



December 2010

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Commentary

Jobs, Jobs, Jobs: The College- and Career-Ready Agenda and Economic Development

Nearly every political leader elected last month – governors, state legislators, U.S. Congressional representatives, etc. – ran on a mantle of economic recovery and "jobs, jobs, jobs." Yet, the connection between jobs, economic development and education is too-often overlooked. The college- and career-ready agenda, at its heart, aims to ensure all students graduate from high school fully prepared to take on the challenges of college-level coursework and the 21st century workplace.

The simple truth is that today's (and tomorrow's) workplace requires more education and training than ever before. In 1973, over 70% of the workforce was comprised of workers with a high school diploma or less, yet by 2018, over 60% of the workforce will be comprised of workers with some college, an associate's degree or higher. Many jobs that used to require only a high school diploma or less – manufacturing technicians, auto mechanics, electricians and others – now typically require some postsecondary education or certification. In addition, a quarter of American workers are now in jobs that were not even listed in the Census Bureau's occupation codes 40 years ago. With advances in technology moving faster than ever before, this trend is only going to continue (just think about the "green" economy, which wasn't even on the radar screen a decade ago). All students need a strong foundation to be successful in an economy that values education and skills above all else.

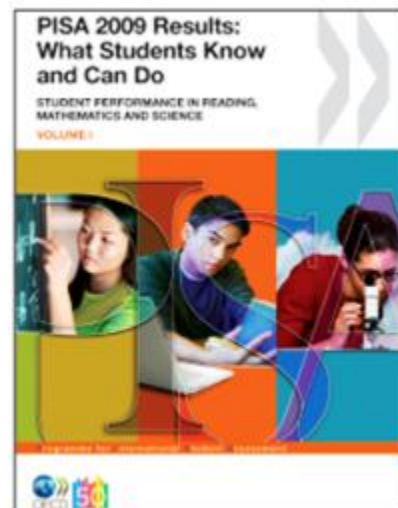
And this is what economic development is all about – bringing the jobs of tomorrow here, today – and ensuring that a strong workforce is in place, ready to step up and fill those new jobs. For a state or community to attract new, high-skilled industries, they need high-skilled employees – or employees who are adaptable learners with strong foundational knowledge and skills that will serve them across industries. States and localities also benefit from being able to demonstrate a strong commitment to education reform and preparing the next generation of skilled workers, entrepreneurs and leaders.

Unfortunately, too many students are failing to graduate from high school or, if they do, are graduating unprepared for their next steps. A third do not complete high school on time, a third of students require remediation upon entry to two-

and/or four-year colleges, and only a quarter of employers of recent high school graduates believe those employees are prepared for the job for which they were hired. Despite a national unemployment rate that remains around 10%, there are about 3 million job openings across the country that cannot be filled because of a lack of skilled workers. As Steve Stevens, president of the Northern **Kentucky** Chamber of Commerce recently [said](#), "Employers are telling us they can't get the employees they need because the local work force doesn't have the proper skills. That's a story we've been hearing for a while. We have to begin to move the needle on this." Given these facts, the path to long term economic recovery and development is clear. States need to maintain their commitment to the college- and career-ready agenda (including building strong career and technical pathways, nicely articulated in this [brief](#) by the Association for Career and Technical Education); encourage strong partnerships between K-12, higher education, and the business community; and collaborate with other states, through cross-state partnerships such as the common assessment consortia, to find cost effective ways to bring about change.

PISA Results Demonstrate Importance of College- and Career-Ready Agenda for All U.S. Students

The just-released [Program for International Student Assessment \(PISA\) results](#) should spur states, districts and schools to push forward on education reforms grounded in college and career readiness for all students. These results show that 15 year olds in the United States were, at best, "middle of the pack," when compared to their peers in OECD countries, scoring 17th in reading, 23rd in science and, with a below average score, 31st in math. In all categories, students in Shanghai, South Korea, Finland, Hong Hong-China and Canada outperformed U.S. 15 year olds. Especially disturbing is the fact that even the top performers in the U.S. do not perform as well as other countries' top performers - and the U.S. has more students performing at the lowest level compared to other developed countries. "These results show the importance of states continuing to lead on the college- and career-ready agenda so that we can graduate students ready to compete against their global peers. The PISA results demonstrate the urgency of that work," said Achieve president Michael Cohen. Read the [press release](#). You can see the full PISA results [here](#). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) presents selected findings from the U.S. perspective [here](#).



Achieve Names Laura Slover Senior Vice President, PARCC and Stephen Pruitt Vice President, Content, Research and Development

Achieve is pleased to announce that Laura Slover has been named Senior Vice President, PARCC and that Dr. Stephen Pruitt will serve as Achieve's Vice

President, Content, Research and Development. "These organizational changes will ensure that PARCC gets the focused and high-level attention a project of its size and importance deserves, while also making certain that Achieve continues its critical content, research and development work," said Achieve president Michael Cohen. "Laura and Stephen are well-known experts in their field and are well-positioned to provide the leadership and technical expertise that states advancing the college-and career-ready agenda have come to expect from Achieve." Read the [press release](#).

More States Adopt Common Core State Standards

The **South Dakota** Board of Education voted on November 29 to unanimously adopt the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in math and English Language Arts. The **Idaho** Board of Education provisionally adopted the CCSS on November 17 and the **Alabama** Board of Education adopted the standards on November 18. **Oregon, New Mexico** and **Kansas** adopted in October, and **Minnesota** adopted the ELA standards at the end of September. For a map of all of the states that have adopted the CCSS, go [here](#). To help states and others better understand the CCSS, Achieve created a range of materials, available at <http://www.achieve.org/achievingcommoncore>.



Data Quality Campaign Webinar

Historically, statewide longitudinal data systems were designed primarily to meet compliance and accountability requirements. With the increasing focus on the use of data to improve student success, states must ensure that these systems inform and support data use at all levels. States and districts are beginning to take action to work together to align their data efforts to improve system-wide performance and student achievement.

The Data Quality Campaign (DQC), of which Achieve is a managing partner, is hosting a webinar on Wednesday, December 15, from 2:00-3:30 p.m. (EST) on **Exploring a New Role For**

News Clips

1. **Common Core and Career Readiness**

JD Hoyer writes in *Huffington Post* "The Common Core Standards offer a unique opportunity to link career education with core academics on a national level." [More...](#)

2. **"Delivering" School Reform**

Alexander Russo notes in

States: From Compliance-Based to Service-Supporting. This webinar will feature Peter Gorman, Superintendent of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in **North Carolina**; Bill Hurwitch, Project Director of Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems at the **Maine** Department of Education; and Brian Rawson, Director of Statewide Data Initiatives at the **Texas** Education Agency as they discuss the current landscape in their states of this alignment effort, promising approaches to this work, and drivers for evolving the role of the state. Register [here](#).

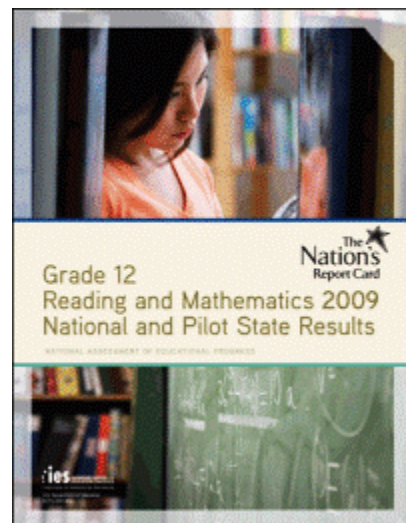
Harvard Education Letter that the Education Delivery Institute is helping states with implementation of large-scale reforms. [More...](#)

3. **Internationally Left Behind**

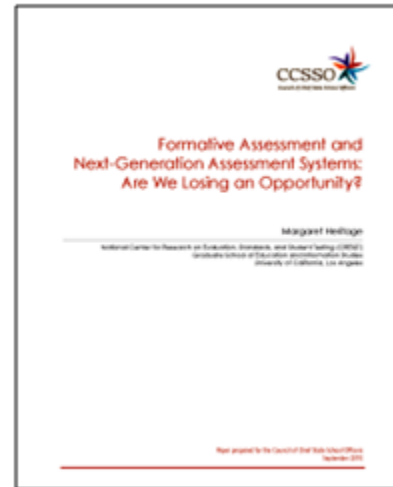
Atlantic Magazine highlights an analysis comparing proficiency across states and countries on PISA. Despite conventional thinking, even America's "relatively privileged students do not compete favorably with average students in other well-off countries." [More...](#)

New Resources

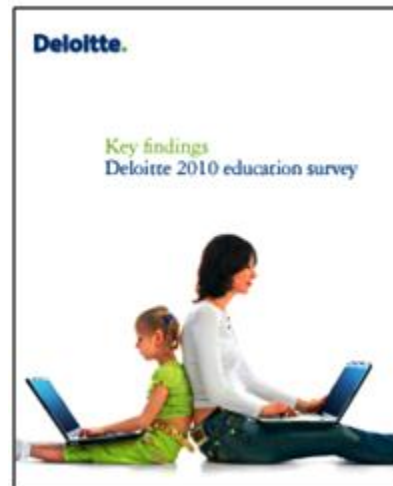
- [The Nation's Report Card: Grade 12 Reading and Mathematics 2009, the National Assessment of Educational Progress](#) (NAEP) provides the only ongoing, nationally representative measure of what America's 12th grade students know and can do. For the first time, this year's 12th-grade report card includes state-level results for 11 participating states – **Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, South Dakota** and **West Virginia** – that volunteered to report their state-level results. *The Washington Post* [reports](#) that the NAEP results show that the nation's high school seniors are performing slightly better in math and reading than they did in the middle of the last decade, but a large majority continues to fall short of the national standard for proficiency.



- The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) released a report about the future of student assessment and the development of more effective ways to assess student learning. [Formative Assessment and Next-Generation Assessment Systems: Are We Losing an Opportunity?](#) argues that we are at risk of losing the promise that formative assessment holds for teaching and learning. The core problem, according to the report, lies in the false, but widespread, assumption that formative assessment is a kind of measurement instrument, rather than a process that is fundamental and central to the practice of teaching and learning.



- [The Deloitte 2010 Education Survey](#) reveals that high school educators think students are unprepared for college coursework and believe access to data can help solve the problem. Slightly less than one-third (31%) of high school educators feel their students are ready for college when they leave high school, while more than two-thirds (68%) of current college students say they were "prepared" or "very prepared" for college coursework when looking back on their first year of higher education. Despite the student self confidence, the survey reveals that as many as 28% of students surveyed still needed to take remedial courses. In addition to uncovering this disconnect between student and teacher perceptions of college preparedness, Deloitte's survey also reveals potential solutions for addressing the preparation gap. In particular, the survey found that educators think more data, such as official reports on their students' performance in college, will significantly help them to adjust high school coursework. A staggering 92% of high school teachers feel they don't have the data necessary to better understand students' college preparation needs.



- When most people hear the term "college and career readiness," they often think of preparation for four-year degree programs. Yet a new report published by Complete College America and written in collaboration with FutureWorks – [Certificates Count](#) – provides a wealth of information on another type of college attainment: postsecondary certificates. In 2008, about 750,000 certificates, defined as credentials issued by educational institutions that indicate completion of a program or study or set of courses, were awarded to recent graduates and adult learners. In some areas of the country, completion of a long-term certificate, a program lasting a year or longer, was associated with a 20-40% increase in earnings. This report convincingly makes the case that in order for the U.S. to become more competitive and meet the goal of leading the world in postsecondary attainment, certificates – and particularly high-quality, rigorous, long-term certificates – are a critical piece of the education puzzle. Read the report and see state-by-state fact sheets [here](#) and watch the broadcast of the release [here](#).



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Achieve Job Opportunity

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