

ILLINOIS' COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY COMMITMENT

Why Is Illinois' 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.ⁱ

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

- **81% of Illinois' jobs are middle- or high-skill** (jobs that require some postsecondary education or training).ⁱⁱ
- Yet only 41% of Illinois adults have some postsecondary degree (associate's or higher).ⁱⁱⁱ

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

As of 2009, Illinois had 36 "dropout factories" or high schools that graduate 60 percent or less of their students.^{iv}

Illinois' 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 ^v	Independently Reported ^{vi}
	87%	79%

Far too many students are unprepared for college-level coursework at two- and four-year postsecondary institutions, as evidenced by Illinois students' struggle to meet college readiness benchmarks in high school.

Illinois' College Readiness Data

- 48% of Illinois' 11th grade students met the college readiness benchmark on the ACT in Reading.
- 40% of Illinois' 11th grade students met the college readiness benchmark on the ACT in math.
- 27% of Illinois' 11th grade students met the college readiness benchmark on the ACT in science.^{vii}

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.^{viii}

THE COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY AGENDA

The best way to prepare students for life after high school is to align K-12 and postsecondary expectations. All students deserve an education that prepares them for college, careers and life

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."*^{ix}

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What Illinois Has Accomplished To Date^x

- Illinois adopted the Common Core State Standards in June 2010.
- In 2004, Illinois first administered the ACT to all 11th-grade students as part of the state's assessment system.
- Illinois also administers WorkKeys to its students as part of its assessment system, a test used to measure students' readiness for a range of careers.

Illinois 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

- Illinois 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.
- Illinois does not collect or plan to use any indicators of college and career readiness, and will need to expand its range of indicators to get a more complete picture of how their students are faring in K-12 and beyond.

How Illinois 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.
- ✓ ...Remain committed to the goals of the PARCC Consortium and to developing a next-generation, computer-based assessment system that is anchored by college- and career-ready tests in high school, which will let students know if they are ready for college-level coursework, and will measure the full range of skills in the common standards.
- ✓ ...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.

- ✓ ...Continue to make progress on the state's data collection efforts, particularly around linking student-level data across K-12 and postsecondary systems.
- ✓ ...Re-examine the state's K-12 accountability system to determine how it can reward measures of college and career readiness, in alignment with the state's standards and assessments.

ⁱ Carnevale, Anthony P. and Donna Desrochers (2003). *Standards for What? The Economic Roots of K-12 Reform*, Education Testing Services. <http://www.learndoearn.org/For-Educators/Standards-for-What.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Carnevale, Anthony P. and Donna Desrochers (2003). *Standards for What? The Economic Roots of K-12 Reform*. Education Testing Services. www.learndoearn.org/For-Educators/Standards-for-What.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Skills to Compete, www.skills2compete.org

^{iv} America's Promise Alliance (2011). Building a Grad Nation: March 2011 Update. www.americaspromise.org/Our-Work/Grad-Nation/Building-a-Grad-Nation.aspx

^v Illinois Report Card, 2008.

http://webprod.isbe.net/ereportcard/publicsite/getReport.aspx?year=2008&code=2008StateReport_E.pdf

^{vi} Education Week Diplomas Count 2011, www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2011/06/09/index.html

^{vii} ACT (2010). *College Readiness Benchmark Attainment by State*.

www.act.org/news/data/10/benchmarks.html?utm_campaign=cccr10&utm_source=data10_leftnav&utm_medium=web#benchmark

^{viii} 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.

^{ix} Achieve (2010). *Achieving the Possible: What Americans Think About the College- and Career-Ready Agenda*. www.achieve.org/AchievingthePossible

^x 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