

COLLEGE-READINESS AND STANDARDS

Too many students graduate from high school without the skills necessary to succeed in college and the workforce. State standards and curricula must be anchored in the expectations of the real world to ensure that students leave school ready for success. Particularly in recent years, states have been leading the effort to raise graduation requirements and standards. However, federal education policy can help ensure that students in all states have the same opportunity to achieve at high standards by providing states resources and support to ensure that their standards are competitive both nationally and internationally. Comparability regarding academic achievement across states can also be strengthened with the support of federal resources.

Related Federal Legislation

Standards to Provide Educational Achievement for Kids (SPEAK) Act, H.R. 325 and S. 224. The SPEAK Act calls for the establishment of rigorous and voluntary core content standards in math and science for grades K-12. The proposal also establishes the American Standards Incentive Fund as a means to incentivize states to adopt the standards and provides a bonus grant to states that meet requirements of the incentive fund to support statewide longitudinal data systems.

States Using Collaboration and Coordination to Enhance Standards for Students (SUCCESS) Act of 2007, S. 164. The SUCCESS Act requires the biennial administration of the National Assessment for Educational Progress to measure student achievement in grades 4, 8, and 12 in reading, mathematics, and science. The proposal also establishes a competitive-based grant program for consortia of states to develop common, rigorous performance standards and assessments. The SUCCESS Act also establishes a competitive grants program to support state development of prekindergarten through grade 16 student preparedness councils to ensure that state standards and assessments are competitive and meet national and international benchmarks.

Related Research and Publications

Closing the Expectations Gap (2008)
American Diploma Project, Achieve, Inc.
<http://www.achieve.org/files/50-state-2008-final02-25-08.pdf>

This is Achieve's third annual 50-state progress report on the alignment of high school policies with the demands of college and the workforce. The report indicates that while more than a third of states have raised high school standards and graduation requirements, there is more work to be done to ensure that all students graduate college- and work-ready. The report details state progress in implementing the American Diploma Project policy agenda, which advocates for the alignment of standards, graduation requirements, assessments, data systems, and accountability with the expectations of college faculty and employers.

Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma that Counts (2004)
American Diploma Project, Achieve, Inc.
<http://www.achieve.org/node/552>

Ready or Not proposes an action agenda to reestablish the value of the high school diploma. In addition, it describes the English and mathematics benchmarks that high school graduates need to excel in higher education and the workplace.

Rigor at Risk: Reaffirming Quality in the High School Core Curriculum (2007)
ACT, Inc.
<http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/reports/rigor.html>

Rigor at Risk finds that high school core courses lack the rigor needed to sufficiently prepare students for higher education and the workforce. The report cites factors that contribute to inadequate college preparation in high schools, including the misalignment between state standards and course-level outcomes needed for success in college. *Rigor at Risk* offers recommendations for states and schools to improve the rigor of their high school curriculum.

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