
A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA IS NO LONGER ENOUGH

- Today, nearly every good job requires some education beyond high school – such as an associate's or bachelor's degree, certificate, license, or completion of an apprenticeship or significant on-the-job training.
- In 1950, 60% of jobs were classified as unskilled, attainable by young people with high school diplomas or less. Today, less than 20% of jobs are considered to be unskilled.ⁱ
- Over 80% of jobs are considered to be “high skill” or “middle skill,” requiring some education and training beyond high school.ⁱⁱ
- It is in the economic interest of the U.S.—and the states—to have a well-educated population: For every additional average year of schooling U.S. citizens complete, the GDP would increase by about 0.37 percentage points – or by 10% – over time.ⁱⁱⁱ
- It is also in the economic interest of individuals to have additional education; more education means lower unemployment rates and higher incomes.

THE U.S. IS AT RISK OF LOSING ITS COMPETITIVE EDGE

- While the U.S. still has one of the highest high school diploma rates for all adults among OECD countries, our advantage begins to slip when looking at the high school diploma rates among young adults from 25-34.^{iv}
- Similarly, the U.S. has the highest percentage of citizens with a postsecondary degree (including two- and four-year degrees) among 55-64 year olds, but we sink to tenth place when comparing the postsecondary degree rate among 25-34 year olds.^v
- These trends suggest that while U.S. degree attainment rates are remaining stagnant, other countries are quickly catching up and surpassing us – and unless we make a change, we will lose our competitive edge.

FAR TOO MANY STUDENTS DROP OUT OR GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS REQUIRED FOR SUCCESS

- Across the nation there is an “expectations gap,” or a disconnect between what students need to know to earn a high school diploma and what they need to know to be successful in college and careers.
- Nearly a third of students fail to earn a high school diploma in four years, a rate that is much higher among disadvantaged students.^{vi}
- Among those that do earn a high school diploma and enroll in a postsecondary institution:
 - Nearly one-third require some remedial coursework (a rate that jumps to 42% for students attending two-year institutions),^{vii}
 - About half of students fail to return to college for their sophomore year,^{viii} and
 - A little over half of students go on to earn a four-year degree within six years.^{ix}
- What is perhaps most egregious about this trend is that students all too often graduate from high school thinking they are prepared for the next step, only to be surprised when they are placed in remedial classes or cannot gain access to entry-level jobs.

THE VALUE OF COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

- By failing to adequately prepare all students, we are closing doors and limiting students post-high school options and opportunities

ALL STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM A COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY CURRICULUM

- Requiring a college- and career-ready curriculum for all will provide students with the core, foundational knowledge and skills they need to succeed in any and all post-high school endeavors.
- There is no evidence that college- and career-ready graduation requirements lead to higher dropout rates. To the contrary, there is evidence that offering rigorous courses sends a signal to students that more is expected of them, which often leads them to work harder.^x
- In fact, students that take more rigorous college-prep courses exhibit larger learning gains over time and are less likely to fail compared to students in low-level courses. For example, low-performing students placed in college-prep courses are half as likely to receive a D or below than students in low-level courses.^{xi}
- Rigorous course-taking is one of the strongest indicators of postsecondary success; students who take a more rigorous curriculum in high school are more likely to enroll in college, persist to their sophomore year and earn a four-year degree than those who did not complete such a curriculum.^{xii}

A STATE EXAMPLE

- With the majority of states' graduation requirements set to first impact the graduating classes of 2010 or later, there are few early examples of the impact of college- and career-ready graduation requirement policies. However, Texas' experience provides an early proof point that raising graduation requirements to the college- and career-ready level does not appear to have a negative impact on the graduation rate.
- The Texas Recommended High School Program (RHSP) has been available as an optional track for students in Texas for the past decade, but it only became the default requirement for the class of 2008. Over the past three years, the graduation rate has stayed within two percentage points (ranging from 78% to 80.4%), and over 80% of all graduates are now completing the RHSP or above. Not only are students graduating at similar rates—they are graduating better prepared.

ⁱ Carnevale, Anthony P. and Donna M. Desrochers, *Standards for What? The Economic Roots of K–16 Reform*, Educational Testing Service, 2003.

ⁱⁱ "The Future of Middle-Skill Jobs" by Harry J. Holzer and Robert I. Lerman, Brookings Institution, February 2009.

ⁱⁱⁱ Jamison, Dean T. et al, (Spring 2008). "Education and Economic Growth." *Education Next*.

^{iv} OECD, "Education at a Glance," 2007 (All rates are self-reported)

^v OECD, "Education at a Glance," 2007 (All rates are self-reported); National Center for Higher Education Management Systems analysis of 2007 American Community Survey. <http://www.higheredinfo.org>

^{vi} Education Week, Education Counts. Developed through the Custom Table Builder, <http://www.edweek.org/rc/2007/06/07/edcounts.html>

^{vii} National Center for Education Statistics, *Remedial Education at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions in Fall 2000, 2003*.

^{viii} Measuring Up (2008). *The National Report Card on Higher Education*. <http://measuringup2008.highereducation.org/index.php>

^{ix} NCES, IPEDS Graduation Rate Survey, analyzed by National Center for Management of Higher Education Systems

^x Lee, V. E. & Bukam, D. T. (2003). *Dropping Out of High School: The Role of School Organization and Structure*. American Educational Research Journal, 40(2), 353-393.

^{xi} Levesque, Karen et al (2000). *Vocational Education in the United States: Toward the Year 2000*. National Center for Education Statistics; Cooney, Sondra and Gene Bottoms, Southern Regional Education Board, *Middle Grades to High School: Mending a Weak Link*, 2002, p. 9.

^{xii} Horn, L. and A.M. Nuñez (2000). *Mapping the Road to College: First-generation Students' Math Track, Planning Strategies, and Context of Support*. U.S. Department of Education. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2001/2001153.pdf>;
Adelman, C. (2006). *The Toolbox Revisited: Paths to Degree Completion from High School through College*. U.S. Department of Education.