

March 2010

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## Commentary

### **The College- and Career-Ready Agenda: Five Years Later**

This year marks the fifth anniversary of the "[Closing the Expectations Gap](#)" report, which Achieve has conducted annually since 2005 when it first launched the [American Diploma Project \(ADP\) Network](#) to challenge states to work together to align high school expectations with the demands of college and the workplace. Over the past five years, since the National Governors Association (NGA) and Achieve co-sponsored the National Education Summit on High Schools, states have made impressive progress in aligning their high school standards, graduation requirements and assessment and accountability systems with college- and career-ready expectations. Briefly, the report finds:



- **Standards:** At the time of the National Education Summit, only three states had end of high school standards aligned with the demands of college and career. Today, 31 states have developed and adopted high school academic standards in English and mathematics that are aligned with college- and career-ready expectations.
- **Graduation Requirements:** In 2005, only three states had established college- and career-ready graduation requirements. Today, 20 states and the District of Columbia require all students to complete such a curriculum to earn a high school diploma.
- **Assessments:** Five years ago, three states administered high school assessments capable of measuring college- and career-ready content that clearly signal students' readiness for first-year, credit-bearing postsecondary courses. Today, 14 states administer such exams.
- **P-20 Data Systems:** In 2005, only three states had operational P-20 longitudinal data systems that link states' student-level K-12 data with similar data from their

postsecondary systems. Today, 16 states are matching such data annually.

- *Accountability:* In 2005, no state had a comprehensive reporting and accountability system that valued college and career readiness. While progress in this area has been slowest, 22 states have now incorporated at least one of four accountability indicators that Achieve has identified as critical to promoting college and career readiness, with only one state making full use of all of the indicators in its accountability system.

The progress states have made over the past five years in adopting policies that aim to ensure all students graduate from high school ready to take the next step demonstrates that the notion of "college and career readiness for all" has gone from a radical concept to the new norm throughout the country, largely due to state leadership. What was once an agenda driven by a handful of state leaders is now a national movement, influencing education reform at the local, state and federal levels.

To see a copy of the report, the PowerPoint, and to watch a video of the press event, go to [www.achieve.org/ClosingtheExpectationsGap2010](http://www.achieve.org/ClosingtheExpectationsGap2010).

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## New from Achieve

### Draft K-12 Common Core State Standards Released

The draft Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics were released by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) on March 10 to a great deal of interest, and mostly positive reviews, across the nation. The standards are a product of a great deal of thought and work by states, organizations, and individuals - work in which Achieve played a central role. The standards are now open for public review. Those interested in providing further feedback should go to [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org) by Friday, April 2, 2010. Achieve issued a [news statement](#) commending the draft standards.

### Race to the Top

On March 4 the U.S. Department of Education (USED) announced the Round 1 finalists for the Race to the Top competition: **Colorado, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Tennessee.** The Round 1 winners of the competition will be announced in April. 40 states and the District of Columbia submitted applications to compete in Round 1 of Race to the Top, and the 16 finalists will be interviewed by panels of reviewers before the winners of the first round are announced.

Through this \$4.35 billion program, states are asked to advance reforms around

four specific areas: adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy; building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction; recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and turning around our lowest-achieving schools. For more information on the Race to the Top process, go [here](#).

The Secretary of Education has set aside up to \$350 million of Race to the Top funds to provide consortia of states with grants to develop next-generation common summative assessments. Achieve President Michael Cohen testified at a [Race to the Top Assessment input meeting](#) in January, held by USED to hear public and expert feedback on the grant program. The subject of the hearing was "Project and Consortium Management" and focused on the lessons learned from Achieve's management of the American Diploma Project Assessment Consortia. A [PowerPoint presentation](#) accompanied his testimony.

### **State Education Policy Expert Margaret Horn Joins Achieve's Team**

Margaret Horn, a former senior education policy advisor to **Tennessee** Governor Phil Bredesen, has joined Achieve's team in Washington, D.C. As director of state leadership and policy development for Achieve, Horn will primarily be responsible for overseeing the organization's work with states in developing, enacting and sustaining college- and career-ready education policies. "We are extremely pleased to welcome Margaret to the Achieve team," said Achieve's president Michael Cohen. "Her experience in Tennessee makes her uniquely qualified to guide states as they work to accelerate progress on the college and career-ready agenda." [More...](#)

### **Complete College America: Seventeen States Join Network to Make Dramatic Increases in College Degree Completion**

Signifying their intent to take the bold action necessary to increase college completion rates, 17 states have joined an Alliance of States with a new non-profit organization, Complete College America (CCA). They are **Connecticut, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont,** and **West Virginia**.

The goal of the new organization is to increase the number of young adults with a college degree or credential dramatically, with a particular focus on traditionally underserved populations. The states participating in CCA have agreed to three major commitments: Setting state and campus-specific degree and credential completion goals; developing and implementing aggressive state and campus-level action plans for meeting the state's completion goals; and collecting and publicly reporting common measures of progress toward completion goals and closing attainment gaps. CCA will support states to implement a range of strategies that will bring needed change to improve completion. Stan Jones, former **Indiana** Commissioner of Higher Education, is president of CCA.

Achieve intends to work closely with Complete College America in the overlapping space between high school graduation and completion of the first year of college,

building on Achieve's deep knowledge about college-readiness and CCA's interest in moving first-year college students from dead-end remediation to acceleration toward a postsecondary credential that matters. For more, go to [www.completecollege.org](http://www.completecollege.org).

### **New Science Education Conceptual Framework for a New Generation**

Achieve is launching a new effort to develop the next generation of science standards that will prepare students across the country for success in living and working in a science and technology-based society and global economy. This initiative is being launched in partnership with the National Research Council (NRC), the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), and the National Science Teacher's Association (NSTA) with initial funding from the Carnegie Foundation. The NRC's rigorous study and review process will develop a science learning Conceptual Framework to reinforce the importance of science education in our increasingly science-dominated society and identify "big ideas" that will help organize curriculum, teaching and learning across the nation. Once the Conceptual Framework is developed, Achieve will work with the NRC, NSTA, AAAS, and state partners to develop next-generation science standards. [More...](#)



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### **President Obama Unveils Blueprint for Preparing Students for College and Careers**

In his weekly address, President Obama called for a redesigned Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), placing the emphasis on ensuring that all students graduate high school college- and career-ready. Watch the video and read the transcript of his address [here](#).

The blueprint, delivered to Congress on Monday, March 15, builds on the foundation laid by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and rewards progress and success while emphasizing the importance of turning around the lowest-performing schools. The

#### **News Clips**

- 1. Reactions to Education Blueprint**

*Stateline* reports that states are pleased that the focus of the Obama Administration's education plan is on what the states have already done and supports them in going further. [More...](#)

- 2. Common Core State Standards**

*The Washington Post*

blueprint builds on the leadership of Governors and Chief State School Officers and asks all states to adopt standards in English language arts and mathematics that build towards college and career readiness by the time students graduate from high school.

The blueprint frames an accountability system that measures student growth toward meeting the goal of graduating all students college- and career-ready. This marks a dramatic shift away from the current law's emphasis on adequate yearly progress (AYP) sanctions. This new approach offers states increased flexibility to pursue programs and strategies with real results. The proposal would fund the overhauled law at \$28 billion in fiscal 2011, which is an increase of \$3 billion.

The full blueprint is available for download [here](#).

published an editorial supportive of the Common Core State Standards draft. Achieve's President Michael Cohen is quoted as saying that the standards are, "Very strong, building on the best state and international standards."

[More...](#) (Watch Mr. Cohen discuss the standards on [C-SPAN](#) or listen to him on [NPR](#).)

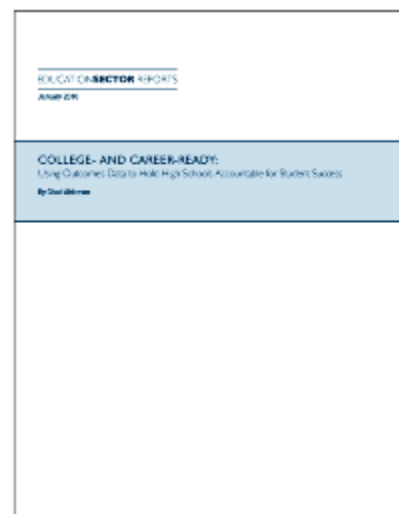
### 3. Ohio Prepares Students for Global Economy

*Dayton Daily News* reports that **Ohio** high school students entering their freshman year this fall will face tougher math requirements as part of an effort by the state to prepare students for college and careers in the global economy. [More...](#)

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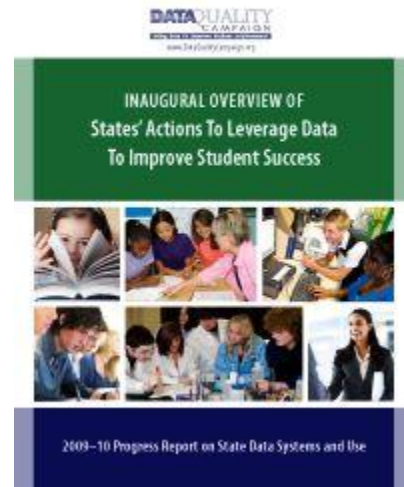
## New Resources

- In "[College- and Career-Ready: Using Outcomes Data to Hold High Schools Accountable for Student Success](#)," Education Sector policy analyst Chad Aldeman notes that the best way to measure whether students are prepared for college or a career is by looking at what actually happens when students arrive at their intended destination. The report cites examples of schools that did make "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) under NCLB, yet whose students were not successful in college. It offers suggestions on ways states could use existing data systems to create richer, more multi-



dimensional measures.

- A Data Quality Campaign survey finds that states are making progress in developing longitudinal data systems and are taking the first steps to ensure that new information is used to improve student outcomes and system-wide performance. But the [results](#) show that most states have much work to do around key practices, such as following student progress from pre-school through college and the workforce, sharing student-level progress reports with teachers, and providing training around data use.



- The ["Gauging the Student Achievement"](#) pitfalls of achievement essential to analyze gaps from four perspectives in order to gain a comprehensive picture of equity. Using state-level NAEP data, the analysis found five states emerge as clear leaders: **Delaware, Florida, Massachusetts, Texas and Vermont.**



Education Trust's new brief, [Gaps: A Deeper Look at Achievement](#)," illustrates the one-dimensional analyses of gaps and concludes that it's

- The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices released, ["Increasing](#)



[College Success: A Road Map for Governors](#)," a brief that outlines actions governors can take to increase college completion rates. It notes that nearly 75 percent of future jobs will require a postsecondary degree or certificate; yet, U.S. college completion rates are flat. It recommends that states improve students' readiness for college and careers, provide necessary supports to students as they pursue degrees, remove barriers that make it difficult to transfer from two- to four-year programs, and experiment with performance-based funding.

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### **Achieve Job Opportunity**

Achieve seeks a Director of Science. For more, go [here](#).

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*Perspective* is sent to you by Achieve, an independent, bipartisan, non-profit education reform organization based in Washington, D.C. that helps states raise academic standards and graduation requirements, improve assessments and strengthen accountability. Please feel free to circulate this e-newsletter to your colleagues.

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