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*Achieve Insights is a monthly briefing of newsworthy items from across states related to ensuring that all students graduate from high school prepared for college, careers, and life.*

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## Alabamians show support for state's standards

Alabama's state superintendent Michael Sentance introduced a proposal at a state board of education meeting to no longer use the Alabama College- and Career-Ready Standards in the state, and instead develop a totally new set of academic standards. State board members showed they had little interest in the proposal and asked why it was necessary to make a major change to the state's standards at this time. The state already has a process by which academic standards are set to be reviewed every six years. Third-party coalition [Alabama GRIT](#) (Graduate Ready, Impact Tomorrow) rallied supporters of the state's current standards, making their voices heard at the meeting. It is important that Alabama maintains college- and career-ready standards to better prepare students for life after high school. Efforts to scrap the state's standards and start anew would only cause confusion for teachers and leave students less academically prepared.

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## The importance of transparent data for California students and families

Stakeholders need accessible and transparent data about college and career readiness among students in their states and schools. With this data in hand, leaders, policymakers, and advocates are better informed about what support schools and students need. A [recent commentary](#) written by Lisa Gonzales and Shelly Masur in EdSource discusses how important data transparency is for California, and how the state's new data

dashboard provides more, better information. They point to how Achieve's [state-by-state reports on data transparency](#) show areas where California is succeeding in providing transparent data as well as areas for improvement. Transparency reports on all fifty states are available on [Achieve's website](#), including comparisons across states on how transparently they report data.

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## Under ESSA, states will report graduation rates among students completing more rigorous courses

A recent [Education Week article](#) by Catherine Gewertz points to a new requirement under ESSA that states report graduation rates based on the diploma earned by a preponderance of students, as well as any students earning more rigorous diploma options (if available), but not students earning diplomas with less rigorous requirements than the diploma earned by a preponderance of students. As quoted in the article, Achieve's President, Michael Cohen said, "For a long time, federal officials have been focusing on graduation rates without caring what a diploma actually means." Achieve delves into this issue further each year in its "[How the States Got Their Rates](#)" report, showing which states offer college- and career-ready (CCR) diplomas and of those states which report the CCR graduation rate, as well as how the CCR graduation rate compares to the reported graduation rate. Students need rigorous courses that prepare them for college and careers.

## Five State Updates

- Nine states - Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Louisiana, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, and Tennessee - and the District of Columbia have received approval of their ESSA state plans from the U.S. Department of Education (ED).
- Other states, including North Dakota and Vermont, have received feedback from ED on their submitted ESSA plans.
- Pennsylvania officials [announced](#) the state would reduce the length of its standardized tests by 20 percent in grades 3 through 8.
- New York released a mock-up of its new [online dashboard](#) for additional information about how well

schools are serving their students.

- The Mississippi State Board of Education approved changes to the state's school grading plan that are expected to result in more schools receiving higher marks.

*All students should graduate from high school ready for college, careers, and citizenship.*

