

Taking Root

Strategies for Sustaining the College- and Career-Ready Agenda

To help state leaders build strategies for sustaining their education agendas over the long run, Achieve has launched *Taking Root: Strategies for Sustaining the College- and Career-Ready Agenda*, generously funded by the GE Foundation.

American Diploma Project (ADP) Network states have committed to raising their high school standards and graduation requirements to a college- and career-ready level and to adopting assessment, data and accountability systems to support these goals. Given the complexity of these reforms, state leaders are increasingly mindful that sustaining reforms over the long haul, so that they may take hold, is just as important as the policy changes themselves. Only sustained reforms will result in improved student achievement and high school graduates who are prepared for college and careers.

To give states the information they need to sustain hard-fought education reform effectively, Achieve conducted research on state education policies that have been sustained successfully to better understand the factors that had the most significant impact. Achieve developed case studies on reforms in Indiana, Massachusetts, South Carolina and Texas because they were able to sustain significant education reforms over at least a decade. 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.

Taking Root also includes a “lessons learned” paper – drawn from the four case studies, a review of existing research on sustainable reform, and Achieve’s experience with states – that offers ten key strategies for states to consider as they adopt and implement college- and career-ready policies. The paper also provides guiding questions for states to use as they evaluate both whether they have the conditions necessary for sustainability in place and whether those conditions are built for success so that education reform can take root and prosper.

The Ten Strategies for Sustaining the College- and Career-Ready Agenda:

- ☑ *Strong and consistent political and education leadership*
- ☑ *External champions pushing for change*
- ☑ *A coalition of supporters*
- ☑ *Strategic communications and outreach*
- ☑ *An open and transparent policy process*
- ☑ *Investment in implementation and capacity-building*
- ☑ *Monitoring progress and making mid-course corrections*
- ☑ *Well-integrated policies that promote P-20 alignment*
- ☑ *Highly functional quasi-governmental entities*
- ☑ *The collection and use of data*

In addition, Achieve has created an audit tool to help state’s assess the likelihood that their college- and career-ready policies are sustainable.

Achieve has also developed an accompanying set of tools and resources around communications, under the banner *Taking Root: Communicating the College- and Career-Ready Agenda*, recognizing that strategic communications and outreach are critical for the adoption, implementation, and sustainability of college- and career-ready policies.

Achieve is committed to providing all states the tools and guidance they need to engage in and successfully consider this critical issue as they move forward.