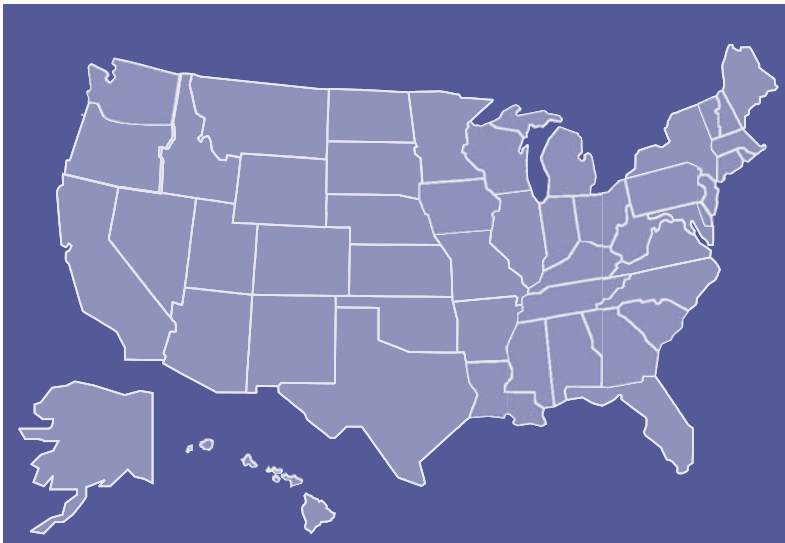
Closing the Expectations Gap

2009



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

Achieve
American Diploma Project Network

About Achieve

Created in 1996 by the nation's governors and corporate leaders, Achieve is an independent, bipartisan, non-profit education reform organization based in Washington, DC, that helps states raise academic standards and graduation requirements, improve assessments, and strengthen accountability. In 2006, Achieve was named by *Education Week* as one of the most influential education groups in the nation. Achieve is leading the effort to make college and career readiness a national priority so that the transition from high school graduation to postsecondary education and careers is seamless. To make college and career readiness a priority in the states, in 2005 Achieve launched the American Diploma Project (ADP) Network. Starting with 13 states, the network has now grown to include 34 states educating nearly 85 percent of all U.S. public school students. Through the ADP Network, governors, state education officials, postsecondary leaders and business executives work together to improve postsecondary preparation by aligning high school standards, assessments, graduation requirements and accountability systems with the demands of college and careers.

For more information about Achieve's work, visit www.achieve.org.

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American Diploma Project Network

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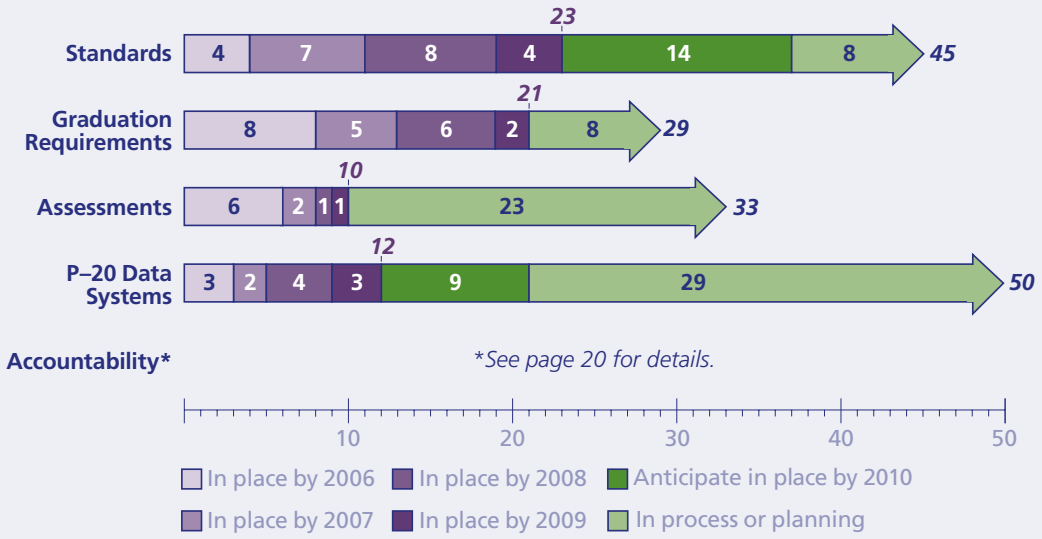
Executive Summary

Since Achieve launched the American Diploma Project (ADP) Network at the National Education Summit on High Schools in 2005, state leaders across the country have been hard at work aligning their standards, graduation requirements, assessments and accountability systems with the expectations of colleges and employers. Each year since the Summit, Achieve has surveyed all 50 states and the District of Columbia about the status of their efforts to adopt and implement this challenging ADP agenda.

State Progress on Adopting Policies To Ensure That High School Students Graduate College and Career Ready



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2009

Key Findings

STANDARDS

Nearly half the states now have high school standards in English and mathematics that are aligned with college- and career-ready expectations. Of the remaining states, all but six are viewing their high school content standards through the lens of college and career readiness. **Twenty-three states** report that their high school standards are aligned with postsecondary expectations, **four** more than a year ago. **Twenty-one additional states** and the **District of Columbia** report that they are in the process of aligning their standards or plan to do so. Moving forward, states want to ensure that their college- and career-ready standards are internationally benchmarked; fully integrate cross-disciplinary proficiencies; and are focused, specific and manageable.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

From 2005 until the present, there has been a surge of states that have raised their graduation requirements to the college- and career-ready level. **Twenty states** and the **District of Columbia** require all students to complete a college- and career-ready curriculum to earn a high school diploma, **two** more than Achieve reported last year. **Eight others** report plans to adopt similar requirements. In upcoming years, states will continue to work toward raising their graduation requirements to this level, but the annual progress will likely be slower.

ASSESSMENTS

States continue to make slow but steady progress in creating college- and career-ready assessments. **Ten states** administer college and career readiness tests to all high school students as part of their statewide assessment systems, **one** more than did a year ago. **Twenty-three additional states** report plans to do so in the future. Many states are in the process of developing new high school assessments, particularly end-of-course exams, that can be used for multiple purposes. In addition to testing the mastery of specific course content, such tests also may signal whether students are ready for credit-bearing, college-level work while they are still in high school and provide an opportunity to close any gaps in their preparation. Most states still need to lay the research and policy foundation before postsecondary systems can begin using results from these tests to place students into credit-bearing courses.

P–20 DATA SYSTEMS

Nearly every state in the nation has or will develop a P–20 data system. **Twelve states** report that they have P–20 longitudinal data systems that match K–12 data with postsecondary data and track the progress of individual students from kindergarten through college graduation, including **three states** that began matching data in the past year. **Thirty-seven other states** and the **District of Columbia** continue to build their P–20 longitudinal data systems. Achieve and others have noted over the past several years the widening gap between the technical capacity of states to track individual students longitudinally and the political will to enrich state P–20 data systems with college- and career-ready indicators and begin using the data to improve outcomes. Having data is just the first step — the challenge for all state leaders is to now commit to using data to strengthen the preparation of students for postsecondary success.

ACCOUNTABILITY

To fully implement the college- and career-ready agenda, state education systems must value college and career readiness as part of their high school accountability systems. If college and career readiness is the goal for all students, then states must include a broader array of indicators than they currently are employing. **Every state** and the **District of Columbia** has reported, or soon will be able to report, a four-year cohort graduation rate based on student-level data, and many are using this rate for accountability. **Eleven states** have begun reporting the percentage of students who earn a college- and career-ready diploma, and **18 states** now report the percentage of students who require remediation upon entering college, although neither indicator is generally factored into states' accountability determinations. Student achievement on college- and career-ready tests and earning college credit while in high school are rarely reported and almost never factored into accountability systems. Rarer still are states setting goals and providing incentives for improvement around these indicators. This area is evolving, and the precise indicators states include and how they use them in the future will undoubtedly evolve, too.

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Overview of Key Survey Results for Each State

● In place by 2009
● Anticipate in place by 2010
○ In process or planning

State	ADP Network member	Align high school standards with the expectations of college and the workplace	Align high school graduation requirements with college- and career-ready expectations	Develop college- and career-ready assessment systems	Develop P–20 longitudinal data systems	Develop accountability and reporting systems that promote college and career readiness	Number of policies in place 2006	Number of policies in place 2009
AL	✓	●	●		●		□□□□□	■□□□□
AK					●		□□□□□	□□□□□
AZ	✓	●	●	○	○		□□□□□	■■□□□
AR	✓	●	●	○	●		■□□□□	■■■□□
CA	✓	●		●	○		■■□□□	■■□□□
CO	✓	●		●	○		■□□□□	■□□□□
CT	✓	○	○	○	○		□□□□□	□□□□□
DE	✓	●	●		●		□□□□□	■■■□□
DC		○	●		○		*n/a*	■□□□□
FL	✓	●	○	○	●		■□□□□	■□□□□
GA	✓	●	●	●	●		□□□□□	■■■□□
HI	✓	●	○	○	○		□□□□□	□□□□□
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IL	✓	○		●	○		■□□□□	■□□□□
IN	✓	●	●	○	●		■■□□□	■■□□□
IA					●		□□□□□	■□□□□
KS		○			○		□□□□□	□□□□□
KY	✓	●	●	●	●		■□□□□	■■■□□
LA	✓	●	●	○	●		■□□□□	■■■□□
ME	✓	●		●	○		■□□□□	■■□□□
MD	✓	●	○	○	○		□□□□□	■□□□□
MA	✓	●		○	●	See page 20 for details.	□□□□□	■□□□□
MI	✓	●	●	●	○		■□□□□	■■■□□
MN	✓	●	●	○	●		□□□□□	■■□□□
MS	✓	●	●	○	○		□□□□□	■■□□□
MO		○			●		□□□□□	■□□□□
MT					○		□□□□□	□□□□□
NE		●			○		■□□□□	■□□□□
NV		●			●		□□□□□	□□□□□
NH		○		○	○		□□□□□	□□□□□
NJ	✓	●	○	○	○		□□□□□	■□□□□
NM	✓	●	●	○	●		□□□□□	■□□□□
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NC	✓	●	●	○	○		□□□□□	■□□□□
ND					○		□□□□□	□□□□□
OH	✓	●	●	○	○		□□□□□	■■□□□
OK	✓	●	●	○	○		■□□□□	■■□□□
OR	✓	●		○	●		□□□□□	■□□□□
PA	✓	●		○	●		□□□□□	□□□□□
RI	✓	●	○	○	○		□□□□□	■□□□□
SC		○			○		□□□□□	□□□□□
SD		○	●		○		■□□□□	■□□□□
TN	✓	●	●	●	○		□□□□□	■■■□□
TX	✓	●	●	●	●		■■■□□	■■■■□
UT		●	○		●		□□□□□	■□□□□
VT							□□□□□	□□□□□
VA	✓	●			○		□□□□□	□□□□□
WA	✓	●	●	○	●		□□□□□	■■■□□
WV		●		○	○		□□□□□	■□□□□
WI	✓	●	○	○	○		□□□□□	□□□□□
WY					●		□□□□□	■□□□□
Totals		● 23 ●/○ 22	● 21 ●/○ 8	● 10 ●/○ 23	● 12 ●/○ 38			

Introduction

"For too many graduates, the American high school diploma signifies only a broken promise."[1] In this opening statement from the 2004 report *Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma That Counts,* the American Diploma Project (ADP) called attention to the critical gap between the expectations for high school graduation and those of postsecondary institutions and employers. Since the release of *Ready or Not*, many state leaders with an eye on meeting global challenges and ensuring the long-term prosperity of their citizens have committed to adopting the ADP agenda as the centerpiece of their high school reform strategies.

Closing the Expectations Gap

In 2005, Achieve co-sponsored the National Education Summit on High Schools 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 with 13 states working toward the common goal of closing the expectations gap. Today, the ADP Network includes 34 states educating nearly 85 percent of the nation's students. ADP Network states are committed to:

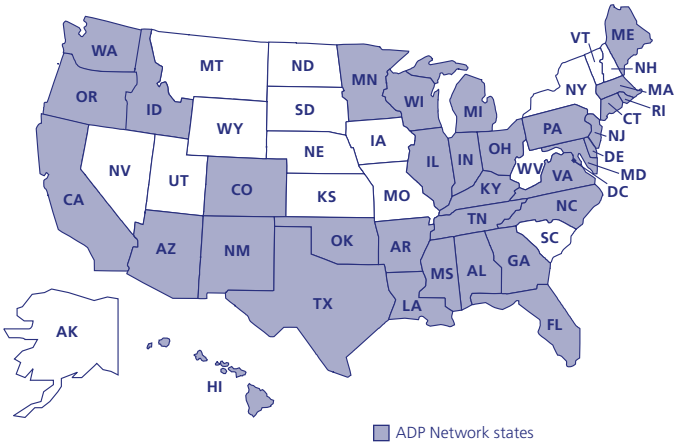
- Aligning high school academic content standards in English and mathematics with the demands of college and careers;
- Requiring students to complete a college- and career-ready curriculum so that earning a diploma ensures that a student is ready for postsecondary opportunities;
- Administering statewide high school assessments anchored to college- and career-ready expectations; and
- Creating comprehensive accountability and reporting systems that promote college and career readiness for all students.

Achieve's Fourth Annual Survey of State Policies

To monitor state progress in closing the expectations gap, Achieve conducts an annual survey of all 50 states and the District of Columbia on the key ADP 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 emphasized questions regarding how states know their policies are aligned, where states are in the policy adoption process and when the new policies likely will be adopted. Also, the survey's approach to accountability was more expansive and focused on Achieve's understanding of evolving state efforts to develop college- and career-ready accountability systems.

Once again, K–12 education chiefs from all 50 states and the District of Columbia responded to the survey. As time allowed, Achieve worked with the states during telephone discussions to review their submitted responses and extended states the opportunity to confirm their results as they would appear in this report. Most states participated in the survey review discussions and confirmation process. See Appendix B on page 28 for more details about this year's survey.

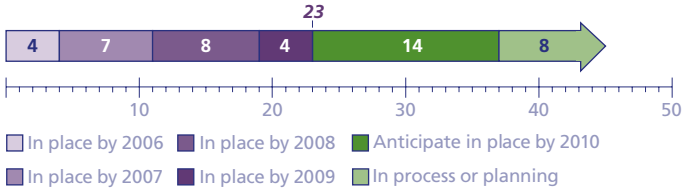
ADP Network States



I. Align High School Standards with the Expectations of College and the Workplace

FOR THE PAST TWO DECADES, academic content standards have served as the foundation of state education systems. Standards provide the underpinning for decisions on curriculum, instruction and assessment, and they communicate core knowledge and skills to teachers, parents and students. In 2004, Achieve, The Education Trust, the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation and the National Alliance of Business released the ADP benchmarks. Based on extensive research with employers and postsecondary faculty, the benchmarks identified the knowledge and skills high school graduates must possess in English and mathematics to be successful in first-year, credit-bearing college courses and/or qualify graduates for the postsecondary education or training needed for good entry-level jobs that pay a family-sustaining wage and offer opportunities for advancement. Across the board, the initiative identified a much more rigorous and focused set of expectations in English and mathematics than most states had in place at the time.

Nearly Half the States Have K–12 Standards Aligned with College and Career Readiness Expectations



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2009

States with Aligned Standards

23 States Have Aligned Standards

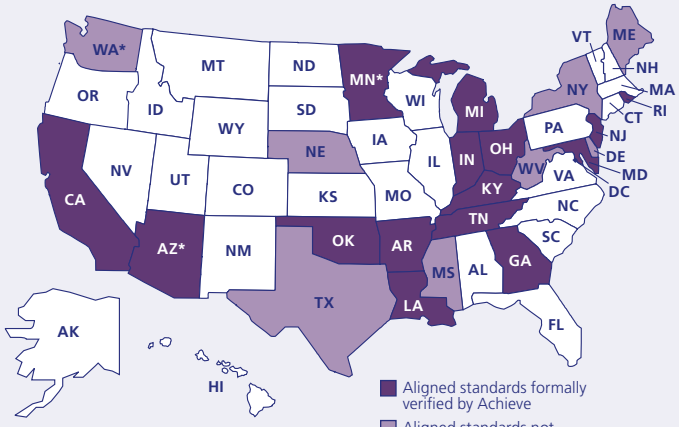
Since 2004, nearly half the states have revised their high school academic standards in English and/or mathematics to align them with the demands of postsecondary education and careers. In most cases, the alignment was accomplished through formal collaborative partnerships between K–12 and postsecondary education systems, with business representatives significantly involved throughout the revision process.

This year, **four new states** report having adopted academic standards in English and/or mathematics that are aligned with the knowledge and skills identified as being necessary for success by state postsecondary and business leaders, bringing the total number of states with aligned standards to **23**.

New States			
Arizona*	Maryland	Texas**	Washington*

*Arizona and Washington adopted mathematics standards this past year. Arizona plans to adopt English standards in 2010; Washington does not have a timeline for adopting aligned English standards.

**Achieve reviewed Texas' college readiness standards in mathematics and found them well aligned with the common core of the ADP benchmarks. However, Achieve has not reviewed Texas' final high school academic standards at this time.

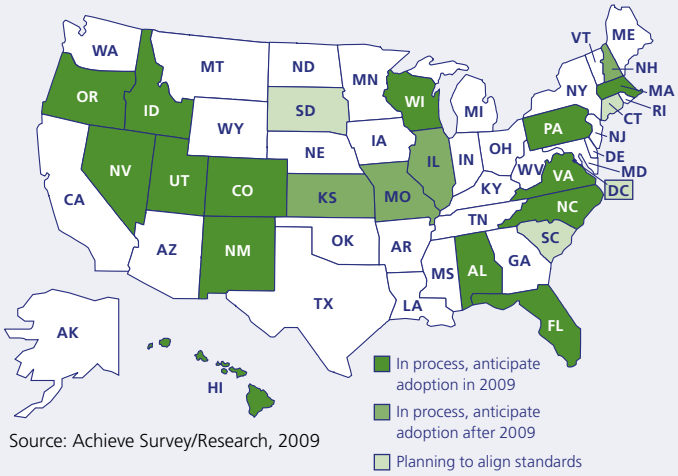


Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2009

*Only mathematics standards aligned

Of these **23 states**, Achieve has formally reviewed and verified the standards alignment in **15**, judging them to be well aligned with the college- and career-ready expectations in the ADP English and mathematics benchmarks. **Eleven of these states** received this formal review and verification through their participation in an Achieve Alignment Institute. In 2008, Achieve launched an Alignment Institute for a fourth cohort of states — **California**, **Florida** and **Illinois** — that collectively educate nearly 25 percent of the nation's students.[2]

14 States Anticipate Adopting Aligned Standards in 2009



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2009

Beyond the **23 states** that already have adopted aligned standards, an additional **21 states** and the **District of Columbia** report that they are in the process of aligning their standards — or have plans to align them — with college- and career-ready expectations in English and mathematics. In all but six states, high school content standards are now being viewed through the lens of college and career readiness.

Based on survey data and additional research, Achieve is able to identify where states are in the process of revising their standards to ensure college- and career-ready alignment and anticipated adoption dates:

- **Fourteen states** anticipate adopting aligned standards in English, mathematics or both content areas in 2009.
- Another **four states** report they have a process under way to develop and adopt standards aligned with college- and career-ready expectations after 2009.
- **Three states** and the **District of Columbia** report that they plan to adopt aligned standards, likely during their next standards revision cycle, but have not taken any formal steps to begin this work.

State	Anticipated Adoption
Colorado**	2009
Florida**	2009
Hawaii	2009
Idaho	2009
Massachusetts**	2009
Nevada**	2009
New Mexico*	2009
North Carolina**	2009
Pennsylvania**	2009
Utah	2009
Wisconsin	2009
Oregon**	2009†/2010✦
Virginia*	2009†/2011✦
Alabama	2009†/2012✦
Illinois	2010
Kansas	2010
Missouri**	2010
New Hampshire	2013
South Dakota	2011†/2014✦
South Carolina	2012 at earliest
Connecticut	TBD
District of Columbia	TBD

*Final adoption pending.

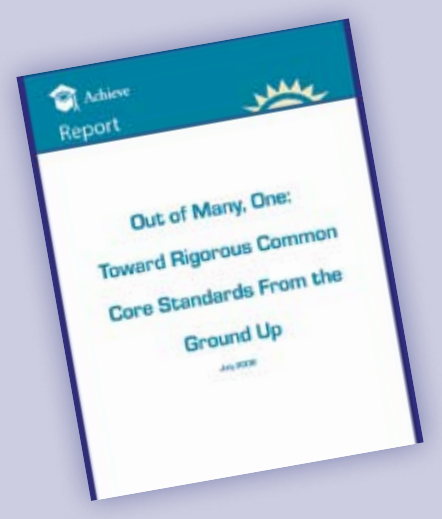
**A number of states did not adopt aligned standards in 2008, as they previously reported, for a variety of reasons: A few re-opened the alignment process, while others slowed down the process because of leadership changes or other internal delays.

†Mathematics

✦English

Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2009

Common Core Standards

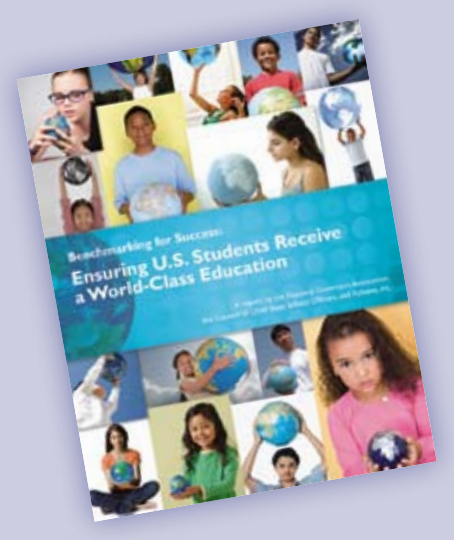


States have demonstrated leadership in developing rigorous standards in English and mathematics that define the knowledge and skills in these core subjects that high school graduates need to be prepared for college and careers. When states set college and career readiness as their goal, not only does the rigor of individual states' standards increase, but a common core in English and mathematics standards also emerges among the states. This common core reflects the demands of the real world that await high school graduates, a world of ever-increasing complexity and expectations not bound by state lines.

The common core does not mean that every state has identical standards; it reflects the reality that there is a fundamental core of English and mathematics knowledge that all graduates must have to succeed in college and careers. State leadership has demonstrated that a voluntary, state-led effort toward a common core for all students is possible, desirable and already well under way.

Achieve's report *Out of Many, One: Toward Rigorous Common Core Standards From the Ground Up* presents an analysis of the college- and career-ready standards for English in 12 states and for mathematics in 16 states. It is available for download at **www.achieve.org/commoncore**.

International Benchmarking for K–12 Education Systems



In December 2008, the National Governors Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers and Achieve released *Benchmarking for Success: Ensuring U.S. Students Receive a World-Class Education*. The report provides states with a roadmap for benchmarking their K–12 education systems internationally — to learn from and adopt the best ideas of top-performing countries. To be competitive in an interconnected and interdependent world, U.S. students need to receive not just a top-notch U.S. education but a world-class education.

Benchmarking for Success outlines what states and the federal government must do to ensure U.S. students receive an education that provides expanded opportunities for college and career success. States must:

- Adopt a common core of internationally benchmarked standards in mathematics and English language arts in grades K–12;
- Leverage their collective influence to ensure that textbooks, curricula and assessments are aligned to internationally benchmarked standards;
- Revise policies for recruiting, preparing, developing and supporting teachers to reflect the best human capital practices in top-performing nations and states;
- Draw on international best practices to hold schools and systems accountable through monitoring, interventions and supports to ensure consistently high performance; and
- Measure state-level education performance in an international context.

The federal government can enable state action by underwriting the cost for states to internationally benchmark their education systems. The federal government also should boost federal research and development efforts to provide state leaders with better information about international best practices and help states develop streamlined assessment strategies that facilitate cost-effective international comparisons of student performance.

To read the full report, go to **www.achieve.org/benchmarkingforsuccess**.

ADP Benchmarks: Looking Forward

Released in 2004, the ADP benchmarks in English and mathematics marked a new way of thinking about developing standards. Historically, states set standards by asking subject matter experts what they thought students needed to know in a particular subject and then, through a consensus-driven process, determined what students should be taught. In contrast, while subject matter experts were still part of the research process that produced the ADP benchmarks, the touchstone for all involved was what high school graduates should know and be able to do in English and mathematics to be prepared for college and careers. The ADP research, subsequently confirmed by other researchers, also found that graduates, whether they are heading to a two- or four-year college or embarking on a meaningful career, need essentially the same level of knowledge in English and mathematics.

Just as states periodically undertake a review of their standards, Achieve is currently in the process of updating the ADP English and mathematics benchmarks. Given that states are operating in a globally competitive environment, state leaders want to ensure that their standards not only prepare graduates to succeed in college and careers but also fully equip them to compete with their international peers. The revised ADP benchmarks will be internationally benchmarked; be supported by a growing research foundation; integrate important cross-disciplinary proficiencies; and be organized in a way that ensures they are focused, specific and manageable.

From the outset, this work has involved advisory groups composed of respected content experts in each discipline, including teachers, curriculum specialists from states and districts, higher education faculty from two- and four-year institutions, and employers. The advisory groups are charged with reviewing and building on the existing benchmarks to reflect evolving state needs, including:

- **International benchmarking:** States now want to know that their high school graduates are ready for college and careers and can compete not only with graduates from other states but also with graduates from around the world. To meet this demand, Achieve is analyzing standards from high-performing countries to identify what their students are expected to know and be able to do by the end of high school and how those expectations compare to the ADP benchmarks in English and mathematics.

- **Research from states and other expert sources about college and career readiness:** As states have developed college- and career-ready standards, many have surveyed college professors and business leaders to establish what it takes for high school graduates to be successful. This state-led research, coupled with research and data from national organizations, will be used to ensure that the revised benchmarks reflect current expectations about college and career readiness.

- **Focus on cross-disciplinary proficiencies:** Embedded in the current ADP benchmarks are important cross-disciplinary proficiencies — research and evidence gathering, critical thinking and decisionmaking, communication and teamwork, and media and technology. These skills are essential for success in 21st-century college classrooms and careers. The revised ADP benchmarks will make explicit how and where students can learn these important proficiencies in the context of a rigorous and content-rich curriculum.

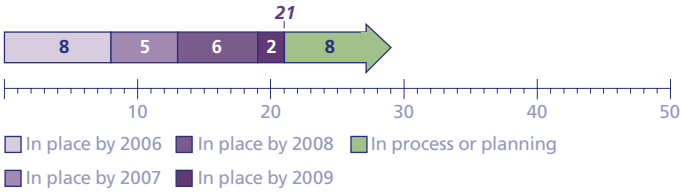
- **Organization:** States are eager to ensure that their standards are clear, focused, teachable and easily translated into the classroom. The revisions to the ADP benchmarks will ensure that benchmarks are organized in a way that maximizes their usefulness and function.

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

THE FURTHER STUDENTS ADVANCE through a challenging high school curriculum, the more likely it is that they will be successful in college and the workplace. Taking a rigorous course of study in high school that reflects college and career expectations in English and mathematics improves access to and success in first-year, credit-bearing college courses, improves entry into and completion of postsecondary training programs, and is one of the strongest predictors of whether a student ultimately will earn a college degree. Yet minority and low-income students are less likely to have access to, enroll in and succeed in a college- and career-ready curriculum in high school than their more advantaged peers. Under these circumstances, a college- and career-ready curriculum functions not as the intellectual and practical boost it should be, but as a filter that screens students from the pathway to success.[3]

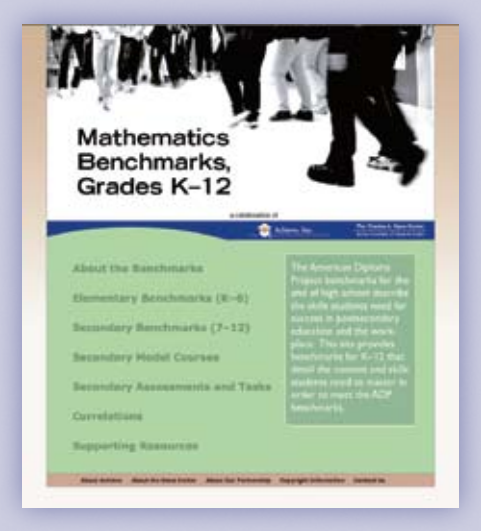
Achieve's ADP research shows that for high school graduates to be prepared for success in college and careers, they need to take four years of challenging mathematics — including the content at least to the level of what is typically taught in an Algebra II course or its equivalent — and four years of grade-level English aligned with college- and career-ready standards. Readiness for college and careers depends on more than the mastery of English and mathematics content, but these two content areas cover a set of critical knowledge and skills that all high school graduates should possess. They also are important foundational subjects for the study of other academic disciplines and contextualized learning. Finally, it is also important to note that a college- and career-ready curriculum is dictated not by the number or names of required courses, but by the rigor of the course content.

State Progress Continues on Implementing College- and Career-Ready Graduation Requirements



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2009

Closing the Mathematics Expectations Gap: Achieve's Collaborative Efforts To Redefine the Mathematics We Teach



To provide states with more detail about the progression of content and skills students need to meet the end-of-high-school ADP benchmarks, Achieve recently "backmapped" the ADP mathematics benchmarks from grade 12 down through kindergarten.

Working with the Charles A. Dana Center at The University of Texas at Austin, Achieve developed a Web site with a set of tools designed to clarify and extend the ADP mathematics benchmarks. States and districts can use these tools to establish and implement an aligned college- and career-ready mathematics program. In addition to the backmapped benchmarks for grades K–6 and 7–12, the Web site provides resources such as model secondary courses, instructional and assessment tasks, criteria for evaluating fourth-year capstone courses, "Mathematics at Work" brochures, and practices worthy of attention. For more information, see **www.utdanacenter.org/k12mathbenchmarks/index.php**.

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

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

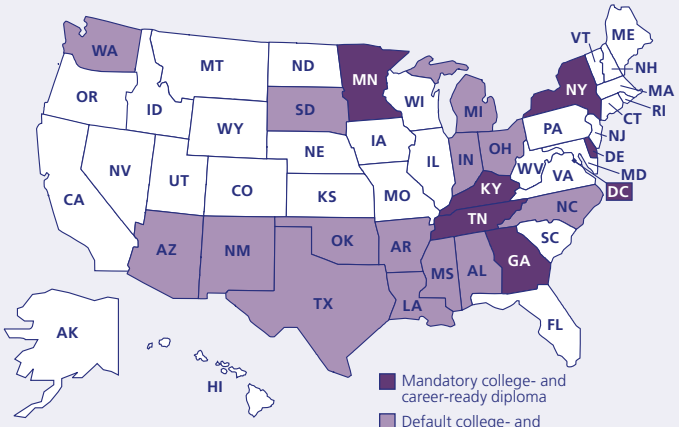
At the time of the National Education Summit in early 2005, only **Texas** and **Arkansas** had set their requirements at a level that would ensure that all graduates are prepared for success in college and the workplace. Today, **20 states** and the **District of Columbia** require all students to complete a college- and career-ready curriculum, including the only **two states** — **Alabama** and **Washington** — that adopted new requirements in the past year.

New States	
Alabama	**Washington**

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

- **Fourteen 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. Of these 14 states, nine have a lower diploma track students may opt into; the other five allow students to opt out of specific courses, typically Algebra II or other advanced mathematics requirements.
- **Six states** and the **District of Columbia** have set mandatory course requirements without opt-out provisions.

Both approaches are designed to end a system that limits access to a rigorous academic curriculum to a select few (frequently referred to as "tracking"), leaving many students — often those already disadvantaged — unprepared to succeed after high school. It is critical, however, that the states with opt-out provisions carefully monitor how many and which students move into the less rigorous curriculum to ensure that the provision is not abused.



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2009

First Cohort of Students To Graduate Under the New Requirements

State	Opt-out	1st Cohort
TX	✓	2008/ 2011*
AR	✓	2010
NY		2010
OK	✓	2010
SD	✓	2010
DE		2011
DC		2011

State	Opt-out	1st Cohort
IN	✓	2011
MI	✓	2011
GA		2012
KY		2012
LA	✓	2012
MS	✓	2012
AL	✓	2013

State	Opt-out	1st Cohort
AZ	✓	2013
NM	✓	2013
NC	✓	2013
TN		2013
WA	✓	2013
OH	✓	2014
MN		2015

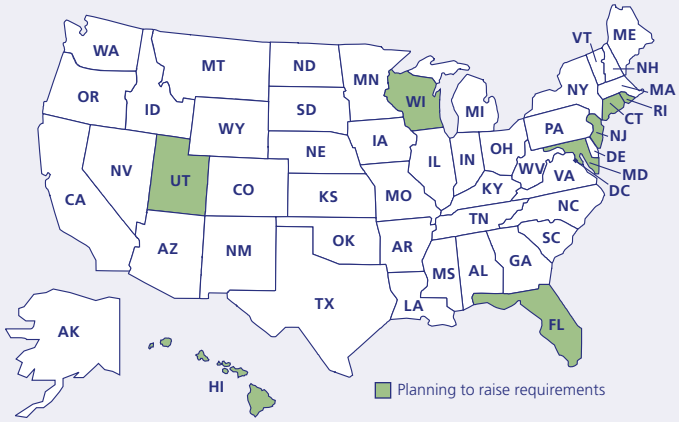
*The Texas Recommended High School Program (RHSP) was established as the requirement for all students (as the default diploma option) in 2003 — first affecting the class of 2008 — and included three mathematics credits through Algebra II. In 2006, Texas added a fourth year of mathematics to the RHSP that will first affect the class of 2011.

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

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

Beyond the **20 states** and the **District of Columbia** that have already adopted a college- and career-ready curriculum as the graduation requirement for all students, another **eight states** report plans to raise the rigor of their high school requirements to the ADP-recommended level.

While at least **two states** — **Florida** and **New Jersey** — anticipate that they will raise their graduation requirements in 2009, the other **six states** did not report concrete timelines in this year's survey.

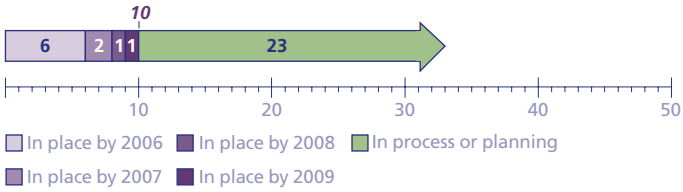


Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2009

III. Develop College- and Career-Ready Assessment Systems

MOST HIGH SCHOOL ASSESSMENTS — particularly those used for graduation — measure knowledge and skills students learn early in high school, or even in middle school. Without sufficient emphasis on the advanced high school content students need to be successful in college and postsecondary education and training opportunities, state assessments will continue to fall short. State high school assessment systems need a component that measures the more advanced skills valued by two- and four-year postsecondary institutions — and employers — and on which scoring proficient means being truly prepared for college and careers.

Many States Are in the Process of or Have Plans To Implement College- and Career-Ready Assessments



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2009

As states align their high school standards and graduation requirements with the demands of college and the workplace, they also need to require all students to take anchor assessments — tests anchored to the states' college- and career-ready expectations. These assessments can signal whether high school students are ready for credit-bearing, college-level work — and the postsecondary education and training necessary to access good jobs — while they are still in high school. If students do not do well on such exams, high schools still have time to provide additional support to help students fill skills gaps before they graduate, ideally reducing the number of students who require remediation upon entering college. In addition, if these tests adequately measure students' mastery of the states' college- and career-ready standards, postsecondary institutions may be able to use the test results to make placement determinations.

Core Principles of College- and Career-Ready Assessment Systems

Most state assessment systems culminate with summative tests in English and mathematics that do not assess students' mastery of the advanced content and skills needed to be successful in college and careers. The typical test instead assesses only content taught early in high school — or even earlier.

Moving forward, states need to develop comprehensive and coherent assessment systems that value and provide signals of college and career readiness and reflect the following five core principles:

1. Proficiency on the state assessment should mean a student is prepared for college and the workplace.
2. High school test results should open doors for students to higher education and good jobs.
3. Tests should assess the full range of college- and career-ready standards. Some of the essential skills that college faculty and employers value in high school graduates are difficult to measure via pencil-and-paper tests, requiring the addition of performance assessments in state assessment systems.
4. Testing should support good teaching and become a tool for instructional improvement.
5. Testing should be streamlined — more testing is not the goal, smarter testing is.

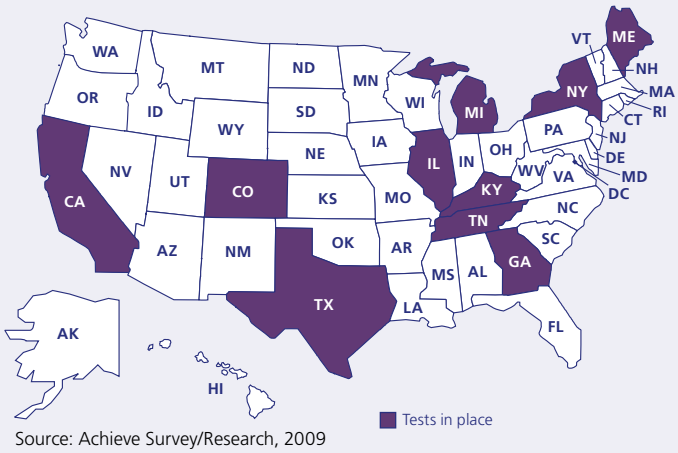
For more information, go to **www.achieve.org/measuresthatmatter**.

10 States Administer Tests Aligned with College and Career Expectations

Every year, Achieve has asked states whether they have a test capable of measuring students' college and career readiness and, if so, whether that test is used by postsecondary institutions for placing students into first-year, credit-bearing mathematics and English courses.

This year, **Georgia** is the only new state to require all high school students to take an anchor assessment with a score that signals college readiness and will be used by the state postsecondary system for placement, bringing the total to **10 states**.

New State
Georgia



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2009

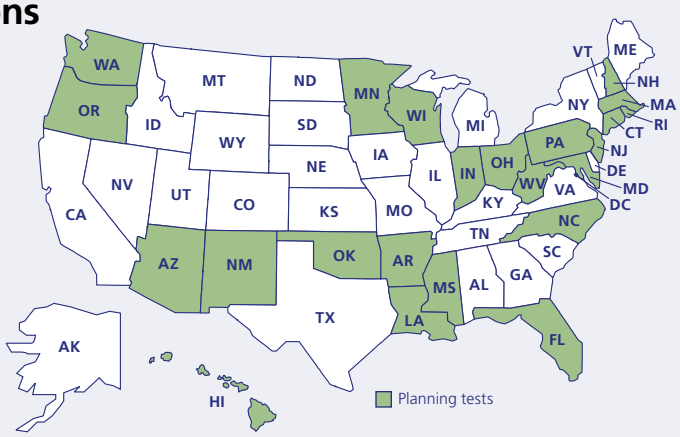
- **Four of the 10 states** measure the college and career readiness of students using **state-developed** high school assessments.
  - In spring 2008, **Georgia** administered its 11th grade assessment in English language arts, which will be used to place the freshman class of 2009 into credit-bearing English courses at two- and four-year public institutions. Georgia will administer its revised mathematics Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHSGT) in 2011, which will be used to place incoming college freshmen in 2012.
  - **New York** and **Texas** have also established readiness scores that are higher than the scores required for graduation on the Regents end-of-course exams and the 11th grade Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), respectively. Beginning with high school freshmen in fall 2011, Texas will replace the TAKS and require all high school graduates to pass a series of new end-of-course exams that also will have a college readiness score.
  - **California** includes voluntary items from the California State University (CSU) system on the statewide 11th grade standards-based tests. Students who score high enough on these tests and continue to take challenging courses during 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 **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 assessment. It is administered along with WorkKeys and state-developed test components designed to assess state standards more fully.
  - Maine augments the SAT with mathematics and science items aligned to its state standards.
  - Colorado, Kentucky and Tennessee are in the process of developing — or plan to develop — additional measures of college and career readiness for their assessment systems in the coming years.

States Developing or Planning College- and Career-Ready Tests

23 States Are Developing or Plan To Develop Tests Aligned to College- and Career-Ready Expectations

Twenty-three states report plans to administer new or modified high school assessments to measure college and career readiness that could be used by postsecondary institutions or businesses to determine the readiness of incoming students and employees. The states are, by and large, at different points in the process of developing and administering these tests. While some states already have administered their assessments to all students in the relevant courses or grades, others are piloting their tests with select districts or students to gather data and allow students and teachers time to adjust to the new assessments. In other cases, states are still in the process of determining which college- and career-ready test or tests they will build into their assessment systems. To date:

- **Eleven states** — all members of the ADP Assessment Consortium (see box, below) — administered the Algebra II end-of-course assessment to select students in 2008. These states are still determining whether the test will be required and for whom, what stakes will be attached for students, and whether and how postsecondary institutions may use results of the test.



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2009

- Another **three states** will administer college- and career-ready assessments in 2009 to some or all students.
- The remaining **nine states** planning to develop high school assessments that they may link with college placement policies are still several years from fully implementing college- and career-ready testing for all students.

The ADP Assessment Consortium

The ADP Assessment Consortium was launched to provide a common and consistent measure of student performance across states over time, improve Algebra II curriculum and instruction, and serve as an indicator of readiness for first-year, credit-bearing mathematics courses in college. Since the Consortium began in 2005, 15 states have joined, making it the largest multistate assessment consortium ever undertaken. The Consortium members are **Arizona**, **Arkansas**, **Florida**, **Hawaii**, **Indiana**, **Kentucky**, **Maryland**, **Massachusetts**, **Minnesota**, **New Jersey**, **North Carolina**, **Ohio**, **Pennsylvania**, **Rhode Island** and **Washington**. In addition to the ADP Algebra II end-of-course exam, which was given for the first time in spring 2008, the Consortium is in the process of developing an aligned Algebra I exam that several states will administer in spring 2009.

While nearly 90,000 students took the Algebra II test in spring 2008, Consortium states varied significantly in how and to whom they administered the test. Although few states administered the test to all students enrolled in Algebra II, most states offered the test on a pilot basis, giving many educators a first look at the expectations of a rigorous Algebra II end-of-course assessment. For more information on the Consortium and the first multistate test administration, see **www.achieve.org/2008Algebra2report**.

Status of High School Assessments That Measure College and Career Readiness

State	Assessment	First Scheduled Administration	Mandatory/Voluntary	Anticipated Start Date for Postsecondary Use
California	CST-EAP	In use	Voluntary	In use
Colorado	ACT	In use	Mandatory	In use
	Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Exam(s)	By 2012	Mandatory	TBD
Georgia	Georgia High School Graduation Tests	In use✦ 2011†	Mandatory	In use (fall 2009)✦ 2012†
Illinois	ACT	In use	Mandatory	In use
Kentucky	ACT	In use	Mandatory	In use
	Algebra II	2008 (pilot)	TBD	TBD
Maine	SAT	In use	Mandatory	In use
Michigan	ACT	In use	Mandatory	In use
New York	Regents End-of-Course Exams	In use	Mandatory	In use
Tennessee	ACT	In use	Mandatory	In use
	End-of-Course Exams (Algebra II, English III)	By 2013	Mandatory	2013
Texas	Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills	In use	Mandatory	In use
	End-of-Course Exams	2011–12	Mandatory	2015
Arizona	Algebra II	2008 (pilot)	Voluntary	TBD
Arkansas	Algebra II	2008 (pilot)	PLAN: All Algebra II students	TBD
Connecticut	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Florida	Algebra II	TBD	Voluntary	TBD
Hawaii	Algebra II	2008 (pilot)	PLAN: All students receiving Board Recognition Diploma	TBD
Indiana	Algebra II	2008 (pilot)	TBD	TBD
Louisiana	End-of-Course Exams (TBD)	By 2012	Mandatory	TBD
Maryland	Algebra II	2009 (pilot)	Voluntary	TBD
Massachusetts	Algebra II	2009 (pilot)	Voluntary	TBD
Minnesota	Algebra II	2008 (pilot)	TBD	TBD
	Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments — Series III (or another test)	By 2016	Mandatory	TBD
Mississippi	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
New Hampshire	Gateway Exam(s)	TBD	Mandatory	TBD
New Jersey	Algebra II	2008 (pilot)	Voluntary	TBD
	Language Arts End-of-Course Exams	TBD	Voluntary	TBD
New Mexico	Standards-Based Exams	2010	Mandatory	2011
North Carolina	Algebra II	2008 (pilot)	Voluntary	TBD
Ohio	Algebra II	2008 (pilot)	Voluntary	TBD
Oklahoma	End-of-Instruction Exams (Algebra II, English 11)	TBD	TBD	TBD
Oregon	Assessment of Essential Skills	Class of 2012	Mandatory	2012
Pennsylvania	Algebra II	2008 (pilot)	Voluntary	TBD
Rhode Island	Algebra II	2008 (pilot)	Voluntary	TBD
Washington	Algebra II	2008 (pilot)	Voluntary	TBD
	College Readiness Math Test	2009	Voluntary	2009 (tentative)
West Virginia	WESTEST	2009	Mandatory	2010
Wisconsin	TBD	TBD	Mandatory	TBD

†Mathematics

✦English

In place by 2009

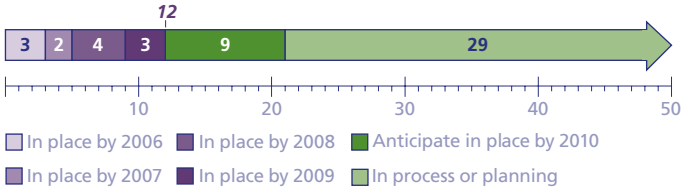
Anticipate in place during 2009 or later

Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2009

IV. Develop P–20 Longitudinal Data Systems

States working to design and implement accountability systems that value college and career readiness must develop longitudinal data systems with the capacity to collect and report accurate information about the progress of students toward readiness. Just as it is important for states to align expectations, they also must strengthen and align their data systems to track and measure student-level progress between the K–12 and postsecondary education systems. The data generated by P–20 data systems must be shared with teachers and education leaders at every level of the system to improve instruction and strengthen the preparation of all students for success after graduation.

States Continue To Develop P–20 Longitudinal Data Systems



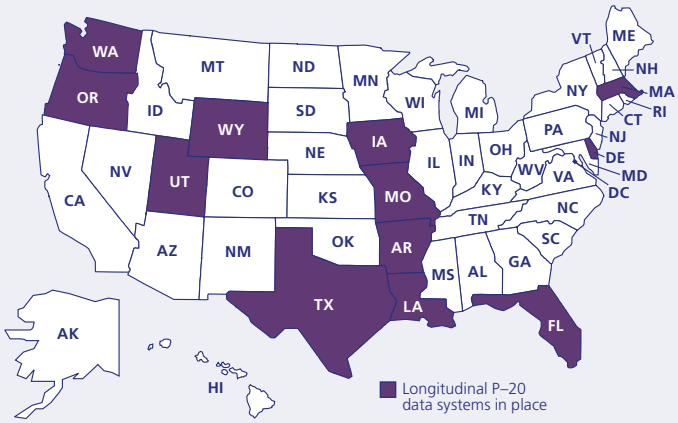
Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2009

States with P–20 Longitudinal Data Systems

12 States Have P–20 Longitudinal Data Systems

Three new states reported to Achieve this year that they now have operational P–20 longitudinal data systems and have begun to match student-level data between the K–12 and postsecondary systems at least annually. This brings the total number of states with P–20 longitudinal data systems to **12**.

New States		
Iowa	Missouri	Oregon



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2009

Data matching is a two-way street. Just as postsecondary institutions require detailed information about the academic preparation of applicants and incoming students, high schools and teachers need to know the extent of their graduates' postsecondary success to better prepare future cohorts of students.

Of the 12 states with P–20 longitudinal data systems:

- **Ten** have developed systems that allow for data to flow both *up* to postsecondary and *back* to high schools.[4] Data often flow up to postsecondary through mechanisms such as e-transcripts, while data may flow back to high schools through automated feedback reports. The next challenge for these states is to ensure that the data that flow back to high schools are complete and detailed enough to guide instruction and improve preparation.
- The remaining **two states** only move data up from K–12 to postsecondary institutions, even though they may have the capacity for the data to flow in both directions.

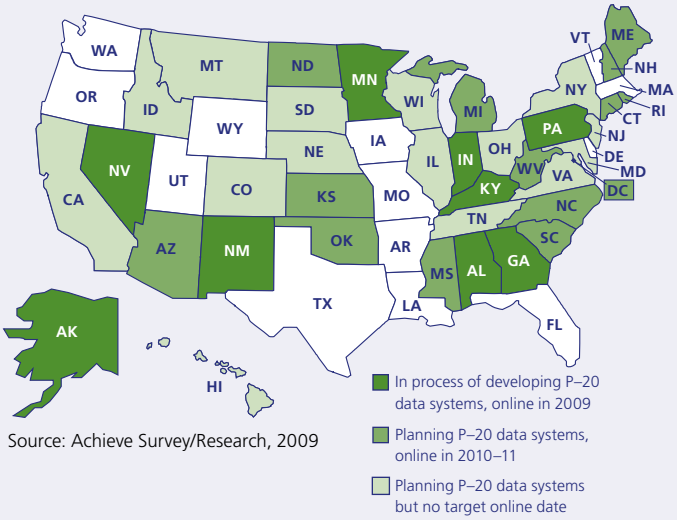
37 States and DC Are Developing or Planning P–20 Longitudinal Data Systems

Thirty-seven states and the **District of Columbia** are in the process of developing — or plan to develop — P–20 longitudinal data systems. A number of states already have the technical capacity but still need to address remaining policy, financial or coordination issues before they begin matching student-level K–12 and postsecondary records regularly. Other states are still in the early stages of development.

- **Nine states** report their P–20 data systems will become operational in 2009.
- **Thirteen states** and the **District of Columbia** will begin matching K–12 and postsecondary student-level records by 2011.
- Another **15 states** have not yet set a target date for the development of their P–20 data systems.

A major driver of the states' longitudinal data system work is the consistent support of the federal government, primarily through three- to five-year Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) grants. While the initial grants focused mainly on the development of K–12 longitudinal data systems, many states are now using those federal dollars to link K–12 and postsecondary data systems.

Over time, states must continue to build college- and career-ready indicators into their data systems and produce meaningful annual reports to key stakeholders to inform accountability decisions, classroom instruction and program evaluations. Having data is just the first step; the next challenge for all state leaders is to commit to using data to strengthen the preparation of students for postsecondary success.



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2009

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

ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS focus the efforts of teachers, students, parents, administrators and policymakers to ensure that students and schools meet established goals. The goals for the state high school accountability systems in place today are based largely on student achievement results from standardized tests that typically measure 8th and 9th grade content and do not fully reflect the demands of college and careers. Such systems send the wrong messages and conceal fundamental flaws in our high schools. It is important for states to anchor their K–12 accountability systems to the goal of graduating students on time, ready to succeed in college and careers.

Policymakers must fundamentally reformulate the indicators they use to measure progress and the incentives they provide schools to improve. Without a coordinated framework that sets the right expectations and sends the right signals, students, educators and school systems will not have consistent targets to aim for — making it difficult for states to target resources and supports to the neediest students and schools.

Through the *Measures that Matter* initiative, Achieve and The Education Trust collaborated to address these challenges and provide strategic and technical guidance to help states create a coherent set of policies designed to graduate all students college and career ready. Informed by a distinguished advisory group of state and national experts representing diverse perspectives, the two organizations developed a set of recommendations designed to provide states with the best possible advice for advancing their reform efforts.

At the heart of the Achieve and Education Trust recommendations are key principles for "next-generation" accountability systems that reflect the goal of college and career readiness for all students. These principles include:

- Broadening the indicators used to measure high school performance so that college and career readiness becomes the central goal for schools;
- Setting clear goals for improvement on these indicators that challenge all schools to help all students reach their maximum potential;
- Providing positive incentives for schools to improve performance on these indicators; and
- Incorporating these indicators into the school accountability formula so that when schools are not performing well, supports and interventions are triggered.

A Broader Array of Indicators

An effective accountability system uses a coherent, purposeful progression of college- and career-ready indicators to focus attention from the beginning of a student's high school career through graduation. If college and career readiness is the goal for all students, states should use three types of indicators to evaluate high school performance:

- **Completion of and success in a college- and career-ready course of study;**
- **Achievement on assessments that measure college and career readiness; and**
- **Attainment of high school credentials and matriculation into postsecondary education and training programs.**

In addition, readiness should not be viewed as a fixed state where students either make it or they do not. State designs for their information and accountability systems should reflect a **continuum** of whether students are **approaching**, **meeting** or **exceeding** college and career readiness. By creating a continuum of indicators, states can accomplish two things that most accountability systems today do not:

- First, they can ensure that students who are identified as off track get the attention and resources they need to get back on track before it is too late.
- Second, they can prevent the floor from becoming the ceiling and instead provide incentives for students who achieve the college and career readiness standard earlier in high school to continue to strive for more.

Continuum of College- and Career-Ready Indicators

	Approaching College and Career Readiness	Meeting College and Career Readiness*	Exceeding College and Career Readiness
Course Completion and Success	Timely credit accumulation Credit recovery**	Successful completion of college- and career-ready course of study	Participation in Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB) and dual enrollment courses
Achievement	Performance on aligned assessments of core content and skills early in high school Grades (when necessary quality control mechanisms have been established)	Meeting standards on the college- and career-ready statewide anchor assessment Postsecondary remediation rates	College-level performance on AP and/or IB exams
Attainment	Graduation	Earning a college- and career-ready diploma	Earning credits in dual enrollment courses Applying to and enrolling in postsecondary

*Metrics based on indicators of "Meeting College and Career Readiness" should be weighted most heavily.

**Credit recovery programs allow students who have not passed required courses to retake these courses (often through online offerings) to help these students stay in school and graduate on time.

To better understand the extent to which states are making college and career readiness a priority for their students and schools, Achieve asked policymakers whether they have incorporated a select set of college- and career-ready indicators into their data, reporting and accountability systems:[5]

- **Cohort graduation rate:** The percentage of entering 9th graders who graduate from high school in four years calculated using a formula based on individual student-level data. States have traditionally included graduation rates in their accountability systems, but it is critical that those rates accurately capture which 9th graders actually graduate on time.
- **College- and career-ready testing:** The percentage of students who score at the college-ready level on a high school assessment anchored to college- and career-ready standards and given to all students. Such an assessment will signal which students are prepared for postsecondary success and which will require additional support before leaving high school.
- **College- and career-ready diploma:** The percentage of students who graduate having completed the requirements for a college- and career-ready diploma, as defined by ADP. States need to know which students — and which groups of students — are leaving high school with this valuable credential.
- **College remediation rate:** The percentage of high school graduates who — upon entrance to a postsecondary institution — are placed into a remedial course in reading, writing or mathematics (a course that does not count toward degree credit in English or mathematics). With the vast majority of high school students intending to pursue a college degree and with so many of those students entering college unprepared for college-level work, states must know whether high schools are preparing students to achieve their goals.
- **Earning college credit while still in high school:** The percentage of students who earn college credit while still enrolled in high school through AP, IB and/or dual enrollment. Just as states must know whether students are progressing toward and reaching certain benchmarks of college and career readiness, states also need to know whether high school students are exceeding college and career readiness.

Do States Track These College- and Career-Ready Indicators in Their Longitudinal Data Systems?

The first step a state must take to build a next-generation accountability system is to enrich its longitudinal data system with a broad array of college- and career-ready indicators. To date, states are making progress, but gaps in data collection persist.

Indicator	Number of States That Include Indicators in Their Data Systems	
	YES	PLAN
Cohort Graduation Rate	28	23
College- and Career-Ready Testing	7	7
College- and Career-Ready Diploma	15	12
College Remediation Rate	22	13
Earning College Credit While Still in High School	15	7

Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2009

Use of Indicators

Having college- and career-ready indicators is only the first step. For the indicators to be meaningful and to drive improvement in the system, they must be used. To that end, Achieve also asked policymakers whether they currently use — or intend to use — the select set of college- and career-ready indicators to raise public awareness and drive school improvement:

- **Publicly report:** The state publicly reports the percentage of students who satisfy the requirements of each indicator at the school level. Accountability begins with publicly reporting critical information about school performance, allowing parents, students, state leaders and the public to know whether high schools are preparing students for success in college and careers.
- **Set performance goal:** The state has publicly set statewide performance goals for increasing the percentage of students who satisfy the requirements of each indicator — and has defined a date for achieving those goals. Accountability systems must set high expectations for performance to motivate schools to improve.
- **Offer incentives to improve:** The state has established incentives to reward schools and districts for increasing the percentage of students who satisfy the requirements of each indicator. Accountability systems should not only lead to sanctions and punitive actions but also include recognition and other incentives to drive improvement.
- **Factor into accountability formula:** The state factors the percentage of students who satisfy the requirements of each indicator into its high school accountability formula. Accountability systems ought to include a range of indicators and employ metrics that are weighted most heavily toward the indicators of meeting college and career readiness.

Findings

- **A cohort graduation rate is the most prevalent college- and career-ready indicator in state accountability systems.** Every state and the District of Columbia is — or soon will be — able to track and report publicly a four-year cohort graduation rate of students, consistent with the National Governors Association Graduation Rate Compact and recently adopted federal regulations.[6] This is significant progress from a few years ago. Every state also has set performance goals for this important indicator, and many factor — or will factor — a cohort graduation rate into their accountability formulas.

- **Nearly every state that offers — or plans to offer — students the opportunity to earn a college- and career-ready diploma is publicly reporting the percentage of students earning that credential, but most don't factor it into their accountability formulas.** Eleven states have begun publicly reporting the percentage of students who earn a college- and career-ready diploma (i.e., students completed the required courses), and 17 others plan to do so in the future. Very few, however, have built this critical indicator into their accountability formulas for high schools or have otherwise created incentives for schools to improve the percentage of students who earn these advanced diplomas.

- **A growing number of states report college remediation rates, but few make them part of high school accountability.** Eighteen states now report the percentage of high school graduates who require remediation in college, and eight more plan to do so.

- **There is very little focus on achievement on college- and career-ready tests or earning college credit while still in high school.** These indicators are rarely reported and almost never factored into accountability formulas or incentive programs for high schools.

Although states are paying attention to some key indicators, no state has yet put in place a comprehensive accountability system based on a broad array of college- and career-ready indicators. These systems will need to mature if high schools are going to have the incentives and resources they need to better prepare students for the challenges that await them after graduation. Moving forward, Achieve will analyze how states' college- and career-ready indicators are used and valued and how they reveal student progress toward college and career readiness. This represents a new vision of accountability and the kind of information states should collect, report, and enable schools and districts to use.

Overview: State Accountability System Elements and Their Uses

Indicator	Publicly Report		Set Performance Goal		Offer Incentive To Improve		Factor into Accountability Formula	
	YES	PLAN	YES	PLAN	YES	PLAN	YES	PLAN
Cohort Graduation Rate	23	28	17	34	3	5	14	27
College-and Career-Ready Testing	6	8	1	2	3	0	3	4
College-and Career-Ready Diploma	11	17	8	7	4	1	4	10
College Remediation Rate	18	8	3	5	1	2	2	5
Earning College Credit While Still in High School	9	8	5	3	2	4	0	4

Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2009

State by State: Accountability System Elements and Their Uses

State	Cohort graduation rate				College- and career-ready testing				College- and career-ready diploma				College remediation rate				Earning college credit while in high school			
	R	G	I	A	R	G	I	A	R	G	I	A	R	G	I	A	R	G	I	A
AL	○	○		○					●											
AK	●	○																		
AZ	●	○		●					○											
AR	●	●		○					●	●			●	○	○					
CA	○	○	○	○					●											
CO	●	●			○	○							○	○						
CT	○	○	○	○													●	●		
DE	●	●							○	○		○					○			
DC	○	○		○					○	●		○								
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 ●	23	17	3	14	6	1	3	3	11	8	4	4	18	3	1	2	9	5	2	0
Total ○	28	34	5	27	8	2	0	4	17	7	1	10	8	5	2	5	8	3	4	4

Key

Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2009

R	**Publicly report:** The state publicly reports the percentage of students who satisfy the requirements of each indicator at the school level.
G	**Set performance goal:** The state has publicly set statewide performance goals for increasing the percentage of students who satisfy the requirements of each indicator — and has defined a date for achieving those goals.
I	**Offer incentive to improve:** The state has established incentives to reward schools and districts for increasing the percentage of students who satisfy the requirements of each indicator.
A	**Factor into accountability formula:** The state factors the percentage of students who satisfy the requirements of each indicator into its state accountability formula.

● Uses indicator

○ Plans to use indicator

Conclusion

Looking back on the four years since the National Education Summit on High Schools, states undoubtedly have made significant progress in adopting individual parts of the ADP agenda.

Four years ago, states rarely engaged formally with the postsecondary and business communities to ensure state high school standards were well aligned with their expectations. Today, 44 states and the District of Columbia have aligned — or plan to align — their English and mathematics standards to ensure all students graduate ready for college and careers. In 2005, only two states had graduation requirements at the college- and career-ready level. Today, 20 states and the District of Columbia have implemented that policy. Before 2006, only three states had P–20 longitudinal data systems and regularly matched student-level K–12 and postsecondary data to measure progress and improve the transition from high school into college or the workplace. Now, 12 states have P–20 data systems, and all but one state are working to put such a system in place. Progress on college- and career-ready assessment and accountability systems has been slower — but steady — as states seek to drive improvements in their systems and reinforce higher expectations. None of this would have been possible without state leadership committed to reforming high schools and ensuring that students graduate with a meaningful diploma.

Budget constraints and competing priorities have the potential to affect states' abilities to take on new policies and implement adopted reforms with fidelity and with the appropriate teacher and student supports in place. However, despite — and even because of — these challenges, states should remain focused on ensuring all students graduate ready for college and careers. Education is the key to America's long-term prosperity, economic growth and international competitiveness. Investing in education now means being better positioned to succeed tomorrow.

States also must take a long view and be mindful that sustaining policy reforms over time is just as important as making the policy changes themselves. Achieve will continue to provide ADP Network states assistance — research and development; technical assistance on standards, assessments, curriculum and accountability; and advocacy and communication tools — to make certain states have the support necessary to adopt and implement the agenda cohesively, as well as to sustain it for the long haul.

Endnotes

[1] *Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma That Counts,* www.achieve.org/readyornot.

[2] California entered the Alignment Institute with standards that are well aligned with college and career expectations, as verified by Achieve. Starting the process with an existing foundation of college- and career-ready standards, California is choosing to focus its Alignment Institute efforts on an analysis of postsecondary assessments (particularly the EAP in mathematics and English) and aligning expectations across the various postsecondary public institutions as well as across the K–12, postsecondary and business communities.

[3] For an annotated list of resources on the importance of higher-level mathematics course-taking in high school and its relationship to postsecondary and workforce access and success, see www.achieve.org/files/MathWorksResources.pdf.

[4] While Iowa's postsecondary data flow from two- and four-year institutions to K–12 systems, the K–12 data only flow up to technical and community colleges.

[5] In the *2008 Closing the Expectations Gap* report, Louisiana, New York, North Carolina and Texas received credit for holding schools accountable for graduating students college and career ready. While these states continue to have robust data and reporting systems that include measures of college and career readiness, Achieve's understanding of the necessary elements of accountability systems has evolved through ongoing work with states and partner organizations.

[6] Under the National Governors Association Graduation Rate Compact of 2005, all 50 governors agreed to develop a four-year, adjusted-cohort graduation rate to ensure accuracy and consistency across the states. In October 2008, the U.S. Department of Education issued new regulations for the No Child Left Behind Act requiring states to report a four-year, adjusted-cohort graduation rate at the high school, district and state levels in the aggregate and disaggregated by subgroups. This requirement will begin with the report cards that will provide results of assessments administered in the 2010–11 school year. The final regulations define the four-year, adjusted-cohort graduation rate as the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular diploma divided by the number of students who entered high school four years earlier, taking into account transfers in and transfers out.

APPENDIX A

Achieve Resources

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

- ***American Diploma Project Algebra II End-Of-Course Exam: 2008 Annual Report*** provides an overview of the exam as well as the results from each of the participating states from the spring 2008 administration of the exam. Most states offered the test on a pilot basis, giving many educators a first look at the expectations of a rigorous Algebra II course assessment. [2008]

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

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

- ***The Perkins Act of 2006: Connecting Career and Technical Education with the College and Career Readiness Agenda*** addresses the components of the Perkins Act, discusses career and technical education more broadly in the context of the ADP agenda, and offers a number of strategies state ADP leadership teams could employ to align and coordinate the implementation of the ADP agenda and the Perkins Act. [2008]

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

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

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

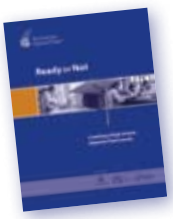
- ***Aligned Expectations? A Closer Look at College Admissions and Placement Tests*** examines what admissions and placement tests intend to and actually do measure, with recommendations for K–12 and higher education policymakers. [2007]

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

- ***Identifying Potential Dropouts: Key Lessons for Building an Early Warning Data System*** provides policymakers an overview of research about the dropout problem and the best strategies for building an early warning data system that can signal which students and schools are most in need of interventions. [2006]

- ***Do Graduation Tests Measure Up? A Closer Look at State High School Exit Exams*** analyzes graduation tests from six states to determine what the tests actually measure and finds that the exams need to be strengthened to better measure the knowledge and skills students will need to be successful after graduation. [2005]

- ***Rising to the Challenge: Are High School Graduates Prepared for College and Work?*** is a survey of recent high school graduates, employers and college faculty on how well they believe high schools are preparing students. All of these stakeholders noted significant gaps in the overall skills, abilities and work habits that are necessary for success after high school. [2005]



- ***Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma That Counts***, developed with The Education Trust, the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation and the National Alliance of Business, is the result of a multi-year project to identify the knowledge and skills all students need to be successful in college and careers. The report found a convergence in the expectations of business and postsecondary leaders; established the ADP benchmarks; and laid out a rigorous policy agenda, which has since become the agenda of the ADP Network. [2004]

In addition to the reports listed above, Achieve has also developed a number of Web-based resources to provide specific stakeholders with the information and tools they need to ensure our schools prepare students for college and careers:

- ***Postsecondary Connection:*** www.postsecconnect.org
- ***Business Tools for Better Schools:*** www.biztools4schools.org
- ***Math Works Advocacy Kit:*** www.achieve.org/MathWorks
- ***Joint Achieve-Dana Center "Mathematics Benchmarks, Grades K–12" Web site:*** www.utdanacenter.org/k12mathbenchmarks/index.php

APPENDIX B

Achieve's Fourth Annual Survey of Policies

As in past years, Achieve's 2008–09 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. Standards

Has your state gone through a formal process to align high school academic standards in mathematics and English with the knowledge and 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 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 ADP?

- 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?
- Are your state's high school graduation requirements aligned with the admissions requirements for your state's public two- or four-year colleges and universities?

C. Assessments

Does your state administer an assessment or assessments to high school students that measure college and career readiness and that postsecondary institutions can use to make placement decisions or your state business community can use to make hiring or placement decisions?

D. P–20 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. Accountability

Does your state collect longitudinal data, report publicly, set state goals for improvement, create incentives to improve, and hold schools accountable for various indicators of college and career readiness?

Refer to pages 20–24 for a complete description of the included indicators and their uses.

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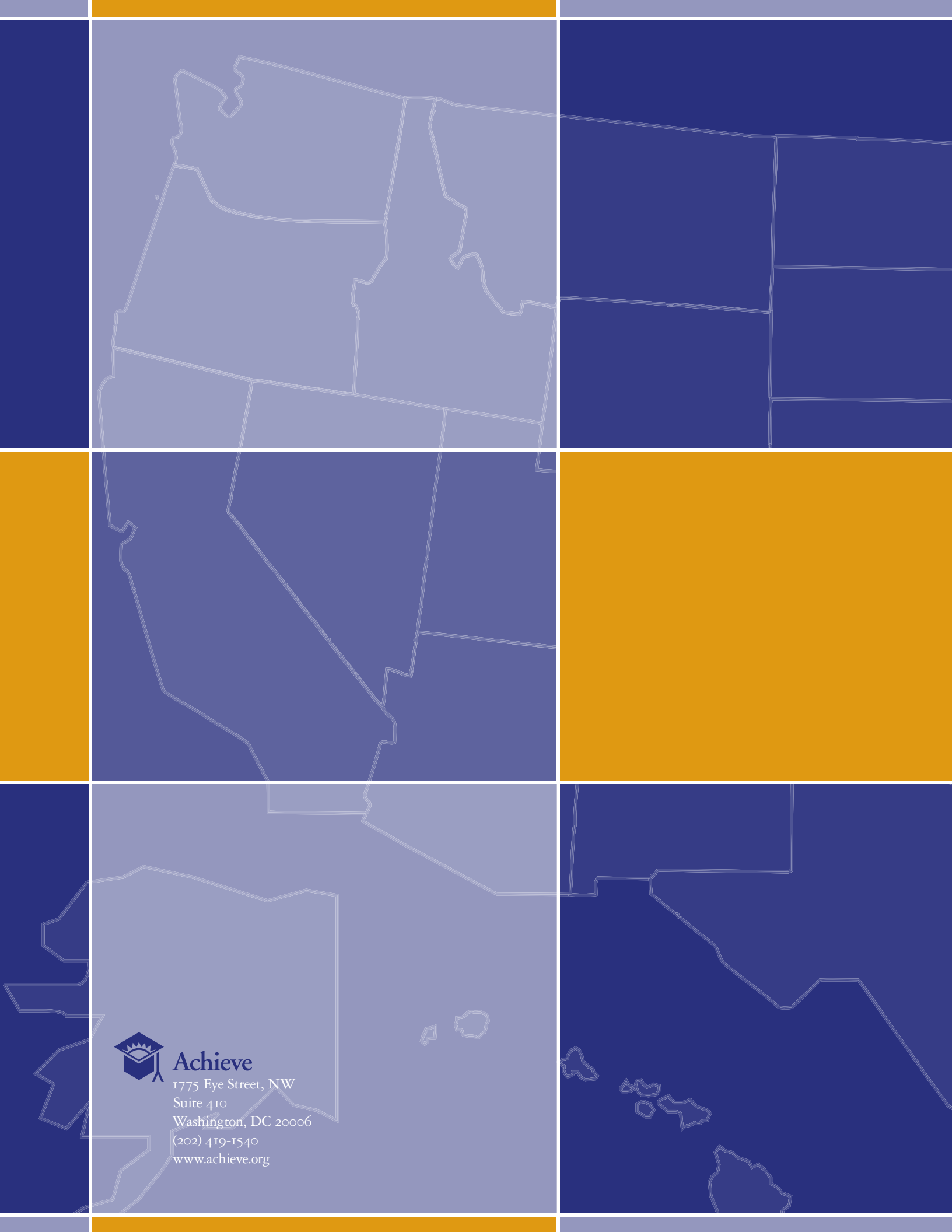

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