



October 2009

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## Commentary

### **The 2009 ADP Network Leadership Team Meeting**

Last month, Achieve hosted the fifth annual American Diploma Project (ADP) Network Leadership Team Meeting in Washington, D.C. The goal of the ADP Network annual meeting is to give states a chance to address key challenges and opportunities associated with adopting, implementing and sustaining the college- and career-ready policy agenda. Participants had time to engage with national experts, learn from colleagues in other states, and meet in state teams to plan next steps in their ongoing efforts to advance the ADP policy goals. Prior to the meeting, Achieve hosted its first-ever Communications and Outreach Workshop for state communications and policy leaders.

With over 300 participants from the 35 states in the ADP Network at the Leadership Team Meeting—including 20 K-12 chief state school officers, 20 state board of education members and legislative leaders, nearly 40 higher education leaders, over 50 members of states' business, philanthropy and education communities, and over 80 representatives from states' governors offices and departments of education—there was a broad consensus that this was not only Achieve's most well attended annual meeting, but also its most successful to date. While a variety of topics were discussed, there were three major areas of focus throughout the meeting: the Common State Standards Initiative, the Race to the Top Fund competition, and how to deliver and sustain the college- and career-ready agenda.

**Common State Standards Initiative:** The Common State Standards Initiative was on the mind of everyone in attendance: 48 states have signed onto the Initiative led by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), including many ADP states that have been working to align their high school academic standards with college- and career-ready expectations over the past few years. A panel, featuring leaders from the NGA and CCSSO; Eric Smith, **Florida's** Commissioner of Education; Mitchell Chester, Commissioner, **Massachusetts** Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Janet Durfee-Hidalgo, the Governor of **Rhode Island's** education policy advisor; and Stan Jones, president of the National Consortium for College Completion and former Commissioner for Higher Education in **Indiana**, focused on this topic, highlighting the benefits of states adopting common standards as well as technical and political strategies for moving

forward.

**Race to the Top:** With the first Race to the Top (RTTT) application deadline coming up in a few months, the \$4.3 billion fund was an area of particular interest across the 35 states. Joanne Weiss, Director of the U.S. Department of Education's RTTT Fund, spoke at the meeting about the goals, expectations and timeline of the Fund, clearly laying out expectations for the four areas of reform required in the RTTT applications—standards and assessments, teacher effectiveness, P-20 longitudinal data systems, and low-performing schools—with a focus on how these four areas must work together to build a strong system of high expectations and critical supports. (View a [video](#) of her speech or read the [transcript](#).) States also had the opportunity to discuss each of these four areas in-depth at breakout sessions.

**Delivery & Sustainability:** Issues around implementing and sustaining the college- and career-ready agenda were also front and center at the meeting, with discussions around addressing pushback to college- and career-ready graduation requirements, a session led by Sir Michael Barber of McKinsey & Company on how to develop goals and systems that structure and facilitate the implementation and delivery of college- and career-ready policies, and the launch of Achieve's new project [Taking Root: Strategies for Sustaining the College- and Career-Ready Agenda](#). Given the progress made by many of the ADP Network states on adopting college- and career-ready policies, the challenge now is to make sure states have the strategies and elements in place so that college- and career- ready policies can take root.

To view the PowerPoints that accompanied the presentations, go to [www.achieve.org/2009ADPLeadershipMeeting](http://www.achieve.org/2009ADPLeadershipMeeting).

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## New from Achieve

### Race to the Top Resources

Achieve recently released a series of [Race to the Top: Accelerating College and Career Readiness](#) guides to help state leaders take advantage of the exceptional opportunity to advance dramatic reforms to their P-20 education systems through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the Race to the Top (RTTT) competition. The guides look at RTTT through a college- and career-ready lens, offering specific advice and promising practices to help ADP Network leaders build on the work they have already begun and maximize the new opportunities presented through RTTT.



#### About This Series

Over 2000 schools have been waiting to step into a competition with the demands of the RTTT. To ensure all students are prepared to meet the challenge, Achieve has developed a series of guides and resources to help state leaders build on the work they have already begun and maximize the new opportunities presented through RTTT.

The series includes guides for standards and assessments, P-20 longitudinal data systems, teacher effectiveness, and low-performing schools. Each guide offers specific advice and promising practices to help state leaders build on the work they have already begun and maximize the new opportunities presented through RTTT.

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In Race to the Top, state leaders are encouraged to build on the work they have already begun and maximize the new opportunities presented through RTTT. The guides look at RTTT through a college- and career-ready lens, offering specific advice and promising practices to help state leaders build on the work they have already begun and maximize the new opportunities presented through RTTT.

- Standards and assessments
- P-20 longitudinal data systems
- Teacher effectiveness
- Low-performing schools

For more information, visit [www.achieve.org](http://www.achieve.org) or contact us at [info@achieve.org](mailto:info@achieve.org). The guides are available for free download at [www.achieve.org](http://www.achieve.org).

The full set of guides is available for free download at [www.achieve.org](http://www.achieve.org).

Achieve is a non-profit organization that works to improve education for all students.

In four separate briefs, Achieve shares recommendations for meeting the Race to the Top challenge and pushing above and beyond the minimum criteria in each of the four core reform areas states are asked to address in their RTTT reform plans: standards and assessments; P-20 longitudinal data systems; teacher effectiveness; and low-performing schools.

Taken together, these guides offer states a coherent set of ideas for leveraging the opportunities presented through RTTT to develop comprehensive reform strategies anchored in the goal of college and career readiness for all students. The guides are available at [www.achieve.org/Racetothetop](http://www.achieve.org/Racetothetop).

## ADP Assessment Consortium

This past spring marked the second year of administration for the ADP Algebra II End-of-Course exam, which was administered to over 102,000 students across 13 states. Additionally, the ADP Algebra I End-of-Course exam was first administered this spring to over 33,000 students across five states. These were important administrations for both exams because the results were used to set the cut scores that indicate if a student has mastered the content in the course they just completed and is ready for higher level mathematics.

The process of determining the cut scores for the exams—standard setting—took place in July 2009 and involved representatives from each of the Consortium states. Because the Algebra II exam will serve as an indicator of college-readiness, the standard setting committee for that exam also included mathematics professors from both two- and four-year post secondary institutions. Students, schools, and districts received their scores from the exams in mid-September.

Achieve just released the [Consortium annual report](#) containing an explanation of the standard setting process and state-by-state results. More information about the ADP Assessment Consortium and the Algebra I and II exams is available at: [www.achieve.org/2009ADPAnnualReport](http://www.achieve.org/2009ADPAnnualReport).

## Sustainability Resources

To help state leaders build strategies for sustaining their education agendas over the long run, Achieve recently launched [Taking Root: Strategies for Sustaining the College- and Career-Ready-Agenda](#), generously funded by the GE Foundation.

At the heart of this project are four case studies that examine both the governmental and non-governmental strategies that were effective in making education reform last in **Indiana, Massachusetts, South Carolina** and **Texas**; a lessons learned paper that draws on and



synthesizes the case studies' 10 overarching lessons and strategies for sustainability; and an audit tool that states can use in their own planning (interested states should [contact](#) Achieve about this audit). View these materials at [www.achieve.org/takingroot](http://www.achieve.org/takingroot).

In addition, in recognition that strategic communications and outreach is vital throughout the adoption, implementation and sustainability of the college- and career-ready agenda, Achieve launched a set of companion materials under the banner, [Taking Root: Communicating the College- and Career-Ready Agenda](#). This set of resources includes fact sheets, how-to's, and templates around key elements of communications and outreach planning, focused on the college- and career-ready agenda. See these tools at [www.achieve.org/communicationstools](http://www.achieve.org/communicationstools).

Achieve will continue to add materials to *Taking Root* throughout fall 2009, including materials to help states in their transition planning in preparation for the 2010 elections. Stay tuned for future updates.

### **Postsecondary Connection**

Achieve is planning to add a number of new resources to the Postsecondary Connection Web site this fall, including: brief case studies of postsecondary engagement in alignment work in **Indiana, California, Texas and Tennessee**; interviews with both state- and campus-level leaders on why postsecondary engagement with ADP's alignment agenda is so important to higher education's success; and material on successful alternatives to remedial/developmental education. Achieve will also link the Web site to a wider range of organizations and resources that can be helpful in your own efforts to engage postsecondary systems and institutions in alignment work in your states.

We also encourage state leaders to note that the American Council on Education (ACE) is coordinating the postsecondary response to the draft common core college- and career-ready standards released in late September; complete information on ACE's effort can be found [here](#).

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### **Step Up Hawaii**

In 2008, **Hawaii** adopted a more rigorous, optional college- and career-ready diploma—the Board of Education's Recognition Diploma, recently re-branded as the Step Up Diploma. Since then, Hawaii has strategically focused and coordinated its communications and outreach efforts to ensure more students enroll in and complete this curriculum.

In 2009, the P-20 Partnerships for Education launched **Step Up Hawaii**,

#### **News Clips**

- 1. Michigan's Algebra 2 Adjustments Cause Concern**

An editorial in the *Detroit Free Press* blog suggests that a **Michigan** state change in Algebra requirements sends the wrong message to students

a multiyear community awareness and action campaign tied directly to the new Step Up Diploma. The campaign includes videos targeted at students and community members featuring students making the case for rigorous high school preparation through data and clever parodies. Step Up also has a companion program, Project Step Up, which asks middle and high school students to commit to the new diploma. To learn more about Step Up or watch the student videos, go to [www.stepuphawaii.org](http://www.stepuphawaii.org).

Hawaii's strategy is grounded in a research-based communications and outreach plan for how to best engage students around this new diploma. In crafting its messages and strategies, Hawaii continually evaluated what messages—and what messengers—would best resonate with high school students. See a presentation on their process [here](#).

In addition to Step Up, Hawaii has recently developed the first-ever "College- and Career-Ready Indicator Reports" for every high school in Hawaii. These reports, drawing on indicators discussed in Achieve and the Education Trust's [Measures that Matter](#), including indicators of whether students are approaching, meeting or exceeding college and career readiness, offer an excellent example of how public reporting can promote and shine a light on students' readiness for college and careers. View these reports [here](#).

about the value of learning hard things. [More...](#)

## 2. **Panel Proposes Standards**

The National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers issued a draft of college- and career-ready education standards for high school graduates. The draft is a result of the Common Core Standards Initiative, involving 48 states and the District of Columbia. [More...](#)

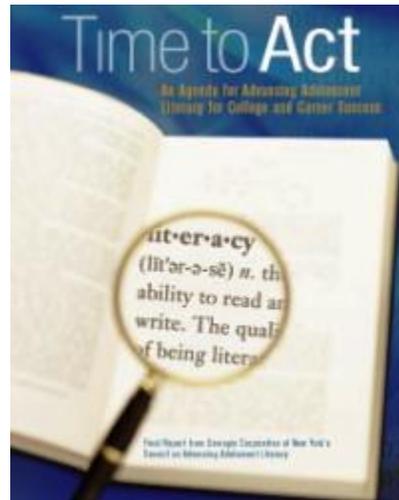
## 3. **Nebraska Education Goals Praised**

Gov. Dave Heineman and other state leaders unveiled a plan to raise graduation requirements, close the achievement gap between minority and white students, and make **Nebraska** one of the top states for attending college. [More...](#)

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## New Resources

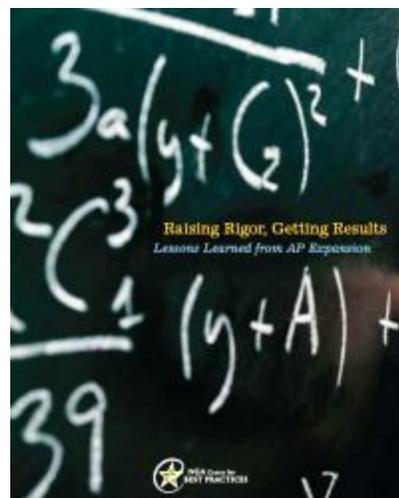
- On September 15th, the Carnegie Foundation released its call to action for adolescent literacy in a report entitled "[Time to Act](#)," written by the Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy. Drawing on research both recent and past, the report builds on the aphorism that students learn to read in grades one through three, but from grades four through high school and beyond, students read to learn.



The acknowledgement that reading instruction changes as students acquire the basic skills of decoding and comprehension is not new, but the awareness that generic comprehension skills, such as inference and analysis, do not transfer automatically to content area reading will be revolutionary for some educators. This report hits hard in its call for adolescents (a term that this report stretches to apply to fourth graders through high school) to master each content area's particular set of literacy skills in order to be able to master the complex tasks that characterize a world in which literacy is "an absolute condition for success."

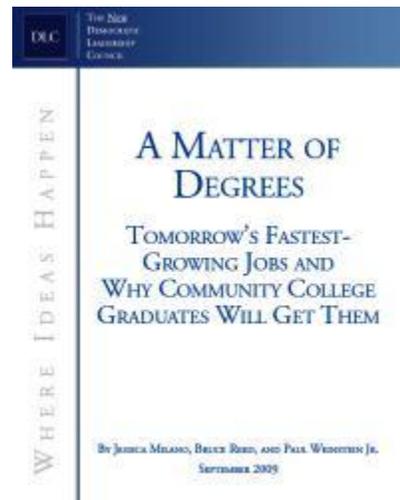
One of the prerequisites for states to "re-engineer" for change is to revise standards so that attention is paid to the specific literacy competencies of each content area. The report includes a table that offers a sample guide for state standards' writers that shows how some ADP benchmarks could be translated to apply specifically to math, science, social studies, as well as to English. The basic message is not, however, that content area teachers need to teach reading through the content but to teach content through effective reading.

- A new report from the National Governor's Association (NGA), "[Raising Rigor, Getting Results: Lessons Learned from AP Expansion](#)," suggests that it is possible for states to raise rigor and get results at scale by increasing student access to Advanced

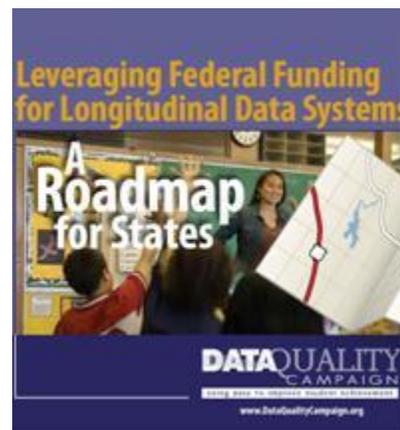


Placement (AP) courses. The report looks at the efforts of six states—**Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maine, Nevada** and **Wisconsin**—that received funding as part of the NGA Center's Advanced Placement Expansion project to increase the participation of minority and low-income students in AP courses at 51 pilot high schools in rural and urban school districts. According to the report, the states achieved striking results: The number of students taking AP courses rose 65 percent over two years, and the number of minority and low-income students taking AP exams more than doubled. Performance on the AP exam, as measured by the percentage scoring "at mastery"—defined as scoring a 3 or higher on the exam—also accelerated at a faster rate than the national average.

- The Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) released a report detailing tomorrow's 'hot jobs' - those professions that promise, over the next few years, to grow both in number and income. The comprehensive analysis reveals that tomorrow's job market will demand many more community college graduates, and that those who earn associate degrees will be rewarded with growing salaries. In "[A Matter of Degrees: Tomorrow's Fastest Growing Jobs and Why Community College Graduates Will Get Them](#)," Jessica Milano, Bruce Reed, and Paul Weinstein Jr. take a close look at the American job market, analyzing where it is expected to grow as the nation moves out of recession.



- The Data Quality Campaign has launched an interactive, printable version of their roadmap, [Leveraging Federal Funding for Longitudinal Data Systems - A Roadmap for States](#), that provides a starting point for state plans by identifying federal funding sources that can be used for data-related activities.



## **Achieve Job Opportunity**

Achieve seeks a Director of State Leadership and Policy Development.  
For the job description, go [here](#).

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*Perspective* is sent to you by Achieve, Inc., a bipartisan, non-profit organization founded by the nation's governors and CEOs to help states raise standards, improve assessments and strengthen accountability to prepare all young people for postsecondary education, careers and citizenship. Please feel free to circulate this e-newsletter to your colleagues.

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