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TOOLKIT

HIGHER ED  
— *for* —  
HIGHER STANDARDS

JULY 2015

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# Building Public Support for Higher Standards

## Dear Colleagues:

Later this summer and fall, our states' efforts to implement new, college- and career-ready standards for K–12 students will likely come under the microscope again when states announce scores on the new, more challenging tests that students in grades 3–11 took this spring. Based on our experience in Kentucky and New York, scores could come back much lower than on previous tests — not because students are learning less, but because the performance bar has been raised, appropriately. It is critical that parents and the public understand and are prepared for this change in expectations, or states could once again find themselves on defense.

College leaders like you can help shape a more positive, constructive narrative by reassuring parents, students, educators, and the general public that setting high expectations is the right thing to do and that the scores are more realistic indicators of student readiness. Moreover, they should understand that higher education is ready to work with K–12 schools to help more students graduate high school truly prepared for college without remediation and also to provide more assistance once they arrive on our campuses. Student success is our top priority.

NASH and SHEEO are urging our members to get involved. To support your advocacy efforts, Higher Ed *for* Higher Standards, a coalition we helped launch last year, has developed a campaign called Proficient Means Prepared. We kicked this campaign off at the joint meeting of NASH and SHEEO in early July. As described in more detail in this toolkit, you can contribute in many ways:

- Publicly express your support for your state's efforts to raise standards.
- Play an active role in your state's media strategy when the new scores are released.
- Launch and/or expand initiatives to improve college readiness and success.
- Partner with the business community and other advocates to help spread the word.

Higher Ed *for* Higher Standards has developed a complete set of communications tools to support your outreach efforts, and the coalition is working with other higher education organizations and businesses to help implement the campaign.

A significant number of states already have signed up to participate. Thank you in advance for joining them. This is an important milestone in our collective efforts to help prepare more students for college, for careers, and for life.

*Matthew Gandal, Organizer, Higher Ed for Higher Standards*

*Robert L. King, Chair, State Higher Education Executive Officers Association*

*Nancy Zimpher, Chair, National Association of System Heads*

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# Ensuring That Proficient Means Prepared

Higher Education's Commitment to College- and Career-Ready Standards and Assessments

**HIGHER ED**  
— for —  
**HIGHER STANDARDS**

**NASH**  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SYSTEM HEADS

 **SHEEO**

**July 7, 2015**

States have made great strides over the past several years in implementing more challenging K–12 standards designed to prepare students for success in college and careers. As leaders in the higher education community, we applaud that work, as it holds tremendous potential for increasing the number of students who arrive in our colleges and in businesses prepared for success.

The need for higher standards is clear. Each year, about 50 percent of first-year students at two-year colleges and 20 percent of those entering four-year universities require basic developmental courses before they can begin credit-bearing coursework. This lack of preparedness costs students and taxpayers billions of dollars each year. It stagnates our educational system and exacerbates the business community's problem of filling jobs.

On the international stage, our students trail as well. On the latest [Programme for International Student Assessment \(PISA\)](#) taken by high school students around the world, U.S. students rank 36th in math, 28th in science, and 24th in reading. And according to a recent study by the [Educational Testing Service](#), young adults in the United States (ages 16–34) rank at or near the bottom on international comparisons of problem solving, numeracy, and literacy skills.

This preparation gap is large and persistent. It puts our students at risk, and it threatens the health of our economy. Setting higher expectations for student learning is absolutely necessary if we are to close these gaps that now leave our young people at such a competitive disadvantage.

This summer and fall will mark a critical milestone in states' efforts to raise educational standards: The results of new K–12 student assessments will be released in states across the country. These new assessments represent a major step forward for students, as well as for colleges and employers. For the first time, scores on high school assessments will have a meaningful connection to college and career success: Meeting standards will mean that students are prepared for successful transition into credit-bearing college coursework and training opportunities.

Because the assessments have been purposefully pegged to a higher standard than previous state tests — a college- and career-ready standard — we expect the initial scores to be lower than what students, families, and educators are used to. This should not be cause for alarm nor an indictment of our K–12 educators. The tests are simply providing a more accurate assessment of our students' readiness for the demands of postsecondary life, the need for which is validated by our own remediation numbers and employer surveys. An honest assessment of students' readiness for postsecondary pursuits taken prior to high school graduation will give educators in every state a starting point to develop pathways and supports to help more students make a successful transition.



We urge our states to remain committed to high standards. We must not back down if initial results are low. The new standards and assessments are anchored in what it takes to succeed in college and careers. We owe it to our students to maintain these higher expectations and do what it takes to help them succeed.

We are committed to working closely with our K–12 colleagues to ensure that the standards and assessments are used to support student success. The new assessments provide critical information that will allow us to identify and address skills gaps while students are still in high school, so they arrive at our institutions and work places better prepared.

We must harness these new measures to provide targeted supports and opportunities for acceleration for our high school students, such as 12th grade bridge courses, dual enrollment opportunities, and course offerings aligned to career pathways.

We must also be prepared to change practices in our higher education institutions to provide for smoother transitions for students who meet the new standards. This will include adapting our placement policies to take the new standards and assessments into account and examining freshman gateway courses to ensure they are part of clear pathways that build from the new K–12 standards and lead to meaningful degrees and credentials.

We also have a responsibility to prepare new teachers and assist veteran teachers in the delivery of high-quality instruction supporting these higher standards.

We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to close the preparation gap by remaining committed to high expectations and doubling down on policies and programs to support student success. We must press ahead with this important work.

# ABOUT HIGHER ED *for* HIGHER STANDARDS

Higher Ed *for* Higher Standards ([www.higheredforhigherstandards.org](http://www.higheredforhigherstandards.org)) is a growing coalition of college presidents, trustees, system leaders, and state executive officers committed to the implementation of college- and career-ready standards. The goal of the coalition is to elevate the voices of higher education leaders and support them in the adoption of aligned policies that leverage more ambitious K–12 standards and assessments. Colleges and universities have a vested interest in the successful implementation of high standards, as better prepared students will help reduce remediation rates and improve completion rates.

## 350 leaders in higher ed, including:

- 142** presidents of four-year institutions
- 122** presidents of two-year institutions
- 35** state SHEEOs/system leaders
- 39** states in the coalition

## Leading national higher education organizations have endorsed HE/HS, including:



## CATALYZING STATE ACTION

- The SUNY (NY) Board of Trustees passed an organizational resolution in support of higher K–12 standards.
- Higher education leaders in CA, CO, DE, IL, KY, MD, NJ, NM, NY, OH, SD, and TN published op-eds signaling support for college- and career-ready standards and assessments.
- Higher education leaders in CA, IL, NJ, OH, SD, and TN issued public letters in support of higher standards and assessments.
- Community college leaders in TN combined all these elements by holding a press conference, signing a public letter, and publishing op-eds in local media.

## SUPPORTING STRONG K–12/HIGHER ED ALIGNMENT

- There is growing recognition that college- and career-ready standards in high school are critical to increasing postsecondary success rates.
- More states are committed to using newly aligned high school assessments for placement into first-year courses (CA, DE, HI, NV, OR, SD, WA).
- There are more states developing bridge courses and transition programs that take advantage of the senior year of high school to get students college and career ready.
- There is renewed interest among national higher education organizations to focus on the high school to college transition and reimagine freshman year.

## OUR AGENDA MOVING FORWARD

### Advocacy

- Grow and diversify the coalition by increasing strength in key states and growing representation of two- and four-year institutions.
- Leverage support of national higher education organizations to catalyze more system and institutional leaders to play an active role in their respective states.

### Implementation

- Make a clear and compelling case for why higher education systems and institutions need to make P–20 alignment part of their policy and operational culture.
- Provide technical assistance to higher education systems and institutions committed to building aligned policies that leverage new K–12 standards to improve college readiness and success.

Following are suggested communications activities to help higher education leaders show support for your state’s college- and career-ready standards and assessments, with a particular eye toward the score release in summer and fall 2015. Higher education’s voice is critical. The more you get involved, the more impact it will have on students in your state.

## IN THIS SECTION

Suggested Activities

Sample Timeline for Activities

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

**1. Learn more about what already is happening in your state — what the state education agency (SEA) is planning and what business groups and other organizations/coalitions are doing.**

- Partner with the state Business Roundtable or state or local Chamber of Commerce to participate in their initiatives. (National organizations will be encouraging state and local members to get involved and work with higher education.)
- Identify any other local coalitions and/or business groups in your state working on similar issues and determine whether to partner with them. If not, there is plenty you can do independently (see below).
- Discuss the SEA’s plans for assessment score rollout to identify how higher education can participate.

**2. Publicly express support and raise awareness for your state’s efforts to set higher standards before and after the new K–12 assessment results are released.**

Possible activities to make the case for WHY the state’s college- and career-ready standards and assessments are so critical *before* the scores are released:

- Pass a board resolution or policy statement recognizing the value of the new standards and assessments and indicating how you will use them to: (1) partner with K–12 to improve college readiness (high school bridge programs, etc.) and (2) strengthen your own programs (placement, remediation, counseling, etc.). *[See more about these initiatives in “Best Practices in P–20 Alignment.”]*
- Write op-eds. *[See samples in “Customizable Templates.”]*
- Incorporate these messages into presentations targeting key audiences (parents, K–12 educators, policymakers, and higher education leaders and faculty).
- Partner with business groups to issue joint statements, co-author op-eds, or hold joint events signaling joint support for high standards.

Possible activities to shift gears to focus more on explaining HOW you are providing support for students *when* the results of the new K–12 assessment results are released. [See *timeline of estimated release dates* in “About the New Tests.”]

- Partner with the SEA (provide quotes for its releases and other materials, participate in live events, etc.).
- Write op-eds. [See *samples* in “Customizable Templates.”]
- Write a press release. [See *samples* in “Customizable Templates.”]
- Conduct media interviews and editorial board meetings — both to promote the wisdom of assessments that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards and to profile your own steps to support students. [See *talking points* in “Customizable Templates.”]
- Use social media to deliver messages (tweet, post on Facebook, etc.). [See *samples* in “Customizable Templates.”]
- Continue incorporating these messages into presentations targeting key audiences (parents, K–12 educators, policymakers, and higher education leaders and faculty).

### 3. Use this as an opportunity to launch and/or expand initiatives in your system/state designed to improve college readiness and success.

Possible commitments include:

- **Collaborate with K–12 school districts on precollege interventions** to help students earn college-ready distinction by the time they graduate high school.
  - States such as **Delaware, Maryland, Tennessee, Washington, and West Virginia** are actively promoting bridge courses to help high school students make the transition to college. [See “*Best Practices in P–20 Alignment*” to learn more.]
- **Revise postsecondary placement practices** to use the scores on the new assessments to put incoming college students into appropriate coursework and, consequently, on a path to persistence and completion.
  - **Hundreds of two- and four-year colleges** in several states have said they will use scores from the PARCC and Smarter Balanced tests to help place entering students in credit-bearing college courses, thus sending a signal to students and parents that these new standards and assessments matter. Institutions such as **California State University** also are working with K–12 systems to ensure that more students are prepared for such courses. [See “*Best Practices in P–20 Alignment*” to learn more.]
- **Redesign postsecondary course strategies** to ensure vertical content alignment between secondary and higher education systems and support student transition into credit-bearing coursework.
  - Higher education institutions in **multiple states** are using “co-requisite” remediation courses to accelerate students’ progress into credit-bearing courses. States such as **Tennessee and Ohio** are more broadly redesigning their course sequences and pathways to graduation. [See “*Best Practices in P–20 Alignment*” to learn more.]

## SAMPLE TIMELINE FOR ACTIVITIES

This sample timeline works backward from when your state is planning to release test results. [See *timeline of estimated release dates* in “About the New Tests.”]

### Before Release of the Scores

#### 2–3 months before scores released

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- Reach out to your state education agency, business organization or coalition, and/or education advocacy group to see what they plan for releasing the new test scores.
- Hold initial strategy meetings with these organizations.
- Take stock of your university’s initiatives that support students — either on your own campuses or in partnership with K–12 systems. [“*Best Practices in P–20 Alignment*” has useful examples of such efforts.]
- Begin planning how you might expand these initiatives or develop similar ones.

#### 1 month before scores released

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- Finalize your campaign strategy and timeline with your state education agency and/or education advocacy group.
- If you are working on your own, make sure to at least confirm with the state education agency when it plans to release test scores.
- Pass a board resolution in support of the new standards and tests. [See “*Customizable Templates*” for a sample draft.]
- Draft and place initial op-eds, if appropriate. [See “*Customizable Templates*” for a sample draft.]
- Hold initial media briefings, focusing on how you are supporting students and when you will announce a new phase of supports, if appropriate. [See “*Customizable Templates*” for a sample draft.]
- Finalize plans for your student support systems (current and pending) and how you want to discuss them.

#### 3 weeks before scores released

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- Finalize key messages and basic talking points. [See “*Customizable Templates*” for a sample draft.]
- Draft presentation(s) and a press release. [See “*Customizable Templates*” for a sample draft.]

#### 2 weeks before scores released

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- Finalize presentation(s) and press release.

#### 1 week before scores released

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- Participate in advanced backgrounder briefings with media and other key stakeholders.

#### Week of score release

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- Participate in any events/briefings where the scores will be discussed.
- Share the press release with media and be prepared to field questions.
- Place op-ed(s).
- Use social media to deliver messages (tweet, post on Facebook, etc.).

### After Release of the Scores

- Continue to participate in broader campaign outreach, if relevant.
- Continue to take advantage of every opportunity to reinforce key messages — especially with students, parents, and policymakers — focused on the additional and more targeted supports you and K–12 systems are now providing.



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# About the New Tests

Along with raising standards, states have begun to administer new K–12 assessments aligned to those standards to gauge how well students have mastered the content and skills. These new, more challenging assessments include:

## IN THIS SECTION

Background information on:

- PARCC
- Smarter Balanced
- ACT Aspire
- College Board SAT
- State-Developed Tests

Estimated Release Dates for Test Results

## PARTNERSHIP FOR ASSESSMENT OF READINESS FOR COLLEGE AND CAREERS (PARCC)

The PARCC assessment system includes tests in grades 3–8 and high school in English language arts (ELA)/literacy and mathematics. The assessment system includes both optional components and a required summative assessment:

### Summative assessments (required):

During 2014–15, students took the assessment in two parts — one in early spring, one in late spring. Starting in 2015–16, both parts of the summative assessment will be offered in one testing window no later than 90 percent of the way through the school year. Students will complete three performance-based ELA/literacy tasks (one analyzing literature, one focused on writing a coherent narrative, and one simulating a research project) and two or more math tasks that involve solving complex, real-world problems. Students also will answer innovative, short-answer questions. The high school summative assessments are grade based for ELA/literacy (e.g., 9th, 10th, 11th grades). For math, states can choose to offer course based (e.g., Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II) or integrated (e.g., Math I, Math II, Math III) assessments.

These high-quality summative tests replace the standardized tests that states have been giving for years. In 2014–15, students in 11 states (Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi,

New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, and Rhode Island) and the District of Columbia took the PARCC annual assessments, plus New York City piloted the assessment in 25 schools.

### Optional components:

These tests give classroom teachers and school leaders insights about students' strengths and weaknesses throughout the year. Schools and individual teachers can offer these as needed to supplement their classroom instruction.

- Diagnostic Subtests: Available for grades 2–8 in fall 2015, these assessments will provide timely, detailed information about student strengths and weaknesses in foundational concepts and skills to support targeted classroom instruction and professional development.
- Speaking and Listening Assessments: These assessments, for ELA/literacy only, will be available for grades K–12 in 2015–16.

For more information, go to [www.parcconline.org](http://www.parcconline.org).

Source: “The Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC),” K-12 Center at ETS, [http://k12center.org/rsc/pdf/k12\\_center\\_parcc\\_flyer\\_br.pdf](http://k12center.org/rsc/pdf/k12_center_parcc_flyer_br.pdf). Plus, [www.parcconline.org](http://www.parcconline.org).

## SMARTER BALANCED ASSESSMENT CONSORTIUM

The Smarter Balanced assessment system includes tests in grades 3–8 and 11 in ELA/literacy and mathematics. Components of the assessment system include:

### Summative assessments (required):

The end-of-year summative assessments consist of two parts:

- Performance Tasks: Students will complete one ELA/literacy task and one math task preceded by a 30-minute classroom activity. Tasks will focus on hard-to-measure standards and real-world scenarios and will measure students' ability to integrate knowledge and skills across multiple standards.
- Adaptive Assessment: These computer-adaptive assessments will consist of innovative item types, most of which can be immediately machine scored. Computer-adaptive testing tailors the testing experience to each student's level of knowledge and skills, providing accurate results for students at all points on the achievement spectrum. If needed to gain sufficient score precision, items from out of grade level may be used. High school summative assessments will be administered at the end of grade 11 only and will measure standards through grade 11 for ELA/literacy and math.

As with PARCC, these high-quality summative tests replace the standardized tests that states have been giving for years. In 2014–15, students in 18 states (California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin) took the Smarter Balanced assessments.

Source: "The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium," K-12 Center at ETS, [http://k12center.org/rsc/pdf/k12\\_center\\_sb\\_flyer\\_hr.pdf](http://k12center.org/rsc/pdf/k12_center_sb_flyer_hr.pdf).

### Optional interim assessments:

The scope, sequence, and timing of these assessments will be determined locally.

- Interim Assessments: This system allows educators to deliver assessments to gain information about student progress throughout the year. The multiple item types will be similar to those on the summative assessments. Districts or schools can select to administer interim assessments that either mirror the summative assessment or focus on a smaller cluster of standards. First launched in January 2015, the interim assessments will not be adaptive until the 2016–17 school year.
- The Digital Library of formative assessment tools and professional resources was launched in summer 2014. It includes a series of assessment literacy and instructional modules in English language arts/literacy and mathematics. In addition, the library includes hundreds of professional learning and instructional materials contributed and reviewed by teachers in a fully searchable format. The Library provides opportunities for teachers to review and comment on resources and to interact with peers nationwide.

For more information, go to [www.smarterbalanced.org](http://www.smarterbalanced.org).

## ACT ASPIRE

ACT Aspire is a new assessment system being administered in Alabama and South Carolina to measure college and career readiness in English, math, reading, writing, and science for grades 3–8 and early high school (grades 9–10). Features include:

- A vertically articulated, standards-based system of summative, interim, and classroom-based assessments;
- Score-reporting categories based on the ACT College and Career Readiness Standards;
- Student growth reports;
- Multiple question types — including long-answer questions, open-ended essays and analyses, and short-answer questions that allow students to select from a range of possible answers; and
- Online delivery of assessments with a paper-and-pencil option.

For more information, go to [www.discoveractaspire.org](http://www.discoveractaspire.org).

Source: "A Primer on Common Core-Aligned Assessments," Education First Consulting, [http://www.education-first.com/files/A\\_Primer\\_on\\_Common\\_Core-Aligned\\_Assessments\\_Education\\_First\\_FINAL\\_June\\_2014.pdf](http://www.education-first.com/files/A_Primer_on_Common_Core-Aligned_Assessments_Education_First_FINAL_June_2014.pdf).

## **COLLEGE BOARD SAT**

Starting in March 2016, students will be able to take the redesigned SAT, which aims to be more in step with college- and career-ready standards. The new SAT includes sections on reading, writing and language, and math as well as an essay.

For more information, go to: <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org>.

## **STATE-DEVELOPED TESTS**

Some states are developing their own tests to assess students' college and career readiness. In these states, ensuring that the tests have been validated by higher education is a critical step that lies ahead.

## ESTIMATED RELEASE DATES FOR TEST RESULTS

Following are the estimated release dates for results for assessments in each state.

**Current as of June 2015, these dates are subject to change,  
so please check with the state education agency for the latest information.**

State	Estimated Release Date	Assessment
Alabama	December 15, 2015	ACT Aspire
Alaska	October 15, 2015	Other
Arizona	October 30, 2015	Other
Arkansas	October/November, 2015	PARCC
California	August 31, 2015	Smarter Balanced
Colorado	October/November, 2015	PARCC
Connecticut	Summer 2015	Smarter Balanced
Delaware	August 20, 2015	Smarter Balanced
District of Columbia	October/November, 2015	PARCC
Florida	December 15, 2015	Other
Georgia	October 15, 2015	Other
Hawaii	September 15, 2015	Smarter Balanced
Idaho	TBD	Smarter Balanced
Illinois	October/November, 2015	PARCC
Indiana	November 30, 2015	Other
Iowa	October 1, 2015	Other
Kansas	December 1, 2015	Other
Kentucky	August 4, 2015	Other
Louisiana	Fall 2015	PARCC
Maine	August 21, 2015	Smarter Balanced
Maryland	October/November, 2015	PARCC
Massachusetts	October/November, 2015	PARCC
Michigan	November 1, 2015	Smarter Balanced
Minnesota	July 28, 2015	Other
Mississippi	October/November, 2015	PARCC
Missouri	October 1, 2015	Smarter Balanced
Montana	Late Summer 2015	Smarter Balanced
Nebraska	TBD	Other
Nevada	August 15, 2015	Smarter Balanced
New Hampshire	September 30, 2015	Smarter Balanced
New Jersey	October/November, 2015	PARCC
New Mexico	October/November, 2015	PARCC
New York	August 15, 2015	Other
North Carolina	September 3, 2015	Other
North Dakota	September 15, 2015	Smarter Balanced
Ohio	October/November, 2015	PARCC
Oklahoma	August 3, 2015	Other
Oregon	September 17, 2015	Smarter Balanced
Pennsylvania	September 1, 2015	Other
Rhode Island	October/November, 2015	PARCC
South Carolina	TBD	ACT Aspire
South Dakota	September 22, 2015	Smarter Balanced
Tennessee	June 22, 2015	Other
Texas	September 11, 2015	Other
Utah	September 15, 2015	Other
Vermont	Early August, 2015	Smarter Balanced
Virginia	August 20, 2015	Other
Washington	August 12, 2015	Smarter Balanced
West Virginia	TBD	Smarter Balanced
Wisconsin	July 31, 2015	Smarter Balanced
Wyoming	July 15, 2015	Other

The following are research-backed messages that higher education leaders can adapt and incorporate into your own materials. Key themes and talking points include:

1. **Too many high school graduates aren't ready for college or careers. We need to close the preparation gap so that *proficient in high school means truly prepared for college or work.***

**Setting high expectations is the right thing to do.**

High percentages of students arrive on our campuses needing remediation covering material they should have learned in high school. Similarly, many businesses say they cannot fill jobs because applicants do not have the right knowledge, skills, or attitudes. Our state's new standards and assessments are designed to help us address these gaps by measuring students' readiness for college and careers. By aiming higher, we can help spur needed improvements and ensure that more students are truly prepared for 21st century opportunities. This is an education issue, an economic issue, and a moral issue.

**The expectations are set at the right level.** Higher education was involved in developing the new standards and tests and in setting more meaningful achievement levels. These new K–12 expectations reflect *our* expectations as higher education leaders. Some parents may be surprised at this year's scores. This test is very different from previous tests. It does a better job of measuring what graduates should know and be able to do, such as think critically, analyze complex reading material, explain their math answers, and communicate effectively. Everyone now has a shared understanding about what it takes to be ready for college or careers, which in turn means that we can help more students arrive better prepared for success, which is good for everyone.

2. **These new standards and assessments will open doors for students and provide them with greater opportunities.**

**Colleges will pay attention to these scores.** Because these new assessments measure college-ready skills, colleges and universities will increasingly use these scores to determine whether incoming students are ready for credit-bearing courses or need to take non-credit developmental courses to close gaps in their academic preparation. By having these more meaningful data, colleges can make better decisions about our incoming students.

**The new assessments will help us better support students.** We are working closely with our K–12 colleagues to use these new assessment data to better prepare students before they start college. Students who do not score “college ready” should receive supports in their senior year so they can improve their skills before they graduate. Students who are ready for more challenging work should get it. We also are working on our own campuses to better prepare students to succeed once they enroll in college. *[Add specifics from your institution. “Best Practices in P–20*

*Alignment” features case studies of some successful approaches at the K–12 and higher education levels.]*

**K–12 students deserve an honest and timely assessment of where they stand.** Too many students who “did well” in high school and earned a diploma are surprised when they get to college and learn they have to take basic English and math courses over again. And parents have sticker shock when they learn they have to pay for college courses that do not lead to a degree. Having more accurate information earlier helps everyone. Colleges used to get readiness data only when freshmen got to campus in the fall and took placement tests. We now get information on their readiness in 11th grade and have an extra year to help students prepare. That helps students catch up before they get to college. And it helps us be more effective, so that we are helping more students earn their degrees on time.

### 3. We can do this.

**Students can meet these higher expectations** — and states like Kentucky prove it with increased college-ready rates over the past three years of higher standards.

**Stay the course.** Educators and students have been working very hard over the past three years to implement these new standards. Don't undermine their hard work. Policymakers and all of us need to stay committed.

**Worth the investment.** If students are ready when they get to campus, they will complete college more quickly without costly remediation. That will save students, families, and taxpayers money. And it will help local economies and communities by getting better-prepared students into the workforce faster. Everyone wins: students, educators, and society.

**You can customize the following templates to:**

- Publicly express support and make the case for WHY the state's college- and career-ready standards and assessments are so critical *before* the new K–12 assessment results are released. Getting out in front of the score release will be critical.
- Play an active role and shift gears to focus more on explaining HOW you are providing support for students *when* the results of the new K–12 assessment results are released.

**Sample templates for before and when the results are released include:**

- Board resolution (for use before the results are released)
- Op-ed (for use before the results are released, can be adapted for when the results are released or after)
- Press release (for use when the results are released)
- Social media posts and infographics (for use when the results are released)
- Talking points for speakers (for use when the results are released or after)
- State profile template (for use any time)

To download electronic versions, go to: [www.higheredforhigherstandards.org/proficient-means-prepared](http://www.higheredforhigherstandards.org/proficient-means-prepared).

## SAMPLE BOARD RESOLUTION

**NOTE:** *This resolution is adapted from one adopted by the New York State University Board of Trustees on May 7, 2014.*

### MEMORANDUM

#### Action Requested

This resolution provides support, by COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY, for college- and career-ready (CCR) standards and aligned assessments. The implementation of these standards in STATE will ensure that all students are college and career ready and lay a foundation for student success at our higher education institutions.

#### Resolution

I recommend that the Board of Trustees adopt the following resolution:

Whereas in 2009 STATE joined a nationwide coalition to collaboratively improve and increase the rigor of educational standards in the United States; and

Whereas the CCR standards are internationally benchmarked, aligned with postsecondary education expectations, and inclusive of higher-order skills that students need to succeed in college and careers; and

Whereas many high school graduates are not college and career ready, extending time to degree or leading to noncompletion, exacerbating student debt and loan defaults and costing STATE colleges more than \$\_\_\_\_\_ annually to provide remediation; and

Whereas COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY remains committed to partnering with our colleagues in PK-12 education through a cradle-to-career approach to closing the remediation gap; and

Whereas holding our education system and our students to higher standards will make STATE students more competitive in today's global workforce and economy;

Whereas higher standards must be aligned to an equally strong assessment system; now, therefore, be it

Resolved that COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY, through its Board of Trustees, endorses the CCR standards and aligned assessments and supports the TITLE OF HIGHER ED LEADER's continued leadership in advocating for their effective implementation.



## SAMPLE OP-ED 1: BEFORE THE RESULTS ARE RELEASED

**NOTE:** *This sample op-ed is written assuming it will be placed BEFORE the K–12 test scores are released. It focuses more on WHY the new standards and tests are needed.*

*If you prefer to place it ON THE DAY OF THE RELEASE OR AFTER, you will need to adjust the verb tenses. And at that point we recommend you focus more on the kinds of expanded supports you will be providing students, while continuing to remind people WHY this is so important. See sample 2.*

### By **STATE LEADER**

This past spring students in grades 3 through high school took a new test, the NAME OF TEST. The assessment is very different. And it's better, measuring what graduates should know and be able to do, such as think critically, analyze complex reading material, explain their math answers, and communicate effectively. Everyone now has a shared understanding about what it takes to be ready for college or careers and what we all have to do to help more students succeed.

It's time. The reality is that too many high school graduates aren't ready for college. *ADD 1–2 DATA POINTS [See the "State Profile Template" for advice on where to find state-specific data.]* High percentages of students arrive on our campuses needing remediation, covering material they should have learned in high school. Similarly, many businesses say they cannot fill jobs because applicants do not have the right knowledge, skills, or attitudes.

Although the new test results will not be announced until DATE, we can say with certainty that this test is a better measure of college and career readiness than our previous state assessments. Students who score well in high school will be prepared for college and work. For students who need more help to get ready, STATE U will be able to offer more targeted supports. And high achievers will benefit from more challenging assignments. That's because NAME OF TEST will provide more accurate, meaningful, and timely information to students, educators, and families alike. That's cause for celebration.

We know that some parents, especially of high school students, might be concerned that their child's scores are lower this year compared to previous years.

The standards for the end of high school have been raised to be in line with the expectations we have for students starting college and careers. We will not use these test scores to close doors but to help open them so that more students are able to successfully transition to college and careers without the need for remediation. Our goal is to make sure students are more successful from day one.

These new expectations are set at the right level. They reflect *our* expectations in higher education. Indeed, our faculty were involved in developing the new standards and tests and in setting more meaningful achievement levels. Everyone now has a shared understanding about what it takes to be college and career ready, which in turns means that more students will be prepared for success, which is good for everyone.

Setting high expectations is the right thing to do. Every year, many students who "did well" in high school and earned a diploma are surprised when they get to college and learn they have to take basic English and math courses over again. Parents have sticker shock when they learn they have to pay for college courses that do not lead to a degree. High school graduates often are surprised and disappointed when they don't get hired. Others say they have not been challenged enough. No more surprises.

By getting more accurate information about students' college readiness in 11th grade, we will have an extra year to work more closely with our K–12 colleagues to help students prepare. And having better information in the earlier grades will help ensure that more students are on track every step of the way.

Indeed, we have been working intensively over the past several months to expand our 12th Grade College Bridge Programs and take steps to reduce the need for costly freshmen remediation courses. Priority one is supporting students. And we will have some important announcements later this summer/fall.

Meanwhile, let's stay the course. Educators and students have been working very hard over the past three years to implement these new standards. Don't undermine their hard work by turning backward, as some policymakers have proposed.

With our collective support, students can meet these higher expectations. But only if we give them a chance.

---

*Add boilerplate about state leader and institution.*

## SAMPLE OP-ED 2: WHEN THE RESULTS ARE RELEASED

**NOTE:** *This sample op-ed is written assuming it will be placed when the K–12 test scores are released or after.*

### By STATE LEADER

The state ANNOUNCED TODAY/RECENTLY RELEASED results of the new test that students in grades 3 through high school took last spring. The results confirmed what we already know: Too many high school graduates aren't ready for college or careers. And too many students fall off track in the earlier grades and never catch up. ADD 1–2 DATA POINTS [See the "State Profile Template" for advice on where to find state-specific data.]

High percentages of students arrive on our campuses needing remediation, re-learning material they should have learned in high school. Similarly, many businesses say jobs remain vacant because applicants do not have the right preparation.

That's old news.

What's new is that we now have standards and assessments in place that will provide the information we need to get more students college and career ready before they graduate. And offer the high achievers more opportunities to excel.

These new expectations are set at the right level. They reflect *our* expectations as higher education leaders. Indeed, we were involved in developing the new standards and tests and in setting more meaningful achievement levels. Everyone now has a shared understanding about what it takes to be college or career ready. That means schools can focus their resources to help many more students graduate well prepared for their next steps. And they can offer more challenging assignments to the higher achieving students.

We at STATE U are prepared to help. Armed with the new, more meaningful assessments, we will partner with high schools to provide college-ready bridge courses and other supports to help students transition to our institutions better prepared.

For example, GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF HOW YOU WILL BE WORKING WITH K–12 PARTNERS TO STRENGTHEN STUDENTS' PREPARATION IN GRADES K–12.

And on our own campus, we will GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF HOW YOU WILL BE STRENGTHENING YOUR OWN PROGRAMS IN REMEDIATION, MENTORING, COUNSELING, ETC.

Setting high expectations is the right thing to do. With more accurate information about students' college readiness in 11th grade, we will have an extra year to work more closely with our K–12 colleagues to help students prepare. We can strengthen our own programs so that entering freshmen get on track from the start. And having better information in the earlier grades will help ensure that more students are on track every step of the way.

That's good news for students, for higher education, and for our communities.

---

*Add boilerplate about state leader and institution.*

## SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

**NOTE:** *This assumes the release will be announced WHEN OR AFTER the test results are shared publicly.*

### **STATE U ANNOUNCES TWO NEW PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT STUDENTS; SCORES WILL BE USED TO “OPEN DOORS” AND CREATE OPPORTUNITIES**

DATE—\_\_\_\_\_ today announced plans to step up its efforts to work with K–12 systems to help prepare more students for college — and to better support them when they arrive on campus. The university will expand its 12th grade bridge initiative to help more students get on track for entering college without the need for remediation. And for entering freshmen who still need help, \_\_\_\_\_ is developing an approach that has them take credit-bearing courses along with intensive supports rather than simply putting them in traditional remedial courses that haven’t been as effective.

The announcement was made as the state released scores on the new tests that students in grade 3 through high school took this spring. The proportion of students meeting grade-level standards is lower than it was last year. That’s not because students are learning any less, but because the test is very different, with a greater emphasis on writing, communications, and problem solving.

“We’re not using these test scores to close doors, but to help open them so that more college students are more successful from day one,” said \_\_\_\_\_, who leads STATE U. “These scores do not surprise us. In fact, they confirm what we already know: Too few students are adequately prepared to succeed in college or careers. Now we have the information we need to help them.”

ADD relevant remediation or NAEP data from your state—2 data points. [See the “State Profile Template” for guidance on where to find this data.]

Reflecting on the scores released today, education and business leaders said K–12 students deserve an honest and timely assessment of where they stand. Too many students who “did well” in high school and earn a diploma are surprised when they get to college and learn they have to take basic English and math courses over again. And parents have sticker shock when they learn they have to pay for college courses that do not lead to a degree.

Having more accurate information earlier helps students catch up before they get to college. And it helps colleges be more effective, so that they are helping more students earn their degrees on time. These higher standards and tests help ensure that proficient in high school means truly prepared for college or careers, whatever path each student chooses.

“Priority one is supporting students,” said \_\_\_\_\_. The expanded 12th Grade College Bridge program will do \_\_\_\_\_, serving more than \_\_\_\_\_ students.

Starting in school year \_\_\_\_, the university’s co-requisite remediation program will do \_\_\_\_\_. More than \_\_\_\_\_ students will be helped.

“Our goal is to help more students graduate on time. These K–12 scores provide a helpful early warning about how prepared students are to succeed at \_\_\_\_\_,” said \_\_\_\_\_. “The initiatives we announced today will help accelerate success. That’s good for everyone: students, families, higher education, and the communities we serve.”

#####

## SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

### Tweets

- “Lower test results are not bad news. Now we can give our kids the help they need.”  
@StateUPresident
- “With new standards and tests, being proficient truly means students are prepared or on track for college and careers.” @StateUPresident
- “With new standards and tests, we can help kids avoid college remediation, saving families time and money.” @StateUPresident
- “With new standards and tests, we can better prepare our students for today’s careers and life.”  
@StateUPresident
- “New test scores are no surprise and won’t stand in the way of your child going to college or being promoted.” @StateUPresident
- “New test results mean we now have the info to help students be ready from day 1.”  
@StateUPresident
- “Parents deserve to have a true picture of how their children are performing.” @StateUPresident
- “Better-prepared high school graduates will graduate college faster, saving money and filling local jobs.” @StateUPresident
- We are helping better prepare our kids for college and careers. Find out how: [link](#)
- Our 12th grade bridge program can help your child be better prepared for college. Find out more: [link](#)

### Facebook

- Test results released today show that only XX percent of our state’s students are proficient. But the good news is that now we really know where our kids stand. Too many high school graduates aren’t ready for college or careers. And too many younger students are off track. Find out how we are working with K–12 to close these preparation gaps: [link](#)
- Now we know: Only XX percent of our state’s students are proficient. With good information from the new state standards and tests, we can help students better prepare for college and careers. And make sure younger students are on track. Find out how we are working with K–12 to close these preparation gaps: [link](#)
- The test results are in. And for the first time they are based on honest expectations for what it takes to be college or career ready. High school students who pass these tests will be able to avoid remediation, saving time and money. Younger students will know they’re on track. High achievers will be offered more challenges. Proficient will mean prepared. [Link to state release](#)
- The test results are in. Now we need to stay the course because setting higher expectations is the right thing to do — for our students, our businesses, and our communities. [Link to state release](#)

# INFOGRAPHICS

The state profile template in this section contains charts and graphics that you can customize to use with your social media posts.

Stand for Children and other advocacy organizations also have infographics that you can share on social media, such as:

## POP QUIZ: WHY DO WE NEED BETTER TESTING?

With high academic standards come better assessments that measure critical thinking, not just rote memorization.

COMPARE THESE REAL TEST QUESTIONS AND DECIDE FOR YOURSELF WHICH IS BETTER.

THE NEW TESTS	OLD TESTS
<div style="background-color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid #ccc; margin: 0 auto; width: 80%;"> <p style="text-align: center; color: #2980b9; margin: 0;"><b>MATH - 3RD GRADE</b></p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">The following questions ask students to solve measurement calculations.</p> </div>	
<div style="border: 1px solid #34495e; padding: 10px; background-color: #f1f3f4; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">Drag and drop the correct area into the box below each shaded rectangle.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; font-size: 0.7em; margin: 5px 0;"> <span>20 Square Feet</span> <span>24 Square Feet</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; font-size: 0.7em; margin: 5px 0;"> <span>27 Square Feet</span> <span>28 Square Feet</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; font-size: 0.6em; margin: 5px 0;"> <span>4 Feet</span> <span>4 Feet</span> <span>3 Feet</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; font-size: 0.6em; margin: 5px 0;"> <span>5 Feet</span> <span>6 Feet</span> <span>9 Feet</span> </div> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 10px; background-color: white; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">Look at the array.</p> <div style="text-align: center; margin: 5px 0;"> </div> <p style="font-size: 0.7em; margin: 5px 0;">What is the perimeter of this array?</p> <p style="font-size: 0.7em; margin: 0;">A. 14 units    B. 18 units C. 20 units    D. 21 units</p> </div>
<div style="background-color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid #ccc; margin: 0 auto; width: 80%;"> <p style="text-align: center; color: #2980b9; margin: 0;"><b>MATH - 3RD GRADE</b></p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">These questions ask students to understand a fraction as a number on the number line.</p> </div>	
<div style="border: 1px solid #34495e; padding: 10px; background-color: #f1f3f4; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">Drag each fraction to the correct location on the number line.</p> <div style="text-align: center; margin: 5px 0;"> </div> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 10px; background-color: white; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">Which number names the point on the number line.</p> <div style="text-align: center; margin: 5px 0;"> </div> <p style="font-size: 0.7em; margin: 0;">A. <math>\frac{1}{2}</math>    B. <math>\frac{3}{2}</math>    C. <math>1\frac{1}{2}</math>    D. <math>1\frac{1}{2}</math>    E. Not here</p> </div>
<div style="background-color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid #ccc; margin: 0 auto; width: 80%;"> <p style="text-align: center; color: #e74c3c; margin: 0;"><b>READING AND WRITING - 5TH GRADE</b></p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">These questions ask students to read a passage and respond based on their learnings.</p> </div>	
<div style="border: 1px solid #34495e; padding: 10px; background-color: #f1f3f4; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">Today you will research three popguns and research other things all night. You will need to research and have you and read a novel. As you review these sources, you will gather information and answer questions about the source of popguns for you can with an essay.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; font-size: 0.7em; margin: 5px 0;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p style="font-size: 0.6em; margin: 0;">The Amazing Popgun Piece by James R. ...</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p style="font-size: 0.6em; margin: 0;">Using the information provided, explain the significance of these sources to reflect on the importance.</p> </div> </div> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 10px; background-color: white; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">Directions: Read the passage about popguns. As you read the passage, think about what it would be like to be around these animals. Then use the passage to help you write a multi-paragraph story.</p> <p style="font-size: 0.7em; margin: 5px 0;">Writing Topic: Imagine what it would be like to live around popguns. Write a multi-paragraph story for your teacher that includes the popguns around on one of the characters. Use what you have learned about popguns to help you create your story.</p> </div>

### THE NEW TESTS vs OLD TESTS

Students are asked to **solve multiple equations** so that "guess C" and move on" is a thing of the past.

Tests on computers give students experience with the technology they'll use in **school, college and career.**

Students are asked to **identify key components** of written pieces, and to **provide evidence** in their answers.

Share this infographic to help others decide which is better.

SHARE THIS INFOGRAPHIC

<http://stand.org/national/action/better-tests-you-decide>

# THE ACADEMIC CHECKUP

## ANATOMY OF A GOOD TEST



IT'S TIME TO MEASURE STUDENT LEARNING IN A NEW WAY - HERE'S HOW TO IDENTIFY A GOOD TEST FROM A BAD ONE:

 <p><b>COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS</b></p> <p>It helps your child succeed in college or career. Testing should be used to measure progress towards high expectations that set them up for success beyond high school.</p>	 <p><b>FAIRNESS</b></p> <p>Your child's cousin in a neighboring city is held to the same expectations. All kids should have fair tests that hold them to the same high benchmarks.</p>	 <p><b>PROBLEM SOLVING &amp; CRITICAL THINKING</b></p> <p>Gone are the days of guessing "C" on an answer sheet. Good tests ask students to use critical thinking and problem solving by showing their work and providing evidence.</p>
 <p><b>INFORMS TEACHERS</b></p> <p>Teachers can help students reach higher expectations by identifying early warning signs when a student is behind. Good tests should give teachers the data to identify when students are falling behind and tailor instruction to their needs.</p>	 <p><b>EMPOWERS PARENTS</b></p> <p>Things parents should get out of good tests: timely feedback, clear results to discuss with their child's teacher, and ways to support their child's learning at home. Things they shouldn't get: confusion, frustration, and delayed results.</p>	

### SICK OF TESTS THAT DON'T HELP YOU OR YOUR CHILD?

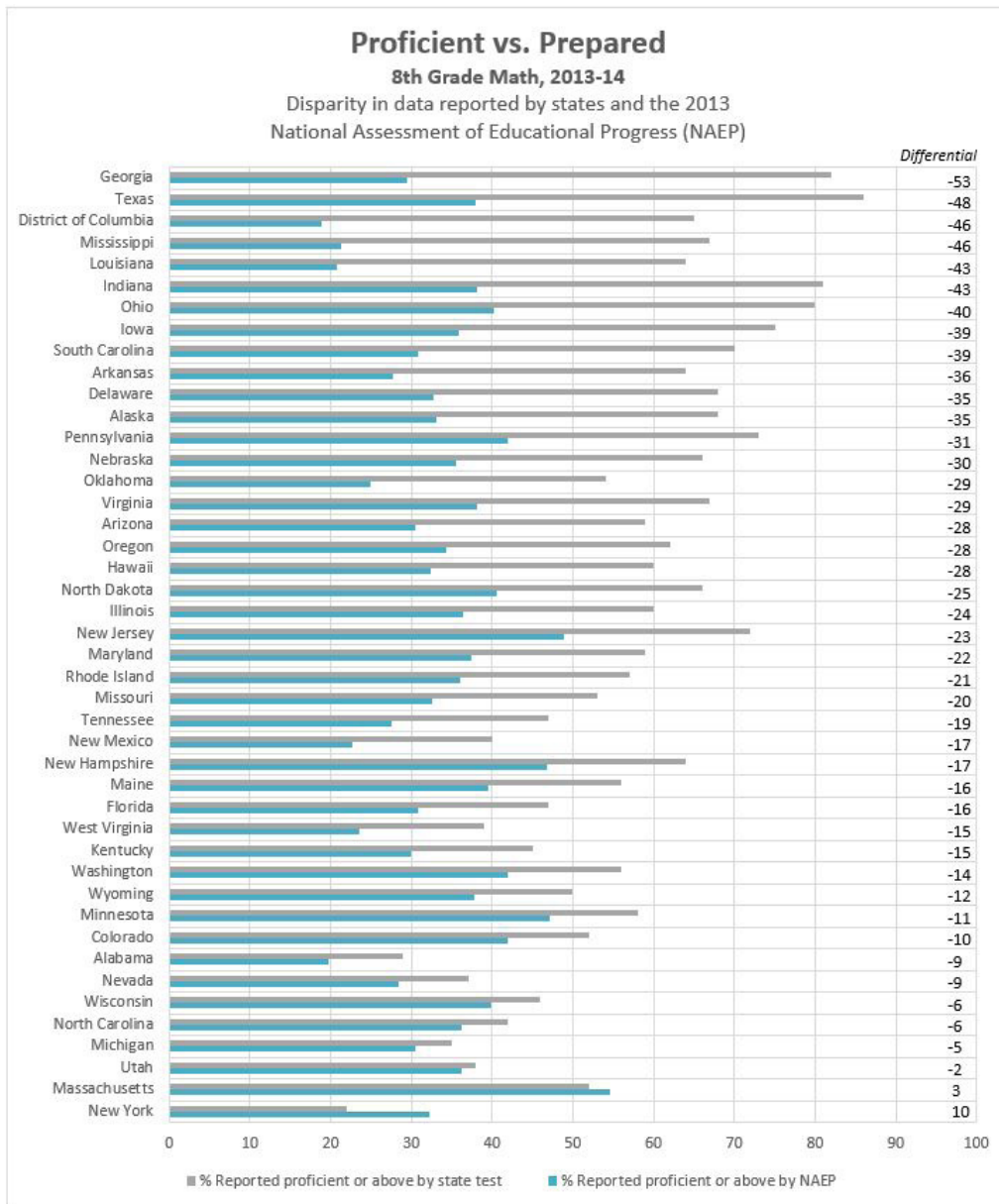
Across the country, we've moved to higher standards and the next generation of better tests. Share this infographic to show others how to identify a good test.

SHARE THIS INFOGRAPHIC



<http://stand.org/academic-check>

The Honesty Gap ([www.honestygap.org](http://www.honestygap.org)) and Achieve's *Proficient vs. Prepared* report ([www.achieve.org/files/NAEPBriefFINAL051415.pdf](http://www.achieve.org/files/NAEPBriefFINAL051415.pdf)) also provide data and graphics that can be used or turned into compelling visuals, then shared over social media with the proper attribution.



## SAMPLE TALKING POINTS FOR SPEAKERS

**NOTE:** *The following talking points can be used in various settings: with your board and other internal stakeholders; the media; policymakers; and others. They are drawn from the “Key Messages” tool.*

*These points can be used before the K–12 test scores are released or after. If after, we recommend you focus more on Point 3, the kinds of expanded supports you will be providing students.*

### 1. Too many high school graduates aren’t ready for college or careers. We need to close the preparation gap so that **proficient in high school** means **truly prepared for college or work**.

- Setting high expectations is the right thing to do.
- These K–12 expectations are set at the right level and reflect *our* expectations in higher education.
- This is an education issue, an economic issue, and a moral issue.
- Only about one-third of high school students are proficient in reading and math, according to NAEP.
- Internationally, our students trail their peers. On the latest PISA assessment taken by high school students around the world, U.S. students rank 36th in math, 28th in science, and 24th in reading. And according to a recent study by the Educational Testing Service, young adults in the U.S. (ages 16–34) rank at or near the bottom on international comparisons of problem solving, numeracy, and literacy skills. *[You can also use state-specific data for this message point. See “State Profile Template” for more.]*

### 2. These new standards and assessments will open doors for students and provide them with greater opportunities.

- We’re not using these test scores to close doors but to help open them so that more college students are more successful from day one.
- K–12 students deserve an honest and timely assessment of where they stand.
- We are working closely with our K–12 colleagues to use these new data to better prepare students before they start college. *[Add 1–2 specifics.]*
- And we are working on our own campuses to better prepare students to succeed once they enroll in college. *[Add 1–2 specifics.]*

### 3. We can do this.

- Students will rise to the challenge if we raise expectations and provide supports.
- Kentucky, for example, has greatly increased its college-ready rates after several years of implementing more challenging standards and assessments.
- Stay the course and don’t undermine our hard-working educators and students.



## STATE PROFILE TEMPLATE

**NOTE:** *The following page contains a sample state profile that you can update with your state's information to highlight the need for college- and career-ready standards and assessments. The profile also includes space for you to provide information about ways you are collaborating with the K–12 system and working at your own institutions to help students succeed in college.*

The charts can be edited in Word. If you do not have data for each indicator, you can get state-specific information from several sources, such as:

- **8th Grade Proficiency:** National Assessment of Educational Progress, [www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading\\_math\\_2013/#/state-performance](http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2013/#/state-performance)
- **College Readiness:** ACT, [www.act.org/research/policymakers/cccr14/states.html](http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/cccr14/states.html)
- **Transition to College:** National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, [www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/index.php?submeasure=119&year=2010&level=nation&mode=map&state=0](http://www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/index.php?submeasure=119&year=2010&level=nation&mode=map&state=0)
- **Remediation:** Complete College America, <http://completecollege.org/college-completion-data>
- **Skills Gap:** National Skills Coalition, [www.nationalskillscoalition.org/state-policy/states](http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/state-policy/states)

You also can find information on the gap between proficiency levels on your state's previous test and the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) — known as the honesty gap — at [www.honestygap.org](http://www.honestygap.org). This will provide a good indication of the level of rigor of your state's previous standards compared to the national NAEP benchmark.

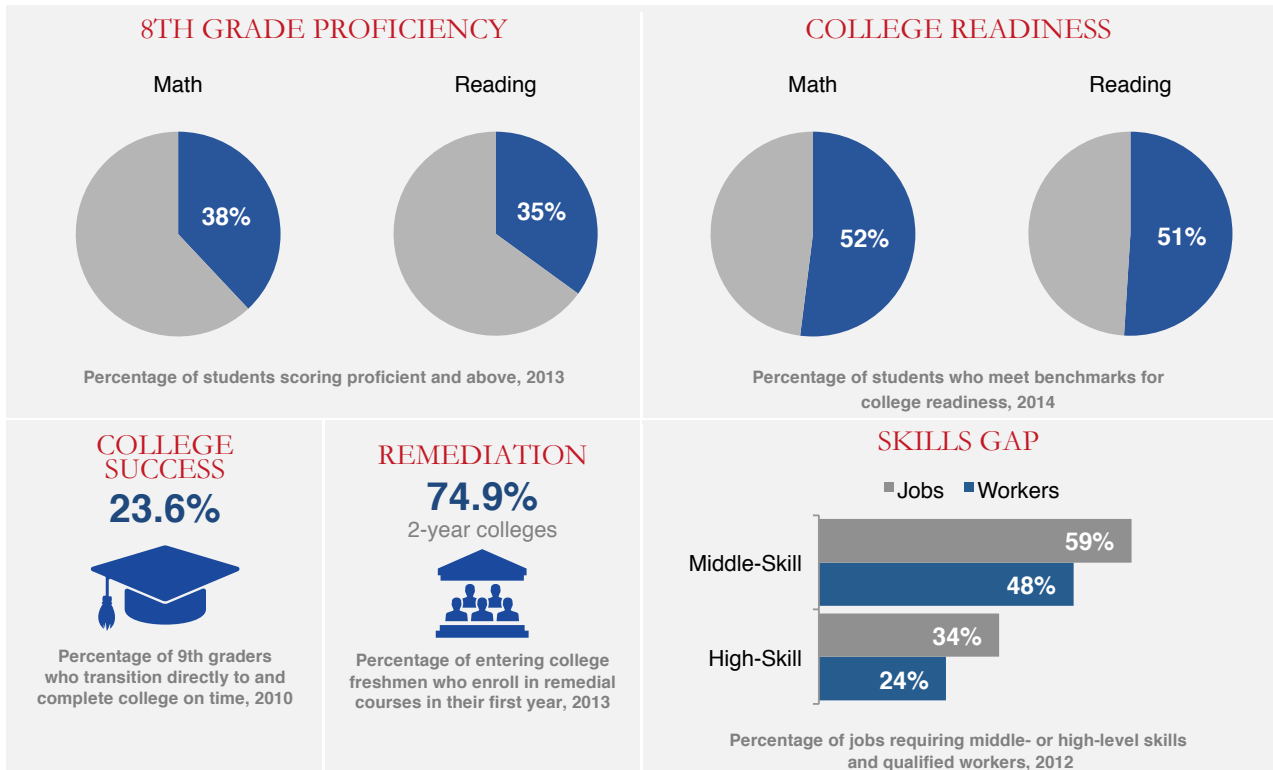
Often-cited international statistics that could supplement your state information include that on the latest **PISA** assessment taken by high school students around the world, U.S. students rank 36th in math, 28th in science, and 24th in reading. And according to a recent study by the **Educational Testing Service**, young adults in the U.S. (ages 16–34) rank at or near the bottom on international comparisons of problem solving, numeracy, and literacy skills.

To access the electronic version of the Word template, go to: [www.higheredforhigherstandards.org/proficient-means-prepared](http://www.higheredforhigherstandards.org/proficient-means-prepared).

[STATE NAME]

Proficient  
MEANS  
Prepared

The vast majority of students are currently not prepared or on track to succeed in college or in careers. That's a major reason why [STATE] is raising the standards and providing more supports.



**What higher education is doing to help better prepare students:**

Add some specifics about what your institution is doing.

Sources: ACT, 2014, [www.act.org/research/policymakers/cccr14/states.html](http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/cccr14/states.html); Complete College America, 2013, <http://completecollege.org/college-completion-data>; National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2013, [www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading\\_math\\_2013/#/state-performance](http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2013/#/state-performance); National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, 2010, [www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/index.php?submeasure=119&year=2010&level=nation&mode=map&state=0](http://www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/index.php?submeasure=119&year=2010&level=nation&mode=map&state=0); National Skills Coalition, 2012, [www.nationalskillscoalition.org/state-policy/states](http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/state-policy/states).

**Higher education has a vital leadership role to play in establishing and sustaining high standards for student learning and success that transcend the traditional boundaries between K–12 and postsecondary education in the United States. This role is rooted in deep collaboration with our K–12 counterparts. Many states have already begun to reshape how colleges, universities, and state higher education agencies organize, design, and execute policies and practices that establish stronger alignment with K–12.**

One key building block — college- and career-ready standards in English language arts (ELA)/literacy and mathematics — is already in place across most states. In many cases, corresponding aligned assessments have been developed, meaning that for the first time, higher education institutions can be confident that students who meet these expectations are academically prepared for entry-level, credit-bearing coursework in college. Higher education is well positioned to leverage these new standards and assessments to significantly improve college readiness; smooth student transitions into credit-bearing, nonremedial college courses; and ultimately, shorten students' time to degree.

Higher education is advancing the P–20 alignment agenda by leveraging higher standards in three key areas:

- **Precollege interventions to help students be ready for college by the time they graduate high school**, including collaboration with K–12 school districts to design 12th grade bridge courses and

support programs based on areas of student need revealed through the new college-ready assessments.

- **Postsecondary placement practices to put incoming college students into appropriate courses and, consequently, on a path to persistence and completion.** This includes using the new high school assessments to determine if entering freshmen are ready for credit-bearing college courses.
- **Postsecondary freshman-year experiences to align secondary and higher education content and support students' transition into credit-bearing coursework.** Efforts include improving counseling, providing co-requisite remediation, and changing credit-bearing course sequences, consistent with the more ambitious expectations embedded in the new K–12 standards.

The following mini-case studies showcase examples of states where higher education is taking the lead in these areas.

## 1. PROVIDE PRECOLLEGE INTERVENTIONS

Some states are using the assessments to provide an early indicator of students' readiness for college work. Others have co-created transition programs. Most have created structures to foster joint work. In addition, many states have been collaborating with the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) since 2009 to create math and literacy courses, which are publicly available on iTunes U, to address readiness gaps for 11th or 12th grade students.

While every state administers a college- and career-ready assessment, very few have used the results to inform student needs before they leave high school. The information from these new tests provides an opportunity to work with high schools to make the most of the 12th grade or support students in the summer months between high school and college. Precollege interventions come in a variety of formats and levels of intensity and may be

offered in one- or two-semester courses or as standalone modular units. The instruction may be delivered in person, online, or as a hybrid.

Summer bridge programs — which typically occur in the summer between high school graduation and fall matriculation in college — offer students accelerated, focused learning opportunities that can help them acquire sufficient knowledge to reduce the need for remediation, greatly increasing their chances of succeeding in college. Ideally, higher education can certify the quality of these transition courses by offering automatic placement in credit-bearing coursework or exempting students from further placement assessments.

For example, [Achieve](#) reports that:

**Delaware** is piloting a Foundations of College Math course that will guarantee placement into credit-bearing coursework in six institutions of higher education for any high school senior who passes.

In **Maryland**, senior year transition math and ELA/literacy courses will be piloted in 2015–16 and implemented in 2016–17. And state legislation requires the Maryland State Department of Education to collaborate by 2015–16 with districts and public community colleges to develop and implement transitional courses for grade 12, or other instructional opportunities aligned to the standards, for students who have not yet achieved college readiness by the end of grade 11, according to SREB.

**Tennessee** designed a voluntary Bridge Mathematics course for students who have not scored a 19 or higher on the ACT by the beginning of their senior year. According to Chattanooga State Community College, the SAILS (Seamless Alignment and Integrated Learning Support) program it developed with Red Bank High School in 2011 helps underperforming students demonstrate competency with high school math standards and be prepared to enroll in credit-bearing math courses when they begin college. While dual enrollment programs are generally designed for students to earn high school and postsecondary credit, seven states, including Tennessee, allow high school students to complete noncredit-bearing developmental coursework through dual enrollment programs.

In **West Virginia**, legislation requires that all public high schools offer transitional courses for students who do not meet college readiness benchmarks on the COMPASS (or another mutually agreed-upon assessment), which West

Virginia administers statewide in 11th grade. And according to SREB, the state's Higher Education Policy Commission and the Council for Community and Technical College Education have adopted uniform standards of college and career readiness based on the state's Next Generation Content Standards and Objectives.

Additional states working on precollege interventions include:

In **Washington**, math transition courses are triggered by a student's 11th grade Smarter Balanced score. Developed by higher education faculty, high school teachers, and curriculum specialists from multiple colleges and school districts, the Bridge to College Courses were piloted in 2014–15. Up to 100 ELA and 100 math teachers statewide will implement courses in 2015–16, with broader implementation anticipated for subsequent school years. Passing these courses senior year guarantees placement into first-year at the state's 34 community and technical colleges, first-year, credit-bearing postsecondary courses, according to the state's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

**Colorado's** GEAR UP Early Remediation Pilot program allows partner middle and high school students to participate in online, self-paced ELA and math courses that mirror the content of the remedial courses offered in state colleges and universities. The program would not be possible without the partnership of Adams State University to create the courses and ensure that students meet the requirements of mastering the classes. When students complete the classes, they receive an Adams State transcript. GEAR UP students can then use these transcripts to enroll in college-level classes as early as grade 10.

## 2. REVISE POSTSECONDARY PLACEMENT POLICIES

A growing number of higher education systems have agreed to honor the “college-ready” scores on the new statewide high school assessments for placement decisions, which will streamline the process for placing students into credit-bearing courses and remove at least one additional set of tests that students must take. Having higher education validate these scores underscores the rigor of the high school standards and courses and the reliability of the new assessments. It also likely will motivate students to work harder to meet the standards because they will see a more direct connection to their next steps after high school.

Seven states allow students achieving a minimum score on a statewide mandatory college-ready high school assessment to place into credit-bearing coursework upon college entry. Going forward, many more institutions/systems have said they will use college readiness cut scores on the new assessments for placement. Some will retain

the use of current placement tests but allow students to use PARCC and Smarter Balanced assessment scores instead.

**California's** Early Assessment Program led the way. The California State University (CSU) system supplemented the California 11th grade math and ELA/literacy exams with a small number of additional items so the tests would measure CSU's standards for readiness for credit-bearing courses. Eleventh graders who met the standards were notified that they would automatically be placed into credit-bearing courses, without the need to take an additional placement exam, if they enrolled in a CSU campus. CSU also partnered with K–12 to develop 12th grade bridge courses for students who needed extra support to achieve college readiness before leaving high school. With California transitioning to the Smarter Balanced exam, CSU and the state's community colleges will use the Smarter Balanced 11th grade scores for this purpose.

Higher education systems in some states participating in the **Smarter Balanced** assessment consortium have agreed to honor scores on the 11th grade assessment as an indicator of readiness for credit-bearing coursework. More than 200 colleges and universities in seven states will honor Smarter Balanced scores as college-ready indicators (California: 23 CSU campuses and 78 community colleges; Delaware: all seven public colleges, one independent college; Hawaii: all 10 public colleges; Nevada: all seven public colleges; Oregon: all 24 public colleges; South Dakota: all six public colleges; Washington: all 40 public colleges, nine independent colleges).

States in the **PARCC** assessment consortium also are preparing to use scores on the high school assessments as indicators of college readiness. Systems or institutions in three states have adopted such policies to date: Adams State and Aims Community College in Colorado, Illinois community colleges, and Southern Arkansas University. In addition, the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, the University of Massachusetts, Massachusetts State Universities, and Massachusetts Community Colleges have issued a statement in support of the PARCC assessment, detailing their involvement

in shaping the test and their hope that it will be a better measure of college readiness than the old Massachusetts state tests, which were considered some of the best in the country. And presidents of the 19 community colleges in New Jersey anticipate considering PARCC scores as a factor in student placement beginning in 2016.

Some states are using **ACT** or **SAT** as their statewide high school assessment taken by all students. Both ACT and SAT claim to have revised their assessments to better align with college- and career-ready standards, such as the Common Core State Standards. In states using those assessments as their high school measures, higher education systems and institutions may have the opportunity to waive placement tests for students who score “college ready,” similar to what is happening with PARCC and Smarter Balanced assessments.

Some states have chosen to develop **their own assessments** to measure their new college- and career-ready standards, rather than using PARCC, Smarter Balanced, ACT, or SAT. For those assessments to be used by higher education as college-ready indicators, they will need to be validated as adequately measuring college-ready knowledge and skills.

### 3. REDESIGN FRESHMAN-YEAR EXPERIENCES

A growing number of institutions are rethinking how they can better support entering freshmen, with improved counseling programs, block scheduling, and a new approach to remediation that helps more students enter and succeed in gateway courses more quickly.

**Complete College America** offers multiple examples:

**In Indiana, Ivy Tech Community College** and the **Lumina Foundation for Education** have created a one-year accelerated associate degree program. The program has two key components that shorten time to degree: recruiting and working with students in high school so they are able to start college without the need for remediation and block scheduling associate degree courses, which makes participating more convenient for students.

**In West Virginia, Mountwest Community & Technical College** provides multiple approaches to co-requisite remediation, including fall bootcamps to get students ready for college-level math courses. In addition, stretch courses merge the traditional three-hour developmental course and three-hour college-level course into one five-hour course that includes developmental support as needed. Under the traditional model, only 12 percent of developmental students at the school passed the gateway course after two years in fall 2011. Under the new model, 74 percent of developmental students passed their gateway course in the first semester in fall 2014.

**The City University of New York** offers an Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) to help select community college students earn associate degrees more quickly. ASAP provides student-friendly structures (e.g., block scheduling from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m., Monday to Friday, and cohorts by major) along with financial incentives (free subway passes and textbooks) to speed participants’ paths to a degree. One study found that ASAP students had three times the graduation rate of a comparison group who lacked the same supports.

**The Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) at the Community College of Baltimore County in Maryland** allows the majority of students who did not pass the writing placement test to enroll in both English 101 and a companion course that provides extra support. Designated sections of English 101 reserve 10 of 20 seats for ALP students, and the course standards are the same as for all sections of English 101. The 10 ALP students enroll in the companion course or workshop, which meets immediately following the English 101 course with the same instructor. The design removes some of the stigma of developmental courses and places ALP students in the classroom with stronger students who model better writing, study habits, and class participation. Students pay for six credits and receive three credits for English 101. The ALP students not only complete English 101 at more than twice the rate of non-ALP students in traditional remedial courses, but they also go on to

complete English 102 at a higher rate and enroll in more college courses. The program is catching on, and as of fall 2013, 153 colleges and universities across the country are offering sections of ALP.

Through its **Developmental Studies Redesign Initiative, Austin Peay State University (APSU) in Tennessee** eliminated its two remedial math courses, Elementary Algebra and Intermediate Algebra, and instead offers enhanced sections of its two gateway (core), college-level mathematics courses. Developmental math students enroll in a core math course and a linked workshop simultaneously. Initial assessments determine each student's math weaknesses. During the linked workshops, students receive additional instruction on key math concepts and particularly on their identified weaknesses. The linked workshop facilitators, students who have excelled in math, also attend the core class with the developmental students and then review concepts presented in class during the workshop. Students completing the co-requisite workshop and core math courses have succeeded at more than twice the rate of those who previously took the traditional developmental courses. The pass rate for developmental students rose from 23 percent to 54 percent in Elements of Statistics and from 33 percent to 71 percent in Mathematical Thought and Practice. Furthermore, more of these students are returning and enrolling in college courses the following school year.

The **New Mathways Project**, a joint initiative of the **Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin** and the **Texas Association of Community Colleges (TACC)**, is a statewide approach to improving student success and completion by reforming developmental education. The initiative includes the development and implementation of a set of accelerated mathematics courses — matching the appropriate kind of math to modern programs of study. Built-in support systems help students more quickly earn college-level credits in rigorous mathematics in comparison to traditional remediation approaches. The 10-year partnership between the Dana Center and TACC offers the opportunity to work directly with the state's 50 community colleges, which have agreed to provide seed money to develop the initiative, and it enables collaboration on articulation, placement, and accreditation policies.

Other institutions are beefing up their mentoring and advising programs to help entering freshmen get on track from day one. For example, **Georgia State University** has boosted graduation rates by more than 20 percentage points in the last 10 years by using degree maps and intrusive advising. Entering students receive intensive advice on their pathway options, then are closely counseled throughout their time on campus to help ensure that they stay on track. At the earliest signs of problems, the university steps in with support — an approach called “intrusive advising.” Pell (52.5 percent), African American (57.4 percent), and Hispanic students (66.4 percent) now graduate at higher rates than the overall student body, and the university confers more bachelor's degrees to African Americans than any other U.S. university.

Meanwhile, **Tennessee** has developed common, standards-based resources for the state's nine public universities and 13 community colleges, according to a recent report by Education First Consulting. Through the Core to College program, faculty from various campuses first developed sample syllabi and model lessons for two courses common across Tennessee campuses: English 1010 (a composition course) and College Algebra. After extensive engagement with educators across the state, faculty worked with the nonprofit Achieve to show their colleagues how to use these materials in gateway courses. Key lessons: use experts from groups such as Achieve to describe the necessary instructional shifts and be thoughtful about overemphasizing college readiness messages such as branding the gateway courses as “13th grade” when communicating with higher education faculty.

In addition to the examples cited by Complete College America, **Ohio** higher education leaders have made several improvements. They revamped their math curriculum to provide alternatives to algebra for students who are not planning to become math majors. Courses like quantitative reasoning, modeling, and elementary statistics often are more relevant to their majors. Postsecondary mathematics faculty and K–12 teachers also are partnering to redesign an aligned secondary mathematics curriculum and instructional practices. In addition to creating a new system of gateway postsecondary math courses and support services, they will be revising postsecondary placement criteria and providing advisers/counselors in both K–12 and postsecondary with tools and knowledge to better support students.

**For more information on these policy levers, see Education First Consulting's Core to College briefs:**

1. [Achieving the Benefits of K–12/Higher Education Alignment](#)
2. [Defining College and Career Readiness](#)
3. [Adopting New College- and Career-Ready Assessments](#)
4. [Developing and Using College Readiness Courses](#)
5. [Aligning Gateway College Courses](#)
6. [Redesigning Educator Preparation Programs](#)

Following are additional resources you can use for data and examples of what other states already are doing to support college- and career-ready standards and tests, so you don't need to start from scratch. If you have additional resources you find particularly useful, please email [info@higheredforhigherstandards.org](mailto:info@higheredforhigherstandards.org) so we can share them with your colleagues.

#### IN THIS SECTION

Additional Resources for Data  
Communications Resources From:

- National Organizations
- State Campaigns

## DATA

### Proficiency in High School and College Readiness

- National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), percentage of students meeting standards, by state and subject, [www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading\\_math\\_2013/#/state-performance](http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2013/#/state-performance)
- Honesty Gap, Achieve and Collaborative for Student Success, gaps between NAEP's college-ready scores and states' own scores, [www.honestygap.org](http://www.honestygap.org)
- ACT, percentage of students meeting college readiness benchmarks in reading, writing, math, and science, [www.act.org/research/policymakers/cccr14/states.html](http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/cccr14/states.html)
- Why Proficiency Matters, Foundation for Excellence in Education, proficiency gap by state, [www.whyproficiencymatters.com](http://www.whyproficiencymatters.com)

### Transition to and Success in College

- National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, percentage of 9th graders who transition directly to and complete college, [www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/index.php?submeasure=119&year=2010&level=nation&mode=map&state=0](http://www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/index.php?submeasure=119&year=2010&level=nation&mode=map&state=0)
- Complete College America, multiple state-by-state indicators about students' readiness for college and their success on campus, <http://completecollege.org/college-completion-data>

### Skills Gap

- National Skills Coalition, a broad-based coalition that uses organizing, advocacy, and communications to advance state and federal policies to ensure that every worker and every industry has the skills to compete and prosper, [www.nationalskillscoalition.org/state-policy/states](http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/state-policy/states)

## NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

### Higher Ed for Higher Standards

[www.higheredforhigherstandards.org](http://www.higheredforhigherstandards.org)

Higher Ed *for* Higher Standards (HE/*f*HS) is a growing coalition of college presidents, trustees, chancellors, and state system leaders committed to the implementation of college- and career-ready standards. The goal of the coalition is to elevate the voices of higher education leaders and support them in the adoption of aligned policies that leverage more ambitious K–12 standards and assessments.

### Collaborative for Student Success/Honesty Gap

<http://forstudentsuccess.org>

[www.honestygap.org/how-is-your-state-closing-the-honesty-gap](http://www.honestygap.org/how-is-your-state-closing-the-honesty-gap)

The Collaborative for Student Success aims to support the efforts of state education agencies and local education organizations responsible for educating and informing all stakeholders — parents, students, teachers and community leaders — about the Common Core State Standards and assessments. The website includes resources for communicating with parents, teachers, business leaders, and policymakers.

The Collaborative’s Honesty Gap website provides information on the gap between proficiency levels on your state’s previous test and the NAEP. These data will provide a good indication of the level of rigor of your state’s previous standards compared to the national NAEP benchmark.

### **The Hunt Institute**

[www.hunt-institute.org](http://www.hunt-institute.org)

The Hunt Institute’s *re:VISION, The Role of Strategic Communications in the Transition to New Academic Standards and Assessments: Case Studies of Tennessee and Kentucky* examines the impact that a clear vision and

strong leadership played in both states in successfully rolling out new standards and assessments.

### **U.S. Chamber of Commerce**

[www.businessforcore.org/state-assessment-primers](http://www.businessforcore.org/state-assessment-primers)

State Assessment Primers provide state-specific information on why each state’s college- and career-ready standards are important and how they connect with the new state assessments. The primers also contain state-specific answers to frequently asked questions, such as what impact test scores will have on students and teachers.

## **STATE CAMPAIGNS**

These state resources focus on communicating with educators, parents, community stakeholders, and others to explain and build support for college- and career-ready standards and tests. If you want help connecting with a local advocacy campaign that is working on these issues, please contact [info@higheredforhigherstandards.org](mailto:info@higheredforhigherstandards.org), and we can help make the introductions. Many states have active efforts, such as Advance Illinois, Kentucky’s Prichard Committee, Higher Achievement NY, Tennessee SCORE, Washington Partnership for Learning, etc. — and higher education’s participation would be especially welcomed.

### **Idaho**

[www.sde.idaho.gov/site/common/toolkit.htm](http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/common/toolkit.htm)

The Idaho State Department of Education created the Idaho Core Standards Communications Toolkit to assist superintendents, principals, teachers, and other school district officials in communicating to parents and other stakeholders about the Idaho Core Standards, why Idaho adopted them, and how they will be implemented at the local level. The resources, which include sample presentations, parent guides, FAQs, and more in English and Spanish, may be used for hosting a community meeting or parent night, encouraging teachers to speak with parents about how classrooms might be different, communicating with local members of the media, and getting factual information out to parents and others.

### **Illinois**

<http://realllearningil.org>

Real Learning for Real Life is a campaign run by Advance Illinois, an organization that reports on how well the state’s education system is performing and supports research- and evidence-based policies to drive student achievement. The campaign provides detailed information to help parents, educators, and others understand the new state standards and assessments and why they are important. Videos of teachers, parents, school administrators, and business leaders underscore the benefits for students, their families, and their communities.

### **Kentucky**

<http://education.ky.gov/comm/UL/Pages/default.aspx>

In 2009, Kentucky passed Senate Bill 1, which shifted the focus of the state’s educational improvement efforts from student proficiency to readiness to ensure student success at the next level. The bill mandated new, more rigorous standards aligned with college readiness expectations, new assessments based on those standards, and a new, balanced accountability system. In 2010, the Kentucky Board of Education, Council on Postsecondary Education (higher education), and Education Professional Standards Board (teacher certification) unanimously agreed to adopt the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics — known as the Kentucky Core Academic Standards. The new standards were implemented in Kentucky classrooms in 2011–12, and the new assessments were given in the spring of that year. When Kentucky released the first round of scores in November 2012, the effort was widely considered a success. The state department of education attributes the success to several factors:

- Clear legislative authority and support;
- A proactive, multipronged communications and outreach effort that included:
  - A dedicated and frequently updated webpage,
  - Multiple advance presentations across the state to all the key stakeholders,
  - Articles in *Kentucky Teacher*, which is a professional development tool for teachers,



- Frequent webcasts, e-blasts, and blog postings, and
- Embargoed advance media briefings, featuring the commissioner and other key leaders;
- Strong and vocal support from teachers and other educators who were involved in helping revise the standards, assessments, and accountability system; and
- Business and civic support, mainly the statewide Chamber and the Prichard Committee, a well-respected nonprofit advocacy group. Each launched parallel campaigns to support the state education agency’s (SEA) outreach efforts.

SEA leaders say the new system’s brand, Unbridled Learning, helped reinforce messaging coherence and consistency, which were essential, along with the commissioner’s commitment to transparency. “The main lesson from this data release was that communications does not start once the data are released to the public. It takes much groundwork, public discussion, sharing of information and a little talent in prediction to make the release go smoothly — even if the data do not show positive results for every school or district,” the agency says in a summary document available at <http://education.ky.gov/comm/UL/Documents/UNBRIDLED%20LEARNING.pdf>.

Since 2012, the state has continued to host two webcasts each year for media and school communications personnel prior to that year’s data release to review any changes in the system and preview results.

For more information on the Kentucky campaign, see The Hunt Institute’s *re:VISION, The Role of Strategic Communications in the Transition to New Academic Standards and Assessments: Case Studies of Tennessee and Kentucky*.

### **Nevada**

<http://nevadaready.gov/Home>

Nevada Ready! is a statewide initiative led by the Nevada Department of Education and the Nevada Board of Education, partnering with the Nevada System of Higher Education, local school districts, and public and private organizations and agencies. The Nevada Ready! website provides information to help educators, students, parents, community leaders, and others understand the new state standards; the new state tests that will be given to assess student and teacher performance; and ways to use those results to help students, educators, schools, and school districts reach these new, rigorous standards. An online toolkit provides resources for hosting a community meeting or parent night about standards and assessments, encouraging teachers to speak with parents about how classrooms might be different, communicating with local

members of the media, and getting factual information to parents and constituents.

### **New York**

[www.highachievementny.org](http://www.highachievementny.org)

High Achievement New York is a broad-based coalition of teachers, parents, school administrators, civil rights advocates, community leaders, and some of New York’s biggest businesses who share a common passion for the importance of high-quality schools in the state and a belief that the Common Core State Standards can help put every child on a path to success. The website invites users to share videos and infographics that support the standards as well as submit their own videos.

### **Tennessee**

<http://expectmoretn.org>

Tennessee’s Expect More, Achieve More campaign used a series of news conferences, TV and radio spots, social media, and its website to provide information and resources on why the state was raising standards and implementing new tests — and to prepare citizens for lower test scores. The website features videos of educators, business and military leaders, students, and others talking about what the standards will mean to them, plus customized information about the standards and tests for parents, teachers, and community members.

For more information on the Tennessee campaign, see The Hunt Institute’s *re:VISION, The Role of Strategic Communications in the Transition to New Academic Standards and Assessments: Case Studies of Tennessee and Kentucky*.

[www.tnscore.org](http://www.tnscore.org)

The State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) collaboratively supports Tennessee’s work to prepare students for college and the workforce. Through outreach, research, programming, and media, they seek to ensure that Tennessee is the fastest improving state in the country on key student outcomes that will lead to college and career preparedness.

### **Washington**

[www.readywa.org](http://www.readywa.org)

Ready Washington, a coalition of state education agencies, associations, and advocacy organizations, provides videos, parent guides, FAQs, and more in multiple languages to build awareness and support among families for the Common Core State Standards, the Next Generation Science Standards, and the Smarter Balanced assessments. The coalition also has assembled a group of Washington teachers to serve as leading voices on the importance of the state’s new college- and career-ready standards and assessments.