

December 2011

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### **Helping Educators Determine the Quality of Open Education Resources**

Open Educational Resources (OER), or digital materials that can be used for teaching, learning, research and more, are made available for free to be used with few or no restrictions. They include full lesson plans, learning modules, complete courses, and many other tools, materials, and techniques used to support access to knowledge — and there are literally millions of open education resources currently available on the Internet. But what differentiates them from one another? How can educators determine whether the resources are high quality? As educators look for ways to help students learn and improve achievement, they need to know which tools may fit their specific needs.

In November, Achieve and the Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education (ISKME) launched a new tool for users to rate the quality of open education resources. The tool allows educators to rate the quality of these teaching and student learning resources, align these resources to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and evaluate the extent to which the individual resources align to specific standards. The tool allows users to apply seven rubrics — available online at [www.achieve.org/oer-rubrics](http://www.achieve.org/oer-rubrics) — to evaluate different dimensions of quality.

One of the online repositories for open education resources is OER Commons ([www.oercommons.org](http://www.oercommons.org)). Publicly launched in February 2007 by ISKME, OER Commons provides a library and knowledge base for the search and discovery of open educational resources. Created with and for educators, students, and self-learners, OER Commons provides useful classroom materials that help students engage with rigorous subject matter. As a network for teaching and learning materials, OER Commons offers engagement with resources in the form of social bookmarking, tagging, rating, reviewing, and online professional development to use the OERs.

OER Commons houses more than 32,000 free and openly-licensed resources and is now hosting this new tool and its resulting evaluation data. ISKME is also making the Achieve OER Evaluation tool available and providing technical support to other organizations who would like to use the rubrics for resources found outside of OER Commons, ensuring a rich dataset of CCSS aligned content across the Web.

Lisa Petrides, president of ISKME, noted, "This tool dramatically increases the

value of open resources by enabling educators to align content to the Common Core Standards directly within OER Commons. Now educators can use curated lesson plans, courses, and learning modules with readily available information about how these materials meet the highest standards for learning."

The release of this tool comes after the U.S. Department of Education's announcement of the Learning Registry on November 7 at the State Education Technology Directors Association Leadership Summit. The Learning Registry is a joint effort between the federal government, nonprofit agencies, and private companies to create a permanent network of digital learning resource providers, and will provide a means of sharing rating data across different websites.

Educators and school administrators from across the country at the state and district level have been trained to use the Achieve OER Evaluation Tool, and have provided ratings on hundreds of resources. This information will be shared through the Learning Registry with other interested repositories.

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## New from Achieve

### **Achieve Builds Capacity**

Chad Colby, a communications expert and veteran of three state education agencies, is now Achieve's Director of Strategic Communications and Outreach. In this new position, Colby will be primarily responsible for overseeing the organization's communications efforts to advance its mission to help states raise academic standards and high school graduation requirements, improve assessments and strengthen accountability. [More...](#)

Allison Jones has been promoted to Vice President for Postsecondary Collaboration, responsible for advancing Achieve's college- and career-ready mission through work with the postsecondary community. Before joining Achieve last year, Mr. Jones served with California State University for 25 years. [More...](#)

### **Six More States Join Effort to Write Next Generation Science Standards**

The initiative to develop K-12 science standards has expanded with the addition of six more states: Arkansas, Delaware, Illinois, Montana, North Carolina and Oregon. Now, 26 states are leading the development of the *Next Generation Science Standards* (NGSS), a shared effort that will clearly define the science content and practices all students will need to learn from kindergarten through high school graduation. Partnering with the states are the National Research Council, the National Science Teachers Association, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and Achieve. [More...](#)



### **PARCC Releases Model Content Frameworks**

The state-led Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) released Model Content Frameworks that will be used to inform the development of item specifications and blueprints for K-12 assessments in English and math at the state and district level. The model frameworks aim to provide support and guidance for implementation of the Common Core State Standards. The frameworks were created through a collaborative process that included state experts and writers of the Common Core State Standards. Nearly 1,000 individual comments were submitted from K-12 educators, principals, superintendents, higher education faculty, school board members, parents and students. The writing teams took that feedback into account when revising the frameworks. The Model Content Frameworks are intended to be dynamic and responsive to evidence and on-going input; as such, PARCC plans to revise them in Spring 2012 to incorporate feedback from educators who have used them over the school year. [More...](#)

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### **Washington State Board of Education Increases High School Graduation Requirements**

The Washington State Board of Education voted on November 10 to raise their state's high school graduation requirements to the college-and career-ready level. The class of 2016 will be the first to face the more rigorous requirements statewide, which include a fourth year of English and an additional half-year of social studies, though 80% of Washington districts already had these requirements in place. With this change, Washington joins the 20 other states and Washington, D.C. that require students to complete a college-and career-ready curriculum in order to graduate. [More...](#)

### **Montana Adopts Common Core**

The Montana Board of Public Education adopted the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Math on November 4. These new standards give every student, no matter where they live, the opportunity to receive an education that will prepare them for college and careers. [More...](#)

### **News Clips**

#### **1. Arizona Sets High Education Goals**

Arizona Ready met to discuss strategies for education reform. Chairman Craig R. Barrett, Ph.D., (who also chairs Achieve's Board of Directors) said, "We must ask more of our students; we must successfully implement the new internationally benchmarked Arizona standards and assessment system; we must increase teacher training in mathematics and science; and we must be accountable for our progress in education reform. The status quo is simply unacceptable." [More...](#)

#### **2. Common Core State Standards**

Iowa Governor Terry

Branstad and Jim Hunt, former Governor of North Carolina, write that the Common Core State Standards "are a set of clear, consistent goals for knowledge and skills that will help our students excel." [More...](#)

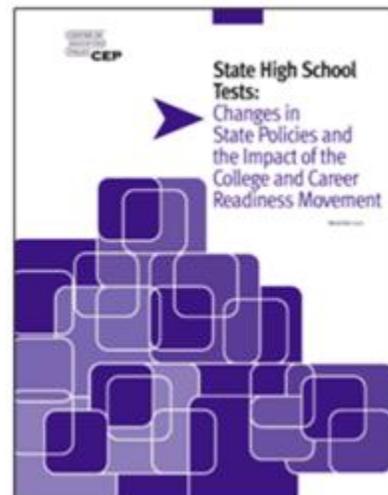
### 3. **Education Beyond High School is Crucial**

For those who question whether a college education may or may not lead to a good job, E. Gordon Gee, president of The Ohio State University, writes in an op-ed, "Thirty-plus years of working with students — in all kinds of economic climates — tells me that education is still the smartest investment one can make." [More...](#)

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## New Resources

- For the first time in six years, the number of states requiring students to pass high school exit exams to earn a diploma has gone down, according to the tenth annual report on high school exams and other assessments by the Center on Education Policy (CEP). But at the same time, the majority of states are preparing for new assessments aligned with the Common Core State Standards and more than one-fourth are offering college and career readiness assessments, the report finds. "While the number of states requiring students to pass exit exams to graduate has gone down, testing in high school is



actually on the increase, as more states administer other types of exams," said Jack Jennings, CEP's president and CEO. "The adoption of the common assessments will be an opportunity to revise all of these policies in a way that makes most sense for all students." The report, [State High School Tests: Changes in State Policies and the Impact of the College and Career Readiness Movement](#), and individual profiles for states with exit exams, college entrance exam policies, and/or college and career readiness assessments are available at [www.cep-dc.org](http://www.cep-dc.org).

- The Data Quality Campaign's (DQC) seventh annual state analysis, [Data for Action 2011](#), shows that states have made incredible progress building their student data systems. More states than ever — 36, up from zero in 2005 — have implemented all of DQC's [10 Essential Elements of Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems](#). Every state now has the capacity to empower all stakeholders — from parents to policymakers — to use data to inform decisions to improve student achievement. States continue to struggle with the [10 State Actions to Ensure Effective Data Use](#), which create a culture where stakeholders use their collected data to increase student success.

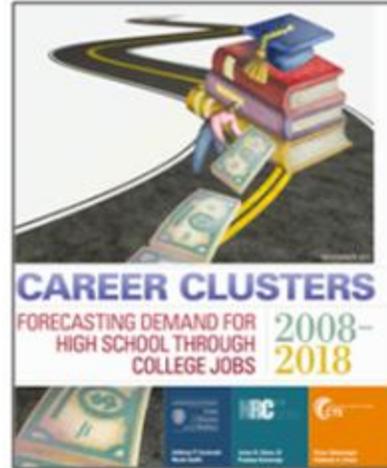
For example: 41 states do not link workforce data with K-12 and 38 states do not link workforce data with postsecondary. States have not empowered cross-agency governance bodies, as 38 states have not established policies around sharing data across agencies. "States have worked so diligently to build their capacity to collect and use quality education data, but this increased data capacity will only increase student achievement when all stakeholders — from parents to policymakers — use these data to make informed decisions," said Aimee Guidera, DQC executive director. "The need is urgent: state policymakers need to allocate scarce resources based on what works to help students, and they cannot do that without data." DQC hosts a [webcast](#) on Wednesday, January 18, 2012, 1:30-5:00 p.m. ET that will discuss the report.

- Working with the American Institutes for Research (AIR), Change the Equation (CTEq) compared the passing scores that states set on their federally-required 2009 eighth-grade science tests with the scale that NAEP established for its own science test. The results are startling. What one state may deem to be "proficient" may be classified as "basic" or well below grade level in another. Fifteen states have set the bar for "proficiency" below NAEP's threshold for "basic" knowledge. Just four states — Louisiana, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and New Hampshire — are at or



above NAEP's standard for proficiency. "Raising the bar on measuring student achievement will take fortitude as some states see the percentage of proficient students plummet," said CTEq and Achieve Board of Directors Chair Craig R. Barrett. "Though it may be painful and initially unpopular, we are doing students a disservice if we set the bar low and give them a false sense of achievement that will hinder their learning and growth in school and beyond." Visit [www.changetheequation.org/scienceproficiency](http://www.changetheequation.org/scienceproficiency).

- Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce released, [\*Career Clusters: Forecasting Demand for High School Through College Jobs, 2008-2018\*](#), a new report produced in collaboration with the National Research Center for Career and Technical Education and the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium. It analyzes and compares the educational requirements and pay across jobs for each of the 16 nationally-recognized career clusters. The report projects that the most promising financial future is for workers with bachelor's and master's degrees. If you have a four-year degree, five out of six jobs available pay more than \$35,000 a year and average \$60,000. However, it is critical to note that while a bachelor's degree offers better accessibility to all high-paying jobs, occupation matters a great deal. The STEM cluster pays the highest wages overall, an average of \$72,000 a year. For the full report, click [here](#).



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### **Achieve Job Opportunity**

Achieve has several career opportunities available. Go to [www.achieve.org/careers](http://www.achieve.org/careers).

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