

# Colorado's College- and Career-Ready Commitment

## The Economic Imperative

Today, nearly every good job requires some postsecondary education and/or training (e.g., an associate's or bachelor's degree, certificate, or apprenticeship or significant on-the-job training). All students need to be academically prepared to compete for good jobs in the global economy.

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>

- **80%** of Colorado jobs are middle or high skills (i.e., require some postsecondary education or training).
- **Yet only 46%** of Colorado's adults have some postsecondary degree (associate's or higher).<sup>ii</sup>

More education is associated with higher earnings and higher rates of employment in Colorado.<sup>iii</sup>

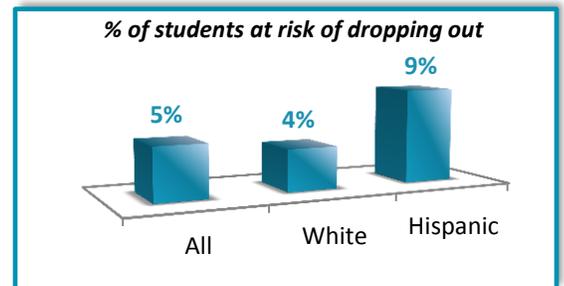
Mean Income	Education Level	Unemployment
\$11,666	HS Dropout	27%
\$27,325	HS Graduate	12%
\$31,862	Some College	8%
\$62,609	Bachelors & Above	5%

## The Equity Imperative

Far too many students drop out or graduate from high school unprepared for success, closing doors and limiting their options and opportunities – in particular minority and low-income students.

Colorado's achievement gaps begin in the earliest grades and extend through college enrollment and admissions.<sup>iv</sup>

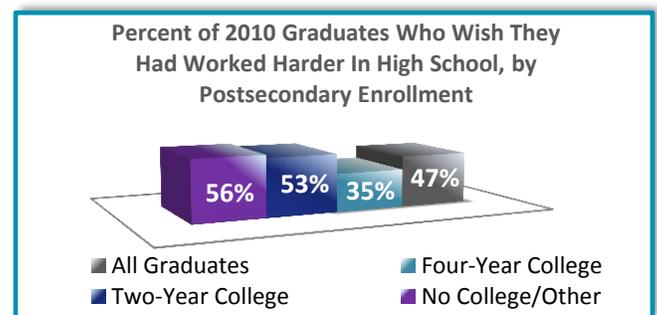
	All	White	Black	Hispanic	Low SES
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math Proficiency	47%	60%	21%	26%	28%
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading Proficiency <sup>v</sup>	40%	49%	22%	22%	20%
HS Graduation Rate <sup>vi</sup>	76%	82%	63%	59%	N/A
College Completion Rate <sup>vii</sup>	53%	56%	41%	42%	N/A



## The Expectations Gap

The bar has been set too low for too long, keeping students from reaching their full potential. If we want students to achieve more, we need to expect more.

- **53%** of Colorado's students in two-year colleges and **20%** of Colorado's students in four-year colleges require remediation.<sup>viii</sup>
- About half (**53%**) of students who enter public colleges in Colorado earn their degrees.
- **34%** of employers deem the preparation of newly hired employees with only a high school diploma as "deficient," (and only 16% find their preparation "excellent.")<sup>ix</sup>
- **49%** of employers surveyed noted they anticipate requiring higher levels of education for most jobs – and another **60%** noted more specific technical skills will be required – in the next 3-5 years.<sup>x</sup>



All too often, students regret not working harder once they leave high school.<sup>xi</sup>

# Colorado's College- and Career-Ready Commitment

## The College- and Career-Ready Agenda

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.

Colorado is among the states that have made college and career readiness a priority for all students.<sup>xii</sup>

- In May 2010, Colorado adopted the Common Core State Standards.
- As part of the state's assessment system, Colorado administers the ACT to all 11th-grade students.

*Colorado is 18 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.*

- Colorado is a governing state in Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), a group of states working to develop a common assessment system using Race to the Top Common Assessment funds.
- Colorado has met six of the ten State Actions identified by the Data Quality Campaign, providing a foundation for strong and sound student-level data collection and use.

*Colorado is one of 26 states with a P-20 longitudinal data system that regularly matches student-level K-12 and postsecondary data.*

- Colorado tracks three indicators of college and career readiness but still needs to expand its use of indicators to get a more complete picture of how their students are faring in K-12 and beyond.

College- and Career-Ready Indicator	Publicly Reported	State Set Goal	Incentive to Improve	Accountability Formula
CCR Diploma				
CCR Assessment				
Postsecondary Remediation	YES			
Exceeding CCR	YES			

## How Colorado Can Further Advance the College- and Career-Ready Agenda

- ✓ ...Fully realize the promise of the college- and career-ready standards by implementing them fully and successfully, taking into account the related curricular, professional development, 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 PARCC and developing and administering a next-generation, computer-based assessment system anchored by college- and career-ready tests in high school that will let students know if they are ready for college-level coursework and measure the full range of the CCSS.
- ✓ ...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 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.

[www.learndoeearn.org/For-Educators/Standards-for-What.pdf](http://www.learndoeearn.org/For-Educators/Standards-for-What.pdf)

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

<sup>iii</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2011). *Current Population Survey*. Figures are based on the total persons in the civilian labor force.

[www.census.gov/hhes/www/cpstc/cps\\_table\\_creator.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/cpstc/cps_table_creator.html)

<sup>iv</sup> Annie E. Casey Foundation. Kids Count Data Center. 2010,

<http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/acrossstates/Rankings.aspx>

<sup>v</sup> Analysis of NAEP data downloaded from nationsreportcard.gov

<sup>vi</sup> Education Week (2009). *Graduation in the United States*.

[www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2012/06/07/](http://www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2012/06/07/)

<sup>vii</sup> NCES. *IPEDS Graduation Rate Survey*, analyzed by National Center for Management of Higher Education Systems.

<sup>viii</sup> [http://higher.ed.colorado.gov/Publications/Reports/Remedial/FY2009/2009\\_Remedial\\_relfeb10.pdf](http://higher.ed.colorado.gov/Publications/Reports/Remedial/FY2009/2009_Remedial_relfeb10.pdf)

<sup>ix</sup> Corporate Voices for Working Families & Civic Enterprises (2011). *Across the Great Divide: Perspectives of CEOs and College Presidents on America's Higher Education & Skills Gap*. [www.civicenterprises.net/pdfs/across-the-great-divide.pdf](http://www.civicenterprises.net/pdfs/across-the-great-divide.pdf)

<sup>x</sup> Achieve/SHRM

<sup>xi</sup> College Board (2011). *One Year Out: Findings From A National Survey Among Members Of The High School Graduating Class Of 2010*.

[www.collegeboard.org/OneYearOut](http://www.collegeboard.org/OneYearOut)

<sup>xii</sup> Achieve (2012). *Closing the Expectations Gap 2011: 50-State Progress Report on the Alignment of High School Policies with the Demands of College and Careers*.