Perspective Newsletter December 2014

Commentary

2014: Year in Review

2014 was a year full of activity at Achieve - all with the goal of getting students college- and career-ready! Here are some highlights from 2014 as well as a few sneak peeks of what to expect in 2015.

EQuIP Exemplars: There are currently 60 exemplary lessons and units freely available to educators through the EQuIP initiative. Teachers can access high-quality, Common Core-aligned lessons and units in both math and English Language Arts for all grade bands. The EQuIP Peer Review Panel, consisting of educators from across the country, met four times throughout the year, including the convening of the newest Peer Review Panel cohort in November.

In partnership with the Teaching Channel, Achieve released the first four of a series of videos on how teachers can use the EQuIP rubrics and feedback processes in schools. Four EQuIP videos are currently available for viewing: an overview video, a video focused

on the [math rubric](#), a video focused on the [ELA rubric](#), and a video about the [EQuIP Student Work Protocol](#).
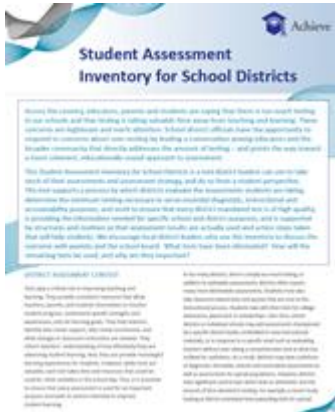
Student Assessment Inventory Tool: In June, Achieve launched its [Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts](#). This tool, developed in response to concerns about overtesting in schools, encourages and enables districts to take careful stock of their required assessments to ensure that only the best and most useful are administered. Districts are also able to adapt the tool as needed in order to tailor it to their unique contexts. Eight school districts in Connecticut piloted the tool and provided feedback during its development. Since its launch, the tool has been downloaded more than 1,200 times.

Next Generation Science Standards: Five states (Illinois, New Jersey, Nevada, Oregon, and West Virginia) adopted [the NGSS](#) in 2014, bringing the total of adopters to 13 states plus the District of Columbia. Kentucky became the first to begin implementing the standards in classrooms this school year. In addition, California has ten districts working on early implementation throughout the state. To help educators begin to envision how content and practices from the NGSS and math and ELA standards can be assessed together by teachers, Achieve released a set of [Classroom Sample Tasks](#) for middle and high school grades.

Rising to the Challenge: Are High School Graduates Prepared for College and Work?: In December, Achieve released the results of a national survey of more than 1,300 recent high school graduates that revealed that approximately 50% report gaps in their preparation for college or the working world. The survey results also revealed the critical importance of high academic standards; only one in four students reported that their high school set high academic expectations, but those who did also indicated that they felt more prepared for success in college and the workplace.
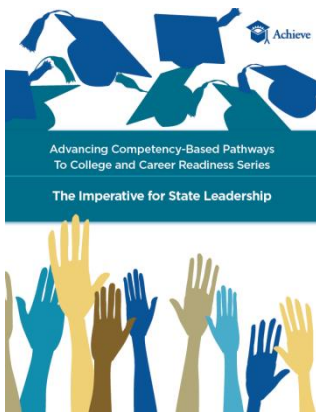
Competency-Based Pathways: Achieve continued to provide strategic support and guidance to 12 states throughout 2014 on developing competency-based pathways to college and career readiness, including the release of a policy brief (Advancing Competency-Based Pathways to College and Career Readiness Series: The Imperative for State Leadership) in July. Additional communications and guidance and materials around competency-based learning will be available to states next year.

What's ahead in 2015?
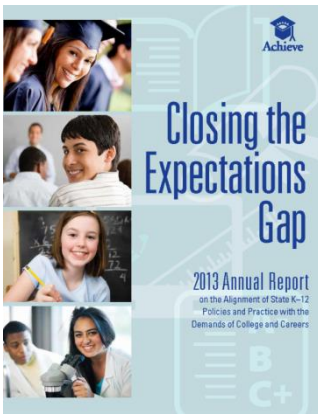
50-State Report: Achieve's Annual Report - *Closing the Expectations Gap* - will be released in early 2015. This report, which is based on an annual policy survey of all 50 states, will detail states' progress in establishing high academic standards, aligned assessments, accountability measures, and graduation requirements. Last year's report can be viewed [here](#).

Additional Surveys on Readiness: Building upon the findings of the Rising to the Challenge survey of recent high school graduates, Achieve will conduct a series of surveys of employers, college faculty, and parents to better understand the current state of college and career readiness as well as how it can be improved.

CCR Data Visualization: In 2014, Achieve launched the CCR Data Visualization Project with Tembo, Inc. The purpose of the project is to advance knowledge and capacity across states about how to report student-level assessment results in ways that maximize understanding and use by teachers, school leaders and families. Through the project, Achieve is developing well-tested sample student-level reports for families and educators that are being shared with states and the PARCC and Smarter Balanced assessment consortia, along with findings and considerations about effective reporting that have emerged from feedback from parents and teachers. Sample reports will be released in early 2015.

More Teaching Channel Videos: Achieve is partnering with the Teaching Channel to release two new video series; the first series provides details about the EQuIP initiative, peer review process, and available materials, while the second explores the different dimensions of the Next Generation Science Standards. Videos in both series will be available in the coming months.

Open Educational Resources: Achieve plans to release a set of state policy recommendations for advancing the use of Open Educational Resources in early 2015.

News Clips

### Common Core State Standards will improve student success

Classroom teachers and college professors alike are embracing the Common Core State Standards because they know higher academic standards are critical for student success. Below are the voices of teachers at the secondary and postsecondary levels describing how the Common Core gives them the flexibility to bring their students to new educational heights. More...

Elementary schools start teaching data literacy

Elementary school teacher Lisa Parisi is trying to teach her students a new kind of literacy. She hopes to prepare them to eventually fill the shortage of qualified science, technology, engineering and math professionals, but also to derive opinions from measurable, real-world data. More...

Student Mathematics Performance in the First Two Years of Teach to One: Math
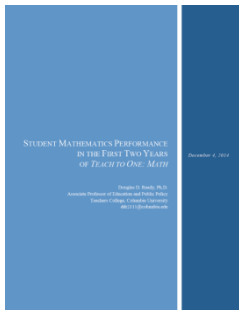
A new [study](#) from Dr. Douglas Ready at Teachers College, Columbia University, illuminates initial results from the implementation of an innovative, personalized middle school mathematics program, Teach to One: Math. In the program, students advance along a mathematics learning progression as they master the material and learn through a combination of live instruction, peer group work, individual computer-based instruction, and other methods. The evaluation found that in by the second year of implementation in 15 schools across several cities, students' learning in math (as measured by a nationally normed assessment) was significantly higher than national norms in 11 schools, statistically comparable in two schools, and statistically lower in two schools. Students in these schools typically began each academic year with math scores far below national averages, are predominately black or Hispanic, and most qualify for the federal free/reduced-price lunch program.

Early Progress: Interim Research on Personalized Learning
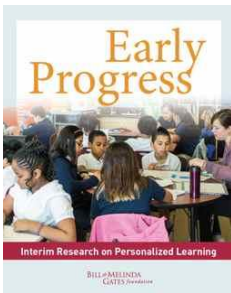
The Gates Foundation has been supporting RAND in studying 23 schools focused on personalizing learning to identify the most promising features of personalized learning and document the challenges of implementation. Gates broadly defines personalized learning as "an education approach in which teachers and schools create systems, tools, and methodologies that tailor instruction to the individual needs, skills, and interests of each student, in an effort to accelerate and deepen learning." The personalized learning schools in the study have implemented one or more of the following strategies: learner profiles, personal learning paths, competency-based progression, and/or flexible learning environments. 86% of teachers stated that they pace instruction based on a student's needs. This interim report finds that students are making significantly greater gains in math and reading over the last two years than a control group at comparable schools. In addition, the concept of personalized learning is still evolving as new models, approaches, and technologies are developed. There is also considerable consistency across the strategies used by early adopters.

Advancing the "Middle-Skill" STEM Policy Agenda
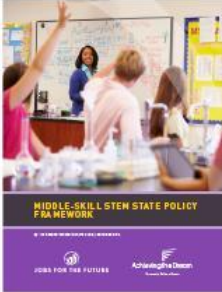
"[Middle-Skill Stem State Policy Framework](#)," a recent report from Jobs for the Future and Achieving the Dream, outlines ways for policymakers to bolster the pipeline of community college students seeking entry into science and math-related fields that require less than a baccalaureate degree. The report argues that the middle-skill segment of the workforce has received inadequate attention and that these jobs provide a growing source of employment opportunities for low-income or less academically prepared individuals. Policy priorities and recommendations include improving remedial education to boost student success, ensuring that two-year STEM programs meet employer demands, and enhancing data collection and use to increase transparency, accountability, and equity. The report further recommends providing incentives to community colleges that demonstrably improve student outcomes through innovation and the development of new career pathways.

Making Career Preparation Work for Students

CCSSO released a report from its career readiness task force titled "[Opportunities and Options: Making Career Preparation Work for Students](#)." The report encourages states to make high school programs more responsive to the labor market by enlisting the employer community as a lead partner,

significantly raise the threshold for quality career pathways in secondary schools, and make career preparation matter to schools and students, in part by expanding accountability systems to emphasize career readiness. To date, 41 states, DC, and the Mariana Islands have agreed to support the recommendations in this report. The full list of supportive states is available here and the list of supportive partners is available here.

Career Opportunities

Achieve has career opportunities available. Click here to learn more.

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