

BUILDING ON COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

In the purest academic sense, preparing students for success in college and careers means ensuring that they graduate from high school with mastery of core knowledge and skills in English and mathematics, along with the critical thinking, communications, problem solving and teamwork skills learned in those courses. States with college- and career-ready graduation requirements also routinely include other required academic courses such as history, economics and lab-based science. While college- and career-ready course requirements provide the solid *academic* base necessary for future success, states should also consider how they can build on these requirements – through additional academic and non-academic requirements and learning opportunities – to ensure their students receive a well-rounded education that provides the best possible preparation for life after high school.

PREPARATION BEYOND BASIC READINESS FOR COLLEGE AND CAREERS

Indiana, Alabama, New York and Ohio all have graduation requirements at the college- and career-ready level, but also offer additional technical and academic diplomas/endorsements for students who have gone above and beyond the core graduation requirements. In each of these states, students may obtain diplomas signifying either advanced academic or technical preparation:

| <i>State</i> | <i>Diploma Signifying Advanced Academic Preparation</i> | <i>Diploma Signifying Advanced Technical Preparation</i> |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Alabama | Alabama High School Diploma with Advanced Endorsement | Alabama High School Diploma with Advanced CTE Endorsement |
| Indiana | Core 40 with Academic Honors | Core 40 with Technical Honors |
| New York | New York Advanced Designation Regents Diploma | New York Technical Endorsement Regents Diploma |
| Ohio | Ohio Academic Diploma with Honors | Ohio Career-Technical Diploma with Honors |

By offering these additional diplomas and endorsements, these states are signaling to students that they can and should go beyond the academic core and incentivizing students to do so, as earning an endorsement is often associated with student rewards (such as additional scholarship money). These endorsements also help students round out their preparation for college and the workplace by offering courses or learning experiences associated with college-going and entry in the workforce.

BEYOND COLLEGE-READY

Diplomas with advanced academic credentials go beyond core requirements, often with the goal of explicitly preparing students for four-year degree programs. Advanced academic diplomas/endorsements typically require:

- **Additional academic coursework** most typically in the areas of mathematics, science and foreign languages, subjects in which the gap between high school graduation requirements and postsecondary admissions requirements is the most common.
- **Earning college credit** while in high school ensures that students have the skills to complete college courses successfully – and will experience a smoother transition. Indiana, Ohio, New York and Alabama require students to take college-level courses, including AP/IB courses and their corresponding exams and/or dual high-school and college-credit courses under their advanced academic distinctions.
- **High scores on college readiness exams** — such as the New York Regents Exam, the ACT or SAT — are required by states to ensure that students have mastered their rigorous college-preparatory curricula.

BUILDING ON COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

New York’s Advanced Designation Regents Diploma is contingent on students passing an additional three Regents exams (one in foreign language, and a second math and science exam), while other states require students to meet the “readiness” bar on often-used placement tools, such as the ACT.

BEYOND CAREER-READY

While some states offer low-level technical diplomas, states with advanced technical diplomas incorporate both the college- and career-ready academics and career-focused coursework and experiential learning. These states are demonstrating that academics are a key element of being ready for the workplace, along with additional technical and hands-on learning.¹ Advanced technical diplomas/endorsements typically require:

- **Additional CTE coursework** – through an articulated program of study or CTE “concentration” – is the most common and basic requirement of an advanced technical diploma, helping students hone in on a specific career pathway. New York, for example, requires students pursuing the Technical Endorsement to complete four units in English, science, math, and economics/government through integrated career-technical courses, specialized or interdisciplinary courses that develop the subject in greater depth and/or breadth, or a combination of career-technical and specialized courses.
- **Work-based learning** requirements allow career-technical diplomas to signify advanced preparation for careers as well as introduce students to real-world, on-the-job experiences. In Indiana, for example, students must complete a Professional Career Internship course or Cooperative Education course, as well as an industry-based work experience to earn the Core 40 with Technical Honors.
- **Professional certifications** also enhance students’ readiness for careers. In Ohio, for example, earning a state-approved industry-based credential is one option, along with apprenticeships, to fulfill the advanced technical graduation requirement. Because most careers now require some form of postsecondary training beyond high school, these requirements encourage students to gain appropriate (and often stackable) credentials early.
- **Earning college credit** while in high school also ensures that students graduating with advanced career-technical diplomas leave high school with all options — including entry in two- or four-year college or on-the-job training— open. Students in Indiana, for example, can choose to fulfill a technical requirement by earning dual enrollment credits in a technical area.

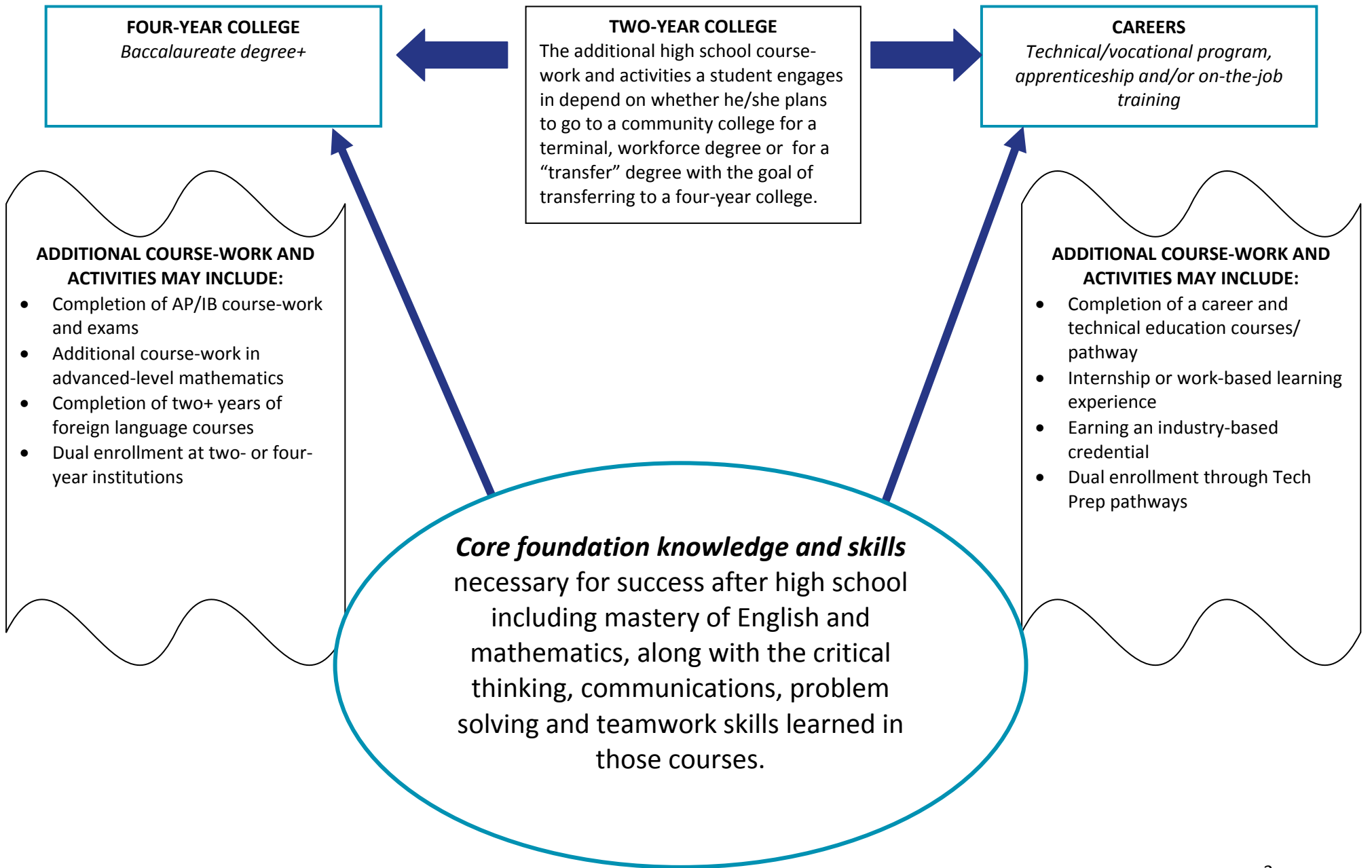
BOTTOM LINE: PREPARATION DOES NOT STOP WITH THE ACADEMIC CORE

There is no question that all students should graduate from high school having mastered the core academic foundation necessary for success in college and careers. There is also little question that academics are critical for success in both college and careers, but are by no means the only critical factor in a students’ preparation. Advanced academic or technical diplomas build on the core college- and career-ready foundation and offer students opportunities better personalize their high school experience to ensure they are fully prepared for their next step, whatever they choose it to be.

¹ ACTE recently released a brief called “*What is Career Ready?*” that defines career readiness as mastery of core academic skills, employability skills (such as critical thinking and responsibility), and technical, job-specific skills related to a specific career pathway. www.acteonline.org/uploadedFiles/Publications_and_Online_Media/files/Career_Readiness_Paper.pdf

CORE-PLUS

BUILDING ON COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS



CORE-PLUS

BUILDING ON COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

