Achieve

American Diploma Project Network

Taking Root

Indiana's Lessons for Sustaining the College- and Career-Ready Agenda

About Achieve

Achieve, created by the nation's governors and business leaders, is a bipartisan, non-profit organization that helps states raise academic standards, improve assessments and strengthen accountability to prepare all young people for postsecondary education, careers and citizenship.

About the American Diploma Project (ADP) Network

In 2005, Achieve launched the ADP Network—a collaboration of states working together to improve their academic standards and provide all students with a high school education that meets the needs of today's workplaces and universities. The ADP Network members—responsible for educating nearly 85 percent of all our nation's public high school students—are committed to taking four college and career readiness action steps:

- Align high school standards with the demands of college and careers.
- Require all students to complete a college- and career-ready curriculum to earn a high school diploma.
- Build assessments into the statewide system that measure students' readiness for college and careers.
- Develop reporting and accountability systems that promote college and career readiness for all students.

Taking Root: Strategies for Sustaining the College- and Career-Ready Agenda would not have been possible without the generous support of the GE Foundation.

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Education Reform in Indiana

Introduction

In the early 1990s, Clyde Ingle, then Indiana commissioner of higher education, received a complaint from a parent whose child had been denied entrance to the state's flagship university, Indiana University. Looking over the student's transcript, Ingle quickly saw that the student had taken several accounting courses in place of math—and therefore didn't have the preparation or skills necessary for success in college.

Ingle realized he was looking at a microcosm of a statewide problem: It wasn't just this student who had been funneled into technical classes at the expense of learning more advanced, college-preparatory skills, but rather thousands and thousands of Indiana secondary students. Indeed, in meetings with university presidents, Ingle was hearing frustrated complaints about students who were unprepared for college-level courses and who lacked the most basic of skills. Universities were spending more money on remediation to teach students what they should have learned in high school, and getting them up to par was an expensive undertaking.

At the same time, the state's business and labor communities also were experiencing frustrations. Indiana was in the midst of a painful transition from an agricultural and manufacturing-based economy with plenty of high-wage, low-skill jobs to one demanding higher levels of education, and both employers and unions were seeing a pressing need for better-prepared—and college-educated—workers. They found the state's education achievement and college-going rates unacceptable and wanted Indiana to do more to clarify the preparation students would need in school to be successful after graduation.

Thus was born Indiana's 15-years-and-still-counting commitment to making a high school diploma more meaningful and to opening more doors to students to attend college. While the state has enacted many groundbreaking policies and proposals to improve student achievement and postsecondary success, this case study focuses on just one reform element—the development and adoption of Indiana's "Core 40" high school diploma. Core 40 spells out the 40 course credits high school students should earn to be prepared for college and careers.

Originally adopted in 1994 by both the Indiana State Board of Education and the Indiana Commission for Higher Education as a curriculum high schools had to offer all students, Core 40 was enacted into law in 2005 as the default high school curriculum required of all students to graduate beginning with the class of 2011.

Over this time period, Indiana has seen remarkable gains in moving more students out of general-education courses into rigorous, college-preparatory courses, and enrolled into college (all data below from the Indiana Commission for Higher Education):

- In 1994, only 12 percent of Indiana high schoolers completed a college-preparatory curriculum; in 2006, more than two-thirds did.
- Between 2001 and 2007, the number of students—including both African-American and Latino students—taking Advanced Placement (AP) exams more than doubled.
- In 1992, only half of graduating Indiana high school students went on to college, placing the state 34th in the nation on this measure. But by 2004, the state's ranking had shot up to 10th in the nation, with 62 percent of graduates going immediately on to college.
- At one selective Indiana public university, 85 percent of students who achieved the Core 40 diploma or Advanced Honors diploma are earning a bachelor's degree within six years; without this preparation, only 60 percent earn a degree.

By 2015, Indiana leaders have set a public goal of being among the top five states in terms of on-time college graduation (within six years at four-year schools and within three years at community colleges).

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Strategies for Sustaining the College- and Career-Ready Agenda

To give states the information they need to sustain hard-fought education reform effectively, Achieve conducted research on state education reforms that have been sustained successfully for over a decade or more. Funded by the GE Foundation, Achieve hopes this work will help other state leaders, wherever they may be on their road to reform, replicate successful strategies and accelerate systemic reform in their own states, particularly around the college- and career-ready agenda.

The project includes:

- Four case studies that examine both governmental and non-governmental strategies that were effective in making reform last in Indiana, Massachusetts, South Carolina and Texas.
- A paper that draws on and synthesizes the case studies' overarching lessons and states' strategies for sustainability.
- A tool that states can use in their own planning.

The four states were chosen because they were able to pass and sustain significant education reforms over time, for at least a decade. The focus of the case studies is not on the specific policies passed, but rather the process and strategies the states employed to make significant change last.

In Indiana, a focus on a rigorous, college- and career-ready curricula and increased access to postsecondary opportunities has resulted in phenomenal progress. What accounts for its remarkable gains and sustained focus? Who was involved? How did they make it happen? And what kept it going, especially in the face of important changes in state political leadership? This case study about Indiana's reform efforts will illuminate a few of the most salient and replicable lessons the state has learned over the course of its 15 years of education reform.

Education Reform in Indiana

Core 40 Milestones

1994
- —Initial development of the Core 40 diploma to specify the courses students should take to prepare for college and careers
- —State enacts policy that all schools are required to offer Core 40 curriculum and enroll all students—but not all students are expected to finish the Core 40 sequence to earn a diploma

1995
- —Stan Jones appointed commissioner of higher education

1997
- —Governor Frank O'Bannon enters office

1998
- —Formation of the Education Roundtable (formalized in legislation in 1999)

1999
- —Creation of the Community College of Indiana through the joining of Ivy Tech and Vincennes University

'99–2000
- —Education Roundtable establishes grade-level academic standards for K–12 system

2001
- —Indiana participates in the American Diploma Project as a state partner

2003
- —Finalization of the Education Roundtable's P–16 plan
- —Governor Joe Kernan enters office in September upon the death of Governor O'Bannon

2004
- —Education Roundtable recommends completion of the Core 40 curriculum become the default requirement for earning a high school diploma
- —Indiana Department of Education and Indiana Commission for Higher Education launch major outreach campaign to communicate with key decisionmakers about the importance of this change

2005
- —Indiana State Board of Education updates high school curriculum and diploma requirements
- —The Legislature makes the Core 40 diploma the default high school graduation requirement and the minimum admissions requirement for the state's four-year public universities beginning with the class of 2011
- —Governor Mitch Daniels enters office

Sustainability Lessons in Indiana

Every state—and every reform effort—has its own unique elements, history and political context. While these often make for interesting observations, they are of limited utility to other states trying to create their own education reform plans and manage their own reform efforts. Of more value are lessons and strategies that speak directly to what makes a public-policy change successful and what helps it "stick" in the system to make a difference. The following lessons were gleaned from one-on-one and group conversations with individuals who have played a role in Indiana's education reform efforts. They include conversations with state elected officials; government employees, including the Department of Education; business leaders; educators in the field; and education activists.

Indiana's Key Strategies for Sustainability

- Special "quasi-governmental" mechanisms, built at the beginning of reform efforts, can facilitate long-term stability
- Strong and consistent education and political leadership is vital to laying the groundwork for a sustainable reform
- Build on—and build up—reforms over time
- External champions are critical to building and maintaining support over time
- Align reform with existing and future education policies
- Transparency in the development and use of standards is important to gaining and sustaining support

Special "quasi-governmental" mechanisms, built at the beginning of reform efforts, can facilitate long-term stability

Creating special entities that cross institutional silos and bring inside- and outside-the-system leaders together can be an essential strategy for developing, refining, pursuing and monitoring reform over the long haul. In Indiana, leaders point to the essential role the Education Roundtable has played in steering the state's efforts.

Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s—as discussions about and movement on education reform began accelerating in states around the country—Indiana found itself in a stalemate, with business and educators (especially the state teachers' union) squaring off repeatedly on opposite sides of any issue. Fingerpointing and gridlock characterized the state education policy climate.

In the mid-1990s, Stan Jones—a former legislator and aide to former Governor Evan Bayh (and eventually state commissioner of higher education from 1995 to 2009)—began informal conversations with leaders of key constituencies, including business leaders, about education in Indiana. While everyone could agree that there were problems the state wasn't tackling, Jones wanted to see if there was any room for agreement around the solutions. Initially, these discussions were focused more on relationship-building, but they evolved into opportunities to find common ground.

In 1998, Governor Frank O'Bannon endorsed these discussions—and legitimized them—by creating the Indiana Education Roundtable, which included leaders from K–12, the business community, higher education, the Legislature and the community. Just as important, Governor O'Bannon, a Democrat, asked Superintendent of Public Instruction Suellen Reed, a Republican, to co-chair the group with him. The Legislature formalized the Roundtable in state law the following year and charged it with important rule-making responsibilities, including the adoption of new K–12 standards for student learning.

Education Reform in Indiana

From its inception, the Roundtable was both impressive in its members and bipartisan in its work. Explained Pat Kiely, president and CEO of the Indiana Manufacturers Association and one of the Roundtable's original members, "Having the right people is key. You need to work some pretty big differences out in order to agree on certain education reforms."

Stories have been told that at first it was difficult for some of these folks who were so used to lobbying on opposite sides of the issue to sit in the same room. But through the even-handed and ego-less leadership of Governor O'Bannon and Superintendent Reed, coupled with the careful prodding and cajoling of Jones behind the scenes, the group was slowly able to transcend partisan and sectoral differences.

To inform the group's deliberations and to help members develop a common framework, the Roundtable drew heavily on national resources and best practices from around the country. It frequently invited organizations such as Achieve, Inc., The Education Trust, the International Center for Leadership in Education, the National Governors Association and The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation to review and help inform its work. By bringing in outside experts and looking at the same facts and same studies, the debate about how best to proceed was de-personalized and de-politicized. Although Roundtable members could still disagree on many matters, they had uncovered a common language and common reference to work together on solutions.

As part of enacting the Roundtable into statute in 1999, the Legislature tasked the Roundtable with developing "world class academic standards" to raise expectations and clarify the skills and knowledge all Hoosier students should be learning. The group began with language arts, math and science and followed with social studies the next year (the state's content standards are now on a six-year review and adoption process).

As part of its legislative mandate, the Roundtable also is charged with making recommendations to help students achieve at high levels. From its unique vantage point, the Roundtable saw the need to strengthen the entire P–16 pipeline for students. In 2003, after eight months of deliberations and public meetings across Indiana, the Roundtable formally adopted a "P–16 Plan" to serve as a roadmap for improving student achievement in Indiana.

By 2004—10 years after Core 40 had first been conceived as a voluntary college- and career-ready curriculum—it seemed time to revisit the idea of whether Indiana would be better served by making completion of the Core 40 classes a graduation requirement for all students. Eventually, the Roundtable endorsed the idea—especially after a "safety clause" was also created that would allow families and students to knowingly opt out of the curriculum—and asked the Legislature to act. It also proposed that Core 40 become the minimum course requirement for admission to Indiana's four-year public universities.

Although the vote in the legislature wasn't a slam dunk, by all accounts the Roundtable's support and its public deliberations to reach its recommendation paved the way and dampened opposition. In 2005, legislators endorsed making Core 40 the default high school graduation requirement for all students and the minimum admissions requirement for Indiana four-year institutions, both effective with the class of 2011.

Looking across all states, it's clear a coordinating entity like the Education Roundtable can be a critical venue for reaching common agreement and a shared vision among key and often competing stakeholders. (In fact, many states have created P–16 or P–20 councils with attributes similar to the Indiana Roundtable, although the success and authority of these organizations varies.) Indeed, Superintendent Reed counsels that it's better to have the major players under the same tent with you.

"Having the right people is key. You need to work some pretty big differences out to agree on certain education reforms."

—Pat Kiely, *president and CEO of the Indiana Manufacturers Association*

That's a calculated risk, as skeptics may water down your work too much, but in Indiana's case it seems to have made the Roundtable more credible and helped break logjams that were preventing change.

As one business representative on the Roundtable observed, "When there are disparate voices telling them what to do, legislators can make excuses not to act. When the Roundtable spoke with one voice, the Legislature had no other way to go."

Strong and consistent education and political leadership is vital to laying the groundwork for sustainable reform

Often, successful reform seems to be nurtured along by a few champions, without whom one can never imagine getting done what has been done. The most successful states have at the center of their reform agendas education reformers who are both politically savvy and smart on the policy. These individuals keep the agenda moving forward and keep players focused on the big picture, have a clear sense of what needs to change and why, and can broker the right deals and compromises to make progress.

Public Leadership

For Indiana, it was very meaningful that the Democratic governor and Republican superintendent co-chaired the Roundtable during its early years. They, together, were the faces of the Roundtable. In 2000, for example, Governor O'Bannon and Superintendent Reed hosted a meeting to distribute booklets on the then-newly adopted standards that explained why students needed to embrace the new standards and what parents could do to help. The two leaders co-hosted a number of other meetings, including the P-16 Pathways to College Policy Forum in 2002, to keep the work of the Roundtable moving forward and provide stakeholders with important information. Despite their political differences, they often presented a unified front in support of the Roundtable's work.

It was equally important that Governor O'Bannon did not impose his own agenda on the Roundtable. Rather, by all accounts, he was unlike some governors in that he had a vision for change but was happy to share credit and the podium with many others. His unique type of leadership allowed subsequent governors, including Governor Kernan (D) and Governor Mitch Daniels (R), to pick up the baton and keep the reform moving, despite changes in party leadership.

In addition to the leadership of Governor O'Bannon and Superintendent Reed, there are a number of key legislative leaders—notably Representative Greg Porter (D) and Senator Teresa Lubbers (R)—who have been longstanding members of the Roundtable, since 1999 and 2000, respectively. This relationship has cut both ways; their participation ensures there is legislative input in the Roundtable's plans and proposals while their positions in the legislature (as chairs of the House Education Committee and the Senate Education and Career Development Committee) have allowed them to help shepherd the Roundtable's proposals through their chambers. (In May 2009, the Commission for Higher Education named Lubbers its new commissioner, succeeding Jones.)

Reformers should be careful not to have their reform agenda attached too specifically to a party or a person so that, during political transitions, the reform can survive. There is often a tightrope to walk when it comes to balancing ownership of the agenda. For example, while leadership from the governor or another key state official is important, it is not necessarily the most important type of leadership required to successfully sustain a reform. Yet, at the same time, education reform usually requires huge system changes that, at the end of the day, require the governor to throw his or her weight behind getting them implemented.

Behind the Scenes Leadership

If the Education Roundtable was successful at helping diverse stakeholders find common ground, it can be attributed in part to the political and strategic smarts of Jones, who used his own personal belief in continual improvement to skillfully guide the work of the Roundtable behind the scenes and keep it on track. Jones invested a great deal of time working with Roundtable members individually and as a group to understand the issues, what the data showed and potential solutions.

As businessman—and former president and CEO of the Indiana Chamber of Commerce—Christopher LaMothe observed, "Stan understood better than most how the political process works. He is well-regarded by both sides of the aisle. He has no ego." But just as important, Jones was not satisfied with the status quo for students, according to many Roundtable members. It was clear to all that he thought that the education system needed to be doing better by kids, and he tenaciously pushed Roundtable members to come together behind key proposals for change.

Importantly, Jones himself cautions that a group like the Roundtable just can't convene without an agenda; there needs to be a purposefulness about where it is going and why.

External champions are critical to building and maintaining support over time

Helping people understand why they should support education reform—and continue supporting it, year after year—is a key component of any successful effort. States with sustained reform efforts can all point to the presence of an external advocate as a major condition of their success. Outside champions can create pressure for change, apply that pressure to policymakers when the effort is stalled, and make sure reforms continue forward despite setbacks or turnover of key elected leaders.

For the business community, getting Hoosiers to change their mindset and understand how the economy was evolving was an essential part of making the case for change. If the state were to remain competitive, the workforce needed more and higher levels of education, as a high school diploma was no longer enough for success. Employers took their place as key advocates and agitators for reform in Indiana in the early 1990s—"We were alarmed by the statistics on education achievement and Indiana's ranking among the states," recalled LaMothe—and they haven't stepped down. Represented consistently by the Indiana Chamber, the Indiana Manufacturing Association and several key business leaders serving on the Indiana Commission for Higher Education, employers have applied unwavering pressure for change over the past two decades. Their advocacy efforts have been joined by organized labor—specifically, the Indiana State Building and Construction Trades Council—which also saw the need to upgrade the skills of high school students to ensure they could successfully pursue postsecondary training.

The frustrations of business and the trade unions in the early 1990s culminated in Indiana's push to identify the Core 40 curriculum and better prepare more students for college and careers. Indeed, the concept behind Core 40—to clearly identify the high school courses deemed essential for student success in going directly to the workplace, pursuing technical training or an associate degree, or seeking a four-year degree—originated in the Indiana Chamber of Commerce's Business-Higher Education Forum, a policy committee composed of employers and university presidents. The Chamber worked closely with Jones and his staff to flesh out the idea of Core 40 and to inform the policy the Commission for Higher Education and State Board of Education ultimately adopted.

Outside champions can create pressure for change, apply that pressure to policymakers when the effort is stalled and make sure reforms continue forward despite setbacks or turnover of key elected leaders.

According to Kevin Brinegar, a member of the Roundtable and president and CEO of the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, "Our goal was to have the two educational governing bodies adopt a position supporting Core 40 as the new high school graduation requirement and the minimum admission requirement for our four-year public institutions of higher education. To that end, business leaders encouraged the Commission for Higher Education and the State Board of Education" to convene a historic joint meeting to discuss and endorse Core 40 formally. In the end, to appease a wider constituency, the state decided to require schools to enroll all students in Core 40 courses as the recommended course of study, but not expect all students to finish Core 40 to earn a diploma.

Importantly, business and labor didn't move onto other priorities after the 1994 decision about Core 40, rather they continued to press their case aggressively for better student achievement, for greater accountability and specifically for Core 40. According to former Superintendent of Public Instruction Suellen Reed, business and labor leaders "kept harping," lent their support to other education reforms and eventually persuaded state leaders to make the Core 40 diploma the default graduation requirement in 2005.

The 1998 creation of the Education Roundtable was an important milestone in these developments. It established a formal venue for business, labor and community leaders to bring their perspective to debates about education issues; have a healthy dialogue with education leaders; and develop agreement on a best path forward for Indiana, said Brinegar. In particular, the Roundtable provided a way for key constituencies in Indiana to discuss their different views about Core 40 and, in 2005, to ultimately agree to make it the default graduation requirement for high school students.

As one business executive explained, "We wore everybody down." Today, both education and business leaders in the state are continuing to promote college as the key to a successful future. The common message is that brains—not brawn—are the way to success.

Build on—and build up—reforms over time

There is something to be said for the old adage, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." Most states that have successfully implemented reform can point to a time (or two or three) when they could have turned back, given up and gone home, but didn't. Compromise is a part of the game and leaders must know when to push and when to fall back. Incremental movement can still be significant progress.

In Indiana, the business community initially hoped that all students would be required to complete the Core 40 courses for graduation. Their proposal was met by resistance by some who thought the curricula was inappropriate for students who would not be attending college and others who worried schools didn't have the right resources to support the policy change. High school counselors and teachers were most worried about how it would affect students, and local superintendents resisted state intrusion. In addition, higher education leaders—although outspoken about the problems of remediating college students—fretted about its impact on admissions. In the end, the state struck a compromise: When the Core 40 diploma was adopted in 1994, it was rolled out as an optional diploma for students.

Its significant impact—and why it was adopted finally in 2005 as a graduation requirement—was achieved through a year-in and year-out effort and ongoing fine-tuning of the policy by state leaders. "Getting the Core 40 diploma sanctioned in 1994 gave us the ability to keep banging away at it," explained Brinegar.

Building on the foundation of Core 40, Indiana policymakers determinedly went about strengthening related education policies to improve student achievement and college-going and to make Core 40 "count" in other ways. Much of Indiana's success in increasing college-going rates can be attributed to the way in which the state advanced a wide range of policies to support Core

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40, communicated broadly about the policy reforms and worked to strengthen the overall college-going culture in Indiana high schools. Indeed, the State Board of Education and Commission for Higher Education's joint decision to adopt Core 40 in 1994 included a broader commitment to improve high school graduation and college and work readiness. Their agreement also included plans for the state to eliminate "general" courses, adopt clearer academic standards and report to high schools on the success of their graduates in postsecondary study, among other reforms.

Other complementary efforts pursued by state leaders included incentives in the form of college financial aid for students to earn a Core 40 or advanced "honors" diploma, extra funding for all students to take the PSAT (and see themselves as "college-ready"), and an adjustment to the state funding formula to provide additional monies to schools for each student earning an academic honors diploma. Big things were happening on the college access front, as well: In 1999, state leaders merged Indiana's two, two-year colleges, Ivy Tech State College and Vincennes University, to make the first-ever community college system, creating a more economical way to provide higher education opportunities to more Hoosier students.

When it became clear that the quality of Core 40 courses varied from school to school—students were arriving at college with Core 40 diplomas but still had disparities in their skills and knowledge—state leaders took a fresh look at their K-12 assessment and accountability systems. The goal was to ensure these tools reinforced the rigorous academic content and signaled the level of quality consistently needed in all Core 40 courses. Thus, throughout the late 1990s, the state convened teachers to develop more than 20 voluntary, classroom end-of-course assessments that schools and teachers could use to improve instruction and ensure consistency in what was being taught. Next, the state moved to add a handful of end-of-course exams in key courses to the state assessment system. Leaders are now focused on providing end-of-course exams in English 10 and Algebra I (as part of the Graduation Qualifying Exam all students must pass), English 11, Algebra II, Biology and U.S. History.

Finally, proponents and opponents closely watched student attainment of the Core 40 diploma. By 1998, 43 percent of students were earning the regular Core 40 or the more advanced Core 40 "Honors" diploma; by 2006 that number had jumped to 68 percent. This level of success opened the door for policymakers to revisit the notion of making Core 40 a requirement for all students. It was clear that schools were successfully helping the majority of students earn the diploma. In some ways, the Core 40 diploma was already becoming the default high school diploma even though it was still voluntary.

One approach the Education Roundtable used to build broader support was to carefully consider the arguments opponents made about how some kids might fare under the new system—and making adjustments that addressed those exceptions. That's why its 2005 recommendation to make Core 40 a graduation requirement provided an "opt-out" clause for students who didn't want to go that route. The Roundtable kept its focus on the facts for most students and the policies that would help the most students, but then created exceptions for exceptional circumstances; it didn't allow anecdotes to distract it from what data clearly indicated was best for most students, said Sen. Lubbers. Or as Jones counseled, "Don't let exceptions become the rule, but do provide for exceptions."

As part of the State Board of Education's work in 2004 and 2005 to revise the state's high school graduation curriculum, four diplomas were established: a general education diploma (the "opt-out" diploma), Core 40 diploma, Core 40 with Technical Honors and Core 40 with Academic Honors (for more information about these diplomas, see the sidebars on page 14-15). Then, during the legislative session of 2005, state lawmakers made Core 40 the default graduation requirement for all students.

but don't get discouraged by the small steps that add up and create momentum."

—Kevin Brinegar, *member of the Roundtable and president and CEO of the Indiana Chamber of Commerce*

"I've learned that things take time," commented Brinegar. "Patience and persistence eventually pay off. Keep your eye on the target, but don't get discouraged by the small steps that add up and create momentum."

Improvement didn't stop in 2005, either. Beginning with the spring 2009 administration, the State Board of Education has moved to increase the rigor of the Graduation Qualifying Exam (GQE), the state's 10th grade assessment long required for high school graduation. State leaders see this test as a "midpoint" assessment toward graduation and it traditionally has been based on general 9th-grade level math and language arts skills. As noted above, a new GQE in 2009 instead consists of two end-of-course exams, one for English 10 and one for Algebra I. Students graduating in 2012 will need to pass these exams too in order to earn a diploma.

Align education reform with existing and future education policies

Reforms are strongest when they are aligned with other reforms and thus become part of a larger whole. Piecemeal efforts are relatively easier to "pick off" and roll back than reforms that have hooks and tentacles across a state's policy landscape. And, on the flip side, policies are more effective when they are coherently connected to others.

In 1994, there was no way of knowing just how successful kids would be with Core 40. And there wasn't even a widespread belief that all students should be aspiring for college or achieving Core 40's higher expectation, just that more students should be. Advocates kept working to build understanding and support for Core 40 and quietly, but deliberately, went about aligning the diploma with other state education policies.

To sweeten interest in Core 40 among parents and students—and make it about more than just a recommended set of high school courses—policymakers tied incentives to the completion of a more rigorous curriculum. With a Core 40 diploma students earned 90 percent of needed financial aid to state institutions. With a Core 40 with Academic Honors they garnered 100 percent of financial aid, but with the regular (non-Core 40) diploma they earned 80 percent. In addition, the state's K–12 school funding formula was modified to provide schools with Academic Honors completion bonuses.

In 2005, state leaders stepped up their efforts to increase high school graduation rates, recognizing that reducing the high school dropout rate was just as important as graduating more students with college- and career-ready skills. Indiana was one of the first states to refine its graduation formula and use student-level data to calculate how many students were graduating on time or dropping out—before the National Governors Association brokered an agreement among governors for most others states to do this. In addition, Indiana developed a "policy toolkit" designed to prevent, intervene and recover high school dropouts. The toolkit included policies that raised the legal dropout age from 16 to 18 years old and revoked a dropout student's driver's license.

State leaders also worked to help more high school students see themselves as college material. The state began offering free PSAT and AP exams. High schools were encouraged to offer new programs, including School Flex, which allows students to attend school part time, Double Up, which allows students to get a jumpstart on their college education through dual credit and AP courses, and Fast Track, which allows high schools and universities to offer a high school completion program for students age 19 and older.

The Indiana Commission for Higher Education coupled these in-system reforms with communications efforts to help students see college as possible—and with aggressive distribution of college and career information. It also looked for ways to eliminate even more financial barriers to low-income students, including expanding Indiana's promising 21st Century Scholars program, which targets and supports high-potential, high-needs middle school students.

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Indiana's policy leaders saw all these efforts as crucial to the success and sustainability of the reforms. For Jones, they were about making education reform "more durable," and Reed argued that "redundancy is necessary to spread support wider."

Transparency in the development and use of standards is important to gaining and sustaining support
Transparency is a critical component of successfully implementing reform over time. It provides the chance for the public to participate and share opinions, pulls no punches about who is making decisions and on what basis, and provides an opportunity to show that policy proposals are evolving based on input from others.

Keeping communication lines open to the public was another key strategy for Indiana, and one that helped to shift the public mindset about the importance of college across the state. The Roundtable held open work sessions and solicited public comments on its working documents through its website. State leaders built on this transparency to communicate openly with the public, fine-tune their recommendations and gain support for reform. Leaders also "branded" the Core 40 effort, giving it a catchy and easily remembered name, and a distinct look and feel (including an actual sticker on the diploma of students who earned the necessary 40 credits), which made it more tangible and easily recognizable.

And when, early in the reform effort, school counselors presented a major obstacle to Core 40 as a graduation requirement, the state Department of Education and Commission for Higher Education enlisted the help of a "counselor corps." These K-12 and higher education educators toured the state making presentations to

Indiana's Policy Toolkit

Education reform in Indiana didn't stop with the advent of Core 40. Over the years, state lawmakers and leaders have steadily added to the concept of Core 40—the concept that all students need to be on a college-bound trajectory—to strengthen and sustain this effort. Below are a few of the complementary measures that have been put in place.

Opt-out option to address the needs of those few students for whom Core 40 is deemed inappropriate—Students can opt out of the Core 40 curriculum, but only with the informed permission of their parents and after meeting with their principal to understand the consequences.

Core 40 as the minimum college admission standard—The 2005 legislation that made Core 40 the default diploma option also made it the minimum admissions requirement for all public four-year universities in the state.

Academic standards that clearly articulate what students are expected to learn—The Education Roundtable developed grade-level standards that complemented a focus on college and career readiness. Having undergone several rounds of revisions, these standards earned Indiana a ranking of first in the nation (with two other states) for clear and rigorous standards.

End-of-course exams make sure students learn Core 40 material—To ensure that students are learning material covered in Core 40 courses, Indiana is implementing end-of-course exams in Algebra I and II, Biology, English 10 and English 11 and U.S. History. Indiana has determined that students in the graduating class of 2012 will have to pass end-of-course exams in Algebra I and English 10 to earn their diploma—these two exams take the place of the state's old 10th-grade Graduation Qualifying Exam, which was also a graduation requirement.

Dropout measures prevent, intervene and recover dropouts —Indiana leaders raised the legal dropout age to 18, required an exit interview before a student may withdraw, and withdrew driver's licenses and work permits for students who drop out without permission—all changes designed to make it less appealing to drop out of school.

Dual enrollment classes prevent boredom—To improve high school retention and prepare more students for college, high schools must offer at least two AP or dual-credit classes, which allow students to earn college credit while still in high school.

Incentives for schools promotes higher-level degree attainment —Schools receive $900 for each student who earns a Core 40 diploma with Academic Honors, providing an additional incentive for schools to push their students to earn the highest degree possible and giving local schools funds to re-invest in efforts to upgrade their college- and career-ready preparatory curriculum.

counselors and other educators on why reform was needed, what was involved in Core 40 and why students could indeed achieve higher standards. Another significant part of the communication involved reaching out directly to parents and students to explain the rationale behind the changes.

The Indiana Department of Education, Indiana Commission for Higher Education, Indiana Department of Workforce Development and State Student Assistance Commission of Indiana launched LearnMoreIndiana.com, Indiana's "college and career connection." This website provides opportunities for students and parents to learn about the state's two- and four-year postsecondary institutions, career training programs and high-growth career options, and offers critical information on college preparation, college access and college affordability.

"Some observers think we did the policy and then checked it off," explained Cheryl Orr, who has staffed the Education Roundtable until recently. "But there was tons of communication along the way."

Next Steps and Challenges for Indiana

While Indiana has made impressive progress on its education reforms, reformers themselves say they are "never done." As Orr sees it, "The bar is set at the right place and our standards are world class. Now we need to focus on helping more kids with the learning."

State leaders remain very focused on the improving graduation rates and figuring out how best to move the remaining 27 percent of students (in 2008) still taking the general education diploma pathway. One key strategy is to provide increased support to schools and students to identify and implement new options and pathways to graduation for struggling students. In spring 2009, the Department of Education announced a graduation rewards program to provide ten $20,000 bonuses and two $10,000 bonuses to schools that show the greatest improvement in their graduation rates. Indiana leaders also are looking to improve early identification of students at risk of dropping out or are off-track to graduating college- and career-ready.

Another priority is boosting the quality of instruction in all high schools across the state and ensuring a consistent, high level of teaching. While Indiana has impressively increased its college-going rate, state leaders see the next phase of harder work will be to increase the college-success rate—so that high school graduates aren't just on track for postsecondary education but actually have the skills and knowledge they need to be successful once they arrive. The state's efforts to put in place a system of end-of-course exams is part of this strategy.

In addition, a 2006 strategic assessment of Indiana's education reforms called for "an integrated, statewide longitudinal data system that provides accurate and timely information on students from preschool through college." The data collected, as planned, would allow the state to hold high schools accountable for student success in college or the workforce and, on the flip side, hold colleges and universities accountable for the quality of teachers they produce.

"We have a good framework for policy. It's definitely changed people's perceptions—and student's perceptions—about what it means to be college-ready," says Scott Jenkins of Gov. Daniels' office. "With Core 40, we put names to courses. Now we need to drive down to the instructional level in high school, especially in mathematics, and transform what happens in these courses."

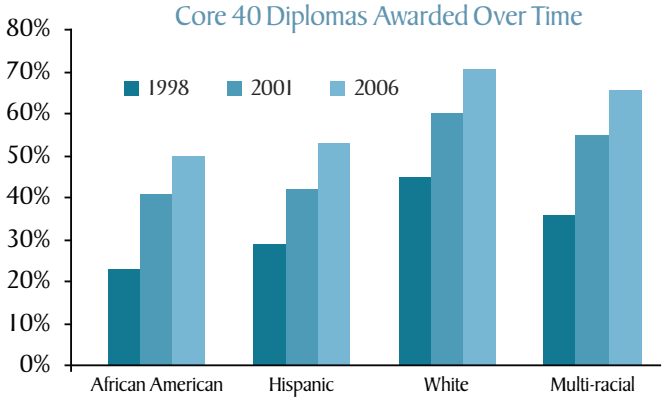
Education Reform in Indiana

Conclusion

In 1950s Indiana, the ticket to a comfortable, middle-class lifestyle was a strong back. Jobs in agriculture, the automotive sector and other manufacturing industries were plentiful, with pay and benefits good enough to buy a house and raise a family. Since a high school diploma was all that was needed to be successful, most Hoosiers didn't see the point of going to college—and the state didn't do much to encourage them.

In 1952, Indiana ranked 22nd in the nation in per-capita income; by 2002, it had dropped to 31st, according to the Institute for Higher Education Policy. The story of education reform in Indiana is about coming to grips with this slide—and about the tenacious efforts of state leaders to turn the tide. It's a story about raising expectations for students, putting many more on a trajectory for postsecondary success, and changing the mindsets of Hoosiers to understand not just that all students need to attend college to be successful, but that all students can succeed in college.

Indiana's approach to change was not a single, omnibus piece of legislation or a grand reform plan backed by a blue-ribbon panel. Rather, beginning in the early 1990s and for well over a decade, a cross-sector coalition of state leaders worked carefully, deliberately and simultaneously on several interlocking policy levers to promote college and career readiness. They focused on a few priorities and made sure they got done well. In the middle of this work was the state's Education Roundtable, a unique planning committee comprised of key P–16 system leaders, educators, employers and advocates that has helped disparate groups find a common vision and compromises.



Core 40 Course and Credit Requirements

English/ Language Arts	**8 credits** Including a balance of literature, composition and speech
Mathematics	**6 credits** 2 credits: Algebra I 2 credits: Geometry 2 credits: Algebra II *Or complete Integrated Math I, II, and III for 6 credits. All students must complete a math or physics course in the junior or senior year.*
Science	**6 credits** 2 credits: Biology I 2 credits: Chemistry I or Physics I or Integrated Chemistry-Physics 2 credits: any Core 40 science course
Social Studies	**6 credits** 2 credits: U.S. History 1 credit: U.S. Government 1 credit: Economics 2 credits: World History/Civilization or Geography/History of the World
Directed Electives	**5 credits** World Languages Fine Arts Career-Technical
Physical Education	**5 credits**
Health and Wellness	**1 credit**
Electives*	**6 credits** *(Career Academic Sequence Recommended)*

40 Total State Credits Required

Schools may have additional local graduation requirements that apply to all students

** Specifies the number of electives required by the state. High school schedules provide time for many more electives during the high school years. All students are strongly encouraged to complete a Career Academic Sequences (selecting electives in a deliberate manner) to take full advantage of career exploration and preparation opportunities.*

Core 40 with Academic Honors *(minimum 47 credits)*

For the Core 40 with Academic Honors diploma, students must:

- Complete all requirements for Core 40
- Earn 2 additional Core 40 math credits
- Earn 6-8 Core 40 world language credits (6 credits in one language or 4 credits each in two languages)
- Earn 2 Core 40 fine arts credits
- Earn a grade of a "C" or better in courses that will count toward the diploma
- Have a grade point average of a "B" or better
- Complete **one** of the following:
  - A. Complete AP courses (4 credits) and corresponding AP exams
  - B. Complete IB courses (4 credits) and corresponding IB exams
  - C. Earn a combined score of 1200 or higher on the SAT critical reading and mathematics
  - D. Score a 26 or higher composite on the ACT
  - E. Complete dual high school/college credit courses from an accredited postsecondary institution (6 transferable college credits)
  - F. Complete a combination of AP courses (2 credits) and corresponding AP exams and dual high school/college credit course(s) from an accredited postsecondary institution (3 transferable college credits)

Core 40 with Technical Honors *(minimum 47 credits)*

For the Core 40 with Technical Honors diploma, students must:

- Complete all requirements for Core 40
- Complete a career-technical program (8 or more related credits)
- Earn a grade of "C" or better in courses that will count toward the diploma
- Have a grade point average of a "B" or better
- Recommended: Earn 2 additional credits in mathematics and 4-8 credits in World Languages for four year college admission
- Complete **two** of the following, one must be A or B:
  - A. Score at or above the following levels on WorkKeys: Reading for Information - Level 6; Applied Mathematics - Level 6; Locating Information - Level 5
  - B. Complete dual high school/college credit courses in a technical area (6 college credits)
  - C. Complete a Professional Career Internship course or Cooperative Education course (2 credits)
  - D. Complete an industry-based work experience as part of a two-year career-technical education program (minimum 140 hours)
  - E. Earn a state-approved, industry-recognized certification

Case Study Interviews

Fred Bauer—*Former member, Indiana Commission for Higher Education*

Kevin Brinegar—*President (and former senior vice president of government affairs), Indiana Chamber of Commerce*

Thomas Erhlich—*Former president, Indiana University*

Steve Ferguson—*Chairman, Cook Group, Inc.; former chair, Indiana Commission for Higher Education*

Clyde Ingle—*Former commissioner, Indiana Commission for Higher Education*

Scott Jenkins—*Senior policy director for education, Office of the Governor*

Stan Jones—*Former commissioner, Indiana Commission for Higher Education*

Patrick Kiely—*President and CEO, Indiana Manufacturers Association; former representative, Indiana House of Representatives*

Christopher LaMothe—*President and CEO, Ascendancy Ventures, LLC; former president and CEO, Indiana Chamber of Commerce*

Teresa Lubbers—*Commissioner, Indiana Commission for Higher Education; former senator, Indiana Senate*

Cheryl Orr—*Former senior associate commissioner for communications and P-16 initiatives, Indiana Commission for Higher Education*

Suellen Reed—*Former superintendent of public instruction, Indiana Department of Education*

Sue Reynolds—*Executive director, American Student Achievement Institute*

Paul Robertson—*Representative, Indiana House of Representatives*

Earline Rogers—*Senator, Indiana Senate*

Eugene White—*Superíntendent, Indiana Public Schools*

Jeffery P. Zaring—*State Board of Education Administration, Indiana Department of Education*

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