Achieve

All students should graduate from high school ready for **college**, **careers** and **citizenship**

News Clips

The Right Curriculum for Kindergarten: Play

Deborah Kenny, founder and chief executive of Harlem Village Academies, writes in *The Washington Post* that, "while some schools might choose to teach vocabulary in a rote, boring way, clearly the standards are not to blame." More...

How Common Core Could Breathe New Life Into OER

T.H.E. Journal reports that advocates such as the OER Commons and Achieve are providing districts and teachers with tools for determining the degree of standards alignment of open educational resources. More...

Perspective Newsletter March 2013

Commentary

Mathematics at Work and the Common Core State Standards

Mathematics education in the U.S. has always been a complicated issue: on the one hand, there is a general consensus that mathematics is a fundamental skill that all students should possess, yet there is also the common - and false - perception that not all students are "good at math" and that it is unfair to expect all kids to take advanced mathematics in order to graduate.

Michael Cohen, president of Achieve, told the *Houston Chronicle* earlier this month that "people worry that if you make kids take more rigorous math, then you'll lose them." But he also asked: "What kind of technical training doesn't require some kind of advanced mathematics?" Studies have found that students who complete Algebra II in high school nearly double their chances of earning four-year college degrees. "It's not like people made up the idea, 'Let's all take Algebra II for the fun of it.' It was looking at what people do after they leave high school, what kind of education and training programs you want to prepare them for."

It was, in part, the disconnect between what is expected of *some* kids compared to what should be expected of *all* kids that led Achieve to first create the *Math Works* resources back in 2008. The *Math Works* resources - a series of *Mathematics at Work* brochures, fact sheets and a white paper - make the case that advanced mathematics is important for all students, no matter what their plans are after high school. Students who take advanced math have better access to college in all forms, are more likely to earn a degree, earn higher salaries and are better prepared for the workplace.
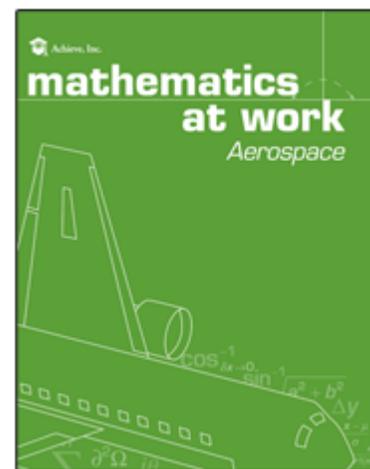
Since their release in 2008, the *Mathematics at Work* brochures have been requested and shared with educators and district personnel from over 200 schools and districts across 48 states and DC, reaching well over 10,000 K-12 students, as well as with nearly 50 institutions of higher education and over 20 state-level agencies. The materials have been used with learners at all ages, from middle school students to adult education students, reinforcing the importance of mathematics for ALL students, regardless of age, zip code or background.

This week, Achieve released updated and revised brochures that now make the connection between middle skills jobs and the mathematics in the Common Core State Standards. The *Mathematics at Work* brochures present case studies drawn from leading industries nationwide, such as information technology, advanced manufacturing and healthcare. They provide concrete examples of how advanced math is applied in these jobs and identify the prerequisite mathematical skills needed to successfully enter these jobs. In healthcare, for example, radiographers rely on geometry, spatial relations, measurement, inverse laws and problem solving to produce CT images that will allow radiologists to properly diagnosis injury and illness. Importantly, all of the jobs highlighted in the brochures are accessible to high school graduates without a four-year college degree.

Achieve also updated the seven *Math Works* fact sheets exploring issues such as equity, career readiness, international competitiveness and the fourth year of mathematics.

To view the updated Math Works resources, visit http://www.achieve.org/Math-Works.

News

Common Core State Standards Tool for Legislators

Achieve, in partnership with Education First, the Aspen Institute and the Insight Education Group, developed a resource for state legislators to help them understand the Common Core State Standards and their role in supporting the implementation of the CCSS and related policies. The paper includes background and key questions that need to be addressed by state legislators on the issues of curriculum and instructional materials, assessment, teacher professional learning, teacher preparation and teacher and principal effectiveness regarding oversight, authorization and appropriation. More...

Future Ready Project

On March 26, Achieve held an American Diploma Project webinar on the Future Ready Project website. Access the 30 minute recording which provides a walk-through of the new features and resources here.

We encourage you to send us resources that you have developed or found beneficial in case making and advocating for the college- and career-ready policy agenda to share on the site. You can now upload the resources directly via a new function on the Future Ready Project Website, which you can access here. Visit www.futurereadyproject.org.

PARCC Helps Schools and Districts Prepare

PARCC released a new planning tool and guidance for schools and districts that will help them get ready for new, computer-based, Common Core-aligned assessments. The PARCC Assessment Administration Capacity Planning Tool provides schools and districts with a calculator that supports local technology budgeting and decision-making in preparation for computer-based administration of the tests in the 2014-2015 school year. More...

PARCC released guidance that provides schools and districts with more information about the design of the PARCC assessments in English language arts/literacy and mathematics, as well as the number of testing sessions and the approximate time it will take students to complete the assessments. PARCC also updated technology guidelines.

Defining College and Career Readiness

On March 20, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (BHE) voted to accept a new definition of what it takes for students to become ready for life after high school. The BHE action followed a "yes" vote on the state's new college and career readiness definition taken by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education on February 26th. Voting on the definition marks the first time that the two boards overseeing the state's K-12 schools and public colleges and universities have partnered in formal agreement on what it means to be prepared for success in college and in the workplace.

The three-page definition (PDF) is intended to provide better coordination between schools and colleges, with the goal of aligning curriculum and expectations for students. The definition builds upon the Commonwealth's focus on English language arts and mathematics as the specific academic areas that will be assessed by PARCC and then used in the postsecondary environment to help determine readiness for and placement into entry-level, credit-bearing courses. Thus, Massachusetts' definition of college and career readiness is designed to link to the Commonwealth's future K-12 assessment instruments and higher education placement policy for English language arts and mathematics.

New Resources

The Shift from Cohorts to Competency

For a comprehensive look into how schools, districts and states are approaching the shift to competency-based education in an effort to help schools meet the goals established by the Common Core State Standards, be sure to read Digital Learning Now!'s recent paper - The Shift from Cohorts to Competency. The paper, developed in partnership with Getting Smart and the Foundation for Excellence in Education, provides a primer on competency-based education and includes examples of how schools, districts and states are supporting the shift to competency-based education, with an emphasis on the role of technology. It discusses ten new capabilities of a competency-based system, such as supporting college- and career- ready expectations and providing flexibility in time and learning; ten design choices, such as progression based on mastery, formative and summative assessments and progress tracking systems; and a number of state policies designed to support competency education.

State Policymakers Guide to Competency Education

For insight into initial steps states have taken to further opportunities for students to advance based on mastery, rather than seat-time, check out the latest issue brief from CompetencyWorks, Necessary for Success: Building Mastery of World-Class Skills, released in partnership with iNACOL and support from the leaders of the Innovation Lab Network. Written by Susan Patrick and Chris Sturgis, the brief introduces the main concepts behind competency-based education, provides concrete examples of steps states have taken to support competency-based learning and includes considerations for state leaders looking to foster a culture that supports competency-based education within their state agencies. Find more resources on CompetencyWorks' Competency-Based Pathways Wiki.

Promoting College and Career Readiness: A Pocket Guide for State and District Leaders

To contribute to the national conversation on preparing youth for college and career success, AIR has developed "Promoting College and Career Readiness: A Pocket Guide for State and District Leaders." This research-based reference tool (available as a downloadable PDF) identifies strategies to ensure that all students, regardless of special needs or language fluency, are prepared for postsecondary education and careers. The Pocket Guide is the second of three guides created to help state and local policymakers and practitioners implement the college- and career-ready reforms included in the flexibility waivers approved by the U.S. Department of Education. AIR researchers reviewed the 35 approved state plans to develop the Pocket Guide, which includes the following: requirements in the state flexibility waivers related to the principle of achieving college and career readiness for all students; descriptions of how the state flexibility plans address college and career readiness; considerations for research-based enhancements to current and planned policy and practice; and examples of state and district innovations in college and career readiness. A related case studies report and brochures are available on the AIR website.
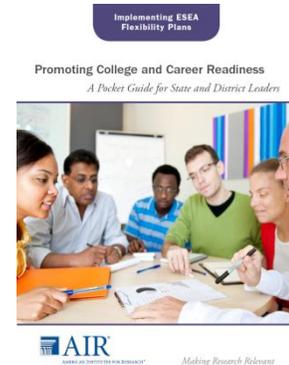
FACT SHEET: Preparing Students for Jobs

Nearly every high-priority item in national, federal, state and local discussions about education - and policy proposals across the political spectrum - requires high-quality longitudinal data to inform its design, implementation and evaluation. A new *fact sheet* from Data Quality Campaign (DQC) shares DQC's analysis of what *Data for Action 2012* tells us about states' data capacity related to preparing students for jobs. Significant work remains to better define, align, collect, share and use students' postsecondary and workforce information to inform policies, practices and decisions that will improve students' success in the economy. State policymakers must work with critical stakeholders to identify and prioritize the education and workforce development questions and task cross-agency bodies to produce and link the data to answers these questions.

Career Opportunities

Achieve has two career opportunities available: Associate Director, Strategic Initiatives and Executive Assistant, PARCC. Go to www.achieve.org/careers.

Connect with Achieve

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.