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Perspective
News and Views from Achieve

March 2008

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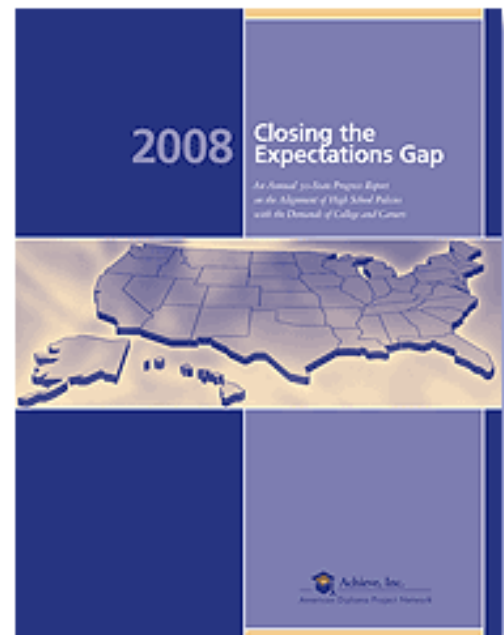
Commentary

Every year since the 2005 National Education Summit and the founding of the American Diploma Project (ADP) Network, Achieve has issued an annual report based on a 50-state survey of efforts to close the expectations gap between what high schools require of their students and what colleges and employers demand.

In "[Closing the Expectations Gap 2008](#)," Achieve found that while a majority of states have made closing the expectations gap a priority, some states have moved much more aggressively than others. Overall, states have made the most progress aligning academic standards and graduation requirements with college- and career-ready expectations. They have made less progress on complementary assessments, data and accountability systems.

According to the report, 19 states now have high school standards that are aligned with postsecondary expectations. In addition, 18 states and the **District of Columbia** now require students to complete a college and career-ready curriculum in order to earn a diploma, including four years of challenging mathematics through at least Algebra II or its equivalent and four years of rigorous English. Just three years ago, only two states (**Texas** and **Arkansas**) had such requirements in place.

In comparison, far fewer states have developed college and career-ready testing systems, with only nine states now administering college-readiness tests to all high school students. With respect to accountability, only four states factor both an accurate graduation rate and whether their students are earning college and career-ready diplomas into their accountability systems. Finally nine states now

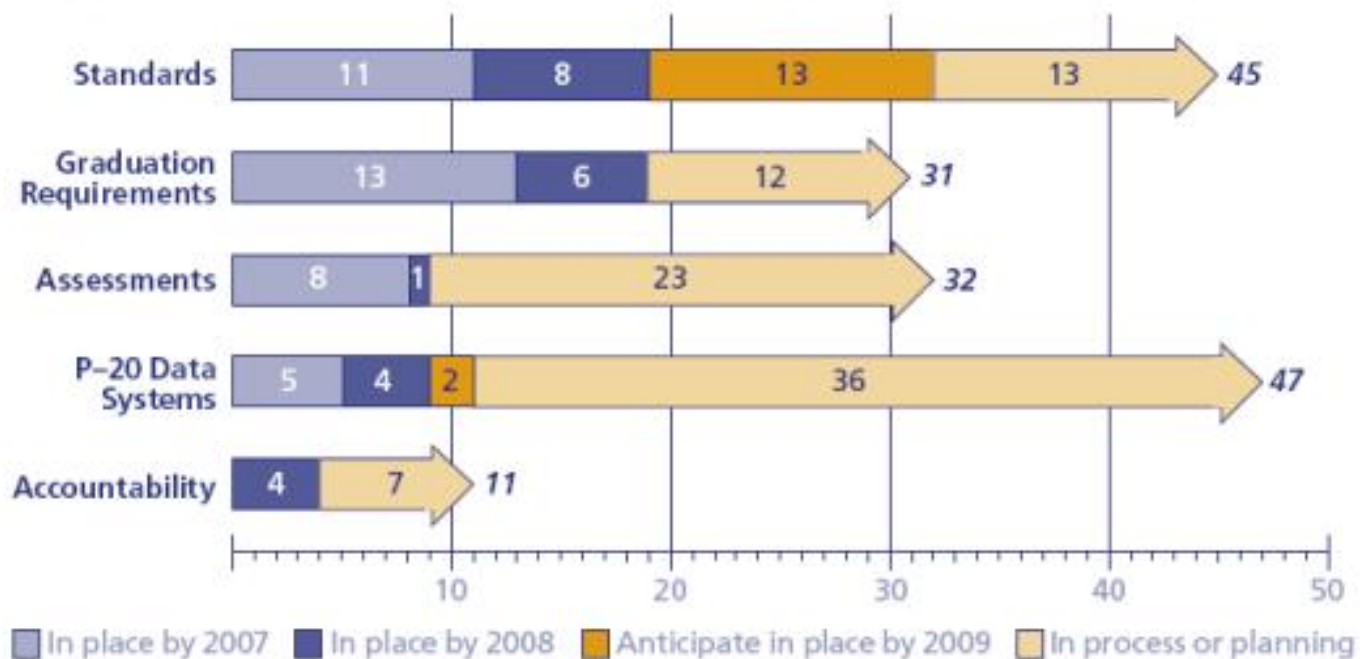


have longitudinal data systems that can track students from pre-K through college graduation.

In each of the ADP pillars-aligned standards, college and career-ready graduation requirements, assessments, accountability and P-20 longitudinal data systems-many more states are in process or planning to make progress in each of these critical areas. For the first time, the report identifies when states anticipate completing their work. Achieve will be paying close attention in future years as to whether states are meeting their targets.

While the progress in the 2008 report is encouraging, what's also striking is how much work there is still to be done in putting the right policies in place and building the capacity of schools so that students graduate from high school prepared for the demands of the real world, whether that's college and/or career. [Download the report...](#)

States Continue To Make Progress on Policies To Ensure That High School Students Graduate College and Career Ready



Source: Achieve Survey/Research, 2008

New from Achieve

California and Connecticut Join the ADP Network

We are pleased to announce that two new states, **California** and **Connecticut**, have joined the ADP Network, bringing the total number of member states to 32. California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger noted in a letter that, "We look forward to working with Achieve and the other member states of the American Diploma Project Network in improving public education in California and ensuring that California's students have the opportunities to prepare for their future success." Governor Rell of Connecticut said, "By joining this network, we have committed to ensuring that our high school standards, assessments, and curricula are rigorous, relevant, and aligned with the expectations that graduates will face in college and the workforce. Our focus is on putting policies in place today that will bring about steady, long-term job growth in the future." [Read the press releases...](#)

ADP English and Communication Benchmarks, Grades 4-12

The ADP end-of-high school English benchmarks describe the skills needed for success in postsecondary education and careers. To provide details on how students can progress toward these benchmarks, Achieve has created the English and Communication Benchmarks, Grades 4-12. These address the content included in the ADP benchmarks (reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, media, logic and literature) with increasingly rigorous expectations from grade 4 through grade 12. They are designed to support states' efforts in developing standards and curricular materials, as well as to provide guidance to educators planning instruction. [More...](#)

Algebra II End-of-Course Assessment Partnership Update

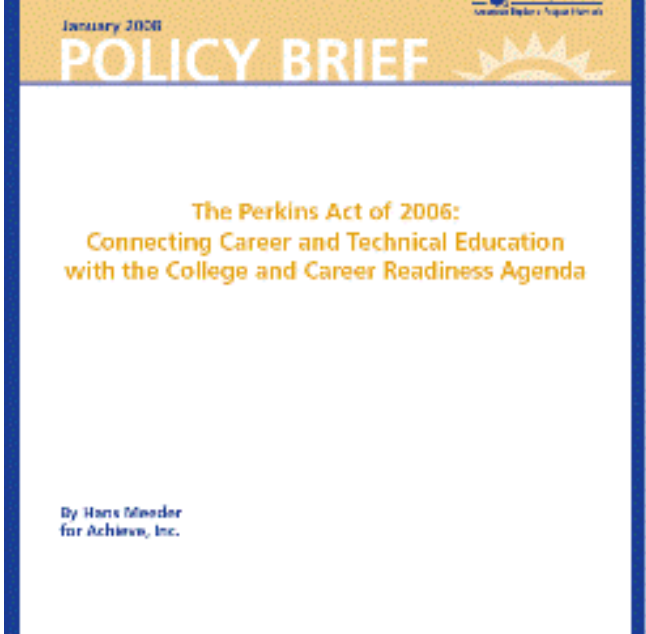
The end-of-course Algebra II exam is the largest effort a group of states has ever undertaken to develop a common assessment based on common standards. Nine ADP Network states - **Arkansas, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania** and **Rhode Island** - formed the consortium initially and another five states - **Arizona, Hawaii, Minnesota, North Carolina** and **Washington** - have joined since, expanding the Consortium to 14 states. The first operational administration of this exam will occur in May 2008 in a number of these states. A fact sheet that answers frequently asked questions is available, including information on the core test content and how states can become members of the Consortium. [More...](#)

Achieve Policy Brief on the Perkins Act

Achieve has published a policy brief



entitled, "The Perkins Act of 2006: Connecting Career and Technical Education with the College and Career Readiness Agenda." The brief is written to inform leaders, particularly those who are implementing the ADP agenda in their states, about the opportunities to align and coordinate strategies between ADP and the Perkins Act. It addresses the major components of the new Perkins Act, discusses CTE more broadly in the context of the ADP agenda and offers a number of specific complementary and mutually supportive strategies state ADP leadership teams could employ to implement the ADP agenda and the Perkins Act. Download it [here](#).



Tennessee Raises the Education Bar

Tennessee adopted new high school graduation requirements at the State Board of Education's quarterly meeting in January, becoming the 18th state to set their graduation requirements at the college- and career-ready level. The board also approved academic standards in math, science and English, which have been revised to be more competitive at a national level.

"Today's vote solidifies the work of the past year of raising education standards to more adequately prepare Tennessee students for 21st century success," Governor Phil Bredesen said. "These improvements are essential stepping stones to Tennessee's students possessing the knowledge and skills to be at the top of their chosen professions. Adequately educating our young people is, and always should be, Tennessee's top priority." [Read the press release](#).

News Clips

1. **College Preparation is a Top State Policy Issue for Higher Education in 2008**

The Chronicle of Higher Education notes that the American Association of State Colleges and Universities has compiled a list of the top 10 issues of higher-education policy that it expects to be at the forefront of states' concerns this year, with affordability, states' fiscal forecasts, and college preparation at the top of the list. [More...](#)

2. **California Education Reform Plan Praised**

Tennessee's new graduation requirements have been dubbed 'The Ready Core,' and now include a fourth year of math at the Algebra II level or above. The Ready Core replaces Tennessee's previous two-tier diploma system, which required all incoming freshman to choose between a "University Path" curriculum and a less rigorous "Technical Path" curriculum. While the Ready Core still provides students with the option to complete a career tech program of study, it also ensures that all students complete a rigorous four-year sequence in math. The new requirements go into effect for the graduating class of 2013.

The new standards are part of the Tennessee Diploma Project, a statewide initiative to align academic standards and student testing with postsecondary and workplace expectations. [More...](#)

News coverage of Tennessee's graduation requirements upgrade has been extensive, including stories in [The Daily Times](#) and [The Tennessean](#). In an [op-ed](#) Gary Nixon, Ed.D., executive director of the Tennessee State Board of Education, writes that these changes are needed because, "the economy demands a more qualified work force and schools that emphasize higher-order skills and critical thinking."

California State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell's "nuts and bolts" [education plan](#), including joining the ADP Network, is called, "sensible, if not revolutionary," and will "set the state's schools on course for real reform," according to a *Los Angeles Times* [editorial](#). The state is taking several action steps to close the achievement gap and to align standards from kindergarten to college.

3. **Critical Thinking Skills**

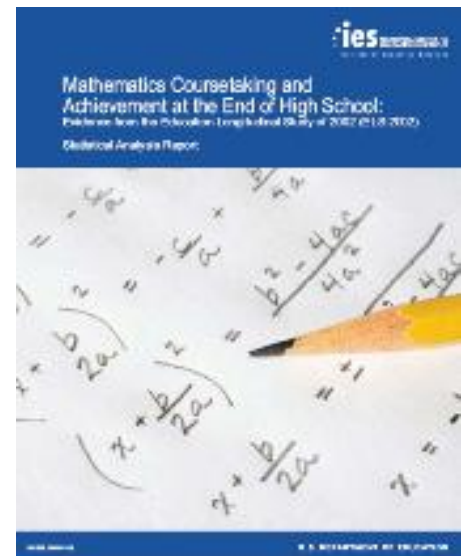
The Washington Post examines the elements of critical thinking and how to foster it. Writer Valerie Strauss notes, "What teachers and parents should do, experts say, is make sure students know the difference between memorizing material and understanding it, that students are open to different ways of thinking and that they learn as much as they can about as much as they can." [More...](#)

New Resources

- The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) issued "Lost in Transition: Building a Better Path from School to College and Careers." This report is based on 15 state education forums held in 2005 and 2006. Sponsored by the League for Innovation in the Community College and SREB, and supported by the U.S. Department of Education, the forums focused on the goals of the College and Career Transitions Initiative. This report summarizes the findings from the education forums, identifies key policy issues, and details actions states can take to improve students' transitions from high school to postsecondary studies and careers. [More...](#)



- The National Center for Education Statistics published a report, "Mathematics Coursetaking and Achievement at the End of High School," examining the relationship between the mathematics courses students complete in 11th and 12th grade and learning gains made during those two years. Key findings underscore the need for students to take rigorous mathematics courses throughout high school in order to meet expectations for postsecondary education and the workplace. [More...](#)



- The National High School Center published "Approaches to Dropout Prevention: Heeding Early Warning Signs With Appropriate Interventions"



With Appropriate Interventions."
This report outlines steps that schools can take to identify at-risk students and provide support systems and interventions



to assist students in obtaining a high school diploma. Further, it discusses the use of early warning data systems to target interventions for groups and individual students, offers a variety of best practice approaches undertaken by higher-performing high schools, and presents effective programs that are being implemented to address the dropout problem. [More...](#)

- *Education Week* published the 2008 "Quality Counts" report. This report expands the set of indicators used in the past and reintroduces state grades. States are rated on performance outcomes, policy efforts and efforts to align policies across various levels: from early childhood education to postsecondary study and training. The report looks broadly at state efforts to attract, develop, and deploy talent. A cradle-to-career perspective highlights the connections between K-12 education and other systems. [More...](#)



Achieve Job Opportunity

Achieve seeks a Director, Postsecondary Initiatives. For more, go [here](#).

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