



Achieve

Perspective  
News and Views from Achieve

December 2008

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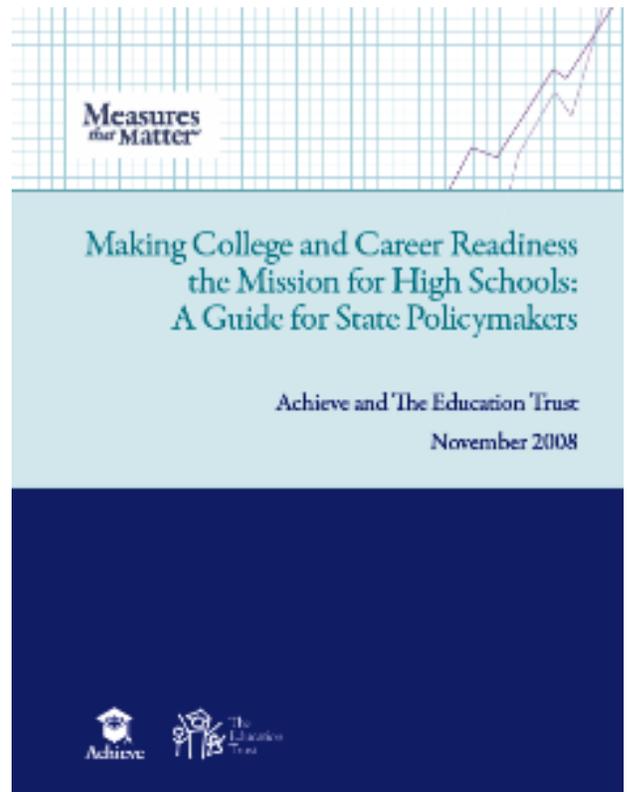
## Commentary

### Measures that Matter

Meaningful standards-based reform is about more than standards. It's about ensuring that the standards are embedded in curriculum, assessments, data and accountability systems so that all students graduate from high school ready for the real world. That means that many of the "traditional" assumptions and ways of thinking about testing and accountability must change. We need to move past the notion that testing means only large-scale multiple-choice assessments and that accountability is inherently punitive. States want—and need—guidance on how to create a next generation assessment and accountability system that moves past these divisive notions.

In an effort to spur state progress and provide guidance to states in these areas, Achieve and the Education Trust have developed a new series of publications and tools that help define the next generation of standards, assessment and accountability reforms. Our new series, [Measures that Matter](#), is the result of a year-long process of research, tool and model development that was guided by an advisory group of state and national experts.

*Measures That Matter* identifies guiding principles for the development of next generation assessment, data and accountability systems including:



- **Curriculum matters**—States need to take responsibility for ensuring that all students have access to a quality curriculum in high school; standards are not enough.
- **"Proficient" should mean "prepared"**—High school tests should measure whether students are college- and career-ready, which means most states need new and better assessments. Those tests should not become "exit" exams but rather open doors for students to higher education and good jobs.
- **More testing is not the goal; smarter testing is**—If states add new tests, they should also take others away. Students and schools are already feeling over-tested.
- **Schools should be held accountable for more than test results**—While assessments should remain a central measurement tool, accountability indicators need to be expanded to reflect whether students are progressing toward achieving and exceeding college and career readiness.
- **Accountability should be more about supporting improvement than punishing failure**—Too often accountability systems have been heavy on sanctions, light on supports and even lighter on positive incentives; that balance needs to change.

This new vision represents an evolution, not a revolution. We are keenly aware of how much work has gone into states' current systems of standards, assessments and accountability, and we appreciate the challenges involved in making changes to those systems. At the same time, states know there are great risks in maintaining the status quo since most state systems have not kept pace with the expectations students face when they graduate from high school and enter the world.

As they have done on common college- and career-ready standards and increased graduation requirements, states are poised to lead on creating next generation assessment and accountability systems. These new tools should prove helpful to them. We also hope they will also be helpful to the Obama Administration and the U.S. Congress as they consider how the federal government can best support states in their efforts to ensure that all students succeed.

Download PDFs of the [Measures that Matter Executive Summary](#), the [full guide](#), and the [Assessment report](#). For more information, go to [www.achieve.org/measuresthatmatter](http://www.achieve.org/measuresthatmatter).

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## New from Achieve

### Postsecondary Connection

Achieve has long advocated that postsecondary leadership is critical to advancing state efforts to prepare all high school graduates for success in higher education and careers. Whether high school graduates are entering public or private institutions, pursuing two- and four-year degrees or entering training programs that will prepare them for the workforce, they all must be prepared for college and careers. The postsecondary community—from faculty to presidents—must, therefore, identify what students need to know to be successful in higher education. Communicating these requirements with the K-12 community, policymakers and the public and clearly making the connection between high school preparation and postsecondary success are fundamental to ensuring that students arrive at institutions ready to succeed.

With support from the Lumina Foundation, Achieve created its newest Web-based toolkit, Postsecondary Connection ([www.postsecconnect.org](http://www.postsecconnect.org)). The toolkit provides tools, data and strategies that higher education leaders need to help link high school preparation and college success. Postsecondary Connection was created and is maintained by Achieve in collaboration with our co-sponsors: American Council on Education (ACE), Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), Data Quality Campaign (DQC), The Education Trust, National Association of System Heads (NASH) and State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO).

Achieve is seeking your input, ideas, materials and links as it works to ensure that the Web site is an essential resource for postsecondary leaders, their institutions and systems. Contact Nevin Brown, Achieve's Director of Postsecondary Initiatives, at [nbrown@achieve.org](mailto:nbrown@achieve.org) with your questions and ideas.

### **Aligning Expectations: Using the American Diploma Project Algebra II Exam in Higher Education**

ACE, Achieve and the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas, Austin held the second annual meeting on "Advancing College Readiness: Higher Education's Role in Improving America's High Schools" on December 8-9 in Washington, DC. The goal of this series of meetings is to bring higher education and K-12 leaders together to explore how the Algebra II exam can serve as a catalyst for greater alignment between secondary and higher education and to drive improvement in student mathematics achievement. At the first meeting, held in October 2007, states had the opportunity to introduce the exam to key higher education leaders and discuss strategies for eventually using this test as an assessment of readiness for first-year, credit-bearing college mathematics courses. At this year's meeting, states were able to review student performance on the initial administration of the exam, examine the content of a form of the exam and

strategize about how leaders can use this assessment to drive improved student performance.

Teams of K-12 and higher education leaders in states that are participating in the American Diploma Project (ADP) Assessment Consortium's Algebra II end-of-course exam attended. In addition to these state teams, representatives at this year's meeting included a range of national higher education associations as well as associations representing the mathematics discipline. The association representatives added a new dimension to the discussion and offered suggestions about ways in which the ADP Algebra II assessment initiative could reach mathematics faculty members, department chairs and other key institutional administrators more effectively.

More information about the ADP Assessment Consortium and the Algebra I and II exams is at: [www.achieve.org/ADPAssessmentConsortium](http://www.achieve.org/ADPAssessmentConsortium).

## **Math Works**

Achieve recently launched the Math Works advocacy kit, a collection of materials that make the case for why all students—regardless of their plans after graduation—should engage in rigorous math course-taking throughout their high school experiences. Since the release, Achieve has continued to add new materials to this kit, including the addition this month of a new fact sheet and PowerPoint presentation on "The Value of the Fourth Year of Mathematics," a new fact sheet on "Math's Double Standard," and the Math Works resource bank with an annotated bibliography, overview of Achieve's other math-related resources and links to national math organizations. The double standard fact sheet is featured on *The Washington Post's* [x=why? blog](#).

In January, Achieve will release two additional Math at Work brochures presenting case studies drawn from civil engineering technology and semiconductor manufacturing to illustrate the advanced mathematics knowledge and skills embedded in jobs that offer opportunities for advancement and are accessible to high school graduates. Find all of the Math Works resources at: [www.achieve.org/MathWorks](http://www.achieve.org/MathWorks).

## **New Mathematics Benchmarks Alignment Tool**

Achieve has launched the Mathematics Benchmarks Alignment Tool, designed to be a user-friendly method for schools, districts and states to perform their own simple alignment analyses against the ADP Benchmarks or the Achieve model course standards for Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II. By uploading standards, the tool can create an alignment report that may be either printed or saved in an Excel format. While not as complete as an Achieve review, the Mathematics Benchmarks Tool helps users get a basic sense of the extent to which objectives for their selected mathematics courses actually address the full range of content needed for

success after high school. This tool is especially helpful to those in the early stages of their standards review processes. [More...](#)

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## In the Spotlight: Hawaii's Efforts to Improve Math Outcomes

**Hawaii** administered the ADP Algebra II end-of-course exam in high schools last May to establish a baseline level of student achievement in mathematics; University of Hawaii campuses also administered the exam to student volunteers. Subsequently, Hawaii held a Mathematics Summit in October where math faculty from higher education and the Hawaii Department of Education shared information from the test administration and brainstormed about possible ways to address K-16 math issues. Hawaii is also planning future meetings where participants will examine how the ADP Algebra II end-of-course exam can be leveraged to upgrade high school Algebra I and II standards, improve the math course sequence between the Department of Education and the higher education system, and identify implications for teacher training.

Hawaii's efforts to improve students' success in mathematics and strengthen the alignment between K-12 and higher education mathematics courses were featured at the "Advancing College Readiness" meeting held December 8-9 in Washington, D.C. John Morton, University of Hawaii Vice-President for Community Colleges, and Wesley Yuu, Hawaii P-20 Partnerships for Education Senior Associate, discussed how the University of Hawaii and the Hawaii Department of Education are working together to

## News Clips

### 1. **Math Gains Reported for US Students**

The 2007 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) results provide the latest snapshot of how U.S. students in 4th and 8th grade rank against their international counterparts on mathematics and science education assessments. U. S. students improved in mathematics while performance in science was flat or lower, indicating that there is much work to be done to improve student achievement in science. The results include scores from students in two states—**Massachusetts** and **Minnesota**—that have proved themselves to be internationally competitive, earning scores that rank them among the best in the world. [More...](#)

### 2. **Linking NAEP to College and Career Readiness**

Education Week reports that the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB)—the board that sets policy

prepare high school graduates for credit-bearing postsecondary mathematics. [More...](#)

for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—has voted to study ways to link NAEP to college and career readiness. This important step strongly aligns with the ADP agenda and assures states that building their own assessments to measure college and career readiness will keep them in step with NAEP. The ADP benchmarks were used by NAGB in their efforts to align NAEP with college and career readiness, and the resulting NAEP assessment frameworks are well-aligned with ADP. [More...](#)

### 3. **Tennessee Works to Prepare College Students**

*The Tennessean* [reports](#) that **Tennessee's** Board of Regents is overhauling remedial courses at the state's colleges and universities with the aim of boosting postsecondary graduation rates. Deborah Woolley, president of the Tennessee Chamber of Commerce and Industry, writes in an [opinion piece](#) that students need to understand clearly and early the high expectations postsecondary institutions and 21st century workplaces will demand from them. She writes: "Tennessee is boldly marching down that road. Under the leadership of Gov. Phil Bredesen, the

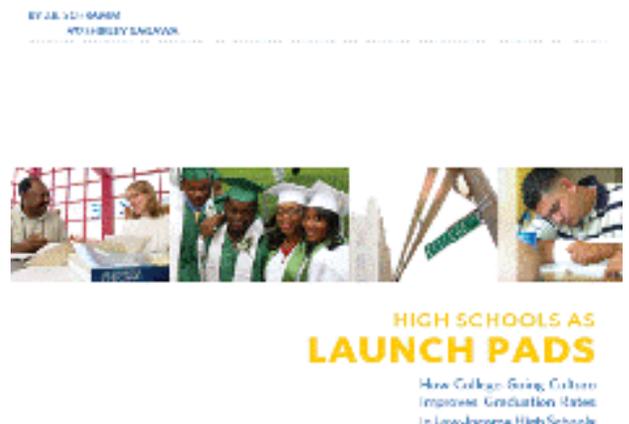
Tennessee Diploma Project aligns college- and career-ready standards with high school graduation exit requirements."

## New Resources

- The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) published "Policies to Improve Instruction and Learning in High Schools," which highlights a pilot project that NGA conducted in partnership with ACT. To improve the consistency and rigor of high school instruction, ACT trained 98 teachers in 18 high schools in three states—**Mississippi, Oklahoma** and **Pennsylvania**—on how to use state-of-the-art curriculum units and instructional methods that were integrated with a system of assessments. The project focused on 10th grade courses in English language arts, geometry and biology and aimed to prepare more high school graduates for the demands of higher education and careers. The results of the pilot project strongly suggest that when high school courses are well-aligned to rigorous standards, growth in achievement occurs. [More...](#)



- The College Summit published a white paper, "High Schools as Launch Pads: How College-Going Culture Improves Graduation Rates in Low-Income High Schools." A growing body of research suggests that students who work hard in high school do so because they connect their efforts with the rewards available in college and careers after high school. The paper uses lessons

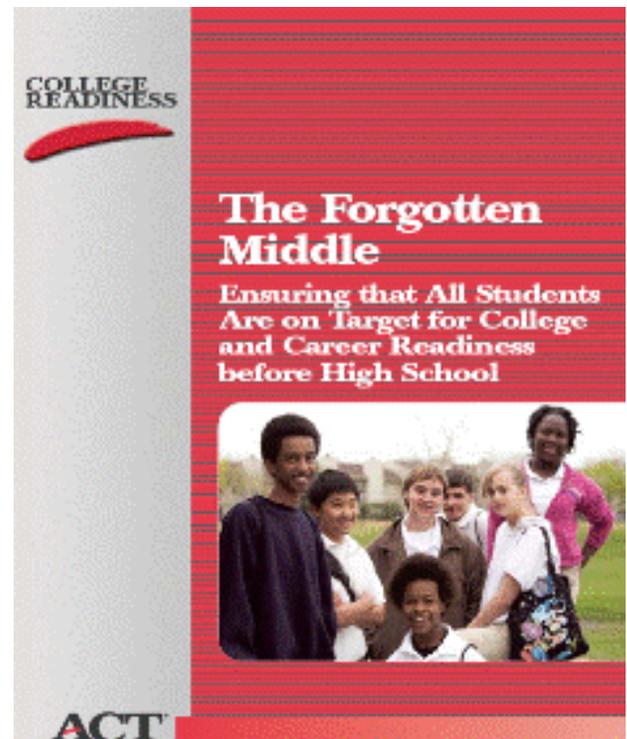


from College Summit's work in schools and districts around the country to encourage state and national policymakers to support college readiness for all students.

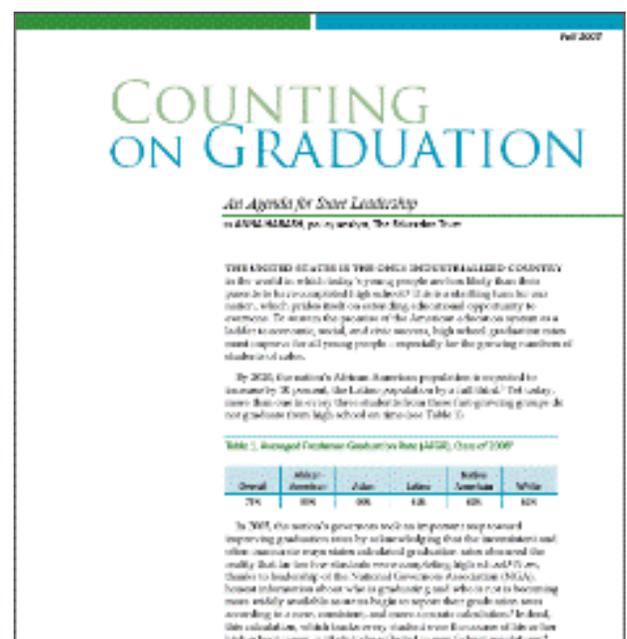
[More...](#)

- ACT's newest report, "The Forgotten Middle: Ensuring that All Students Are on Target for College and Career Readiness before High School," suggests that the end of eighth grade is a critical defining point for students on the path towards college and career readiness. ACT finds that if students are not on target for college and career readiness by the eighth grade, the impact on their future success may be nearly irreversible.

[More...](#)



- The Education Trust published "Counting on Graduation: An Agenda for State Leadership." The report underscores that, among industrialized nations, the U.S. is the only country in which young people are now less likely than their parents to have earned a high school diploma. Reversing this trend is critical. [More...](#)



Overall	American	Asian	Latino	American	White
75%	80%	90%	78%	85%	82%

In 2007, the nation's governors will no longer be able to improve graduation rates by simply mandating that the institutions and other agencies more states calculate graduation rates according to the newly established four standards more consistently. High school seniors (those in leadership of the National Governors' Association (NGA)), however, information about who is graduating and who is not is becoming more widely available across the nation to support their graduation rates according to a new, consistent, and more accurate calculation. Indeed, this calculation, which tracks every student from the time of life in the high school system, is likely to be included in some federal regulations.<sup>1</sup> State leaders were not at all divided in developing a consistent set of policies aimed at increasing the rate, since systems of calculation and methods are complicated expectations that graduation rates are to improve.

**The Education Trust**

This paper will likely provide more of the greater support of the State Education.

The Education Trust • 1229 Street, N.W., Suite 700 • Washington, D.C. 20004 • www.edtrust.org

- America's Promise Alliance launched Grad Nation, a resource designed to help communities develop tailored plans for keeping students on track to graduate from high school and prepare for college, careers and life. It provides research-based guidance for addressing the dropout crisis, offering ready-to-print tools and links to online resources. Achieve is an America's Promise Alliance Partner. [More...](#)

## Grad Nation

A Guidebook to Help Communities Tackle the Dropout Crisis

November 2006

- The State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) published "En Route to Seamless Statewide Education Data Systems: Addressing Five Cross-Cutting Concerns." The paper suggests key processes that can help states develop successful longitudinal data systems. The report is a result of a 2007 SHEEO workshop, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, that brought together cross-sector, data-focused leadership teams from eleven states (including seven ADP Network states), along

**SHEEO** State Higher Education Executive Officers

**EN ROUTE TO SEAMLESS STATEWIDE EDUCATION DATA SYSTEMS: ADDRESSING FIVE CROSS-CUTTING CONCERNS**

August 2006 Shawntia Rose Cooper, Policy Analyst

**INTRODUCTION**

Student achievement depends upon seamless passage through a series of transitions: elementary to middle school, middle school to high school, high school to college. Tracking the occurrence of successful transitions requires the collection and analysis of student data across these transition points. Yet longstanding separations between education sectors and continuing proliferation of multiple, disconnected student data systems have served as barriers to seamless tracking of student progress.

Recognizing that K-12 and postsecondary data systems need to answer critical questions about student preparation and achievement, many states are currently developing longitudinal data systems. Their progress, documented by national studies, is encouraging. According to Achieve's 50-state survey, *Closing the Education Gap 2006*, 9 states currently have a K-16 longitudinal data system in place, while 38 others have systems in progress.<sup>1</sup> The Data Quality Campaign's 2007 survey reports that 35 states have put into practice at least 6 of its 10 Essential Elements of Data Longitudinal Data Systems.<sup>2</sup>

However, creating a coherent, effective and sustainable state longitudinal data system requires much more than simply integrating disparate education systems. Through a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, SHEEO convened a workshop, January 10-12, 2006, to discuss key data systems, as a forum for states to engage in post-to-post learning. The workshop brought together cross-sector, data-focused leadership teams from 11 states with content experts from prominent national organizations for two days of collaborative sessions.<sup>3</sup> Through workshop discussions, state teams identified five core processes which are key to successfully implementing longitudinal data initiatives:

- Identifying shared benefits as a foundation for cooperative work across sectors
- Reconciling technical differences between independently created data systems

with prominent content experts.

[More...](#)

However, creating a coherent, effective and sustainable state longitudinal data system requires much more than simply extending existing student testing systems. Through a grant from the IES and selected state educational leaders convened a working group and also postsecondary policy leaders, as a venue for states to engage in peer-to-peer learning. The workshop brought together cross-sector, data-focused, leadership teams from 11 states with content experts from prominent national organizations for two days of collaborative sessions. Through workshop discussions, state teams identified five core processes which are key to successfully implementing longitudinal data initiatives:

- Identifying shared benefits as a foundation for cooperative work across sectors
- Reconciling technical differences between independently created data systems
- Assessing student privacy while sharing data to foster improvement
- Designing a data system to enable effective use by key constituencies
- Planning for long-term sustainability of state longitudinal data systems

The development of a statewide longitudinal data system is an enormous endeavor, breaking it down into components can help identify appropriate areas of immediate work. Drawing from the experiences shared by workshop participants – education leaders in states actively engaged in the process of creating statewide data systems – this report addresses each of these components, in turn and presents an overview of insights and strategies to address emerging, prevalent, and state-specific concerns.

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*Perspective* is sent to you by Achieve, Inc., a bipartisan, non-profit organization founded by the nation's governors and CEOs to help states raise standards, improve assessments and strengthen accountability to prepare all young people for postsecondary education, careers and citizenship. Please feel free to circulate this e-newsletter to your colleagues.

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