

NORTH CAROLINA'S COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY COMMITMENT

Why Is North Carolina'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.ⁱ

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

- **80% of North Carolina's jobs are middle- or high-skill** (jobs that require some postsecondary education or training).ⁱⁱ
- Yet only 38% of North Carolina 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.

North Carolina'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 ^{iv}	Independently Reported ^v
	70%	80%

As of 2009, North Carolina had 92 "dropout factories" or high schools that graduate 60 percent or less of their students.^{vi}

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

- Among those North Carolina high school graduates who enter public college in the state, only 54% persist on their sophomore year at two-year institutions and 78% at four-year institutions.^{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 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."*^{ix}

NORTH CAROLINA'S COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY COMMITMENT

What North Carolina Has Accomplished To Date^x

- In 2009, North Carolina adopted academic standards aligned with college- and career-ready expectations.
- North Carolina adopted the Common Core State Standards in June 2010.
- In 2007 North Carolina adopted a college- and career-ready curriculum as the state's default graduation requirements.

North Carolina is one of only 21 states (including DC) with requirements at this level

- North Carolina is a Governing State in the SMARTER BALANCED Assessment Consortium (SBAC), a group of states working to develop a common assessment system using Race to the Top Common Assessment funds.
- North Carolina's longitudinal data system satisfies all ten essential Data Quality Campaign elements, providing a foundation for strong and sound student-level data collection.
- North Carolina will need to expand its use of college- and career-ready indicators to get a more complete picture of how their students are faring in K-12 and beyond.

How North Carolina 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 common assessment consortium and developing a next-generation, computer-based assessment system that is anchored by college- and career-ready tests in high school, will let students know if they are ready for college-level coursework, and 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 data.
- ✓ ...Re-examine the state's K-12 accountability system to determine how it can further reward measures of college and career readiness, in alignment with the state's standards, course requirements 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.learn2earn.org/For-Educators/Standards-for-What.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Skills to Compete <http://www.skills2compete.org>

ⁱⁱⁱ National Center for Higher Education Management Systems' analysis of American Community Survey (2007) <http://www.higheredinfo.org>

^{iv} North Carolina School Report Card, <http://www.ncreportcards.org/src/stateDetails.jsp?Page=1&pYear=2008-2009>

^v Education Week Diplomas Count 2010, www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2010/06/10/index.html

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

^{vii} National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (2008). *Retention Rates - First-Time College Freshmen Returning Their Second Year, Graduation Rates*. <http://www.higheredinfo.org/>

^{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