

## COLORADO'S COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY COMMITMENT

### Why Is Colorado's 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 associate's or bachelor's 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:* The demand for middle- and high-skilled workers is outpacing the state's supply of workers educated and experienced at that level.

- 80% of Colorado's jobs are middle- or high-skill (jobs that require some postsecondary education or training).
- Yet only 46% of Colorado's adults have some postsecondary degree (associate's or higher).<sup>ii</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.*

Colorado's 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>iii</sup>	Independently Reported <sup>v</sup>
	<b>74%</b>	<b>73%</b>

As of 2009, Colorado had 21 “dropout factories” or high schools that graduate 60 percent or less of their students.<sup>v</sup>

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

### Colorado's Remediation Data

- 53% of Colorado's students in two-year colleges; and
- 20% of Colorado's students in four-year colleges require remediation.<sup>vi</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>vii</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>viii</sup>*

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### What Colorado Has Accomplished To Date<sup>ix</sup>

**In 2010 Colorado adopted K-12 academic standards aligned with college- and career-ready expectations**

- Colorado adopted the Common Core State Standards in May 2010.
- Colorado requires all students to take a national college admissions exam; as part of the state's assessment system, Colorado administers the ACT to all 11<sup>th</sup>-grade students.

**Colorado is one of only 14 states with high school tests used by higher education for admissions/ placement decisions letting students know if they are ready for college-level coursework while still in high school and giving them time to address any readiness gaps**

- Colorado is a participating state in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the SMARTER BALANCED Assessment Consortium, the two main multi-state consortia that won Race to the Top Common Assessment funds.
- Colorado's longitudinal data system satisfies eight of the ten Data Quality Campaign identified essential elements, providing a foundation for strong and sound student-level data collection.
- While Colorado does not have an accountability system that fully incorporates the range of college- and career-ready indicators, the state does utilize several critical indicators in their reporting system.

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

### How Colorado 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.
- ✓ ...Adopt college- and career-ready graduation requirements, aligned to the Common Core State Standards, to ensure all students are prepared, and eligible, for entry into college and skilled careers.
- ✓ ...Remain committed to the goals of the common assessment consortia and developing a next-generation, computer-based assessment system that will measure the full range of the Common Core State Standards.
- ✓ ...Continue to make progress on the state's data collection efforts, particularly around making student data available to relevant stakeholders and linking K-12 and postsecondary student-level data.
- ✓ ...Re-examine the state's K-12 accountability system to determine how it can reward measures of college and career readiness.

<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> The Colorado Department of Education, Colorado Education Statistics – Class of 2008 Graduation Data. [www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/rv2008GradLinks.htm](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/rv2008GradLinks.htm)

<sup>iv</sup> Education Week Diplomas Count 2011, [www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2011/06/09/index.html](http://www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2011/06/09/index.html)

<sup>v</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>vi</sup> Colorado Commission on Higher Education (Feb 2010). *2009 Legislative Report on Remedial Education*. [http://highered.colorado.gov/Publications/Reports/Remedial/FY2009/2009\\_Remedial\\_relfeb10.pdf](http://highered.colorado.gov/Publications/Reports/Remedial/FY2009/2009_Remedial_relfeb10.pdf)

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

<sup>ix</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.achievethepossible.org/ClosingtheExpectationsGap2011](http://www.achievethepossible.org/ClosingtheExpectationsGap2011)