

Among Americans, there is near universal agreement across partisan, ethnic/racial and geographic lines that some education and training beyond high school is necessary – and that stronger expectations in high school will go a long way towards preparing students for their next steps.

There is strong agreement that education or training beyond high school is necessary for future success:

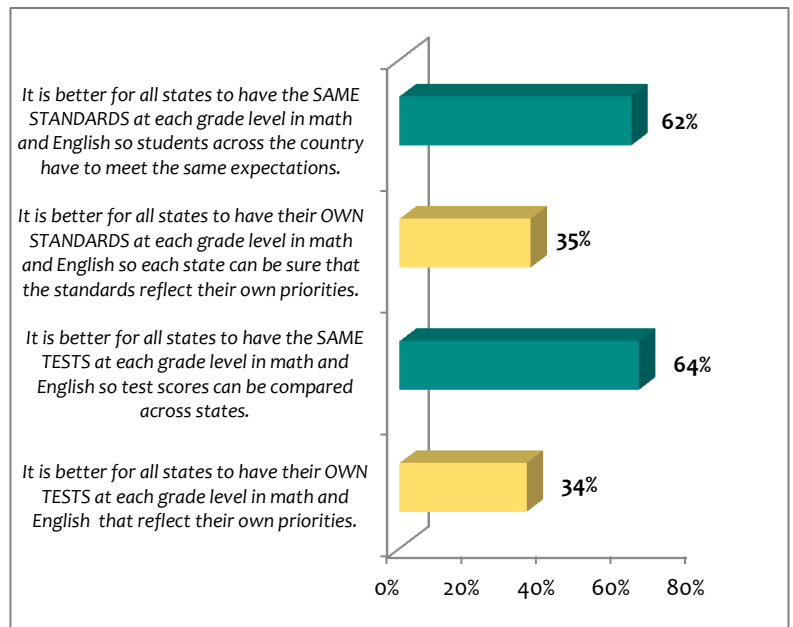
- 89% of voters agree that “to really get ahead in life a person needs at least some education beyond high school, whether that means university, community college, technical or vocational school.”
- 89% of Republicans, 90% of Democrats and 87% of Independents agree with this statement.¹
- 95% of Americans say a postsecondary degree or certificate is very or somewhat important for financial security.²

The public see the connection between education and economic competitiveness.

- Two-thirds believe that a high dropout rate has a lot of impact on the nation’s economy (69%), and similarly on America’s ability to compete in the global economy (65%).³
- About 68% of voters believe public schools should be teaching more math and science; over 80% of voters strongly (54%) or somewhat (30%) agree there will be “a lot more jobs” in the future in that require advanced math and science skills.⁴

Most people see the need for major reform of our public schools:

- Nearly three-quarters of voters believe that improving public high schools is extremely or very urgent.
- Voters place more urgency on improving high schools than they do on improving middle schools (67% urgent; 33% extremely urgent) or elementary schools (63% urgent; 32% extremely urgent).⁵



Support for common standards, assessments and graduation requirements is robust:⁶

- 63% of voters believe it is “better to implement the same rigorous graduation requirements for everyone so all students are being pushed to succeed and achieve their potential,” while just 32%

¹ Achieve (2010). *Achieving the Possible: What American Voters Think about the College- and Career-Ready Agenda.*

<http://www.achieve.org/AchievingthePossible>

² Lumina Foundation/Gallup (2011). *Most Americans See College as Essential to Getting a Good Job.*

http://www.luminafoundation.org/newsroom/news_releases/2011-08-18.html

³ Alliance for Excellent Education (2010). *National Voter Survey on Public High Schools and ESEA Reauthorization.*

http://www.all4ed.org/publication_material/July2010Poll

⁴ Public Agenda (2010). *Are We Beginning to See the Light?* <http://www.publicagenda.org/pages/math-and-science-ed-2010>

⁵ Alliance (2010)

⁶ Achieve (2010)

believe “It is better to implement higher graduation requirements for top-performing students and have lower requirements for students who are struggling.”

- 86% of voters support “college- and career-ready” requirements – with 65% strongly supporting the requirements for all students. This support crosses party lines: 85% of Republicans, 87% of Democrats, and 85% of Independents support rigorous requirements for all students – and 70% of Republicans, 65% of Democrats, and 61% of Independents *strongly* support such requirements.

There is ongoing debate over whether postsecondary education – and specifically four-year degrees – is worth the investment of money and time, yet few college graduates regret continuing their education.⁷

- 57% of Americans say the higher education system in the United States fails to provide students with good value for the money they and their families spend and 75% say college is too expensive for most Americans to afford.
- Yet, an overwhelming majority of (four-year) college graduates (86%) say that college was a good investment for them personally.
- Adults who graduated from a four-year college believe that, on average, they are earning \$20,000 more a year as a result of having gotten that degree. Adults who did not attend college believe that, on average, they are earning \$20,000 a year less as a result, estimates that are fairly on par with the income gap between those with a college and degree and those without.

⁷ Pew Research Center & Chronicle for Higher Education (2011). “Is College Worth It?” <http://pewsocialtrends.org/2011/05/15/is-college-worth-it/>