

## ARKANSAS' COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY COMMITMENT

### Why Is Arkansas' Commitment To College and Career Readiness So Critical?

#### A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA IS NO LONGER ENOUGH FOR SUCCESS

*Today, nearly every good job requires some postsecondary education and/or training – such as an associates or bachelors degree, certificate, license, or completion of an apprenticeship or significant on-the-job training.*

In 1950, 60% of jobs were classified as unskilled, attainable by young people with high school diplomas or less. Today, less than 20% jobs are considered to be unskilled.<sup>i</sup>

One result: In Arkansas, the demand for middle- and high-skilled workers is outpacing the state's supply of workers educated and experienced at that level.

- **82% of Arkansas' jobs are middle- or high-skill** (jobs that require some postsecondary education or training).<sup>ii</sup>
- Yet only 27% of Arkansas adults have some postsecondary degree (associate's or higher).<sup>iii</sup>

#### TOO MANY STUDENTS GRADUATE UNPREPARED FOR REAL WORLD CHALLENGES

*Currently, far too many students drop out or graduate from high school without the knowledge and skills required for success, closing doors and limiting their post-high school options.*

Arkansas' graduation rate – both the state-reported and the independently-reported – demonstrates how the education system is not working for all students.

Graduation Rate (class of 2008)	State Reported <sup>iv</sup>	Independently Reported <sup>v</sup>
	68%	70%

As of 2009, Arkansas had 14 “dropout factories” or high schools that graduate 60 percent or less of their students.<sup>vi</sup>

Far too many students enter two- and four-year postsecondary institutions unprepared for college-level coursework.

### Arkansas' Remediation Data

79% of Arkansas' students in two-year colleges and 32% of Arkansas' students in four-year colleges require remediation.<sup>vii</sup>

Employers of graduates entering into the workforce directly after high school note gaps in their knowledge and skills:

- 41% of employers are dissatisfied with graduates' abilities.
- Only 18% believe that new graduates, with no further education beyond high school, have the skills necessary for advancement.<sup>viii</sup>

#### THE COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY AGENDA

*The best way to prepare students for life after high school is to ensure they graduate with a strong foundation in the core academic areas that will leave all doors open in the future.*

Over the past five years, states have driven the college- and career-ready agenda – a policy agenda that seeks to ensure all students graduate high school, and graduate ready for their next steps.

The momentum created by the states has been bolstered by the federal government's Race to the Top competition, which has further incentivized the adoption of common, college- and career-ready standards and assessments.

Support is very strong among voters for college- and career-ready policies, across demographic and party lines:

- *89% of voters agree that “to really get ahead in life a person needs at least some education beyond high school, whether that means university, community college, technical or vocational school.”*
- *83% of voters believe all students should “be pushed to take rigorous and broad academic requirements in high school to make sure they have as many options as possible upon graduation.”<sup>ix</sup>*

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### What Arkansas Has Accomplished To Date<sup>x</sup>

- In 2006, Arkansas adopted academic standards aligned with college- and career-ready expectations. In July 2010, Arkansas adopted the Common Core State Standards.
- For the class of 2010 and all subsequent classes, students in Arkansas were required to meet college- and career-ready expectations to graduate.

**Arkansas is one of only 21 states (including DC) with requirements at this level**

- Arkansas is a Governing State in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), a consortium of states working to develop a common assessment system using Race to the Top Common Assessment funds.
- Arkansas' longitudinal data system all ten essential Data Quality Campaign elements, providing a foundation for strong and sound student-level data collection.

**Arkansas is one of 22 states with a P-20 longitudinal data system that regularly matches student-level K-12 and postsecondary data**

- Arkansas tracks all four indicators of college and career readiness, but will need to expand its use of indicators to get a more complete picture of how their students are faring in K-12 and beyond.

College- and Career-Ready Indicator	Publicly Reported	State Set Goal	Incentive to Improve	Accountability Formula
CCR Diploma		YES	YES	
CCR Testing				
Postsecondary Remediation	YES	YES		
Exceeding CCR				

### How Arkansas Can Further Advance the College- and Career-Ready Agenda

- ✓ ...Realize the promise of the Common Core State Standards by implementing them fully and successfully, taking into consideration the related curricular and policy changes.
- ✓ ...Continue to make progress on the state's data collection efforts, particularly around making student data available to relevant stakeholders.
- ✓ ...Remain committed to the goals of the PARCC Consortium and developing a next-generation, computer-based assessment system that is anchored by college- and career-ready tests in high school, will let students know if they are ready for college-level coursework, and will measure the full range of the Common Core State Standards.
- ✓ ...Re-examine the state's K-12 accountability system to determine how it can further reward measures of college and career readiness, in alignment with the state's standards and course requirements.

<sup>i</sup> Carnevale, Anthony P. and Donna Desrochers (2003). *Standards for What? The Economic Roots of K-12 Reform*, Education Testing Services.

<http://www.learn2earn.org/For-Educators/Standards-for-What.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Skills to Compete <http://www.skills2compete.org>

<sup>iii</sup> National Center for Higher Education Management Systems' analysis of American Community Survey (2007) <http://www.higheredinfo.org>

<sup>iv</sup> 2010 Arkansas State School Performance Summary Report, [normessaweb.uark.edu/schoolperformance/State/State.php](http://normessaweb.uark.edu/schoolperformance/State/State.php)

<sup>v</sup> Education Week Diplomas Count 2010,

[www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2010/06/10/index.html](http://www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2010/06/10/index.html)

<sup>vi</sup> America's Promise Alliance (2011). Building a Grad Nation: March 2011 Update. [www.americaspromise.org/Our-Work/Grad-Nation/Building-a-Grad-Nation.aspx](http://www.americaspromise.org/Our-Work/Grad-Nation/Building-a-Grad-Nation.aspx)

<sup>vii</sup> Arkansas Department of Higher Education (Dec 2009). *Comprehensive Arkansas Higher Education Annual Report*.

[http://www.adhe.edu/SiteCollectionDocuments/Comprehensive%20Report/14%20-%20Remed\\_Report-FINAL.pdf](http://www.adhe.edu/SiteCollectionDocuments/Comprehensive%20Report/14%20-%20Remed_Report-FINAL.pdf)

<sup>viii</sup> Peter D. Hart Research Associates/Public Opinion Strategies, *Rising to the Challenge: Are High School Graduates Prepared for College and Work?* prepared for Achieve, Inc., 2005.

<sup>ix</sup> Achieve (2010). *Achieving the Possible: What Americans Think About the College- and Career-Ready Agenda*. [www.achieve.org/AchievingthePossible](http://www.achieve.org/AchievingthePossible)

<sup>x</sup> Achieve (2011). *Closing the Expectations Gap 2011: 50-State Progress Report on the Alignment of High School Policies with the Demands of College and Careers*. [www.achieve.org/ClosingtheExpectationsGap2011](http://www.achieve.org/ClosingtheExpectationsGap2011)