



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

## May 2014 Perspective Newsletter

### Commentary

#### **New policy brief provides guidance to states in using career-focused indicators of college and career readiness in accountability and public reporting systems**

Achieve and the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEc) released a policy brief, [\*Making Career Readiness Count\*](#), to propose an expanded framework for college- and career-ready indicators that better incorporate indicators focused on career preparation. The brief also includes guidance and recommendations for states on how they can take steps in the next few years to ensure that the "career" in their college- and career-ready accountability and public reporting system is not an afterthought but rather a powerful lever to focus priorities, to drive progress, and to ultimately see more students, and their communities, succeed. Importantly, the paper does not put forward one specific approach or strategy for valuing college and career readiness but rather offers a view into how states are currently approaching this challenge and what policymakers need to consider



as they look to reform their own reporting and accountability systems.

It is critical that states encourage schools and districts to provide all students experiences that put them on a path to access and to succeed in the careers of their choosing, as well as experiences they need to build the knowledge and skills necessary for entry into and success in postsecondary education. Whether high school graduates enroll in a traditional two- or four-year institution, enter a postsecondary technical program or apprenticeship, or go directly into the military or workforce following high school graduation, *they need the same core of academic skills, particularly in English language arts and mathematics*. There may be additional academic skills or knowledge necessary for certain content areas, but all students need strong critical-thinking and problem-solving skills.

The vast majority of graduates who do go directly into the workforce will need to complete additional education or training to get jobs that offer a family-sustaining wage and pathways to advancement.<sup>1</sup> All students are working toward career pathways. As such, states need to encourage and support schools and districts to help all students reach a college- and career-ready level of academic preparation, while also encouraging schools and districts to help all students participate and succeed in career pathways and experiences that both prepare them for and guide them through the future of work.

One of the clearest ways for states to do this is by setting strong performance goals for all students that value career-focused courses, experiences and credentials and then backing up those goals with specific indicators that are reported to the public and

used in school and district accountability systems. This serves two essential purposes: first, that career readiness is a priority for the state, and second, that policymakers, education leaders, teachers, community partners, business and workforce leaders, parents, and students have the right information at the right time to make important decisions and continuous progress toward the goals. Yet, the current state of knowledge and understanding about how to do this is limited.

The policy brief examines how states are currently using career-focused indicators in accountability systems (e.g., weighted in accountability formulas and/or awarding bonus points) and in public reporting systems such as school report cards. It finds that over half of states include at least one career-focused indicator in accountability, reporting, or both. It highlights several states, such as Georgia, Kentucky, Missouri and Virginia, which are paving the way toward more comprehensive systems that value career readiness. Finally, it offers recommendations for states to use multiple measures of career readiness in their systems, to deeply engage state CTE/college and career readiness leaders as well as workforce and economic development leaders in all aspects of designing and continuously improving the use of indicators, to find the right balance of using indicators in accountability and public reporting, and finally, to act on the information gleaned from use of the indicators to improve outcomes for students.

[1] Achieve (2012). *The Future of the U.S. Workforce: Middle Skills Jobs and the Growing Importance of Postsecondary Education*. [www.achieve.org/middleskills](http://www.achieve.org/middleskills).

### Update from EQuIP

This month, Achieve partnered with Washington, DC-based education nonprofit [LearnZillion](#) to host a one-day training session on the [EQuIP](#) rubrics and quality review process as well as the EQuIP Student Work Protocol. The EQuIP rubrics are designed to assist educators in evaluating the quality of lessons and units aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and the EQuIP Student Work Protocol helps establish or articulate the relationship between student work and the quality and alignment of instructional materials. The training session was attended by nearly 200 members of LearnZillion's Dream Team of local educators who are selected annually from around the country to create the teaching and instructional materials available on LearnZillion's website.



Achieve also partnered with the Iowa Department of Education to train Iowa educators who will review instructional materials submitted to the state through an RFP process. This evaluation committee will use a modified version of the EQuIP rubrics to evaluate example instructional units and their alignment to the Iowa Core standards.

Additionally, Achieve has now posted **24 lessons or units identified as Exemplar or Exemplar if Improved** under the EQuIP rubrics by members of the EQuIP Peer Review Panel. These lessons and units span across grade levels in mathematics and ELA/literacy, and are available on the EQuIP [webpage](#).

**If you are a developer interested in having a lessons or units reviewed by the EQulP Peer Review Panel**, please visit <http://lessons.achieve.org> to register and submit materials aligned to the CCSS. More information on the EQulP Peer Review Panel is [here](#).

### **Upcoming guidance from EducationCounsel for states that use assessments for high-stakes student decisions**

Since last fall, EducationCounsel has partnered with both CCSSO and Achieve to support states concerning core policy issues that must be addressed during the phase-in of new college and career-ready (CCR) assessments. This work has included development of a state policy planning [workbook](#) and multiple state team convenings. One key area of focus has been to provide guidance on the important policy issues implicated if/when states use new CCR assessments for high-stakes, student purposes. This includes using these assessments to inform high school graduation and/or grade retention/promotion decisions.

There are many factors to be considered when transitioning or implementing this kind of policy, and to build on this important work, EducationCounsel plans to release deeper state guidance to inform state decision-making on the use of assessments for high-stakes purposes during transition to CCR assessments. The guidance will identify the key challenges, describe the education policy issues, frame and operationalize the legal standards, and provide a matrix tool for related state decisions.

This document will be released in early June and EducationCounsel,

in collaboration with CCSSO, will then host multistate webinars for state teams to further discuss these critical issues, work through the matrix tool, and inform state decision-making. **If you are a state department of education deputy, assessment lead, policy lead, or general counsel, and are interested in attending one of EducationCounsel's June webinars, contact: [kedda.williams@educationcounsel.com](mailto:kedda.williams@educationcounsel.com) for more information.**

## News Clips

### **Aiming for college?**

A new recommendation for college-bound high school students from the Utah System of Higher Education is that they take four years of math instead of the required three. The guidelines are a more vocal approach by higher education leaders who hope to boost the state's six-year college graduation rates. Read the story in [The Salt Lake Tribune](#).

### **Common Core standards are vital to Ohio's future**

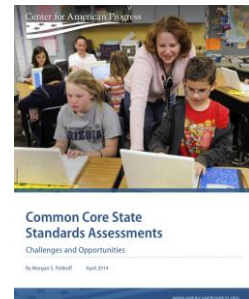
Richard A. Stoff, president and CEO of the Ohio Business Roundtable, writes in *The Columbus Dispatch* that, "Staying the course on full implementation of Ohio's New Learning Standards, including the Common Core State Standards for English and math, is absolutely vital to the future success of our children and to the economic health of our state." [Read the op-ed](#).

## New Resources

### Common Core State Standards: Challenges and Opportunities

The Center for American Progress released *Common Core State Standards: Challenges and Opportunities*.

Assessment challenges addressed in the report include: higher proficiency levels, technology upgrades, computer scoring, content coverage, time investments, validating uses for expanded evaluation and rollout coherence. Recommendations include putting assessment quality and alignment at the forefront, providing reliability and validity evidence for promoting new uses for assessment data, being proactive in explaining new proficiency standards to get ahead of concerns about decreasing proficiency rates, creating and implementing more thoughtful teacher and school accountability systems, and encouraging assessment quality by giving the consortia more freedom to measure proficiency outside of grade level and refining peer-review guidance.



## College Readiness Indicators and Supports

Education researchers from Stanford University, Brown University and the University of Chicago released a [\*College Readiness Indicator Systems \(CRIS\) Resource Series\*](#). The series is a suite of educational products designed to help school districts use data to identify the students and the supports they need to graduate high school and have success in college. The CRIS initiative brought together the researchers with urban school systems in Dallas, New York City, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and San Jose. The aim of the initiative was to develop and study the implementation of a system of indicators and supports designed to deliver the knowledge and skills students need to be truly ready for college. The three targeted dimensions of students' college readiness are academic preparedness, academic tenacity and college knowledge.



## A Stronger Nation through Higher Education

A new report by the Lumina Foundation, [\*A Stronger Nation through Higher Education\*](#), shows that 39.4 percent of working-age Americans (ages 25-64) held a two- or four-year college degree in 2012. That figure is up from 2011, when the rate was 38.7 percent and from 2008 when the rate was 37.9 percent. The latest degree attainment among young adults (ages 25-34) is even more optimistic at 40.9 percent, which is three percentage points higher



STRONGER NATION through HIGHER EDUCATION  
A REPORT FROM LUMINA FOUNDATION



than in 2008. If attainment continues to increase at these levels, increasing the percentage of Americans with high-quality degrees and credentials to 60 percent by 2025 is within reach.

## How Competency-Based Education is Evolving

*From policy to practice: How competency-based education is evolving in New Hampshire,*

released by the Clayton Christensen Institute, offers insights into how competency-based education became mainstream in New Hampshire; the environment that has allowed it to grow; and some of the challenges and promising practices schools, and the state, have encountered in their movement toward competency-based education. The brief approaches New Hampshire's experience through the lens of Susan Patrick and Chris Sturgis' five-part working definition of high-quality competency-based education, describing different approaches to the work and challenges encountered for each part of the definition. Thirteen schools from across the state shared their distinct experiences in developing and implementing competency-based education.



## Career Opportunities

Achieve has career opportunities [here](#).

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