

THE VALUE OF COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS IN ALABAMA

WHY COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS?

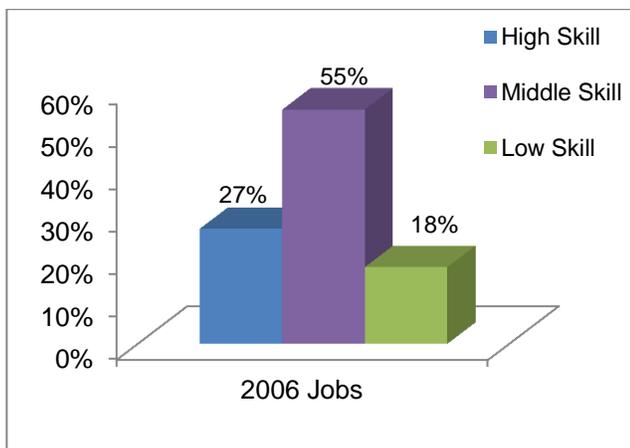
- *A high school diploma is no longer enough; now, nearly every good job requires some education and/or training beyond high school – such as an associates or bachelors degree, certificate, license, or completion of an apprenticeship or significant on-the-job training.*
- *Currently, far too many students drop out or graduate from high school without the knowledge and skills required for success, closing doors and limiting their post-high school options.*
- *The best way to prepare students for life after high school is to align K-12 and postsecondary expectations. All students deserve a world-class education that prepares them for college, careers and life.*

A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA IS NO LONGER ENOUGH FOR SUCCESS

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

- About **82% of Alabama's jobs are middle- or high-skill** (jobs that require some postsecondary education or training).ⁱⁱ
- Yet only 31% of Alabama adults have some postsecondary degree (associate's or higher).ⁱⁱⁱ



TOO MANY STUDENTS GRADUATE UNPREPARED FOR REAL WORLD CHALLENGES

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

Alabama's Retention & Remediation Data

For every student who enrolls in a two-year institution in Alabama:

- **44%** require remediation.
- Only **48%** return their sophomore year.

For every student who enrolls in a four-year institution in Alabama:

- **18%** require remediation.^{iv}
- **69%** return their sophomore year.
- And only **43%** go on to earn a degree within six years.^v

Employers agree that graduates entering directly into the workforce lack essential workplace skills.

- 41% of employers are dissatisfied with high school graduates' ability to read and understand complicated materials.
- And only 18% believe that new graduates, with no further education beyond high school, have the skills necessary for advancement.^{vi}

Preparation for the Jobs of Tomorrow

Alabama should be preparing students for the **jobs of tomorrow**, not the jobs of yesterday – or even of today.

Among Alabama's occupations with the largest and fastest-growing employment are a **number of skilled jobs that require some postsecondary education or training but less than a four-year degree**, such as:^{vii}

OCCUPATION	# of JOBS	MEDIAN SALARY
Registered nurses	40,320	\$51,800
Computer support specialists	5,250	\$36,200
Radiologic Technicians & Technologists	3,320	\$42,700

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A MORE RIGOROUS & RELEVANT HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION WILL OPEN DOORS FOR STUDENTS – AND KEEP THEM OPEN

By requiring all students in Alabama to complete a rigorous curriculum in high school, Alabama is helping to ensure all students leave high school with the knowledge and skills they need for lifelong success – regardless of their immediate post-high school plans.

Personal Benefits of Education in Alabama^{viii}

The link between educational attainment and gainful employment is clear: **more education is associated with higher earnings and rates of employment.**

While there may be jobs available to high school drop outs and graduates, they often pay less and offer less security than jobs held by those with at least some postsecondary experience.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	MEAN INCOME
5%	TOTAL	\$42,667
15%	HS Dropout	\$19,743
6%	HS Graduate	\$32,518
3%	Some College	\$35,091
1%	Bachelor's & Above	\$78,134

Postsecondary Preparation & Success

Studies find that **students feel more prepared by a rigorous course** of study in high school:

- College students who took Algebra II or beyond during high school are more than twice as likely to report feeling prepared for the math they are expected to do in college.^{ix}
- They also perform significantly better in a range of college courses, including physics, chemistry and even biology.^x

Students – especially low-income students – demonstrate larger achievement gains when they are enrolled in rigorous course of study in high school.^{xi}

- 87% of first-generation college-going students – who took a highly rigorous course of study in high school – persisted in college or earned a degree after 18 months.
- Only 55% of first-generation students who took just a general curriculum persisted that long.^{xii}

Research finds that high school students who take **advanced math nearly double their chances of earning a postsecondary degree:**

- 59% of low-income students who took advanced math in high school earned a bachelor's degree.
- 36% of low-income students who did not complete the rigorous high school course of study earned a bachelor's degree.^{xiii}

BOTTOM LINE: Alabama's college- and career-ready graduation requirements – the First Choice Diploma – provide students with a rigorous foundation that will open doors after they leave high school and keep them open in the future.

ⁱ Carnevale, Anthony P. and Donna Desrochers (2003). *Standards for What? The Economic Roots of K-12 Reform*, Education Testing Services. <http://www.learnedearn.org/For-Educators/Standards-for-What.pdf>

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

ⁱⁱⁱ Measuring Up.

^{iv} Alabama Policy Institute (2004), "The Cost of Remedial Education: How much Alabama pays when students fail to learn basic skills." http://alabamapolicyinstitute.org/pdf/re_study.pdf

^v Measuring Up (2008), *The National Report Card on Higher Education*. <http://measuringup2008.highereducation.org/index.php>

^{vi} 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.

^{vii} Career One Stop: Pathways to Career Success. <http://www.careeronestop.org/>

^{viii} Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2008. U.S. Census Bureau. Figures are based on total person within the civilian labor force.

^{ix} 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.

^x Sadler, P. M. & Tai, R. H. (2007). *The Two High-School Pillars Supporting College Science*. *Science*, 317, 457-8.

^{xi} Levesque, Karen et al (2000). *Vocational Education in the United States: Toward the Year 2000*. NCES

^{xii} Horn, L. and A.M. Nuñez (2000). *Mapping the Road to College: First-generation Students' Math Track, Planning Strategies, and Context of Support*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2001/20011153.pdf>

^{xiii} Adelman, C. (2006). *The Toolbox Revisited: Paths to Degree Completion from High School through College*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, xxvi.