



November 2015

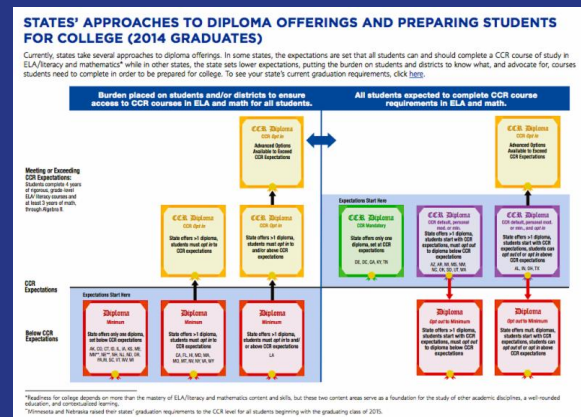
Dear Reader,

As states and districts take steps to hold students to higher academic expectations and better prepare them for life after high school, they must be transparent with students and their families. As our new report on high school diploma options and our survey of parents show, states too often do not publicly report or communicate critical information that enables families to make decisions influencing their child's academic preparedness. These resources serve as an important reminder that it isn't enough to enact college- and career-ready policies or provide quality options to students; states and districts must be transparent and communicative as well.

Michael Cohen, *President, Achieve*

New Report Shows Wide Variation, Lack of Alignment to College and Workforce Expectations in High School Diplomas

Achieve released [How the States Got their Rates](#), a report compiling high school diploma options available to the class of 2014 in all 50 states and the District of Columbia alongside their graduation rates. The analysis looked at how many diplomas a state offered, whether the diplomas required students to complete college- and career-ready (CCR) course requirements in English Language Arts (ELA)/literacy and mathematics, assessment requirements for earning the diplomas, and if student subgroup outcomes were



reported by diploma type. Achieve's analysis reveals that while many states have multiple diploma options for students, they are largely not publicly reporting how many students earn each type of diploma, or modify or substitute required courses. Most states report how many students are graduating, but not if all graduates are academically ready for college or career.

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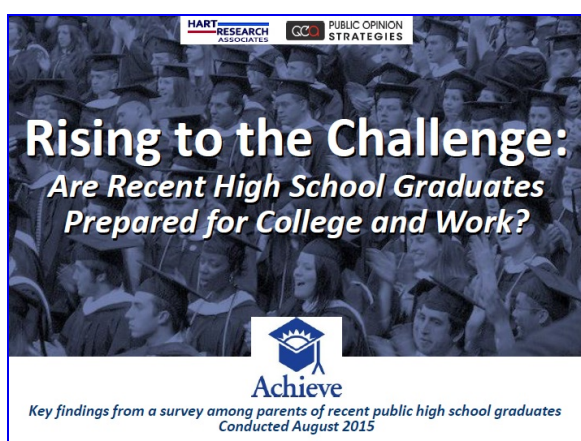


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Rising to the Challenge: Parents Weigh In



The [third and final phase](#) of Achieve's new national survey - *Rising to the Challenge: Are Recent High School Graduates Prepared for College and Work* - shows that better communication between high schools and parents is needed to address the disconnect between parents and students, faculty, and employers in perceptions of recent

graduates' readiness for life after high school. This survey builds upon Achieve's [2014 survey of recent high school graduates](#) and [2015 survey of employers and college faculty](#) about recent graduates' preparedness for success in college and careers.

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NGSS Accelerated Model Course Pathways



Achieve released the [Next Generation Science Standards \(NGSS\) Accelerated Model Course Pathways](#), a resource that offers guidance to schools and districts seeking to organize NGSS performance expectations into a compressed

time frame. The NGSS Accelerated Model Course Pathways are designed for high-achieving students who want or need to pursue advanced level science courses earlier in middle or high school, and at a more rapid pace.

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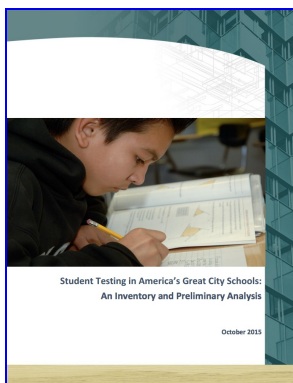
[Achieve Webinar: Parents Weigh In - Are Students Ready for College and Career?](#)

Join us on November 17th from 2:00-3:00 p.m. ET to unpack the results from the [third and final phase](#) of Achieve's surveys on student preparedness for college and career. This time, parents weigh in. Pollsters from Hart Research and Public Opinion Strategies will share findings from the nationwide poll of parents of recent high school graduates on their perception of how their child's high school prepared them for their next steps.

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[New Study on Testing from the Council of the Great City Schools](#)



The Council of the Great City Schools released [an analysis](#) of testing practices (including the amount of time students spend taking required tests) in 66 urban school districts. The study found that the average amount of testing time devoted to mandated tests among eighth-grade students in the 2014-15 school year was approximately 4.22 days or 2.34 percent of school time.

One tool that districts can use to address concerns about overtesting is [Achieve's Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts](#). The tool guides districts through the process of taking stock of their required assessments to ensure that only the best and most useful tests are administered.

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[National Governors Association: Expanding Student Success: A Primer on Competency-Based Education from Kindergarten](#)

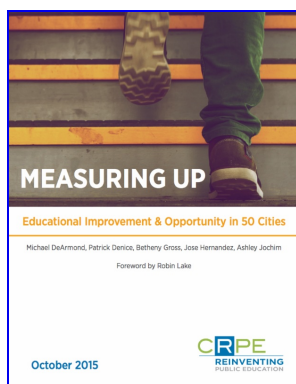
through Higher Education

The NGA recently released a [policy brief](#) that examines ways governors can support and expand competency-based education (CBE) at the state and local levels. This brief describes the rationale for transitioning to CBE in K-12 and higher education systems, key implementation shifts, and promising state approaches. It emphasizes the central role governors can play in promoting CBE as the only policymakers that oversee the entire pipeline of policies and resources for their state's education systems. Specific policy areas addressed in the brief include the role of the educator, assessment and accountability, and repurposed funding mechanisms.

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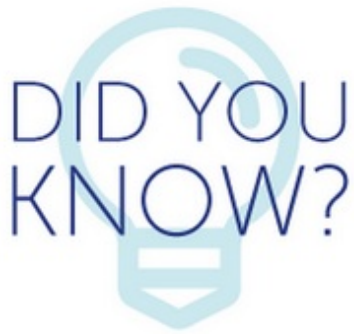
Measuring Up: Educational Improvement and Opportunity



The Center on Reinventing Public Education recently released, [Measuring Up: Educational Improvement and Opportunity](#) in 50 Cities, a new resource for understanding the state of urban public schools in the U.S. The report measures outcomes for all public schools, based on test scores and non-test indicators, in 50 mid- and large-sized cities. Among other takeaways, the report finds that less than 1 in 3 cities made gains in math or reading proficiency relative to their state and in 31 out of 50 cities, less than 10% of high school students enroll in advanced math classes.

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ready for college, careers, and citizenship.*

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