From Achieve President Michael Cohen

In December 2016, we gathered with practitioners, policy leaders, and partners from across the country to celebrate Achieve’s 20th anniversary and discuss the past, present, and future of the college- and career-ready agenda. Through a series of candid conversations with teachers, students, policy and research leaders, and others who understand the critical importance of college- and career-ready graduates to our nation’s future, we were reminded that while this work has made great strides forward in the past two decades, much work still remains. States have made progress in adopting the college- and career-ready policies needed to ensure that students are held to high academic expectations, but far too many graduates move on from high school unprepared to succeed in higher education or begin a career. As we begin to implement our new strategic plan, we are reminded of the critical role that collaboration within and across states has played in advancing the work during the past twenty years. Together, we can work to ensure all U.S. high school graduates are equipped to pursue their dreams.

Michael Cohen
President, Achieve
Achieve is proud to be the leading voice for the college- and career-ready agenda, and has helped transform the concept of “college and career readiness for all students” into a national priority.

Achieve is an independent, nonprofit, 501(c) (3) nonprofit education reform organization dedicated to working with states, districts, and partners on policies and practices to raise academic standards and graduation requirements, improve assessments, and strengthen accountability. Created in 1996 by a bipartisan group of governors and business leaders, Achieve is leading the effort to make college and career readiness a priority across the country so that students graduating from high school are academically prepared for postsecondary success.

When states want to collaborate on education policy or practice, they come to Achieve. Achieve has worked with state teams, educators, postsecondary leaders, grassroots and civil rights organizations, advocacy partners, the business community, and many others to improve student performance closer to home. Achieve has worked with state teams, educators, postsecondary leaders, grassroots and civil rights organizations, advocacy partners, the business community, and many others to improve student performance closer to home. Achieve has worked with state teams, educators, postsecondary leaders, grassroots and civil rights organizations, advocacy partners, the business community, and many others to improve student performance closer to home.

In 2016, Achieve celebrated its 20th anniversary and reflected upon two decades of leadership in the effort for states to prioritize college and career readiness for their students. While significant progress has been made, we still have far to go; the mission that drives us — raising expectations for all students and helping students meet them — remains the same. Our tactics and strategies will necessarily shift over the next 20 years as we respond to the changing landscape faced by our students.

Achieve will continue to be the nation’s leading voice for college and career readiness for all students. We will take that leadership role a step further by working with states to commit to — and report on — that readiness.

We will continue our research, digging into the data to make sure states are being transparent and ensuring we fully understand what makes the numbers move. We will work with states, districts, and partners to share this information broadly, always mindful to disaggregate it by subgroups of students so that special attention can be paid to closing persistent achievement gaps. We will work to paint a full, nationwide picture of how all students are doing, supporting states and districts as they work to improve student performance closer to home.

We cannot achieve our mission and succeed without help. It is a point of pride that we have strong partnerships across and within states — gathering stakeholders from the education, policy, business, and civil rights worlds who are committed to adopting and sustaining college- and career-ready policies and practices.

We are committed to providing counsel, expertise, advocacy, and communications support to expand the number of advocates calling for college- and career-ready policies and practices. We have a solid coalition-building strategy that we will expand and refine to empower local voices of support. We will also broadly share lessons learned from this work to boost advocacy efforts among our national and state partners.

A New Strategic Plan

1 Priority One
Keeping the Focus on All Students in All States

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2 Priority Two
Supporting Comprehensive Approaches in States

Ensuring all high school graduates are ready for college, careers, and life requires more than standards alone. College- and career-ready policies must include high-quality assessments, coherent graduation pathways, transparent outcome (and system) information, and equitable accountability systems in order to be fully effective.

We will be reviewing, analyzing, and sharing the work we do in these areas. Our deep content knowledge and expertise in ELA/literacy, mathematics, and science positions us as the reliable source to conduct this work and to provide state and district education leaders with the tools, resources, and strategic advice — rooted in data and research — that will help them make informed decisions.

3 Priority Three
Building and Expanding Partnerships

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4 Priority Four
Strengthening Our Foundation

Accomplishing our mission depends on a strong organizational foundation from which to launch our work. Achieve is committed to developing our outstanding staff and maximizing the use of smart internal controls to keep us at peak efficiency. We will ensure our financial sustainability and strength by deepening relationships with traditional funders as well as cultivating new funding relationships — and we will continue to rely on our impressive Board to advance our work.
This effort represents the first time that CCR and postsecondary cross-state summary reports. Instead of a single report, Achieve published 51 student performance against CCR measures in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Since 2005, Achieve has conducted an annual policy survey of all states and the District of Columbia about the steps they are taking to ensure that all students graduate from high school prepared to succeed in postsecondary education, including college and career readiness. In 2016, Achieve issued the following research and reports:

### Proficient vs. Prepared: Updated Edition
*January 2016*

Following the 2015 release of the first edition of Achieve’s “Proficient vs. Prepared” report, which showed large disparities between most state test results and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Achieve released an updated edition in January 2016 to see whether states had taken steps to close the “honesty gap.” Since many states had taken action to transition to new, more rigorous tests and set new levels of proficiency, many of the disparities were significantly reduced or even eliminated. With a few exceptions, the 2016 edition of “Proficient vs. Prepared” found that most states acknowledged and corrected their reporting of student proficiency.

### Annual 50-State Report: The College and Career Readiness of U.S. High School Graduates
*March 2016*

Since 2005, Achieve has conducted an annual policy survey of all states and the District of Columbia to examine student outcomes, looking at actual student performance against CCR measures in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

### Count All Kids: Using the 9th Grade Cohort to Improve Transparency and Accountability
*September 2016*

This brief examined how states can provide a more accurate picture of the college and career readiness of their high school students. Achieve recommends that states report multiple indicators using the “9th grade cohort” rate (as they do with graduation), which will lead to a more accurate picture of how well states, districts, and schools are serving all students.

### Competency-Based Policies and Pathways: Lessons from Colorado and Illinois
*September 2016*

Achieve identified early lessons learned in Colorado and Illinois that will be of interest to other states and districts exploring competency-based pathways (CBP) to college and career readiness. This paper discusses considerations and recommendations identified from the work in CO and IL, highlighting strategies and actions that will enable CBP and college- and career-ready expectations to occur simultaneously with a particular focus on CBP-enabled graduation requirements, assessments, and accountability systems.

### HIGH SCHOOL ASSESSMENTS IN THE ERA OF ESSA

Recognizing that the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) presents unique challenges and opportunities for states with respect to how they select and use high school assessments, Achieve published two new papers in fall 2016 to explore these issues and equip policymakers to make informed assessment decisions.

#### High School Assessment in a New Era: What Policymakers Need to Know
*September 2016*

Achieve and the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment partnered to develop this brief to help state policymakers make sense of what testing options exist and identify key action steps to consider as they make decisions about high school assessments.

#### High School Assessments and Accountability During ESSA Transition
*October 2016*

This brief provides a national perspective on the ELA/literacy, mathematics, and science assessments states are using to measure high school students’ achievement within each state’s accountability system, with the goal of providing an understanding of the vast variations within the current landscape and pushing states’ thinking about future assessment requirements and developing more coherent assessment and accountability systems.

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In November, Achieve released the second edition of “How the States Got their Rates,” which analyzed the 95 diploma options available across all 50 states and the District of Columbia for the class of 2015. The analysis looked at how many diplomas a state offered, whether a state offered a diploma that met college- and career-ready expectations in ELA/literacy and mathematics course requirements, assessment requirements associated with earning a diploma, and if or how student outcomes were reported by diploma type. The report was highlighted in Politico, Education Week, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, and other media outlets.

In addition, Achieve published complete state-by-state graduation requirements in a spreadsheet that allows users to compare states’ graduation requirements by diploma type, subject, number of credits required, the specific courses required to graduates, as well as state assessment requirements.

Diplomas that Matter: Ensuring Equity of Opportunity for Students with Disabilities
November 2016

Achieve and the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) issued a report that analyzed the diplomas available to students with disabilities in each state for the graduating class of 2015. The report also compared the course and assessment requirements for earning a regular diploma in each state for students with disabilities and their peers without disabilities. Achieve and NCEO’s analysis found that most students with disabilities can earn a regular diploma and that expecting less of students with disabilities does them a disservice because they leave high school unprepared for their next steps.
Educators Evaluating the Quality of Instructional Products (EQuIP)

EQuIP is an initiative designed to identify high-quality materials aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) or Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Its objectives are to increase the supply of high-quality lessons and units aligned to the CCSS or NGSS that are available to teachers, to give publishers examples of what quality lessons look like, and to build the capacity of educators to evaluate and improve the quality of instructional materials for use in their classrooms and schools.

Over the past year, EQuIP grew its collection of high-quality and CCSS-aligned mathematics and ELA/literacy instructional material by 50% to reach its goal of publishing 150 sets of instructional materials in both subjects. There are 165 sets of exemplary CCSS lessons and units posted on Achieve’s website.

Additionally, Achieve launched the EQuIP Peer Review Panel for Science and released an updated version of the EQuIP Rubric for Science in an effort to identify and shine a spotlight on emerging high-quality lessons and unit plans designed for the NGSS. The Achieve team facilitated or supported EQuIP trainings that provided NGSS professional development to more than 800 classroom teachers across ten states throughout the year.

EQuIP Call to Action

Unique to 2016 was the EQuIP Call to Action for lessons and units aligned with high school standards. Achieve brought together experts and practitioners in both mathematics and ELA/literacy to identify focus areas in each grade. To support the development of units aligned to the standards identified in the Call to Action, Achieve hosted a Unit Writing Jam in May at which 11 teacher teams developed and submitted units. Combined with the pre-existing Call to Action for grades K-8, Achieve received a total of 169 submissions, 27 of which were in response to the high school focus areas. Over 40 total Call to Action submissions were identified as exemplary and published on Achieve’s website.

EQuIP and Student Work

The EQuIP team also explored how student work can play a role in the development of high-quality material. In February of 2016, Achieve brought groups of teachers together from across the country to annotate their own samples of student work for publication on Achieve’s website. Those samples were published as part of the Student Work Annotation initiative with the exemplars from which they were taken — one set of annotated student samples for each grade band in each content area. This work further inspired Achieve to organize a strategy session to look at how evaluating student work could help close the expectations gap.

NGSS Primary Evaluation of Essential Criteria for Alignment

The NGSS Primary Evaluation of Essential Criteria for Alignment (PEEC-Alignment) was created to help developers and reviewers of instructional materials understand whether materials contain or exhibit the essential features of a program aligned to the NGSS innovations. Following its initial public release in 2015, feedback was collected from targeted organizations and individuals and the writing team made revisions based on the feedback. While this document was being finalized, revisions began on the EQuIP Rubric for Science (version 3.0) to support the development of the Peer Review Panel for Science and ensure that the tools were coherent and complementary.

Panel Discussion: “Developing and Discovering Quality Curriculum in a Google World”

Highlighting the importance of high-quality, aligned instructional materials, Achieve hosted a panel discussion at the National Press Club that served as a deeper dive into findings from RAND Corporation’s American Teacher Panel study on K-12 standards implementation and instructional materials as well as perspectives from education leaders. Panelists included John White, State Superintendent of Louisiana; Julia H. Kaufman, one of the RAND study’s authors; and Ashley Bessicks, teacher at Phelps High School, District of Columbia Public Schools.
State Standards Reviews
A number of states revised their ELA/literacy and mathematics standards during 2016. In many cases, Achieve provided detailed technical reviews of the college and career readiness of penultimate or final drafts of standards. In 2016, Achieve conducted reviews for draft or final standards in Arizona, Louisiana, New York, Oklahoma, and Tennessee.

State Assessment Reviews
Building on its history of developing and evaluating state assessments and the recent work of partner organizations to evaluate the quality and alignment of new college- and career-ready state assessments, Achieve developed the capacity to provide this important service to states through a revised methodology and streamlined review process, enabling Achieve to launch its state assessment review process in 2017.

Four new NGSS EQuIP videos with the Teaching Channel

Improving and Planning for Science Assessments
Adoption of the NGSS and similar three-dimensional state standards pose challenges for states as they develop high-quality and aligned statewide assessments. In response to state needs, Achieve began working with states to improve their science assessments by carefully examining assessment design trade-offs and alignment considerations. For example, Achieve facilitated assessment design discussions among over 20 states for both formative, classroom-based assessment processes as well as statewide summative assessments. Based on the growing state needs for support around assessment design, Achieve also drafted principles for NGSS-aligned assessments for states to use in their assessment development processes. Achieve plans to continue this work by supporting both classroom-based assessments as well as development and evaluation processes for statewide science assessments.

Additional Support for Science Education
As the organization that helped states to develop the NGSS, Achieve continued to support states and districts as they revise their science standards with the National Research Council’s Framework for K-12 Science Education and the NGSS in mind. As previously described, Achieve provided implementation support with an increasing emphasis on selecting high-quality, standards-aligned instructional materials and worked with states on the future of science assessments. These additional resources were released during 2016:
- NGSS Overview for Principals, a resource developed to help building administrators better envision the full range of instructional supports needed for successful implementation
- Four new NGSS EQuIP videos with the Teaching Channel
- NGSS Lesson Screener
- NGSS Example Bundles Guide and Example Bundles for all grade levels
- A new and improved NGSS website

Accountability Roundtable
In conjunction with Achieve’s 20th Anniversary celebration, Achieve convened an accountability roundtable on December 8 to explore the critical dimensions of state accountability systems as part of the planning process for a 50-state report on the quality of state accountability systems that Achieve will publish in 2017. A variety of stakeholder groups were represented, including educators, policy and technical experts, civil rights and advocacy organizations, parents, school board members, superintendents, business groups, and higher education. Participants:
- identified dimensions of state accountability systems that are critical in determining the quality of those systems;
- defined what quality looks like for each of those dimensions; and
- explored how to evaluate state systems on these dimensions and how results from an evaluation of state accountability systems could be reported to promote continuous improvement.

Roundtable members indicated that they want to stay involved with this process and will continue to provide input and feedback that will guide the development of Achieve’s 50-state report on state accountability systems.
Achieve to hold Advocacy Communications Master Classes.

Coalition Support Network

Achieve created a new innovation fund open exclusively to CSN 3.0 members called Innovate to Achieve, through which Achieve provided targeted funding for creative, short-term projects tied to coalitions’ advocacy goals. Climb Higher Colorado used these funds to bolster their partnership with the Denver Public Schools Office of Family and Community Engagement to increase outreach to refugee families via the Home Visit Program and Academic Standards Events, where parents and teachers discuss the importance of standards and student learning.

• Advocacy Communications Master Classes: Achieve also hosted interactive one-day workshops to increase advocates’ confidence in communicating messages in support of the CCR agenda. These occurred in Alabama, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, New Jersey, and Washington in 2016. As an example of impact, Ann Marie Corgill, 2015 Alabama Teacher of the Year, attended the Alabama training and subsequently wrote an op-ed in support of the Alabama College- and Career- Ready Standards and served as a spokesperson for CCR policies in Alabama and across the country.

Four coalition support network states partnered with Achieve to hold Advocacy Communications Master Classes.

Advocating for College- and Career-Ready Policies

Coalition Support Network

Building upon Achieve’s existing partnership efforts with state-based education advocacy coalitions, this year, Achieve launched the Coalition Support Network (CSN) 3.0: a network of coalitions in states across the country committed to advocating for comparable college- and career-ready standards, high-quality assessments aligned to those standards, and increased transparency of student outcomes.

Achieve provided backbone support to the network by:

• directly funding, in part, state-based coalition operations;
• serving as network manager;
• providing strategic communications and messaging support;
• advising coalitions on CCR best practices and policies; and
• connecting coalitions with Achieve and partner research resources, and tactical technical assistance.

Achieve also supported the following activities through the CSN:

• Network Convenings: Coalition leaders met during Achieve’s 20th Anniversary celebration, engaged in a summer planning retreat, and came together in April to share challenges and successes surrounding the coalitions’ work to engage diverse stakeholders, especially as it related to the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Advocating for College- and Career-Ready Policies

State-based Op-Eds

Achieve partnered with educators to increase the number of science educators who are vocal and effective advocates in their local communities. These efforts resulted in nearly a dozen educator op-eds being published across states including Arkansas, Delaware, Iowa, Kentucky, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington.

Communications and Advocacy Trainings

Achieve hosted six Advocacy Communications Master Classes throughout 2016 to prepare attendees to communicate about improving science education. These classes trained 140 participants from 14 states. Additionally, the Achieve team led workshops during one summer training and two fall conferences with over 200 educators, administrators, district leaders, and advocates on identifying target audiences and effective advocacy practices to build community support for high-quality science education.

Sixteen new advocacy and communications projects were provided $332,000 in total funding through Innovate to Achieve in 2016 across 12 states.

National Research on Perceptions in Education

Achieve hosted 20 focus groups of parents in 10 states to seek their thoughts on different aspects of the CCR agenda and education in their state. In particular, Achieve sought to learn more about the extent to which states and schools are transparently sharing data about student achievement in their state, as well as what kinds of data and information parents would be most interested in knowing about schools. These focus groups informed a survey Achieve conducted of 1200 public school parents nationwide about their thoughts on various topics in public education. Findings from the poll included consensus among parent groups on the importance of states maintaining high-quality assessments, and that the vast majority of parents find the standardized test results from their students useful.

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A Leading Voice for the College- and Career-Ready Agenda

Achieve’s diverse and experienced staff have many years of experience in teaching, school and district leadership, policy, advocacy, communications, government, and more. The Achieve team was asked to make presentations, speak on panels, and provide training across the country during 2016. Highlights from the year include:

- Presentation by Mike Cohen on a panel about opportunities for state leadership on ESSA at the CCSSO Legislative Conference in April
- Presentation by Mike Cohen on a panel about whether the NAEP Mathematics Framework should be revised to align with the Common Core State Standards at the National Council on Measurement in Education Meeting in April
- Presentation on college and career readiness before the Maryland State Board of Education by Mike Cohen and Marie O’Hara in April
- Testimony by Elliott Asp before the Colorado General Assembly Interim Committee on choosing the fifth accountability indicator in August
- Presentation by Elliott Asp on the opening panel of the Virginia Summit on Assessing for Deeper Learning in September
- Presentation by Sandy Boyd on goal setting and continuous improvement at the Data Quality Campaign ESSA Policymakers Summit in October
- Featured speaking presentations on EQuIP and mathematics content by Ted Coe at the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Regional Conference in October
- Presentation by Sandy Boyd on innovations in assessment at the Foundation for Excellence in Education’s National Summit on Education Reform in December
- Presentation by Jacob Mishook on assessment at a White House event on “Creating Better, Fairer, and Fewer Tests” in December

Spreading the Message

Achieve.org

- 694,712 PAGE VIEWS
- 237,683 UNIQUE USERS

NextGenScience.org

- 9,870,245 PAGE VIEWS
- 1,031,296 UNIQUE USERS

Social Media

Achieve continued its active presence on Twitter during FY 2016, sharing resources, news articles, tools, and more with its audience and partners. The @AchieveInc Twitter account topped 8,800 followers and gained several thousand retweets and mentions throughout the year. The @OfficialNGSS Twitter account also took off during the course of the year, topping 10,000 followers.

To diversify our social media efforts and reach educators in a new way, we created “pinnable” images for all 150+ EQuIP Exemplars and posted them all on Pinterest boards organized by subject and grade band. Since teachers often use Pinterest for lesson planning ideas, the EQuIP exemplars are now accessible via that medium as well.

Monthly Newsletters

Achieve continued to release monthly newsletters both from the organization generally (Perspective) and about the NGSS specifically (NGSS Now). Perspective was sent to over 7,200 subscribers each month while the NGSS Now subscriber list topped 23,000 individuals.
Celebrating 20 Years of Raising Expectations

On December 7, 2016 Achieve celebrated its 20th Anniversary by convening over 200 education policymakers and thought leaders, as well as experts, educators, and students, in a joint effort to reflect on and drive forward the college- and career-ready agenda. The meeting opened with a session on the past and future of the college- and career-ready agenda from the perspectives of Linda Darling-Hammond, Stan Litow, and Gerard Robinson. Participants then heard the story of Tennessee’s successful implementation of the CCR agenda spearheaded by bipartisan support, narrated by former Governor Phil Bredesen, Jamie Woodson, and Commissioner Candice McQueen. The critical voices of teachers (Nathan Gibbs-Bowling, Cathy Whitehead, and Bootsie Battle-Holt) and students (Andrew Brennan, Jonathan Abundez, Lydia Burns, and Madison Ortega) were elevated during the final afternoon panel where participants were able to get an insider’s view of today’s classroom.

The evening honored four leaders, past and present, for their many years of support and dedication as board members and as a driving force behind Achieve’s success. Craig R. Barrett, Louis V. Gerstner Jr., Edward B. Rust Jr., and Arthur F. Ryan, along with Intel Corporation, IBM, State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company, and Prudential Financial, Inc. were recognized for their dedication to high standards for all students. The event concluded with a keynote address from J.D. Vance, #1 New York Times best-selling author of Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis, and Juan Salgado, President and CEO of the Instituto del Progreso Latino, who discussed the path ahead for finding common ground and making education a shared goal for all Americans.

Board Updates

Achieve significantly reshaped its Board of Directors during 2016, welcoming a unique cadre of leaders from across the country.

Over the course of the year, Achieve welcomed to its board:

- Dr. S. James “Jim” Gates, Jr., Distinguished University Professor, Regents Professor, and John S. Toll Professor of Physics at the University of Maryland
- The Honorable John R. “Jock” McKernan, Jr., former Governor of Maine and Senior Advisor to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation
- Janet Murguía, President and CEO of National Council of La Raza
- Chris Gabrieli, Partner Emeritus of Bessemer Venture Partners, Chair of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, and CEO of Empower Schools

Contributors

Achieve is grateful for the generous support of our 2016 contributors.

- American Express
- Archer, Daniels, Midland Company
- Arconic Foundation
- Dr. Craig Barrett
- BASIS.ed
- Bayer USA Foundation
- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- Carnegie Corporation of New York
- Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation
- Chevron
- designDATA
- DuPont
- ExxonMobil
- The Fratelli Group
- Chris and Hilary Gabrieli
- The GE Foundation
- Gross, Mendelsohn & Associates, P.A.
- IBM Corporation
- Intel Foundation
- The Leona M. & Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust
- Pisces Foundation
- Public Opinion Strategies
- PwC Charitable Foundation
- The Prudential Foundation
- S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation
- State Farm Automobile Insurance Company
- Travelers Foundation
- Widmeyer Communications - A Finn Partners Company
- The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
All students should graduate from high school ready for college, careers, and citizenship.