

2008

Closing the Expectations Gap

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



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 and training, careers, 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, 32 states have 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

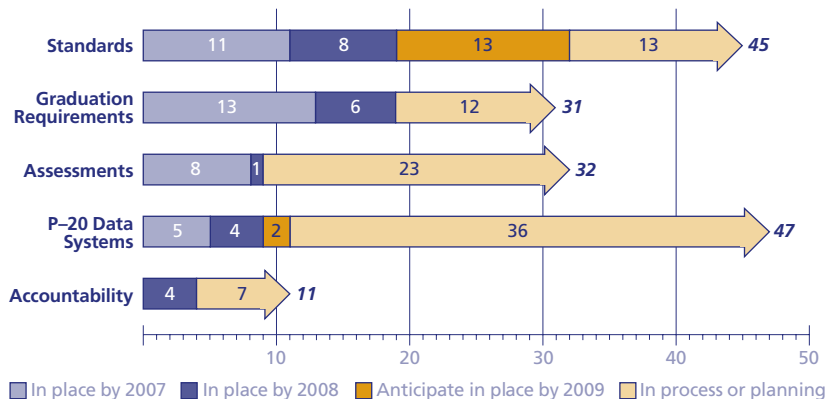
In 2004, Achieve released a series of reports revealing a sizeable gap between the standards students are required to meet to earn a high school diploma and the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in their college and career pursuits after high school. Achieve called it the “expectations gap” and issued a challenge to national and state leaders to take action to close that gap.

In 2005, Achieve sponsored the National Education Summit on High Schools in partnership with the National Governors Association. Forty-five governors attended the Summit as did corporate CEOs and education leaders from both K–12 and higher education. At the Summit, participants widely acknowledged that if states did not dramatically raise expectations and achievement in their high schools, America’s competitive position in the global economy could be at risk.

Leaders at the Summit committed to a multipronged 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. The Summit also marked the launch of Achieve’s American Diploma Project (ADP) Network, which today includes 32 states educating nearly three-quarters of the nation’s schoolchildren.

Every year since the Summit, Achieve has 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 careers. The results have been promising but remind us of how much further we still need to go. During the past three years, a majority of states have made closing the expectations gap a priority, although some have moved more aggressively than others. States have made the most progress aligning academic standards and graduation requirements with college- and career-ready expectations. They have made less progress on assessments, data and accountability systems.

States Continue To Make Progress on Policies To Ensure That High School Students Graduate College and Career Ready



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2008

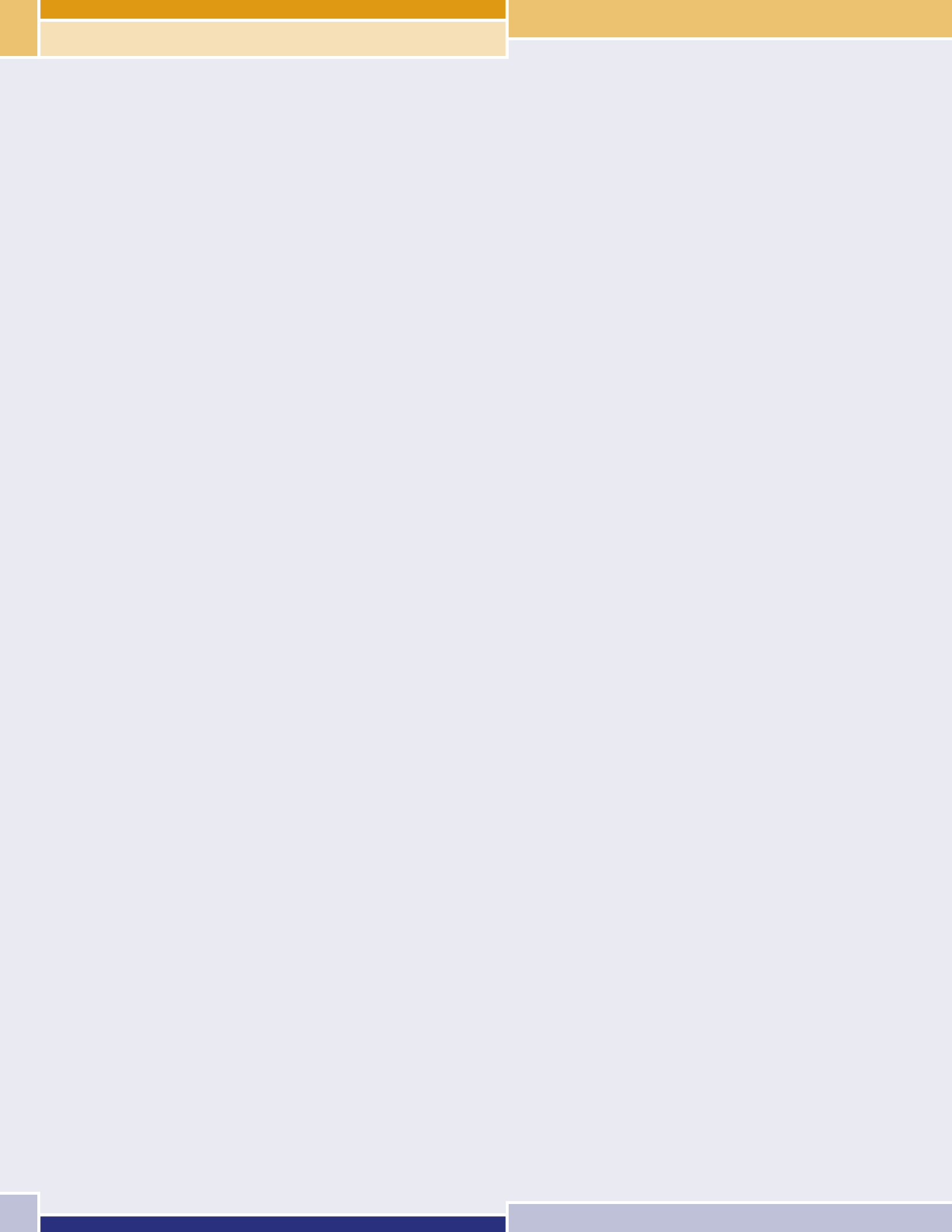
Highlights from This Year’s Survey

- **STANDARDS** — **Nineteen states** report that their high school standards are aligned with postsecondary expectations, **eight** more than a year ago. **Twenty-six additional states** report that they are in the process of aligning their standards or plan to do so.
- **GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS** — **Eighteen states** and the **District of Columbia** require all students to complete a college- and career-ready curriculum to earn a diploma, **six** more than Achieve reported a year ago. **Twelve other states** report plans to adopt similar requirements.
- **ASSESSMENTS** — **Nine states** administer college readiness tests to all high school students as part of their statewide assessment systems, **one** more than last year. **Twenty-three other states** report plans to do so in the future.
- **P-20 DATA SYSTEMS** — **Nine states** report that they have P-20 longitudinal data systems that match K-12 data with postsecondary data to track the progress of individual students from kindergarten through college graduation. This number includes **four new states** that report they began matching data in the past year. **Thirty-eight other states** are developing P-20 data systems.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY** — **Four states** factor both a cohort graduation rate and the earning of a college- and career-ready diploma into their systems for evaluating high schools and holding them accountable for improvement. **Seven other states** plan to move in this direction in the future. In this report, Achieve identifies other important college- and career-ready indicators that states also must factor into their accountability systems.

Overview of Key Survey Results for Each State

- In place by 2008
- Anticipate in place by 2009
- In process or planning
- ADP Network state

State	Align high school standards with college and workplace expectations	Align high school graduation requirements with college and workplace expectations	Administer college readiness test to all high school students	Develop a P-20 longitudinal data system	Hold high schools accountable for graduating students college and career ready	Number of policies in place		
						2006	2007	2008
AL		○		○		□□□□	□□□□	□□□□
AK				○		□□□□	□□□□	□□□□
AZ	●	●	○	○		□□□□	□□□□	■□□□
AR	●	●	○	●		■□□□	■□□□	■□□□
CA	●		●	○		■□□□	■□□□	■□□□
CO	●		●	○		■□□□	■□□□	■□□□
CT	○	○	○	○		□□□□	□□□□	□□□□
DE	●	●		●		□□□□	■□□□	■□□□
DC	○	●		○	○	n/a	n/a	■□□□
FL	●		○	●		■□□□	■□□□	■□□□
GA	●	●	○	●	○	□□□□	□□□□	■□□□
HI	○	○	○	○		□□□□	□□□□	□□□□
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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				●		□□□□	□□□□	■□□□
Totals	● 19 ●/○ 26	● 19 ●/○ 12	● 9 ●/○ 23	● 9 ●/○ 38	● 4 ●/○ 7			



Introduction

In the four years since the release of the American Diploma Project (ADP) report — *Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma That Counts* — concerns about the gap between the expectations for high school graduation and the expectations of postsecondary institutions and employers have continued to grow.¹

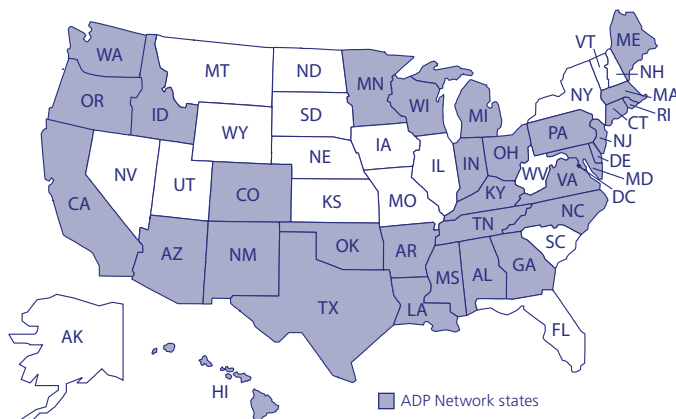
Awareness of this expectations gap has become part of the national dialogue about our schools and the preparation of students for life after high school. Widely acknowledged are persistently troubling high school dropout rates and college remediation rates — especially among disadvantaged minorities — and the growing desperation of employers who cannot find qualified applicants for high-skilled, well-paying jobs. Mindful of the long-term implications of these problems for our economy and our children, national and state leaders, as well as the general public, share a sense of urgency and are committed to closing the expectations gap.²

Closing the Expectations Gap

In 2005, Achieve sponsored the National Education Summit on High Schools in partnership with the National Governors Association. Forty-five governors attended the Summit along with corporate CEOs and education leaders from both K–12 and higher education. The Summit marked the launch of Achieve’s ADP Network, which today includes 32 states educating three-quarters of the nation’s schoolchildren. Leaders in these states have committed to a four-part policy agenda designed to close the expectations gap that is leaving so many young people unprepared for their futures:

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

ADP Network States



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2008

Achieve’s Third Annual Survey of State Policies

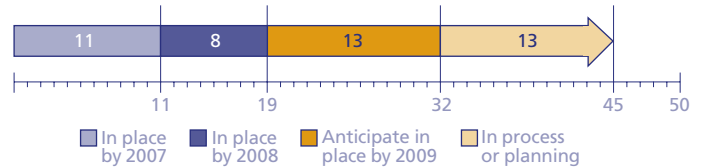
To monitor state progress in closing the expectations gap, Achieve conducts an annual survey of all 50 states — and this year for the first time, the District of Columbia — on the key policies that form the basis for the ADP Network. The survey continues to evolve each year to better reflect where states are in the development and implementation of the ADP-recommended policies. This year’s survey, more so than previous ones, shifted the emphasis of the questions asked from whether states have adopted policies to how states know their policies are aligned, where states are in the policy adoption process and when the new policies will likely be adopted. Also, the survey asked states about the challenges they face and the steps they are taking to ensure that their policies are having the intended impact on the preparation of students for success after graduation.

Once again, K–12 education chiefs from all 50 states and the District of Columbia responded to the survey.³ As time allowed, Achieve worked with the states during telephone discussions to review their submitted responses to the survey and extended states the opportunity to confirm their results as they would appear in this report. Nearly every state participated in the survey review discussions and confirmation process. See the appendix on page 20 for more details about this year’s survey.

Align High School Standards with Real-World Expectations

EVERY STATE HAS ACADEMIC STANDARDS that articulate the core knowledge and skills 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. Until recently, however, the standards for K–12 education were not well aligned with the demands of postsecondary education and careers.

States Have Made Significant Progress Aligning K–12 Standards with College and Career Expectations



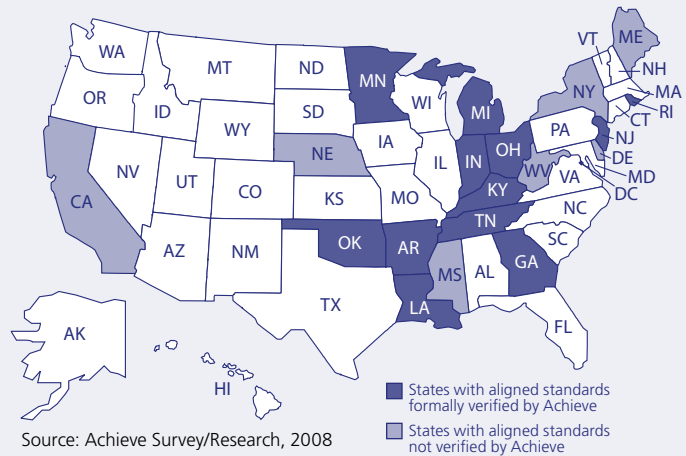
Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2008

States with Aligned High School Standards

19 States Have Aligned Standards

Since 2004, a growing number of states have taken concrete steps to anchor their K–12 standards in the skills necessary for success after graduation. The process has been most effective when it has been accomplished through formal collaboration between the K–12 and postsecondary education systems, with the business community playing a strong supportive role.

This year, **eight new states** report having adopted academic standards for high school students that are aligned with the expectations of colleges and industry, bringing the number of states with aligned high school standards to 19.



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2008

Achieve has formally reviewed the new high school mathematics and English language arts standards in 12 of the 19 states and found them to be well aligned with the college- and career-ready expectations in the ADP benchmarks. Achieve has not formally reviewed the standards in the remaining seven states.

New States			
Georgia	Minnesota*	New Jersey	Oklahoma
Maine	Mississippi	Ohio	Tennessee

*Mathematics standards adopted in 2007; English language arts in 2010

Verifying Standards Alignment

In 2004, Achieve worked with representatives from the postsecondary and business communities to develop the ADP benchmarks. The ADP benchmarks are an agreed-on common core of knowledge and skills all students should gain in high school to ensure that they are prepared to enter and succeed in credit-bearing college courses or to gain entry-level positions in high-skill jobs that offer opportunities to advance. Since then, Achieve has worked with 23 states to align their high school academic standards, including 19 states that have participated in Achieve's Alignment Institutes.

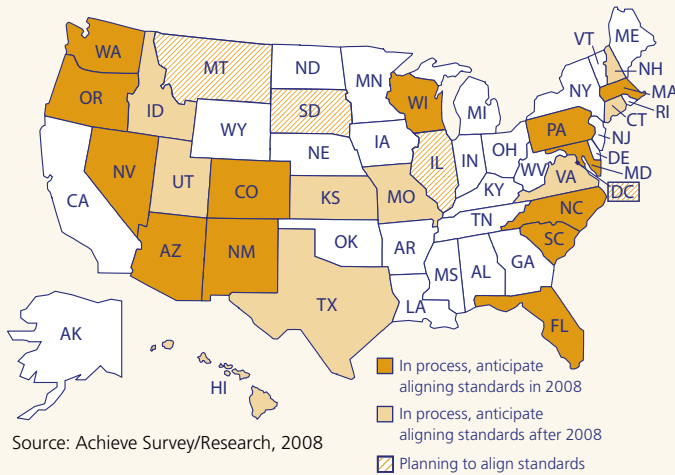
In 2008, Achieve will issue a report exploring the consistency of content and rigor across 15 of these states' standards in English language arts and/or mathematics. Achieve found the state

standards to be well aligned to the ADP college- and career-ready expectations and remarkably consistent from state to state. Specifically:

- *There is a common core of knowledge and skills that is well aligned to college- and career-ready expectations and consistent across the states, particularly states that participated in the Alignment Institutes.*
- *Consistency does not necessitate conformity. States retain individuality in the organization and breadth of their standards while ensuring that their students will be prepared for life after high school.*

States in the Process of Aligning High School Standards

25 States and DC Are in the Process of Aligning Standards



Beyond the 19 states that report having adopted college- and career-ready standards, **25 additional states** and the **District of Columbia** report that they are in the process of aligning their high school standards with college- and career-ready expectations. Each state is working through its own standards development or revision process and on its own timeline. From survey results and discussions with the states, Achieve is able to distinguish among states that are at different points in the standards alignment and revision process.

- **Thirteen states** anticipate adoption of aligned college- and career-ready standards by their boards of education or other authorities in 2008.
- **Nine states** report that they are working to align their high school standards with college- and career-ready standards and anticipate adoption after 2008.
- **Three states** and the **District of Columbia** report that they intend to begin the standards alignment process in the future but have not taken concrete steps to begin the process.

13 States Anticipate Adopting Aligned Standards in 2008

State	Status	Anticipated adoption
Colorado	● Process	2008
Florida	● Process	2008*
Maryland	● Process	2008
Massachusetts	● Process	2008
Nevada	● Process	2008*
New Mexico	● Process	2008
Pennsylvania	● Process	2008
South Carolina	● Process	2008*
Wisconsin	● Process	2008
Washington	● Process	2008 [†]
North Carolina	● Process	2008 [†] /2009 [‡]
Arizona	● Process	2008 [†] /2010 [‡]
Oregon	● Process	2008 [†] /2010 [‡]
Connecticut	● Process	2009
Idaho	● Process	2009
Texas	● Process	2009 [‡] /2010 [‡]
Virginia	● Process	2009 [†] /2010 [‡]
Kansas	● Process	2010
Hawaii	● Process	2010 at earliest
New Hampshire	● Process	2013
Missouri	● Process	TBD
Utah	● Process	TBD
Montana	▨ Plan	2010
South Dakota	▨ Plan	2011 [†] /2014 [‡]
District of Columbia	▨ Plan	TBD
Illinois	▨ Plan	TBD

*These states adopted new standards in 2007 and will verify their alignment in 2008.

[†]Mathematics

[‡]English language arts

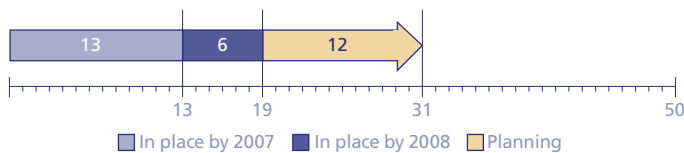
Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2008

Align High School Graduation Requirements with College and Career Expectations

CLEAR AND COMPELLING EVIDENCE shows that the level of the courses students take in high school is one of the best predictors of their success in college and the workplace. This is particularly true in mathematics: Data show a strong correlation between taking higher-level mathematics courses in high school and achieving success in college and employment in high-growth, high-performance jobs. Rigorous course-taking matters for all students, but it is particularly important for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Taking a challenging high school curriculum — including but not limited to content typically taught in Algebra II — cuts in half the gap in college completion rates between white students and black and Latino students.⁴

The *number* of courses students are required to take has been on the rise for the past quarter century, but until recently, few states specified *which* courses students are required to take and set their graduation expectations at the appropriate level to ensure that graduates are prepared for success in college and the workplace. Achieve’s research suggests that for high school graduates to be prepared for success in postsecondary settings, 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 career-ready standards.

States Continue To Implement College- and Career-Ready Graduation Requirements



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2008

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

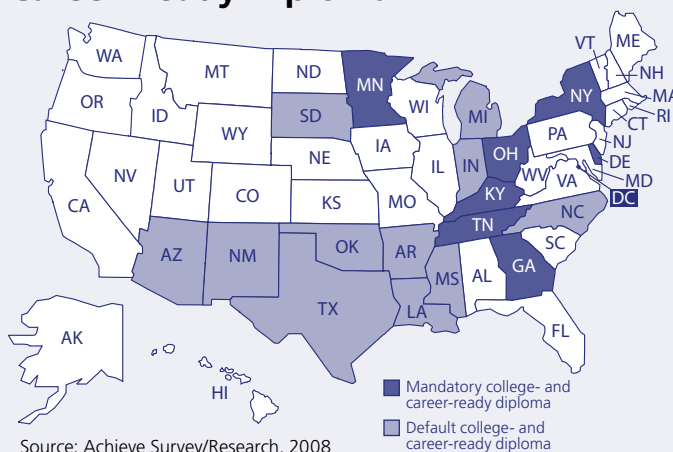
18 States and DC Require a College- and Career-Ready Diploma

At the time of the Summit three years ago, only *Texas* and *Arkansas* had set their requirements at a level that would ensure that all graduates were prepared for success in college and the workplace. Over the past year, **five states** and the **District of Columbia** report having elevated their high school diploma requirements to the ADP-recommended college- and career-ready level, bringing the number of states requiring all students to complete a college- and career-ready course of study to **18** plus the **District**.⁵

New States		
Arizona	Georgia	North Carolina
District of Columbia	Louisiana	Tennessee

States raising their course requirements to the level recommended by ADP have taken one of two approaches:

- **Seven states** and the **District of Columbia** have set mandatory course requirements without opt-out provisions.



- **Eleven states** require students to automatically enroll in the “default” college- and career-ready curriculum but allow them to opt out of the requirements if their parents sign a waiver.

Both approaches are designed to do away with the type of tracking that has long existed in American high schools and continues to leave many students unprepared for the world they enter after high school.

Default and Mandatory Graduation Requirements

Students entering 9th grade in the 11 states with a default diploma will be automatically enrolled in the state's rigorous college- and career-ready course of study but may choose to opt into a less rigorous program if their parents sign a waiver. There are two ways states may structure their opt-out provisions: About half of the states provide a "minimum" diploma sequence that is required for students who opt out. For example, students in Arkansas are enrolled automatically into the Smart Core curriculum but may opt into the less rigorous Common Core curriculum. Students who opt out receive a different diploma and a transcript that indicates they completed a less rigorous curriculum. The other trend among states with default diplomas is to allow students, with parental and school consent, to opt out of specific courses, most often Algebra II and other advanced math courses. Students who do this receive the same diplomas as those who complete the more rigorous courses, but their transcripts reflect the change. Although the opt-out provision in default diploma states is designed to preserve an element of choice for parents and students and to relieve pressure on schools and students by allowing some to take a less challenging curriculum, it also has the potential of opening the door to continued tracking. States with opt-out provisions will need to carefully monitor how many and which students move into the less rigorous curricular track and ensure that the provision is not abused.

Time before Graduation Requirements Take Effect

Most states that have adopted new college- and career-ready graduation requirements allow several years before the first cohort of students is expected to complete the new requirements to earn a diploma.

First Class of Students To Graduate under the New Requirements

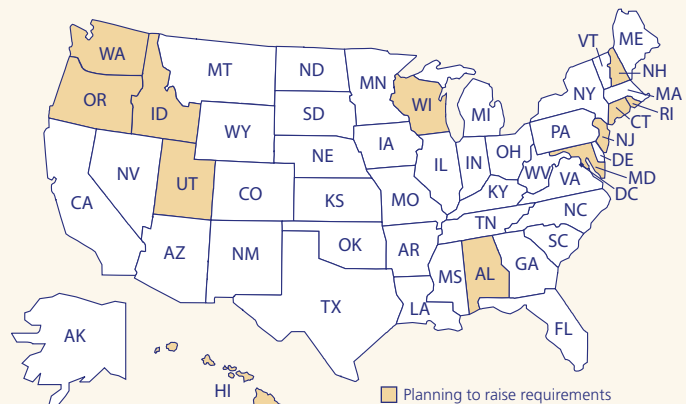
St	Opt-out prov	1st grad class	St	Opt-out prov	1st grad class	St	Opt-out prov	1st grad class
TX	✓	2008/2011*	DC		2011	AZ	✓	2013
AR	✓	2010	IN	✓	2011	NM	✓	2013
NY		2010	MI	✓	2011	NC	✓	2013
OK	✓	2010	MS	✓	2011	TN		2013
SD	✓	2010	GA		2012	OH		2014
DE		2011	KY		2012	MN		2015
			LA	✓	2012			

*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 that will first affect the class of 2011.

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

12 States Plan To Raise Graduation Requirements to the College- and Career-Ready Level

Beyond the five states and the District of Columbia that adopted new college- and career-ready diploma requirements, **12 additional states** report that they plan to raise their graduation requirements to the ADP-recommended level. Achieve has not been able to determine when these states anticipate adopting their new diploma requirements.



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2008

Offering Credit by Proficiency

An inherent challenge in using course requirements as the key lever in a graduation policy is that course completion often is measured only by seat time, without a method for students to demonstrate that they have learned the core content and acquired the necessary skills from those courses. To create a more performance-based system, some states are designing processes that stress the demonstration of skills and knowledge more than the accumulation of Carnegie units. States are taking a number of approaches when developing these policies. Some states are providing opportunities for targeted populations of students, while a handful of others are pursuing more comprehensive credit-by-proficiency policies.

In Indiana, students can earn credit toward the Core 40 diploma by receiving a score that demonstrates proficiency on a standardized assessment of academic or subject-area competency that is accepted by accredited postsecondary institutions; receiving a high proficiency score on an end-of-course assessment without taking the course; successfully completing a similar course at an eligible institution under the postsecondary enrollment program; or receiving a score of three, four or five on an Advanced Placement examination for a course subject area. These opportunities are most useful for high school students pursuing advanced courses. On the other hand, a number of states permit students who have failed a traditional Carnegie unit-based course to earn credit by demonstrating proficiency to ensure that they stay on track to graduate.

In Ohio, offering credit by proficiency is an important policy option to allow students the opportunity to demonstrate skills in academic areas, even when those skills are taught in a contextualized course. The Ohio Core legislation requires the State Board of Education to work with the Board of Regents and Partnership for Continued Learning to adopt a statewide plan for students to earn high school credit based on demonstration of subject-area competency, in lieu of or in addition to completing hours of classroom instruction.

To earn a high school diploma in Rhode Island, all students must demonstrate proficiency in applied learning skills — critical thinking, problem solving, research, communication, decisionmaking, interpreting information, analytic reasoning, and personal or social responsibility — in all six core content areas. Students can demonstrate applied learning through portfolios, exhibition or capstone projects or performances, end-of-course assessments, or the Certificate of Initial Mastery.

Often, proficiency assessments and scoring criteria are determined locally. States need to invest time and resources to ensure rigor, reliability and validity in the awarding of credit across schools within the state.

Lessons Learned about Aligning Requirements



In a new policy brief, *Aligning High School Graduation Requirements with the Real World: A Road Map for States*, Achieve presents lessons learned from states that have completed the process of raising graduation course requirements to the ADP-recommended level. These states faced a similar set of challenges as they sought to implement more demanding requirements, and the strategies they employed throughout the process are instructive for other states considering revisiting their graduation requirements.

The policy brief explores issues such as the following:

- How many credits and which courses in each subject should be required;
- How to decide between default or mandatory requirements;
- How to retain the arts, foreign languages and electives;
- How to encourage multiple pathways in the high school curriculum;
- Requirements based on Carnegie units or demonstrations of proficiency;
- Capacity-building strategies; and
- The importance of communications and coalition building.

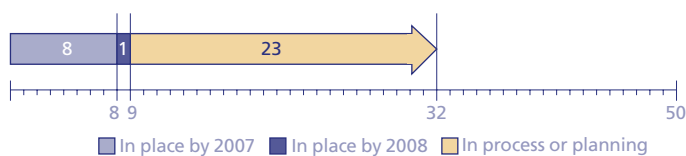
To read the full policy brief, please visit Achieve's Web site, www.achieve.org/node/980.

Align High School and Postsecondary Assessments

AS STATES ALIGN their high school standards and graduation requirements with the demands of college and the workplace, they also must build assessments rigorous enough to measure college and career 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 students will need to be successful in college, state assessments will fall short of measuring readiness for postsecondary pursuits.⁶

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, they can help schools determine whether students are on a path to be ready for their pursuits after high school.

Few States Have Aligned Assessments, but More Plan To Implement Them



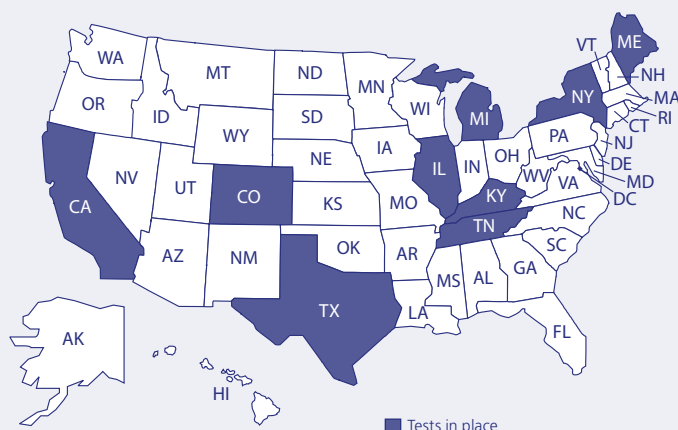
Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2008

States with College- and Career-Ready Tests

9 States Have College- and Career-Ready Tests

Progress on state high school assessments continues to trail behind that of standards and graduation requirements. *Tennessee* is the only new state this year to require all high school students to take such a test, bringing the total to **nine states**.

- **Three of the nine states** measure the college and career readiness of students using state-developed high school assessments. *New York* and *Texas* have established a readiness score that is higher than the score required for graduation on the Regents End-of-Course Exams and the 11th grade Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills,⁷ respectively. *California* includes voluntary items from the California State University (CSU) System on the 11th grade standards-based tests. Students who score high enough on these tests and continue to take challenging courses their senior year of high school have their placement exam waived when they enter CSU.
- The remaining **six states** require all students to take a national college admissions exam. *Colorado*, *Illinois*, *Kentucky*, *Michigan* and now *Tennessee* incorporate the ACT national college admissions test into their state assessment systems, and *Maine* incorporates the SAT into its assessment system. For Illinois and Michigan, the ACT serves as only one component of the state high school



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2008

assessment — others include WorkKeys and state-developed test components designed to more fully assess state standards. Maine uses an augmented version of the SAT that more closely aligns with its standards.

Although it remains to be seen which strategies hold the most promise, whichever path states pursue, the next-generation assessments must adequately measure college and career readiness, and they must be well aligned with state high school standards.

States Developing or Planning College- and Career-Ready Tests

23 States Are Developing or Planning College- and Career-Ready Tests

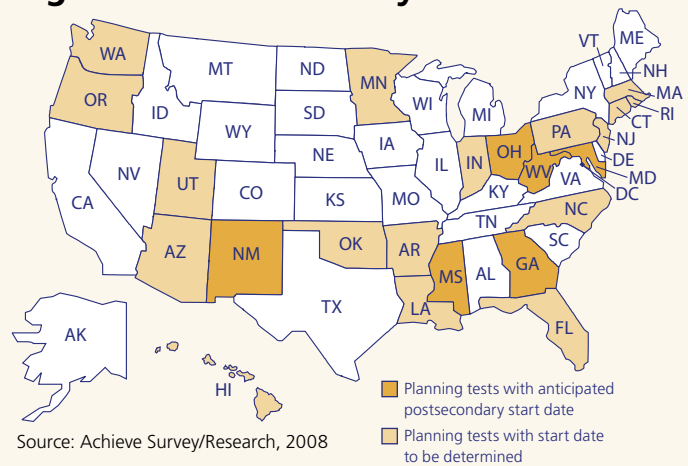
Although few states have college- and career-ready assessments in place today, a growing number are in the process of developing or planning to develop such assessments as part of their high school testing and accountability systems.

Twenty-three states report plans to administer new or upgraded high school assessments that have potential to be used by postsecondary institutions to determine the readiness of incoming students. Of the 23 states moving forward with test development,

- **Eight** will begin administering the assessment in 2008.
- **Five** plan to administer the assessment in 2009 or 2010.

Of the 23 states with plans for new tests, **six states** report an anticipated date by when they expect to have a policy in place for postsecondary institutions to make placement decisions using the new high school assessment.

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. **Seventeen states** use or plan to use such tests in high school with the assessments in the more advanced courses (e.g., Algebra II and English III) serving as the college-ready measure. The second most popular strategy is for states to incorporate the ACT or SAT into their assessment systems;



six states are pursuing this path. The remaining states plan on modifying their existing high school tests to make them better measures of postsecondary readiness.

Whichever path states pursue, the assessments must meet two important goals: They must measure college and career 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.

Algebra II Consortium

In fall 2005, nine ADP Network states — Arkansas, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island — came together to develop specifications for a common end-of-course Algebra II exam. Five additional states — Arizona, Hawaii, Minnesota, North Carolina and Washington — have since joined the partnership, bringing the total number of participating states to 14.

This multistate assessment has three overarching goals: to improve Algebra II curriculum and instruction in high schools; to serve as an indicator of readiness for first-year college credit-bearing courses; and to provide a common and consistent measure of student performance across states over time.

The assessment was field tested in October 2007, and the first live administration will occur in spring 2008 in a number of these states. Moving forward, states are working to determine how and when public institutions of higher education can use the Algebra II end-of-course test for placement purposes, as well as how this exam will fit into their state assessment and accountability systems.

For more information on the consortium and participating in the Algebra II end-of-course exam, please visit www.achieve.org/AlgebraIITestOverview.

State Plans for College- and Career-Ready Tests

States	Identified tests	First scheduled administration of test	Mandatory versus voluntary/some students	Anticipated start date for postsecondary use
California	California Standards Tests with the Early Assessment Program	● In use	Voluntary	● In use
Colorado	ACT	● In use	Mandatory	● In use
Illinois	ACT as part of the Prairie State Achievement Exam	● In use	Mandatory	● In use
Kentucky	ACT	● In use	Mandatory	● In use
	Algebra II End-of-Course	● 2008	TBD	TBD
Maine	SAT augmented with state items	● In use	Mandatory	● In use
Michigan	ACT as part of the Michigan Merit Exam	● In use	Mandatory	● In use
New York	Regents End-of-Course Exams	● In use	Mandatory	● In use
Tennessee	ACT	● 2009	Mandatory	● In use
Texas	Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills	● In use	Mandatory	● In use
Maryland	Algebra II End-of-Course	● 2009	Voluntary	● 2009 (Tentative)
Ohio	Algebra II End-of-Course	● 2008	TBD	● 2010 (Pilot)
Mississippi	TBD	● 2009	TBD	● 2011 (Tentative)
West Virginia	Grade 11 WESTEST 2	● 2009	Mandatory	● 2011
New Mexico	Algebra II End-of-Course	● 2010	TBD	● 2011
Georgia	Georgia High School Graduation Tests	● 2008*/2011 [†]	Mandatory	● 2012
Arkansas	Algebra II End-of-Course	● 2008	All Algebra II students (PLAN)	TBD
Hawaii	Algebra II End-of-Course	● 2008	All Algebra II students (PLAN)	TBD
Indiana	Algebra II End-of-Course	● 2008	TBD	TBD
New Jersey	Algebra II End-of-Course	● 2008	TBD	TBD
Pennsylvania	Algebra II End-of-Course	● 2008	TBD	TBD
Rhode Island	Algebra II End-of-Course	● 2008	TBD	TBD
Massachusetts	Algebra II End-of-Course	● 2009	Voluntary	TBD
Arizona	Algebra II End-of-Course	TBD	TBD	TBD
Connecticut	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Florida	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Louisiana	Algebra II and English IV End-of-Course	TBD	TBD	TBD
Minnesota	Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments — Series III	TBD	Mandatory	TBD
	Algebra II End-of-Course	TBD	TBD	TBD
North Carolina	Algebra II End-of-Course	TBD	TBD	TBD
Oklahoma	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Oregon	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Utah	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Washington	Algebra II End-of-Course	TBD	TBD	TBD

● In place by 2008

● Has anticipated start date

[†]Mathematics

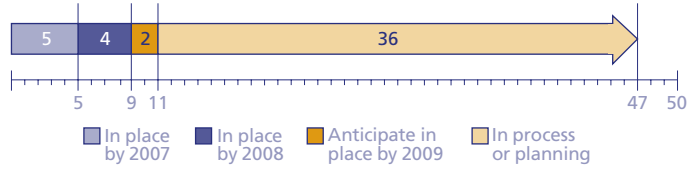
^{*}English language arts

Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2008

IV. Develop P–20 Longitudinal Data Systems

AS STATES WORK to align expectations between the K–12 and postsecondary education systems, they also must strengthen and align the data systems. In most states, while the quality and flow of student-level data from high schools to colleges continues to improve, colleges do not routinely share student-level data with high schools. Once students graduate from high school, no feedback system exists to allow high schools to know how well prepared their graduates truly were and how well they fared in their postsecondary pursuits.

Many States Are Putting Data Systems in Place



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2008

It is critically important for states to develop longitudinal data systems with the capacity to track student progress from high school through postsecondary education — a goal that can be accomplished through a variety of structures. However, states need both the technical capacity and the resources not only to bring such a longitudinal data system online, but also to maintain the system and produce annual reports to policymakers, school districts, postsecondary institutions and high schools so that the appropriate analysis can be performed and data-based decisions can be made. An effective longitudinal data system would enable policymakers and educators to compare high school course-taking, grades and assessment results with placement and performance in first-year college courses, college credit accumulation and persistence, and ultimately degree completion rates and career success.

States with P–20 Longitudinal Data Systems

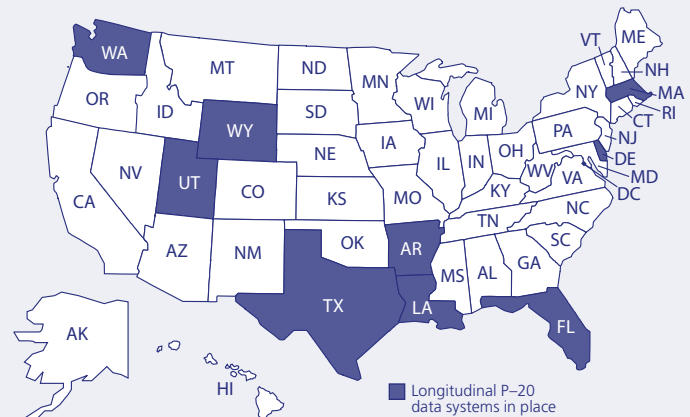
9 States Have P–20 Longitudinal Data Systems

Four new states this year reported to Achieve that they now have an operational P–20 longitudinal data system that allows the annual matching of student-level data from the K–12 system with the postsecondary system. This brings the total to **nine states** with P–20 longitudinal data systems.

New States

Delaware	Utah	Washington	Wyoming
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Progress in this area has been very slow in large part because states have been focused first on getting their K–12 longitudinal data systems in place. The vast majority of states have accomplished this task, and now attention is turning to connecting that information system to the databases that have long existed in higher education.



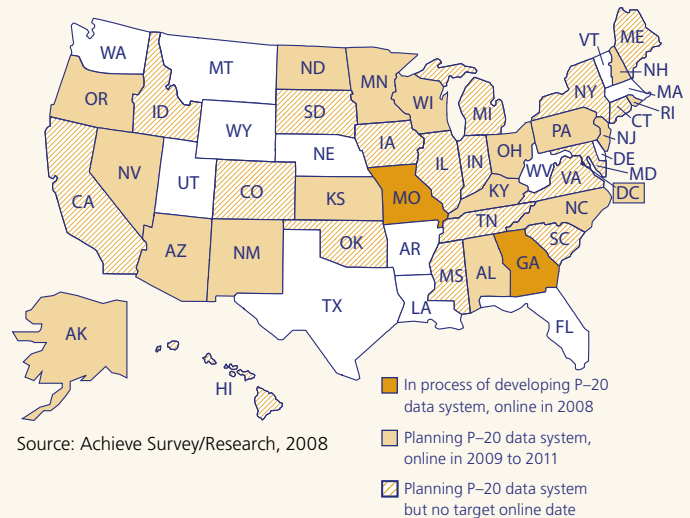
Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2008

States Developing or Planning P–20 Longitudinal Data Systems

37 States and DC Are Developing or Planning P–20 Longitudinal Data Systems

Thirty-seven states and the District of Columbia report that they are developing their P–20 longitudinal data systems, working to overcome either technical capacity or policy obstacles so they can match individual K–12 student-level records with postsecondary records on an annual basis.

- Two states report that their P–20 data systems will come online in 2008.
- Ten states have set a target date of 2009, and another seven states and the District of Columbia are aiming for 2010 or 2011.
- The remaining 18 states working to develop their P–20 longitudinal data systems do not have a target date.



P–20 Data Systems: Technology Not the Main Barrier

As states move forward to develop and connect K–12 and postsecondary longitudinal data systems, the challenges are becoming clearer. Yet, having the necessary technology in place to match records across the systems often is not the main barrier.

Of the states that reported to Achieve that they plan to match student-level records across K–12 and higher education in the future, *13 already have the technical capacity to do this matching.* What's stopping them? In some cases, there are no regulatory or legislative policies in place to allow the matching to occur; in other cases, a decision needs to be made regarding which body has authority over

the data collection and matching; and in many states, there is confusion about what is allowable under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

The Data Quality Campaign, a national coalition of education organizations dedicated to supporting and encouraging policymakers to improve the collection, availability and use of high-quality education data, is making this issue of P–20 alignment a priority in its third year. Visit www.DataQualityCampaign.org for more information about how states have overcome the political and legal challenges associated with putting P–20 longitudinal data systems in place.

V. Develop Accountability and Reporting Systems That Promote College and Career Readiness

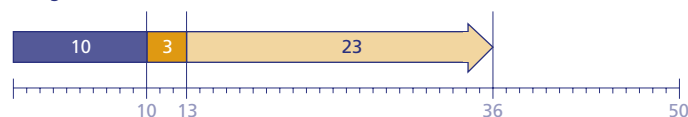
THE MISSION OF HIGH SCHOOLS is to prepare all students for college, careers and citizenship. Unfortunately, preparedness is barely a factor in most high school accountability systems — if it is even measured at all. In most states, accountability models are driven by attendance, graduation rates and performance on high school assessments that often are not adequate measures of college and career readiness. Just as states need to align their standards, graduation requirements and assessments with college- and career-ready expectations, so too do they need to implement the next generation of school accountability.

To meet the goal of all students graduating college and career ready, at a minimum, states need to define what it means to meet this expectation — through their standards, graduation requirements and assessment systems — and develop the capacity to track student and school progress against those expectations. States must report publicly how schools perform on these readiness indicators, and they should begin to revise their accountability models

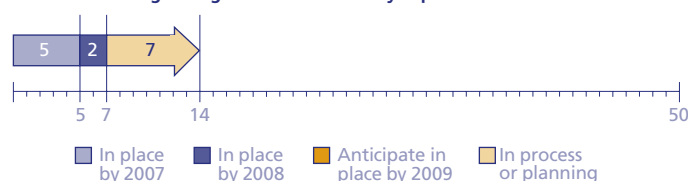
— both incentives and consequences for schools and districts — to give significant weight to these data. In addition, the longitudinal data systems discussed in the previous section will allow states to validate the college- and career-ready indicators by correlating the preparation students receive and their demonstrations of readiness in high school with their actual postsecondary success.

Few States Hold High Schools Accountable for Graduating Students College and Career Ready

Hold High Schools Accountable Using a Cohort Graduation Rate



Hold High Schools Accountable for Students Earning College- and Career-Ready Diploma



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2008

High School Accountability Indicators

A state accountability system should include, among other indicators, an accurate cohort graduation rate; whether students have completed a college- and career-ready curriculum; whether students score at the college- and career-ready level on a high school assessment; and the placement of college-going graduates into credit-bearing, non-remedial courses in English and mathematics.

To date, only a quarter of the states factor one or two of these indicators of college and career readiness into their high school accountability system, but none factor all four. If states are to realize the goal of graduating all students college and career ready, it will be critically important for them to factor these and other indicators of college and career readiness into their accountability systems.

	AZ	AR	FL	GA	LA*	MA	NY*	NC*	OK	SC	TX*	VT	VA	TOTAL
Cohort graduation rate	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		10
College- and career-ready diploma				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	7
College-ready test results														0
College remediation				✓					✓					2

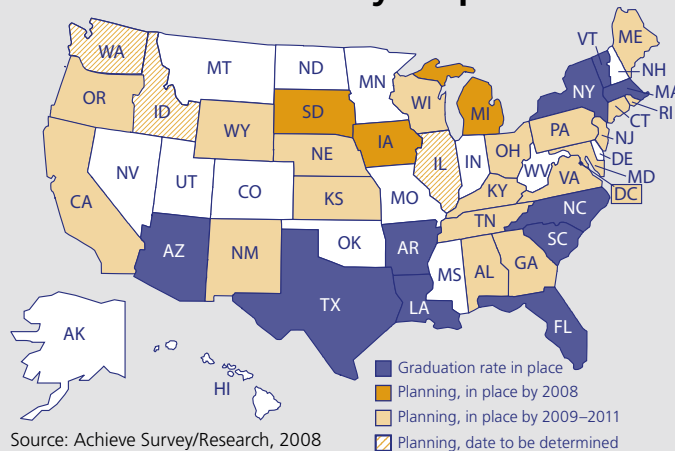
*In the executive summary, these four states are counted as having accountability policies in place because they factor into their state accountability systems both the cohort graduation rate and the percentage of students who graduate with a college- and career-ready diploma. An additional six states — Georgia, Kentucky, Ohio, Rhode Island, Tennessee and Virginia — and the District of Columbia plan to move in this direction.

Holding High Schools Accountable Using 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. Rather than rely on estimated graduation rates, the agreed-on 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.

- **REPORTING:** **Fourteen states** use the four-year cohort rate or a comparable method to report their graduation rate. **Eleven additional states** plan to report this or a similar cohort graduation rate beginning in 2008, and **22 others** plan to report their cohort rate in 2009 or later.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY:** Beyond simply reporting the four-year cohort graduation rate, **10 states** report that they have begun to use this rate or a similar rate for accountability purposes. **Three**

10 States Use Cohort Graduation Rate for Accountability Purposes



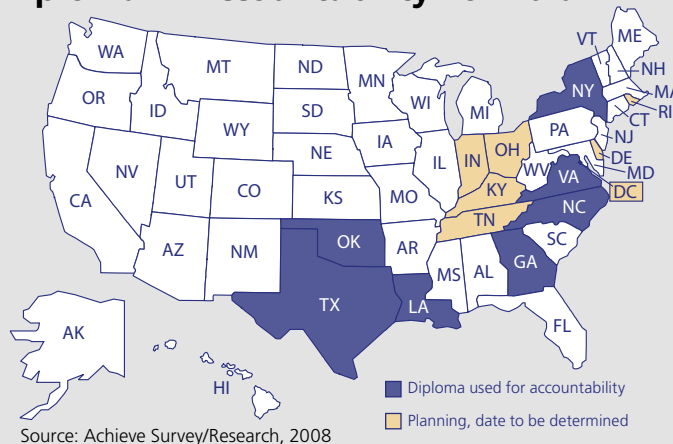
additional states have indicated their intention to begin doing so in 2008. **Twenty-two others** and the **District of Columbia** plan to use this rate for accountability purposes in 2009 or later.

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

As states increase graduation requirements and take other steps to encourage more students to complete a college- and career-ready curriculum, they must begin to factor this goal into their high school accountability systems. States also should publicly report the percentage of graduates in each high school who complete such a curriculum.

- **REPORTING:** **Twelve states** indicated in this year's survey that they report publicly the percentage of high school graduates with a college- and career-ready diploma — or will as soon as their new college- and career-ready diploma is in place. An additional **13 states** indicated their plans to begin reporting this information.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY:** **Seven states**, including two new states this year — *Louisiana* and *Virginia* — reported that they factor the percentage of high school graduates who earned a college- and career-ready diploma into their high school accountability systems. An additional **six states** and the **District of Columbia** indicated

7 States Use College- and Career-Ready Diploma in Accountability Formula



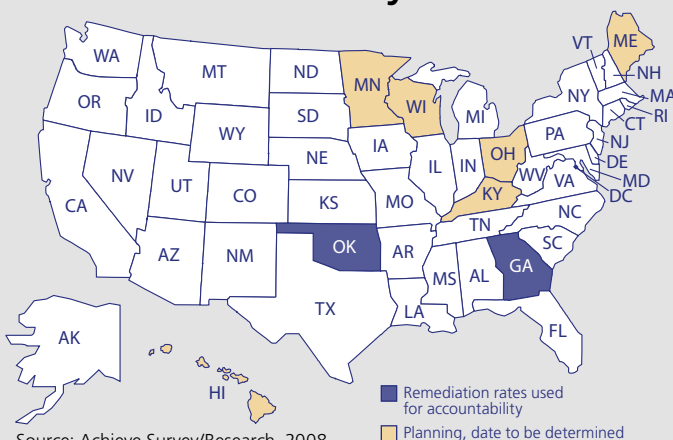
their plans to begin factoring the percentage of college- and career-ready diplomas earned into their accountability systems.

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

A strong accountability system should provide incentives to high schools to increase the percentage of students who are able to place as entering college freshmen 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. Postsecondary remediation does offer a second chance to many students, but too often it cannot make up entirely for inadequate preparation in high school. Approximately 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 degrees or bachelor's degrees.⁸ This unfortunate reality is reflected in overall degree completion rates. Even as more students are entering postsecondary institutions, the nation's college graduation rates have remained flat for years.

- **REPORTING:** Seventeen states indicated in this year's survey that they publicly release the percentage of recent high school graduates who are required to take remedial courses on entering college. An additional **nine states** indicated their plans to begin reporting this important information.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY:** No new states have updated their accountability systems to include college remediation this year. *Georgia*

Only 2 States Use College Remediation Rates in Accountability Formula



and *Oklahoma* remain the only **two states** to do so. An additional **six states** indicated their plans to begin factoring college remediation rates into their accountability systems.

Factoring college remediation into a high school accountability system poses certain reliability challenges that states must address: The state must consider whether the postsecondary institutions have established a common placement standard and how reliable the placement assessment(s) are in assessing that standard. If the placement standard is different across institutions, comparing remediation rates across high schools is more difficult.

Factoring College and Career Readiness Tests into Accountability Systems

To develop a robust accountability system that promotes the college and career readiness of all high school graduates, states must administer assessments capable of measuring whether students have mastered the core knowledge and skills necessary for success in postsecondary institutions and the high-performance workplace. While a small but growing number of states are administering college- and career-ready assessments to all of their high school

students, none factor into the state accountability formula the percentage of students scoring at or above an established statewide college- and career-ready cut score. Postsecondary institutions and employers must work with the state K–12 leaders to establish such a cut score and begin to hold high schools accountable for the readiness of their graduates.

Conclusion

In the three years since the National Education Summit on High Schools, the commitment to align high school expectations with the demands of postsecondary institutions and employers has become a national movement.

Thirty-two states have voluntarily joined the ADP Network and are working to close the expectations gap that has left too many young people unprepared for life after high school. States outside the Network also are taking steps to close the gap.

States have made the greatest progress aligning their K–12 standards and graduation requirements with the demands of colleges and careers. Nineteen states reported to Achieve that they have adopted newly aligned high school standards, and another 13 anticipate adopting college- and career-ready standards this year. Similarly, 18 states and the District of Columbia have adopted college- and career-ready graduation requirements, with 12 others planning to take this important step over the next few years.

Progress on the alignment of high school assessments and K–12 data and accountability systems has been much slower. Only a handful of states have built college-ready assessments into their high school

assessment systems, and even fewer have made college and career readiness a key factor in their high school accountability systems.

States will need to pay more attention to these policy levers if the promise of these reforms is to be realized. Newly adopted standards will be of marginal value without aligned assessments to measure student performance. Similarly, raising graduation requirements for students without holding schools accountable for ensuring that students meet the new standards is both unfair and ineffective. Achieve and The Education Trust will be releasing a report later this year with recommendations for how states can build next-generation assessment and accountability systems to meet these goals.

Achieve remains optimistic that states will continue to make progress on the college and career readiness agenda in the years ahead and that their adoption of these policies increasingly will benefit high school students as they prepare for their futures.

Endnotes

¹ The Education Trust, the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation and the National Alliance of Business partnered with Achieve in the American Diploma Project and the *Ready or Not* report.

² 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; Parsad, Basmat and Laurie Lewis. *Remedial Education at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions in Fall 2000*. NCEES 2004-010. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003; Peter D. Hart Research Associates/Public Opinion Strategies, *Rising to the Challenge: Are High School Graduates Prepared for*

College and Work? A Study of Recent High School Graduates, College Instructors, and Employers, Achieve, Inc., February 2005; and Carnevale, Anthony P. and Donna M. Desrochers. *Standards for What? The Economic Roots of K–16 Reform*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service, 2003.

³ In overview charts in the executive summary and at the beginning of each section of the report, the District of Columbia is included in the number of states.

⁴ Adelman, Clifford. *Answers in the Tool Box: Academic Intensity, Attendance Patterns, and Bachelor's Degree Attainment*, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, June 1999.

⁵ The most notable change in graduation requirements among these states is in the area of mathematics: Each raised the requirement to the Algebra II or equivalent level.

⁶ Achieve, Inc. *Aligned Expectations? A Closer Look at College Admissions and Placement Tests, 2007*; Achieve, Inc. *Do Graduation Tests Measure Up? A Closer Look at State High School Exit Exams, 2004*.

⁷ Texas will replace the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills with a series of end-of-course tests beginning in 2011–12.

⁸ National Center for Education Statistics, *Condition of Education 2004*, Indicator 18.

APPENDIX

Achieve's Third Annual Survey of Policies

As in past years, Achieve's 2008 50-state survey of high school policies focused on aligned standards, graduation requirements, assessments, and data and accountability systems. In addition, the survey contained a number of questions regarding where states that are planning new policies are within the development process and when they anticipate reaching final adoption. 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.

Survey Questions

The questions from this year's survey are paraphrased below.

A. Academic Content Standards

Has your state gone through a formal process to align high school academic standards in mathematics and English language arts with the skills necessary for both entry into credit-bearing college courses and success in entry-level, well-paying jobs?

- Have your state higher education system and state business community formally verified that the high school content standards in mathematics and English language arts reflect the skills necessary for success in credit-bearing, non-remedial college courses and in well-paid, high-skilled careers?
- Have your state high school academic standards undergone an external review to ensure their alignment with college and career readiness expectations?

B. Graduation Requirements

Does your state require all students to complete a college- and career-ready curriculum, as defined by the American Diploma Project?

- Does your state conduct curriculum audits — or have a similar mechanism — to ensure that the content of required courses properly reflects course expectations?
- Does your state permit or require the awarding of course credit based on student proficiency?

C. College- and Career-Ready Assessments

Does your state administer a statewide assessment to all high school students that produces results used by postsecondary institutions to make admissions or placement decisions?

D. P–20 Longitudinal Data Systems

Does your state have a functioning P–20 longitudinal data system: i.e., does your state currently match student-level records from a K–12 longitudinal data system with student records in the postsecondary data system(s) at least once annually?

E. College and Career Readiness Factored into K–12 Accountability Systems

When did/will the state first use the NGA Compact Cohort Graduation Rate or comparable cohort graduation rate for

- Public reporting?
- State high school accountability?

Does/how does your state incorporate into its high school accountability system — or otherwise publicly report — indicators of college readiness such as the percentage of high school students who

- Complete a college- and career-ready diploma or program of study?
- Enroll in college and require remediation in reading, writing and/or mathematics?
- Score college and career ready on a high school assessment?

Acknowledgments

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Achieve also would like to thank the Data Quality Campaign, the National Governors Association and The Education Trust, which shared information and insights as Achieve developed this year's survey and analyzed the state responses.

Achieve would like to thank the following members of the staff for their hard work on this report: John Kraman, senior policy analyst, who directed the research, analysis and writing of the report; Kate Blosveren, policy analyst, who played a critical leadership role in the research and writing of the report; research assistants Allison Camara, Liam Honigsberg, Lesley Muldoon and Julie Palmer, who provided additional support; and Matthew Gandal, executive vice president, who served as the report's senior editor.

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