

Advancing Postsecondary Readiness

Coordinating Efforts to Prepare Students for College and the Workplace
David Armstrong, Chancellor
Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Education

Postsecondary Readiness is a national concern...

- Governors from 45 states, corporate executives, & leaders from secondary and postsecondary education all have agreed on the importance of a common policy goal:
- Making the high school diploma a true indicator of readiness for success in both college and work.

The starting point...

- The requirements of today's economy have made old distinctions between academic and career skills obsolete
- Young people need the same fundamental skills whether they pursue college or work after high school
- Most students will eventually need at least some postsecondary education.

The national response:

- Over 30 states have begun work on raising high school graduation standards and on better aligning secondary and postsecondary curriculum
- Governors in 26 states have joined the American Diploma Project Network, a national program co-sponsored by Achieve, Inc; The Education Trust; Jobs for the Future, the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation and the University of TX
- Additional states are participating in the National Governors' Association Honor States program

What is The American Diploma Project Network?

- Grew out of the 2005 National Education Summit on High Schools
- Action Agenda:
 - Making high school standards, assessments and curriculum more challenging;
 - Making them more relevant and engaging by better aligning them with the real-world demands of postsecondary education and work; and
 - Holding high schools and postsecondary institutions accountable for improved performance

Participating states have agreed to taking four actions:

- 1. Aligning high school standards with the knowledge and skills required for success after high school
 - Requires state postsecondary systems and institutions to define clearly the knowledge and skills necessary for enrolling in credit-bearing courses and employers to be clear about the skill sets necessary to succeed in a global knowledge economy
 - Requires K-12 to align its standards and assessments with those expectations

American Diploma Project Standards

- 2. Requiring all high school graduates to take challenging courses that actually prepare them for life after high school
 - ADP has identified a common core of knowledge and skills in English and Math that students must master
 - Standards call for four years of grade-level:
 - English, including literature, writing, reasoning, logic and communication skills
 - Math, including Alg. I and II, Geometry, Data Analysis and Statistics
- 3. Streamlining the assessment system so that the tests students take in high school also can serve as readiness tests for college and work
 - Currently, colleges and employers generally ignore the exams students take in high school and administer their own hiring and placement tests, sending “mixed signals” to students about what is important
 - Better alignment will:
 - Provide students with an early indicator of college and work readiness, allowing them to fill any learning gaps before leaving high school
 - Provide incentives for students to take h.s. curriculum and assessments seriously by providing a clear connection to college and careers
 - Save students, parents and taxpayers from expense of remedial college courses
 - Be more efficient by reducing the overall number of tests students must take
- 4. Holding high schools accountable for graduating students who are ready for college or careers, AND holding postsecondary institutions accountable for students’ success once enrolled
 - In most states, school are held accountable for performance on tests that measure 8th, 9th or 10th grade skills,--- but are rarely held accountable for ensuring that students achieve the higher standards necessary for success in college and 21st century jobs
 - Colleges generally are not held accountable for ensuring that students actually graduate with a degree and productive set of knowledge and skills...

The National Consensus is Unambiguous and Bipartisan:

- The American Council on Education (ACE), The National Association of System Heads (NASH), the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO), Achieve, the National Governors' Board, and the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB):
 - There is a mandate for change
 - Work requires statewide “buy-in” and cooperation between secondary and higher education with colleges playing a major role

Steps to advancing postsecondary readiness: Curriculum

- College and high school leaders must work together to align standards—
 - Schools in every state have established academic standards that are the foundation for curriculum, testing and accountability from Pre-K-12
 - Few have anchored those standards to the skills required for postsecondary success

Steps to advancing postsecondary readiness

- States must raise high school graduation rates
 - 11 states require a set of college preparatory courses for graduation; 9 others are working to do that
 - Postsecondary educators can reinforce state efforts by collaborating with public school officials to determine the appropriate set of courses for success in higher education

Steps to advancing postsecondary readiness: Assessment

- Statewide standards must drive not only course work, but also assessment
 - Five states will administer the ACT or SAT to all high school students during the junior year
 - Nine states are entering into a compact to develop a common Algebra II “end of course” assessment that will indicate readiness for college-level math
 - The CA State University System and the CA Dept. of Education worked together to add questions to the state’s 11th grade English and math assessments so those tests could also be used as college-placement exams

Is a systematic approach necessary?

- Most colleges operate outreach programs and work closely with their local districts
 - Local initiatives are no substitute for a statewide agenda
 - Even the most well-conceived single-institution efforts can have only marginal impact when curricula and assessments are not organized statewide around a common understanding/agreement upon skills and knowledge students need for life after high school

What about over-standardization?

- Agreement on a baseline standard of readiness does not restrict institutional admissions, grading or curricular decisions
- ...And it does not limit the freedom of faculty to design courses as they see fit

Advancing Postsecondary Readiness

- Florida's Status:
 - Florida is one of many states working to better define standard of readiness for college and work
 - Our Education Data Network, history of K-20 articulation, A+ and A++ legislation, including High School Reform initiatives, provide a strong foundation and impetus for addressing improved postsecondary readiness