised or modified its graduation requirements in the past year?
- Please indicate which of the following policies your state has in place — or plans to implement — to ensure that district course offerings are consistent and equally rigorous: model curricula for required courses, state academic standards that articulate content of required courses, end-of-course exams for required courses in the core subjects.
- Please indicate which support and incentive policies your state has in place — or plans to implement — to help all students complete a college- and work-ready curriculum.

Section III — High School Assessments

- Does your state administer assessments capable of measuring college and work readiness to all high school students, and if so, are the results of that test used by state higher education institutions?
- Is your state developing or planning to develop any new high school tests capable of measuring college and work readiness that will serve higher education purposes?

Section IV — P–16 Data Systems

- Does your state have a single P–16 longitudinal data system that tracks students from kindergarten through college graduation?
- Is your state able to match student records from a K–12 longitudinal data system with student records in the higher education data system(s)?

Section V — Reporting and Accountability Systems

- Does your state hold high schools accountable for improving their graduation rates using the NGA Graduation Rate Compact formula?
- Does your state accountability system incorporate indicators that reveal how high schools improve the college and work readiness of their students?
  - The percentage of graduates who earn a "college- and work-ready" diploma or complete a "college- and work-ready" set of course requirements
  - The percentage of high school graduates enrolling in a postsecondary institution within some window of time after high school graduation
  - The percentage of high school graduates who enroll in remedial coursework in either English or mathematics at state postsecondary institutions

Endnotes

1. Greene, Jay P. and Marcus A. Winters. "Public High School Graduation and College Readiness Rates: 1991–2002." *Education Working Paper, No. 8*. Center for Civic Innovation at the Manhattan Institute, 2005.

2. Parsad, Basmat and Laurie Lewis. *Remedial Education at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions in Fall 2000*. NCES 2004-010. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003.

3. Carnevale, Anthony P. and Donna M. Desrochers. *Standards for What? The Economic Roots of K–16 Reform*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service, 2003.

4. All 50 states responded to this year's survey. Achieve followed up with states when necessary to clarify their responses or to get additional information. Achieve also conducted research to supplement state responses as needed. In the end, Achieve made the decision to modify some state responses to make the data comparable.

5. ADP research found that there is a common core of knowledge and skills, particularly in English and mathematics, that students must master to be prepared for post-secondary education or careers. In mathematics, these benchmarks represent content found in a rigorous four-year course sequence that includes courses such as Algebra I and II and Geometry, as well as considerable data analysis and statistics. The English benchmarks demand strong oral and written communication skills and considerable research and analysis. Logic and reasoning skills also are a critical element of the benchmarks.

6. Jerald, Craig D. *Identifying Potential Dropouts: Key Lessons for Building an Early Warning Data System*. White paper prepared for Achieve, Inc., 2006.

7. Peske, Heather G. and Kati Haycock. *Teaching Inequality: How Poor and Minority Students Are Shortchanged on Teacher Quality*. The Education Trust, 2006.

8. Students who are not ready for credit-bearing coursework at the four-year CUNY institutions are transferred to the system's two-year institutions for remediation.

9. There is pending legislation in Texas that would replace the TAKS with a series of end-of-course tests. At the time of this report's publication, that legislation had not been voted on.

10. Achieve, Inc. *Aligned Expectations? A Closer Look at College Admissions and Placement Tests*. 2007.

11. For more information about the Data Quality Campaign and what progress states are making in developing longitudinal data systems, visit www.DataQualityCampaign.org. For more information about the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, visit www.nchems.org.

12. Data Quality Campaign. *Maximizing the Power of Education Data While Ensuring Compliance with Federal Student Privacy Laws: A Guide for State Policymakers*. March 2007.

13. Jerald, 2006.

14. NGA Graduation Rate Compact formula = [on-time graduates in year X] ÷ [(first-time entering 9th graders in year X - 4) + (transfers in) - (transfers out)].

15. Balfanz, Robert and Nettie Legters. *Locating the Dropout Crisis: Which High Schools Produce the Nation's Dropouts? Where Are They Located? Who Attends Them?* Report No. 70. The Johns Hopkins University, September 2004.

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