

## **American Diploma Network Pennsylvania's State Plan**

### **The Challenge**

Pennsylvania has heard the clear national message concerning the necessary preparation of high school graduates for success in college and career. We are mounting an unprecedented effort to make sure our graduates are ready to meet this new more challenging standard.

The challenge is that more than half of Pennsylvania's 11th graders are not proficient in math on the state, criterion-referenced test and nearly 2 in 5 are below the standard in reading

Only 44% of high school freshmen graduate on time with a college-ready transcript

Our schools are not ensuring that students take a challenging, real-world curriculum

- Fewer than half of Pennsylvania school districts require students to take 4 years of math in order to graduate
- Only 52% of our school districts require Algebra, 39% require Geometry, and 20% require Algebra II
- Barely 1 in 4 school districts require students to take 4 years of science in order to graduate
- Only 77% of school districts require Biology, 24% require Chemistry, and 12% require Physics
- Career and Technical Education students fare worse still, with 80% failing to reach proficiency levels on state math assessments

While there are many reasons for these disappointing statistics, one clear cause is the lack of access to a college ready curriculum, and insufficient rigor of courses currently offered even in that core. Clearly, the state must undertake some systemic reform efforts in order for students to be competitive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **State's Response**

Under the leadership of Governor Rendell and Secretary of Education Zahorchak, Pennsylvania is taking unprecedented steps to improve the quality of the high school experience for Pennsylvania students. For example:

- Pennsylvania's 2005-06 budget demonstrated strong bi-partisan support for the Governor's education proposals, including more than doubling available funding for high school reform; first-ever appropriations to fund dual enrollment opportunities,

- particularly for lower-income students, and tutoring support for students in low-performing high schools and career and technical centers.
- The Commonwealth is pursuing aggressive reforms to career and technical education, based on the recommendations based on a statewide analysis conducted by Jobs for the Future, that will enhance academic rigor, ensure industry relevance and build postsecondary connections for CTE students; and
  - The Governor has appointed the Commission of College and Career Success, dedicated to promoting postsecondary transition and success for increasing numbers of Pennsylvania students, which will help to ensure bi-partisan oversight of and support for the Commonwealth's high school reform strategies.
  - Pennsylvania has joined with 21 other state in the American Diploma Project, an effort to raise expectations and achievement in our high schools so that all students graduate with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in college and work.

Over the next three years, the Governor will focus the above resources to take the following steps on behalf of Pennsylvania's students:

\*Align academic standards in high school with the expectations for college and workplace success, so that all students who meet the standards are prepared for their next steps in life.

\*Ensure that high school course requirements provide all students with a college- and career-prep curriculum in order to earn a high school diploma

\*Streamline the assessment system so that the tests students take in high school can also serve as readiness tests for college and work

\*Develop an accountability system to hold high schools and colleges accountable for the success of their students.

### **Summary of State ADP Action Plan**

Pennsylvania, as a local control state, must approach aggressive high school reform on two levels: bringing districts along through targeted supports as well as pushing for more state-wide quality assurances through regulation and legislation.

Project 720 is Pennsylvania's high school reform effort. The four platforms of this work align with the ADP commitments. We will continue to increase the amount of support to these districts and additional cohorts until a "critical mass" is reached. The heart of Project 720 is increasing the rigor of the high school and career and technical school curriculum by having participating districts commit to providing all their students with a college-and-career prep curriculum in order to graduate. Through Project 720, high schools are forming regional partnerships in order to share data on how their students do

in post-secondary and what that can mean for reshaping their high school curriculum and supports.

Simultaneously, the ADP team is working via various approaches to move on statewide policies which will ensure that the high school diploma has greater meaning for both colleges and industries. The Commission on College and Career Success is the focus of much of this work. It will take this next year to study the policies issues involved and make recommendations to the Governor by December 31, 2006 to be acted upon in the 2007 legislative session. This 25 person commission is co-chaired by the Chancellor of the State University System and a prominent Business leader. Five work teams support the Commission. In all, over 75 of Pennsylvania's best educators, policymakers, and citizens will be concentrating their efforts on what can be done in Pennsylvania to ensure more students graduate ready to compete in the new global economy.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education is also moving this agenda forward in several areas: Concluding 18 months of study on the PSSA's correlation to placement exam scores at 6 higher education institutions, PDE is starting to work with some sectors on plans to use the PSSA for placement. PDE is also working on developing and making available high quality college-and career prep curriculum in English, an area historically less well-defined. PDE is revising post-secondary program guidelines for preparing counselors to include college-and –career advocacy work. PDE is also working on a k-12 student unit record system that will be compatible with PHEAA's higher education system, allowing for a more systemic way of understanding where Pennsylvania's educational pipeline is working and where we need to strengthen it.

The State Board of Education is currently working on this effort by clarifying language in the School Code that will ensure that all students reach standards prior to graduation.

## **Pennsylvania's Plan for Implementing ADP Imperatives by 2008**

### **I. Align academic standards in high school with the expectations for college and workplace success, so that all students who meet the standards are prepared for their next steps in life.**

August 2005-January 2007 (18 month work plan)

\*Launch process with the K-12, post-secondary and business communities to define the knowledge and skills students need to succeed in credit bearing courses in Pennsylvania's college and universities as well as high-growth industries.

\*Commission on College and Career Success work team made up of post-secondary content area faculty and high school content area faculty will use national benchmarks (ADP and others) and the state's academic standards to identify gaps in existing high school standards and to revise those standards as necessary. Also define in easy-to-communicate terms what skills one must have in order to enter the world of work or higher education without the need for remediation.

\* Have business and post-secondary communities validate that if students meet the state's academic standards, they will be ready for success in college and careers.

\* Have Achieve review standards and Academic Achievement Essentials to ensure quality and rigor.

By December 2007

\*Change Chapter 4 of School Code which defines academic standards to reflect the needed changes.

\*Communicate Academic Achievement Essentials widely with support of higher education and business community.

## **II. Upgrade high school course requirements so that all students are required to complete a college- and work curriculum in order to earn a high school diploma.**

August 2005-January 2007 (18 month work plan)

\*Require all Project 720 schools (more than 63) to require all high school students to take a college-and –career prep sequence in order to graduate from high school.

\* In order to compare rigor and consistency across the state, PDE conducts curriculum and graduation requirement surveys to ascertain state of high school curriculum in Pennsylvania currently.

\* PDE identifies high-performing high schools and their curriculum in order to inform discussions across the state concerning what all students need to have taken in high school to be ready for post-secondary success.

\*Create a work team under the Commission on College and Career Success to research work in other states and analyze Pennsylvania data in order to make legislative recommendations to Governor on high school curriculum.

By August 2007

\*Made necessary legislative and regulatory changes necessary to implement recommendation of the Commission on College and Career Success.

## **III. Streamline the assessment system so that the tests students take in high school can also serve as readiness tests for college and work**

August 2005-January 2007 (18 month work plan)

\*Conduct research into the correlation of current PSSA with college placement exam scores in higher education institutions in Pa. Present findings to higher education community and communicate findings to general populations.

\*Work with Community Colleges and State System universities to use PSSA for admission and placement decisions.

\*Work with other states and our Pennsylvania higher education partners on common end of course Algebra II exams which might also be used for placing students in their first math course.

By August 2008

\*Work to increase the number of higher education institutions, including the larger state-related to use PSSA for placement

**IV. Develop an accountability system to hold high schools and colleges accountable for the success of their students.**

\*Revise Chapter 4 of the School Code in order to ensure all students who graduate from a Pennsylvania high school clearly demonstrates proficiency in our standards, whether they use the PSSA or an alternative local exam use for high school graduation.

\*The first step in any good accountability system is a deep understanding of how students move through our educational pipeline. To this end we will use the newly developed data system to track student performance through K-12 and provide feedback loops to sending high schools on the higher education performance of their graduates.

\*Work with higher education to extend new data system to undergraduate years.

\*Greater emphasis on performance measures for higher education which accounts for graduation of all students with the skills necessary to enter the world of work and greater society as prepared and productive citizens.

**Pennsylvania's State ADP Action Team**

. Pennsylvania's American Diploma Project Action Team includes key officials from the Governor's office, the General Assembly, K-12 and higher education, business and the State Board of Education.

➤ *Team Leader Donna Cooper, Secretary, Governor's Office of Planning and Policy.* As the

representative from Governor Rendell's office, Secretary Cooper will be the team leader. Secretary Cooper has extensive experience in leading successful statewide education reform initiatives and is an active member of the Achieve Network. Previously, she served as the Executive Director of Good Schools Pennsylvania, a public education advocacy organization, and as the Deputy Mayor for Policy and Planning in the Rendell administration in Philadelphia, where she oversaw a wide variety of programs and services dedicated to addressing the needs of children, youth and families. Secretary Cooper brings extensive understanding of public education and experience in moving an education agenda at the state level, and will ensure that the proposed strategies are successfully carried out.

- *Dr. Gerald Zahorchak, Secretary of Education.* As former Deputy Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, Dr. Zahorchak was a leader in the development and formation of Pennsylvania's high school reform initiatives. Prior to his two and one-half years as a senior official in the Department of Education, he was a highly successful superintendent of a mid-size economically disadvantaged urban school district. Thus, Dr. Zahorchak has hands on knowledge of what it takes to build sustainable reform, and to turn around troubled schools and districts. Dr. Zahorchak will marshal the time and talents of the Department of Education to ensure the success of Pennsylvania's proposed strategies.
- *Representative Dwight Evans, House of Representatives Appropriations Committee Ranking Member.* Representative Evans was elected to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in 1980, and is currently serving as Minority Chairperson on the House Appropriations Committee. Rep. Evans taught in the Philadelphia public school system prior to being elected, and championed the state's charter school act. He supported the Education Empowerment Act, designed to help students in failing school districts, and the School District of Philadelphia's public-private partnership to create an alternative school for disruptive students. He is currently focusing his efforts on education reform, teacher recruitment and retention and increasing educational alternatives for families. Representative Evans and his staff will serve as the bridge to others members the General Assembly, ensuring their understanding and active support.
- *Dr. Judy Hample, Chancellor, Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.* Dr. Hample oversees the 14 state-owned universities that constitute the Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education. Through her access to this extensive statewide system, Dr. Hample will ensure that standards and assessments used in "college ready" programs do, in fact, meet postsecondary expectations.
- *Karl Girton, President, Pennsylvania State Board of Education.* As the president of the State Board of Education, he leads the administrative regulatory body for elementary/secondary and higher education in the Commonwealth, which includes adopting broad policies and principles and establishing standards governing the educational program of the Commonwealth. Mr. Girton is a prominent business leader from central PA who has been actively involved on state-level business councils and with his Alma matter, Pennsylvania State University. Mr. Girton will ensure that all State Board members are aware of the work undertaken through the grant, and that there is a full understanding of any policy challenges or barriers that the Board needs to address.
- *Daniel Fogarty, Manager of Management and Organizational Development, Carpenter Technologies.* Mr. Fogarty not only has a distinguished career in the private sector, but also contributes significant portions of this time to supporting education and workforce-related public systems. For example, Mr. Fogarty plays leadership roles with the Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Board, and was named recently by Governor Rendell to co-chair the Commission on College and Career Success. Mr. Fogarty will ensure that statewide business

organizations, e.g. The Business Roundtable and the Chamber of Business and Industry, understand and support activities undertaken through the grant.

Dr. Lori Shorr, Special Assistant to the Secretary of Education and the Governor's point person for the American Diploma Project and the Commission, will be responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the work outlined in this proposal. The implementation team consists of Ian Rosenblum, Executive Policy Specialist, Governor's Policy Office; Dr. Amy Hodges, PDE, lead implementer of Project 720, the Governor's High School Reform Initiative; Don Spangler, Co-Director, Department of Education Policy Office; and Dr. James Gearity, Deputy Secretary for Postsecondary and Higher Education.

The Governor's Commission on College and Career Success Membership