

PENNSYLVANIA'S COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY COMMITMENT

Why Is Pennsylvania'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 associates or bachelors 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: The demand for middle- and high-skilled workers is outpacing the state's supply of workers educated and experienced at that level.

- **81% of Pennsylvania's jobs are middle- or high-skill** (jobs that require some postsecondary education or training).
- Yet only 38% of Pennsylvania's adults have some postsecondary degree (associate's or higher).ⁱⁱ

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.

Pennsylvania'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 ⁱⁱⁱ	Independently Reported ^{iv}
	90%	78%

As of 2009, Pennsylvania had 53 “dropout factories” or high schools that graduate 60 percent or less of their students.^v

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

- Among those Pennsylvania high school graduates who enter public college in the state, only 55% persist on their sophomore year at two-year institutions and 80% at four-year institutions.^{vi}

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.^{vii}

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.”^{viii}

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What Pennsylvania Has Accomplished To Date^{ix}

- Pennsylvania adopted the Common Core State Standards in July 2010.
- Pennsylvania is a participating state in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the SMARTER BALANCED Assessment Consortium (SBAC), the two multi-state consortia that won Race to the Top Common Assessment funds.
- Since 2005, Pennsylvania has administered Project 720, a grant program that has provided funding to over 200 schools committed to ensuring all students graduate college and career ready (by raising graduation requirements, among other things), strengthening their academic infrastructure to increase student achievement, leveraging data-informed student services, and providing multiple pathways to postsecondary success (through programs such as dual enrollment and CTE).
- Pennsylvania's longitudinal data system satisfies nine of the ten essential Data Quality Campaign elements, providing a foundation for strong and sound student-level data collection.

Pennsylvania is one of 22 states with a P-20 longitudinal data system that regularly matches student-level K-12 and postsecondary data

- While Pennsylvania has the capacity to collect a range of college- and career-ready indicators, the state will need to expand its use of these data in a variety of ways to get a more complete picture of how their students are faring in K-12 and beyond.

How Pennsylvania 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.
- ✓ ...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.
- ✓ ...Remain committed to the goals of the common assessment consortia and developing a next-generation, computer-based assessment system that 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, such as teachers, parents and counselors.
- ✓ ...Re-examine the state's K-12 accountability system to determine how it can reward measures of college and career readiness.

ⁱ Carnevale, Anthony P. and Donna Desrochers (2003). *Standards for What? The Economic Roots of K-12 Reform*, Education Testing Services.

<http://www.learndoeearn.org/For-Educators/Standards-for-What.pdf>

ⁱⁱ National Skills Coalition www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/fact-sheets/state-fact-sheets/; National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, analysis of 2009 American Community Survey.

www.higheredinfo.org/

ⁱⁱⁱ 2009-10 State of Pennsylvania Report Card, www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/state_report_cards/7438

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

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

^{vi} National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (2008). *Retention Rates – First-Time College Freshmen Returning Their Second Year*, www.higheredinfo.org/

^{vii} 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.

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

^{ix} 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.achievethepossible.org/ClosingtheExpectationsGap2011