



June 2011

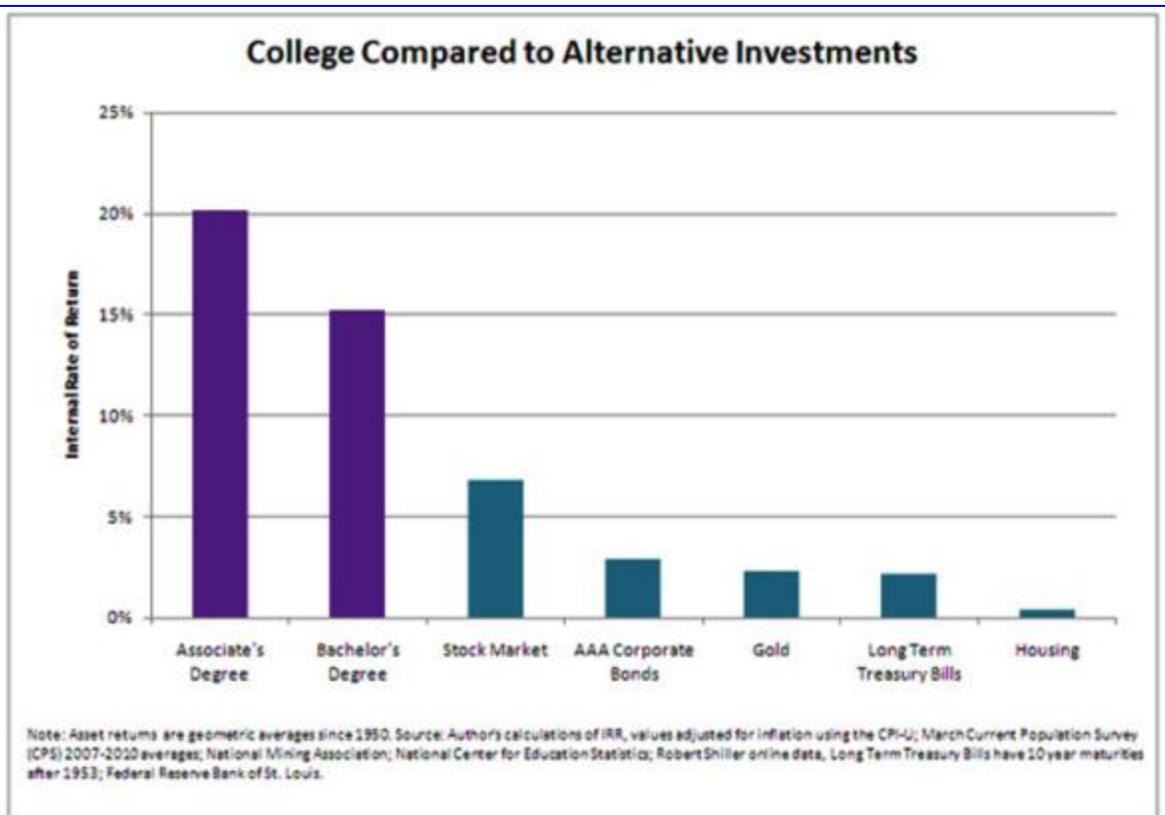
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The Economic Value of College and Career Readiness

It is no secret that there is a skills gap in America. Employers are concerned about the ability of our graduates' to think critically, communicate well and perform basic tasks in mathematics and other important areas. Employers estimate that 39% of recent high school graduates with no further education are unprepared for the expectations that they face in entry-level jobs. At the same time, employers find themselves unable to fill open positions even as the unemployment rate continues to hover around 9%. It is estimated that there are at least four unemployed individuals for every new job opening, largely because of this skill gap.

The college- and career-ready agenda has always been a jobs—and equity—agenda with the goal of providing *all* students with the foundational knowledge and skills they need to be successful. Americans need higher-level skills to obtain and succeed in the 21st century economy and raising expectations in K-12 will provide the academic foundation students need to obtain those skills. Despite the mounting evidence, there continues to be some resistance to the college- and career-ready agenda, largely stemming from a misunderstanding that it means that all students should go to four-year colleges. In fact, being "college- and career- ready" is about graduates having options and choosing their own career path. To do so, graduates must leave high school ready—that is, without the need for remediation—for additional education and/or training whether that is at a community college, technical college, apprenticeship or certificate program or a four- year college degree.

Another common concern is that it's unfair to push students to pursue additional education given the rising costs of higher education. Yet, recent research hones in on the economic returns of postsecondary education and training, and finds them to be significant, even accounting for tuition and opportunity costs of being in school. [*Where is the Best Place to Invest \\$102,000 — In Stocks, Bonds, or a College Degree?*](#), a new paper just released by the Hamilton Project, an economic growth and advocacy arm of the Brookings Institution, estimates that the average college graduate earns, over their lifetime, \$570,000 more than an individual with only a high school diploma. In other words, an investment in postsecondary education yields a five-fold return on investment—far exceeding the return on traditional investments, such as stocks, bonds and real estate.



SOURCE: Greenstone, Michael and Adam Looney. *Where is the Best Place to Invest \$102,000?* The Hamilton Project, the Brookings Institution (June 25, 2011).

Building on this, [The Undereducated American](#), a new study published by Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce, estimates that in order to keep pace with increased demand for college-educated workers in the labor market, the U.S. will need to produce 20 million more college graduates by the year 2025. That means, of course, we'll need to do a far better job of producing high school graduates who are truly college and career-ready.

The simple fact is that education matters, and a high school diploma is rarely enough to ensure access to 21st century jobs. For that, high school grads need to be prepared for the additional postsecondary training and education it will take to succeed.

New from Achieve

Update on the Next Generation Science Standards

The release of the National Research Council (NRC) report, the [Conceptual Framework for Science Education](#), is anticipated in July 2011. Once the Framework is released, Achieve will begin working with states and educators on phase two of the process to develop the *Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)*. Be on the lookout for the

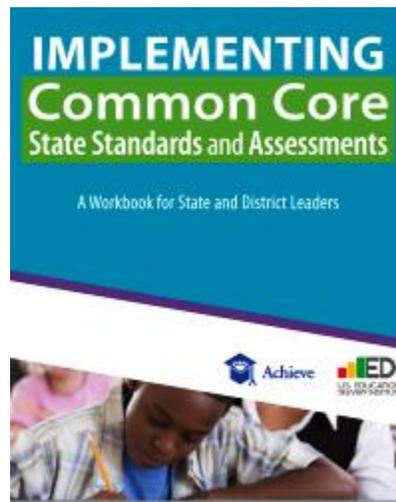
new NGSS website that will go live when phase two begins later this summer. The website will house updates on development and serve as a portal for standards reviews. In the meantime, a fact sheet about the development process is available online [here](#).

PARCC Update

PARCC's Governing Board held its Quarterly Meeting in Washington D.C. on June 24, 2011. The Governing Board is comprised of the K-12 chief state school officers from the 15 Governing States, and meets quarterly to make major policy and operational decisions on behalf of all PARCC states, including decisions related to the overall design of the assessment system, PARCC's procurement strategy, and other significant issues. Read the [news statement](#).

On June 6-7, 2011 PARCC held a two-day Transition & Implementation Institute to provide state and district leaders with a framework for assessing capacity and planning next steps in order to implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and transition to the PARCC assessments. The Transition & Implementation Institute provided a forum for state and district leaders to share their strategies and to create and/or refine existing state implementation plans to incorporate and leverage leading state and district efforts.

The Institute utilized the new [Common Core Implementation Workbook](#), recently released by Achieve and the U.S. Education Delivery Institute. View videos of the plenary sessions [here](#). (If you don't have broadband speed, press 'HD' on the video to toggle to the mobile version.) Materials from the Institute including the agenda and PowerPoint presentations are located [here](#).



Reaching the Finish Line

One in four public students drop out before they finish high school. That's 1.3 million per year - one every 26 seconds, 7,000 every school day. On June 25 Edward B. Rust Jr., chairman of the board and chief executive officer of State Farm and Achieve Board member, appeared on Christine Romans' "Your Bottom Line" on CNN to discuss education. Watch the interview [here](#). In 2010, [America's Promise Alliance](#), of

News Clips

1. College Pays Off

New York Times business section columnist David Leonhardt writes, "The evidence is overwhelming that college is a better investment for most

which Achieve is a partner, launched its most ambitious campaign ever—[Grad Nation](#)—to end the dropout crisis and prepare young people for college and the 21st century workforce.

Mirroring the high school dropout crisis, nearly half of all four-year college students fail to graduate. The numbers are even lower for those attending community college. Low rates of completion have a direct impact on the economy, with a widening skills gap to fill new jobs. In response, on June 9 a broad coalition of organizations launched the National Coalition for College Completion. Led by the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP), the coalition includes business, civil rights, community-based, and student and youth advocacy organizations. The Coalition launched [FinishHigherEd.org](#), a resource center that provides fact sheets, policy one-pagers, and an ever-growing library of promising practices from colleges and community-based organizations.

To support states the U.S. Department of Education issued guidance to U.S. governors in March, offering suggestions to improve graduation rates. The [College Completion Tool Kit](#) defines seven proposals states can consider to raise completion statistics. The National Governors Association designed its own [Complete to Compete initiative](#) to compile the ideas and experiences of and make recommendations to state executives from around the country.

graduates than in the past. A new study even shows that a bachelor's degree pays off for jobs that don't require one: secretaries, plumbers and cashiers. And, beyond money, education seems to make people happier and healthier." [More...](#)

2. **Class of 2011 Survives Stricter Graduation Requirements**

Lynn Moore of *The Muskegon Chronicle* congratulates Michigan's class of 2011 for passing rigorous new high school graduation requirements. She notes that, "it was five years ago that the Michigan Legislature decided a half credit of civics was not a sufficient requirement to make certain graduates are ready for the challenging careers of tomorrow." [More...](#)

3. **Ax the Substandard Diploma**

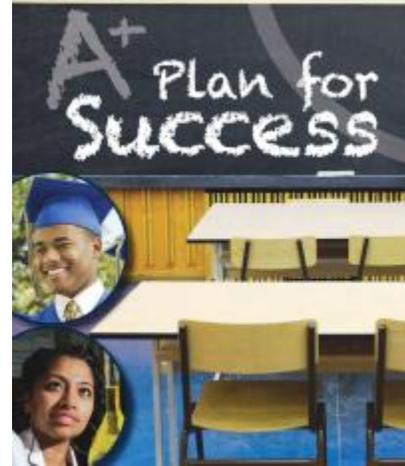
Kristen Amundson writes in *The Washington Post* that Virginia's students never have to take the math classes that will prepare them for college-level math. As a result, they wind up in remedial classes. [More...](#)

New Resources

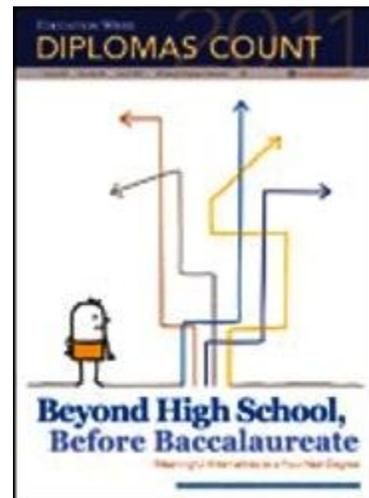
- The National Research Council published [Successful K-12 STEM Education](#), a new report that recommends ways that leaders at all levels can improve K-12 education in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The report provides an overview of the K-12 STEM education landscape by

considering different school models, highlighting research on effective STEM education practices, and identifying conditions that promote and limit school- and student-level success. It suggests that one way to elevate science to the same level of importance as mathematics and reading is to assess science subjects as frequently as is done for reading and math. States are encouraged to develop assessments that are aligned with the next generation of science standards—which will be based on a framework to be released soon by the NRC (see above)—and that emphasize science practices rather than mere factual recall.

- The Campaign for High School Equity (CHSE), a diverse coalition of leading civil rights and education advocacy organizations primarily representing students of color, recently unveiled its [A Plan for Success](#) to help ensure that *all* young people graduate from high school ready to work, ready for college, and ready to be productive citizens. It underscores that dropouts are more likely than high school graduates to experience poverty, poor health, and incarceration during their adult lives, and that the financial impact of the high dropout rate on our society is staggering. The coalition's goal is to acquaint policymakers, advocates, educators, and the general public with ideas about high school education reform that, in policy and practice, have the potential to increase high school graduation rates as well as improve the college and workforce readiness of every graduate.



- A new report by *Education Week* and the Editorial Projects in Education (EPE) Research Center finds that the nation's graduation rate has increased significantly, following two consecutive years of declines and stagnation. With this dramatic turnaround, the nation's graduation rate stands at 72 percent, the highest level of high school completion in more than two decades. The report shows that the nation's public schools will generate about 145,000 fewer dropouts than the previous year. These new findings offer reason to believe that the past decade's unprecedented efforts to combat the nation's dropout crisis are starting to produce results. The report, [Diplomas Count 2011: Beyond High School, Before](#)



[*Baccalaureate—Meaningful Alternatives to a Four-Year Degree*](#), explores the pros and cons of new thinking about the educational and economic viability of postsecondary pathways between a high school diploma and a four-year degree.

Achieve Job Opportunity

Achieve has several career opportunities available. Go to www.achieve.org/careers.

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