NGA Center for BEST PRACTICES

Issue Brief

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Setting Statewide College- and Career-Ready Goals

Executive Summary

The changing economy requires that states focus on postsecondary education and training as the goal for all students. Recognizing this, states have led the charge to increase expectations for all students. Unfortunately, the newfound support for college and career readiness has not yet led to significant improvements in student outcomes.

To stimulate improvement in the preparation of students for postsecondary education and training, states can set statewide college- and career-ready goals. In setting state education goals, governors can define the vision and inspire the change necessary to prepare all students for success in college and careers. However, to date, very little guidance exists for states seeking to create education goals.

This Issue Brief provides direction to state leaders on establishing college- and career-ready performance goals. The process should include the following five steps:

1. Select performance indicators;
2. Collect, calculate, and report baseline data for the indicators;
3. Set specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely (SMART) goals;
4. Establish annual or biannual targets to meet the goals; and
5. Publicly report performance on the indicators annually.

Unfortunately, existing measures of performance do not indicate whether a student is ready to succeed in college and careers. All states should instead report on these five key college- and career-ready performance measures:

1. Percentage of students completing (or on track to complete) a college- and career-ready course of study
2. Percentage of students demonstrating proficiency on “anchor” assessments
3. Percentage of students obtaining college credit or a career certificate in high school
4. Four-year cohort graduation rate
5. Percentage of traditional, first-year students enrolling in remedial coursework at a postsecondary institution

The integration of ambitious goals into state education policy, based on a process with broad stakeholder involvement and transparency, is a crucial first step for states to realize system improvement. With clear expectations, schools, districts, state education agency officials, nonprofits, business representatives, and policymakers can work together to meet a common mission: preparing all students for college and careers.

Introduction

The changing economy requires that states focus on postsecondary education and training as the goal for all students. Graduating from high school is no longer sufficient for future success. Whereas in the past a high school graduate could find employment with self-sustaining wages, the current economic situation has diminished that prospect. Unemployment rates for individuals without some college training have nearly doubled in one year.[2] In 2008, college graduates earned, on average, twice as much as high school graduates, a disparity that has grown since 1980.[3] By 2012, 63 percent of jobs in the United States workforce will require at least some postsecondary education or training.[4] States collectively will need to produce an additional three million college credentials to meet the growing workforce demands.[5]

States have led the charge to prepare all students for success in college and careers. From a greater focus on higher order skills found in the common core state standards to more rigorous graduation requirements, states continue to increase expectations for all students.

Unfortunately, the newfound support for college and career readiness has not yet translated into significant improvements in student outcomes. Nationally, only 23 percent of ACT test-takers met the benchmarks indicating readiness for college-level coursework in all four core subjects (English, reading, mathematics, and science).[6] This lack of preparation is also apparent once students enter college. At least 40 percent of students entering postsecondary education require remediation in either math or reading.[7] It is clear that more work needs to be done to graduate students from high school who are prepared for success in postsecondary education and training.

Defining College and Career Readiness*

A college- and career-ready student is an individual that is ready to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing, academic college courses and in workforce training programs. College refers to two- and four-year postsecondary schools. Workforce training programs pertain to careers that offer competitive, livable salaries above the poverty line; offer opportunities for career advancement; and are in a growing or sustainable industry.

* National Governors Association, "Common Core State Standards Initiative: Standards-Setting Criteria" (Washington, D.C.: 2009). Available at: http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Criteria.pdf.

To stimulate improvement in the preparation of students for postsecondary education and training, states can set statewide college- and career-ready goals. Governors of several states, including **Colorado**, **Massachusetts**, **Minnesota,** and **New Hampshire**, have set education goals and seen progress as a result. For instance, New Hampshire Governor John Lynch established a goal of zero high school dropouts by 2012. In just three years, the state has reduced the number of dropouts by nearly half. In reviewing the actions of a number of states, the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) finds that setting statewide goals is a valuable and necessary step for generating positive education outcomes.

Since 2005, the NGA Center has worked with states to develop and implement statewide education goals. We have drawn from these collaborations to create a framework for setting statewide education goals that all states can use.

Using best practices gleaned from the NGA Center's experience working with states to set education goals, this Issue Brief can serve as a manual for states as they aim to drive education system performance.

Understanding the Problem

Research suggests that setting clear and attainable goals can stimulate individual and system performance;[8] however, there has been limited guidance for states on the process for setting education goals. On two occasions, the federal government has expected states to set education goals without providing any assistance. States were required to embark on goal-setting processes for compliance rather than on a process to build stakeholder buy-in around a common vision for the state.

With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002, states were required to set performance targets for students scoring at the proficient level or above on state math and English language arts assessments. The law established a goal of 100 percent proficiency for all students by 2014, and left it up to states to determine the interim targets. This process was largely unsuccessful for two reasons. First, many education stakeholders viewed the long-term goal as unachievable. Second, many states set minimal targets for performance initially, delaying the majority of the growth until the end of the period. These states are now facing serious federal consequences, as large percentages of their schools are deemed "in need of improvement."

In 2008, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) published federal regulations for a common four-year graduation rate calculation that requires states to propose graduation rate goals and set targets to achieve them. The department, however, was silent on the process or outcomes expected from states. "There is no specific process or method that a State must use to establish its graduation rate goal," USED stated in non-regulatory guidance, and the only affirmative guidance offered is that the annual targets must show "continual" and "substantial" progress.[9] This is problematic because states previously set annual graduation rate targets as low as 0.1 percent.[10]

To be competitive in the federal Race to the Top grant competition states are expected to set college- and career-ready performance goals. Again, there is limited guidance for states on setting the goals or monitoring students' ability to meet them.

Why Set Goals to Improve College and Career Readiness?

Setting statewide education goals demonstrates that the governor is focused on the future economic vitality of the state. Without an educated workforce, the state's economy will suffer. If companies cannot draw on a pool of highly educated workers, they may choose to relocate. Other potential new employers may refrain from moving into states that lack a pool of well-educated workers. When governors set meaningful and achievable targets for improvement, it signals that the state is committed to education as the driving factor in economic vitality.

In addition, properly set goals can do three important things:

- Communicate a vision for the future to the public;
- Demonstrate tangible improvement; and
- Inspire change at the individual level.

Goals succinctly indicate what someone is trying to accomplish by answering the important question: What does success look like? Articulating a clear vision for the future is an important first step for states that seek to increase the number of students graduating high school prepared for college and careers.

Setting goals enables states to measure whether schools and districts are successful in preparing students for college and careers. Interim targets connected to the goals reveal when policies and

programs can be expected to show progress. This numerical evidence enables stakeholders to demonstrate "quick wins," which are critical to sustaining any change effort.[11]

Finally, setting timely goals can create a sense of urgency and, ultimately, inspire individual change. A key component in leading effective change is to establish a sense of urgency.[12] Specific goals narrow an individual's focus, allowing the person to target attention to a few performance measures. In a setting such as the classroom, where stakeholders analyze numerous indicators, having a small number of clearly communicated goals can motivate performance on the indicators of emphasis.[13] Research also has shown that setting goals leads to greater individual effort and increases persistence.[14] Taken together, these attributes can help stakeholders at all levels meet their governor's vision for the future.

Goal-Setting Principles

For any goal-setting effort to succeed, the process needs to be grounded in research and justifiable to the individuals responsible for implementing reform. There are four general principles that should guide states when carrying out the college- and career-ready goal-setting process:

- Stakeholder involvement;
- Transparency;
- Ambition; and
- Integration.

Involve Multiple Stakeholders

The goals will have greater support and buy-in if the process involves multiple stakeholders from the education system and community. By following an inclusive process, educators, administrators, parents, students, business leaders, and the public can work together to achieve common goals. Transparency and inclusion demonstrate that the goals and benchmarks were not set by a private group with a hidden agenda, but rather by individuals with the most at stake in the outcome of the overall effort.

Tennessee has worked to include multiple stakeholders in its college- and career-ready goal-setting process. The state team included leaders representing different student populations (e.g., minorities, English-language learners, students with disabilities) to help determine the appropriate indicators for system performance. Even with broad stakeholder engagement, states need to ensure that the goals take root. One option for promoting sustainability is to have the goals formally adopted, as in **Tennessee**.[15] This step can add weight to the buy-in process as well as provide external pressure to report on and monitor results.

Use a Transparent Process

Transparency is a critical way to engender public trust and commitment to the goal and targets. State leaders can build public understanding and ownership of the state's goal and make progress when there is clarity about the indicator definitions, the process for developing the goal and targets, the individuals and groups involved, and the way that progress on the goal will be measured and reported.

If a state lacks the data capacity to report the baseline on an indicator, the state should use its best approximation or estimate, being explicit about the method and rationale it used. In addition, those states should continue to take the necessary steps to build a robust P-16 longitudinal data system capable of gathering and analyzing the data needed for measuring progress on the state's goals. (See the *Collect, Calculate, and Report Baseline Data* section for more information.)

Set "Stretch" Goals

Ambition drives improvement. High goals lead to greater effort than low goals, so the numerical goal for each indicator should be a "stretch."[16] States, however, should not set a goal that is too ambitious. As with the No Child Left Behind Act, individuals may disregard the goal if it does not seem achievable or may be resigned to failure if it seems unattainable. This dissatisfaction is particularly detrimental because it can lead to diminished future effort.[17] For states, this is the most challenging aspect of the goal-setting process. States can ask the following questions to assess whether a goal is a stretch: Do stakeholders perceive the goal as challenging yet credible? Will a significant number of students improve if the goal is reached?

The goals need to be grounded in the possible. States should consider their goals and targets in relation to pacesetter schools, districts, and states. Particularly as state longitudinal data systems become fully operational, states need to identify schools and districts that are making the most progress and calibrate subsequent state improvement goals to reflect the progress that these models demonstrate is possible.[18] For example, **Colorado** produces a report for each school and district that details individual student growth—disaggregated by subpopulation—in comparison with the rest of the state.[19]

Integrate Goals into State Education Policy

States should embed the goals in public processes to inform the development of similarly rigorous higher education goals and other proposed education policy changes. States should consider publishing the goals in schools throughout the state; displaying them prominently on the Web sites of the state department of education, state board of education, and the state government; and citing them in publications issued by the state board of education and state department of education. (See the *Publicly Report Performance* section for more information.) States also should translate statewide goals into individual targets for schools and districts. The goals need to become an integral part of both the educational system's culture and the public and official dialogue about the system.

One way to accomplish this integration is to build the indicators and goals into the state's accountability system. In 2009, **Florida** changed its accountability system for high schools to account for growth on college- and career-ready indicators, such as the participation and performance of students who take Advanced Placement classes and exams.[20] Under **Tennessee's** federal accountability plan, the state set a graduation rate goal of 90 percent. For a high school to make adequate yearly progress it must either meet the state goal or be "on track" to do so by the 2013–14 school year.[21] The state provided each high school with the level of expected growth to be "on track," and the governor's office credits this school-level accountability with driving performance.[22]

Recommended Goal-Setting Framework

Once a transparent process involving multiple stakeholders is formalized, state leaders can use the recommended framework for setting college- and career-ready goals. States should take the following five steps:

1. Select performance indicators;
2. Collect, calculate, and report baseline data for the indicators;
3. Set specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely (SMART) goals;
4. Establish annual or biannual targets to meet the goals; and
5. Publicly report performance on the indicators annually.

Performance Indicators

The creation of sophisticated state longitudinal data systems has generated a wealth of education data for schools, districts, and the state; however, there is very little guidance on which metrics are best suited to gauge system performance. States need to measure indicators that will illuminate whether the education system is preparing students for success in college and careers.

College- and career-ready performance indicators need to be limited in number and easily understood to have an effect at the school level. Unfortunately, current state-reported indicators at the high school level (e.g., assessment scores and graduation rates) do not provide a full picture of whether students are prepared for college and careers.

States need to select a set of indicators that can at once provide a snapshot of system performance and at the same time be communicated to parents, teachers, administrators, and policymakers. To accomplish that dual mission, the indicators should not overwhelm interested parties either in their number or complexity. States also need to ensure that the indicators they adopt are valid predictors of whether students are leaving high school prepared for success. Research indicates that goals only work when the measures of performance are relevant.[23]

Based on education goals developed in eight states participating in the College & Career Readiness Policy Institute (CCRPI), the NGA Center has identified a foundational set of "Power Indicators" that can provide an accurate measure of a state's progress in preparing its students for college and careers. The Power Indicators are meant solely as a "check" on system progress; they are not meant to represent the only data collected and reported at the state level.

The suggested Power Indicators are:

1. Percentage of students completing (or on track to complete) a college- and career-ready course of study
2. Percentage of students demonstrating proficiency on "anchor" assessments
3. Percentage of students obtaining college credit or a career certificate in high school
4. Four-year cohort graduation rate
5. Percentage of traditional, first-year students enrolling in remedial coursework at a postsecondary institution

While there are many other performance measures, the NGA Center believes that these five are the minimum set of indicators necessary to accurately gauge system performance. Moreover, these indicators are sufficient to provide a full picture of system progress because each indicator serves as a check against other indicators in the group. For instance, requiring a challenging course of study ensures that standards are not reduced to increase the state's graduation rate. See **Appendix A** for more information on how each indicator complements the others. States may also choose to add additional indicators to this set of five based on local interest or conditions; however, the total set of indicators should be limited in number.

These indicators signal what policies need to change. For instance, if a majority of students complete a college- and career-ready course of study, but are not able to pass the "anchor" assessment, then the state needs to alter the curriculum or take steps to improve instruction. If a significant number of students are able to pass the "anchor" assessment, but are then placed into remedial coursework, then the state needs to adjust the cut score. The data not only provide an overview of system performance, they are also incredibly useful for tracking the outcome of policy decisions and making changes if necessary.

Each indicator is essential for gauging preparation for success beyond high school and plays an integral role in comprising a set of measures that states can adopt.

Course of Study

The academic intensity of a student's high school curriculum is one of the most important components in predicting whether a student will succeed in postsecondary coursework and training.[24] Since the National Education Summit on High Schools in 2005, the clear state trend has been to increase high school graduation expectations as a first step to providing students with the necessary skills for success.

Twenty-one states require students to complete a college- and career-ready course of study to graduate from high school.[25] For instance, **Texas** recommends that high school students to take four years of English, mathematics, and science to graduate high school. The college- and career-ready course of study indicator enables states to determine what percentage of students are taking, and are on track to complete, a course of study that provides momentum toward completion of a postsecondary degree or credential.

Anchor Assessment

Many state high school assessments reflect knowledge and skills students learn early in high school. These assessments do not provide information on whether a student is prepared for college or employment. Consequently, students can achieve "proficiency" and still find themselves in remedial coursework when they enter postsecondary education.

Only 14 states offer "anchor" assessments to indicate which students are prepared for postsecondary options.[26] Six states, including **California**, **Hawaii**, and **West Virginia**, developed these anchor assessments internally, while eight states—**Alabama, Colorado,** and **Michigan—** use a national college admissions exam. While the specific approaches of these assessments differ, each has a cut score that postsecondary institutions use to place students into first-year, credit-bearing courses and training.[27] States should monitor performance on these assessments to measure whether coursework and instruction are aligned in a way that prepares high school students for future success.

College and Career Credit in High School

Students who obtain college credit in high school—through dual enrollment, dual credit, or Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs—are more likely to enroll in college and complete a degree.[28] States such as **Georgia**, **Kentucky**, **Nevada**, and **Wisconsin** have proved in their work to expand AP test taking and success that states can raise rigor and get results at scale.[29] At the same time, students who earn a career certificate are better prepared for entry into a job or further training. Leaving high school with college credit or a career certificate not only shows that a student is ready for postsecondary success, but also provides a head start to that objective.

Graduation Rate

High school graduation is the single largest hurdle that students must clear to enroll in postsecondary education and training. Students who do not graduate high school are less likely than others to become employed and, on average, earn less than their peers with some postsecondary education.[30] An accurate, cohort-based measure of the number of on-time graduates in a given year is an essential system performance metric.

The U.S. Department of Education requires all states to report a four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate at the state, district, and high school level following the 2010–2011 school year.

Furthermore, states must use the four-year adjusted cohort rate for federal accountability following the 2011–2012 school year. For more information on the cohort graduation rate calculation, see *Implementing Graduation Counts: State Progress to Date, 2009*.

Remedial Coursework

There is no more telling indicator of college preparation than the need for remediation. Research shows that the leading predictor that a student will drop out of college is the need for remedial reading. While 58 percent of students who take no remedial education courses earn a bachelor's degree within eight years, only 17 percent of students who enroll in a remedial reading course receive a bachelor's degree within the same time period.[31] Students who need remedial coursework in mathematics do not fare much better. Only 45 percent of students in two- and four-year institutions that enroll in a remedial math course will complete a degree.[32] These rates are particularly disturbing when coupled with the fact that states pay approximately $1 billion annually to provide remedial education.[33]

Because of the importance of this indicator for college completion, a few states have begun to provide this information to high schools statewide. **Kentucky** was the first state to provide a "Feedback Report" to every high school to show how each school's student remediation and persistence rates compare at the school, district, and state level. This critical information can be used by policymakers to determine whether high schools successfully prepared students for college.

Collect, Calculate, and Report Baseline Data

Every goal-setting process must begin with baseline data. States need to know current system performance before setting future performance goals. Collecting information on the suggested Power Indicators requires sophisticated longitudinal data systems that track high school and postsecondary outcomes. Fortunately, the data to report on the Power Indicators is either currently available or on track to be available in the next few years.

The Data Quality Campaign recommends 10 essential elements be included in a state longitudinal data system, and all 50 states are on pace to implement the elements. Since 2005, the number of states with all 10 elements has risen from zero to 12.[34] At the same time, the number of states actually calculating and reporting on indicators of system performance has also risen. For example, 48 states will calculate and publicly report a four-year cohort graduation rate by the end of 2012.[35]

Some states are able to collect and report data for the Power Indicators immediately, but many others cannot yet report on all five proposed indicators. The federal government awarded $250 million in grants to improve state data systems in 2010, so it is an opportune time for states to make the necessary system changes to report these indicators.

States that cannot immediately report on the full set of recommended elements should create "interim" indicators, where necessary, to monitor performance in the five Power Indicator areas. Interim indicators should rely on currently available data and thus not place any additional burden on the state during the transition period. For example, **Ohio** will calculate and report its graduation rate using the National Center for Education Statistics Leaver Rate until 2011 when its data system will report a four-year cohort rate.[36] Interim indicators are not as accurate a measure of college and career readiness as the recommended Power Indicators, but can provide states with immediate information regarding system performance. When baseline data are available, state leaders should revisit the goal to reflect the calculation change.

Set SMART Goals

Goals can be a powerful motivator if constructed appropriately and damaging if they are unachievable. Goal-setting theory explains that goals can stimulate performance when they are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely (SMART).[37] Goals that are specific (i.e., increase state graduation rate to 90 percent) generate higher levels of performance than generic goals (i.e., increase state graduation rate).[38] At the same time, goals that are measurable and hard to achieve are positively connected to performance.[39]

However, if the goals are not realistic, either in the scope or time to reach the goal, performance will not follow.[40] As mentioned previously, stakeholders within a school or state will not be motivated to attain a goal that is not meaningful, regardless of the time given. Concurrently, a goal that is meaningful will only lead to increased performance if stakeholders believe they can accomplish it within a certain timeframe. Too short a timeframe and the goal will be dismissed as unattainable; too long a timeframe and no immediate motivation will occur. In short, the goals should reflect a long-term vision for improvement within a timeframe of five or 10 years.

Commitment to a goal is based on two factors: importance of the outcomes expected and belief that the goal can be reached.[41] States therefore should not only choose measures that are connected to postsecondary performance, but also set attainable goals. Policymakers need to make the case that achievable goals are the first step in a long process of continuous improvement. Much like how a new runner does not try to complete a marathon in a month, so too must states not aim for full-scale improvement overnight. Attainable and realistic must be the mantra of policymakers as they set education goals.[42] As an example, the **Massachusetts** Board of Elementary and Secondary Education recommended that the state set its performance goal on the state assessment at 85 percent by 2020—rather than at the 100 percent proficiency level of No Child Left Behind—to increase mobilization to improve education outcomes.[43]

Graduation Rate Goals: From Aspiration to Reality in Massachusetts

One way that states can further improve system performance is to break down the state education goals into a manageable size for each school. It is imperative that parents, teachers, principals, and other community members not be overwhelmed by the challenge they face. Rather, states should work to provide information to schools and districts to help them tailor improvement strategies to the students most in need.

The NGA Center has developed a process that states can use to stimulate performance on graduation rates at the school level. Working with a number of states on efforts to increase graduation rates, the NGA Center has encouraged policymakers to not only set statewide goals, but also to make them meaningful for schools.

Massachusetts is at the forefront of states establishing education goals. In particular, the state's graduation rate goal of 95 percent by 2018, one of the highest in the nation, requires approximately 14 percent growth in 10 years. This means that the state needs to graduate an additional 10,600 students to meet its goal.

While this number may be daunting for parents, teachers, and policymakers alike, when presented another way, it becomes much more manageable. For Massachusetts to reach its state graduation rate goal, each high school in the state needs to graduate an additional 2.94 students per year. This number can be used as a communication tool to inspire change, helping to focus the efforts of all concerned parties.

To take into account individual high school enrollment and graduation rates, the NGA Center recommends that states calculate the additional number of graduates for each high school. This school-based estimate can vary widely from the overall state estimate. Making this information available to schools and districts is one more way that states can help improve performance at the local level.

States can use different methods for identifying the Power Indicator goals, such as benchmarking to leading states or connecting K-12 and postsecondary or workforce system goals. The NGA Center has worked with states to set goals using each of these methods. For example, **New Mexico** wanted to ensure that its goal for increasing the graduation rate took into account the unique challenges of large Hispanic and Native American populations. The state chose to benchmark its five-year graduation rate goal to **Arizona's** current performance. The similarity in student populations made this goal more realistic for stakeholders in the state.

Ohio Governor Ted Strickland has made raising college enrollment and completion a key goal of his tenure. When setting its own system performance goals, the Ohio Department of Education worked with members of the postsecondary system to ensure that K-12 system performance goals, such as graduation rates, were designed to meet Governor Strickland's goal of an additional 230,000 enrollees in Ohio postsecondary institutions.

Create Annual or Biannual Targets

For goals to be effective, individuals need summary feedback.[44] It is important that states create and publicly report on annual or biannual targets to measure performance and adjust expectations. The targets provide parents, teachers, administrators, and policymakers with information about performance. Not only can this data demonstrate early wins, which is a critical component to generate change, it can allow leaders to shift resources or strategies if success is not apparent.

States should consider past performance and other states' performance on a particular indicator when creating one- or two-year targets that lead to a long-term goal. For example, a state that aims to increase the percentage of high school students with college credit may choose to benchmark its performance to past growth in the percentage of students scoring a 3 or higher on an AP exam or to the state with the greatest growth on that indicator (**Florida** at 3.1 percent).[45]

While taking into account new funding opportunities and policy change, states should aim for relatively consistent progress across the length of the goal. Delaying expected gains until the end of the performance period may not spur immediate action. For examples of two-year targets aligned to 10-year stretch goals for K-12 and postsecondary system performance, see **Appendix B**. States should also revisit the targets on an annual or biannual basis to ensure that the state is on the right path to reach the long-term goal.

Publicly Report Performance

The final—and potentially most important—step of the framework is to publicly communicate the goals and performance. Making the information public enhances the commitment at all stakeholder levels and places pressure on individuals to reach the stated vision.[46] Governors and state education chiefs can include messages about the indicators and goals in their speeches. Policymakers can require the publication of annual reports on the chosen indicators and progress toward meeting the goals. Most importantly, principals and teachers can infuse their school improvement conversations with data on the college and career readiness of their students.

As part of integrating goals into state education policy, states can use Web sites and school reports to ensure that the goals and annual performance on the Power Indicators are widely reported. For example, the **Georgia** State Board of Education publicizes the education system's performance on its Web site. After receiving approval from the Governor's Workforce Cabinet, **Arkansas** will include performance targets and goals on its newly created multiagency Web site, Arkansas Works, which offers college and career planning tools. **Delaware** is building a data dashboard with access to performance information driven by stakeholder role. States such as

Hawaii, **Indiana**, and **Ohio** send reports with college- and career-ready indicators to each school comparing the school's annual performance to the state's overall performance.[47]

The next step that states need to take is to clearly indicate not only the minimum performance level expected, but also the goal each school should aspire to meet. This includes clearly communicating the state goal and individual school goals. For more information on making goals real for schools, see the text box *Graduation Rate Goals: From Aspiration to Reality*.

Conclusion

States have led the charge to increase expectations for all students. These efforts have created a nationwide focus on college and career readiness, but states realize that more action is needed to ensure that all stakeholders are working to meet a single, consistent vision for improvement. By setting state education goals, governors can define the vision and inspire the change necessary to prepare all students for success in college and careers.

More than simply inspiring change, goals are necessary for accountability. Without a clear sense of what is expected, individuals and organizations cannot be held accountable for performance. Creating public goals can clarify expectations and enable states to hold schools and districts accountable when they do not meet established performance standards. Goals also help hold stakeholders throughout the state, including the governor's office, the legislature, state education agency, and advocacy groups, accountable for their efforts to improve student outcomes.

Appendix A. Power Indicators Cross-Reference Table

Power Indicators	What it Measures	What it Leaves Out	Complemented By
Graduation Rate	Did students finish?	Have students taken the courses necessary to prepare them for college and career? Can students pass a college-level assessment? Can students pass a college-level course? Did schools actually prepare students for success in college?	College- and career-ready (CCR) coursework CCR score on anchor assessment College credit in high school Enrollment in developmental coursework
CCR Score on Anchor Assessment	Can students pass a college-level test?	Did students finish or did schools push out the students who could not pass? Have students taken the courses necessary to prepare them for college and career? Can students pass a college-level course? Did schools actually prepare students for success in college?	Graduation rate CCR coursework College credit in high school Enrollment in developmental coursework
CCR Coursework	Have students taken the courses necessary to prepare them for college and career?	Did students finish or did schools push out the students who could not pass? Can students pass a college-level assessment? Can students pass a college-level course? Did schools actually prepare students for success in college?	Graduation rate CCR score on anchor assessment College credit in high school Enrollment in development coursework
College Credit in High School	Can students pass a college-level course?	Did students finish or did schools push out the students who could not pass? Have students taken the courses necessary to prepare them for college and career? Can students pass a college-level assessment?	Graduation rate CCR coursework CCR score on anchor assessment
Enrollment in Developmental Coursework in College	Did schools actually prepare students for success in college?	Are there students who did not reach college? Did students enrolled in developmental courses take a rigorous course of study? Did students enrolled in developmental courses pass the anchor assessment?	Graduation rate CCR coursework CCR score on anchor assessment

Appendix B. Arkansas Performance Goals and Measures

	Core Goal Description	Indicators	Measures						
			2007–08 Baseline	09–10 Goal	11–12 Goal	13–14 Goal	15–16 Goal	17–18 Goal	19–20 Goal
High School	Core Goal #1 Increase the High School Graduation Rate	Arkansas Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate (NGA Compact Rate)	69.4%	85%	85%	85%	87%	92%	95%
High School	Core Goal #2 Increase Postsecondary and Career Readiness	% of Students Graduating with Smart Core	58%	62%	68%	73%	81%	85%	90%
High School	Core Goal #2 Increase Postsecondary and Career Readiness	% of Students Graduating with Smart Core Plus (Successful Completion of an AP, IB, or Concurrent Credit Course, Receiving a Career Readiness Certificate)	49%	53%	58%	62%	67%	73%	80%
High School	Core Goal #2 Increase Postsecondary and Career Readiness	% of Students Not Requiring College Remediation	48.7%	53%	56%	60%	64%	69%	70%
Postsecondary	Core Goal #3 Increase Participation in Postsecondary Education	% of Public High School Graduates Enrolling in an Arkansas Postsecondary Institution within One Year	50.3%	58%	63%	67%	70%	73%	75%
Postsecondary	Core Goal #3 Increase Participation in Postsecondary Education	% of Public High School Graduates Enrolling in an Arkansas Postsecondary Institution within Four Years	57.2%	66%	70%	74%	79%	84%	87%
Postsecondary	Core Goal #3 Increase Participation in Postsecondary Education	Number of Adults Age 25 and Above Enrolling in an Arkansas Postsecondary Institution	5,205	5,600	6,100	6,600	7,000	7,200	7,500
Postsecondary	Core Goal #4 Increase Postsecondary Completion	% of Public School Graduates Receiving a Two-Year Degree from an Arkansas Postsecondary Institution within Three Years of Graduating	3.2%	5%	7%	11%	14%	17%	20%
Postsecondary	Core Goal #4 Increase Postsecondary Completion	% of Public School Graduates Receiving a Four-Year Degree from an Arkansas Postsecondary Institution within Six Years of Graduating	13.7%	19%	21%	24%	27%	29%	33%
Postsecondary	Core Goal #4 Increase Postsecondary Completion	Number of Adults Age 25 and Above Receiving a Two- or Four-Year Degree from an Arkansas Postsecondary Institution	3,161	5,050	5,250	5,620	5,960	6,260	6,700

Notes

[1] The author would like to thank Alex Harris, Alissa Peltzman, and Elliot Regenstein for their assistance in shaping this framework.
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