

WEST VIRGINIA'S COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY COMMITMENT

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

- 80% of West Virginia's jobs are middle- or high-skill (jobs that require some postsecondary education or training).
- Yet only 26% of West Virginia'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.

West Virginia'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}
	84%	72%

As of 2009, West Virginia had 2 "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 West Virginia high school graduates who enter a public college in the state, only 49% persist on their sophomore year at two-year institutions and 71% 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."^{viii}
- 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}

WEST VIRGINIA'S COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY COMMITMENT

What West Virginia Has Accomplished To Date^{ix}

- In 2006, West Virginia adopted high school standards aligned with college and career expectations.
- In June 2010, West Virginia adopted the Common Core State Standards.
- West Virginia administers the WESTEST, an 11th grade assessment capable of measuring students' readiness for college and careers, that is used to place students in credit-bearing, first-year college courses.

West Virginia 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

- West Virginia 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.
- West Virginia's longitudinal data system satisfies none of the Data Quality Campaign's ten essential elements, including the regular matching of student-level data across K-12 and postsecondary systems.

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

- However, West Virginia will need to expand 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 West Virginia 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 consortium 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 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 2008-09 West Virginia Achieves Report Card, <http://wweis.k12.wv.us/nclb/pub/rpt0809/cache/pdf999.pdf>

^{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, Graduation Rates*. <http://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.achieve.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.achieve.org/ClosingtheExpectationsGap2011