

# TENNESSEE'S COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY COMMITMENT

## Why Is Tennessee'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.<sup>i</sup>

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

- **81% of Tennessee's jobs are middle- or high-skill** (jobs that require some postsecondary education or training).<sup>ii</sup>
- Yet only 32% of Tennessee adults have some postsecondary degree (associate's or higher).<sup>iii</sup>

### 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.*

Tennessee'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 <sup>iv</sup>	Independently Reported <sup>v</sup>
	82%	77%

As of 2009, Tennessee had 24 “dropout factories” or high schools that graduate 60 percent or less of their students.<sup>vi</sup>

## Tennessee's Remediation Data

54% of Tennessee's students in two-year colleges and 18% of Tennessee's students in four-year colleges require remediation.<sup>vii</sup>

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.<sup>viii</sup>

## 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.”*<sup>ix</sup>

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### What Tennessee Has Accomplished To Date<sup>x</sup>

- In 2009, Tennessee adopted academic standards aligned with college- and career-ready expectations. In August 2010, Tennessee adopted the Common Core State Standards.
- In 2008, Tennessee adopted the Tennessee Ready Core, raising their high school graduation requirements to the college- and career-ready level, and eliminating a two-tiered diploma system that tracked students based in their perceived academic abilities.
- The Tennessee Ready Core requirements are in alignment with the admissions requirements set by the Tennessee Board of Regents.

**Tennessee is one of only 21 states (including DC) with requirements at this level**

- In 2009, Tennessee first administered the ACT to all 11<sup>th</sup>-grade students as part of the state's assessment system.

**Tennessee is one of only 14 states with high school tests used by higher education for admissions/placement decisions letting students know if they are ready for college-level coursework while still in high school and giving them time to address any readiness gaps**

- In 2010, Tennessee was named one of the two Round 1 winners of Race to the Top

**Tennessee is one of only 12 states (including DC) to win the Race to the Top state competition**

- Tennessee is a Governing State in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), a consortium of states working to develop a common assessment system using Race to the Top Common Assessment funds.
- Tennessee's longitudinal data system satisfies all ten essential Data Quality Campaign elements, providing a foundation for strong and sound student-level data collection.
- However, Tennessee will need to expand its collection and 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 Tennessee Can Further Advance the College- and Career-Ready Agenda

- ✓ ...Leverage Race to the Top funds to advance the state's college- and career-ready agenda, and build support structures for students to ensure they are fully prepared to meet the raised expectations.
- ✓ ...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 PARCC 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 linking K-12 and postsecondary student-level data.
- ✓ ...Re-examine the state's K-12 accountability system to determine how it can reward measures of college and career readiness.

<sup>i</sup> 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>

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

<sup>iii</sup> National Center for Higher Education Management Systems' analysis of American Community Survey (2009) <http://www.higheredinfo.org>

<sup>iv</sup> Tennessee Department of Education State Wide Report Card, 2010, [www.edu.reportcard.state.tn.us/pls/apex/f?p=200:1:1036679878842962](http://www.edu.reportcard.state.tn.us/pls/apex/f?p=200:1:1036679878842962)

<sup>v</sup> Education Week Diplomas Count 2010, [www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2010/06/10/index.html](http://www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2010/06/10/index.html)

<sup>vi</sup> America's Promise Alliance (2011). Building a Grad Nation: March 2011 Update. [www.americaspromise.org/Our-Work/Grad-Nation/Building-a-Grad-Nation.aspx](http://www.americaspromise.org/Our-Work/Grad-Nation/Building-a-Grad-Nation.aspx)

<sup>vii</sup> Tennessee Higher Education Commission (2008). *Tennessee High Education Profiles and Trends*.

<http://tennessee.gov/thec/Legislative/Reports/2008/ProfilesTrends2008.pdf>

<sup>viii</sup> 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.

<sup>ix</sup> Achieve (2010). *Achieving the Possible: What Americans Think About the College- and Career-Ready Agenda*. [www.achieve.org/AchievingthePossible](http://www.achieve.org/AchievingthePossible)

<sup>x</sup> 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](http://www.achieve.org/ClosingtheExpectationsGap2011)