



Supporting Secondary School Redesign

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FEDERAL UPDATE

Academic Competitiveness Grants: Approved State Rigorous Secondary School Programs

This spring, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) announced guidelines for college students and high school seniors to apply for Academic Competitiveness Grants and National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent (SMART) Grants for the 2006–07 academic year. Congress passed the Academic Competitiveness Grants and SMART Grants as part of the Higher Education Reconciliation Act of 2005, signed by President Bush on February 8, 2006. These grant programs make available \$790 million in the 2006–07 academic year and \$4.5 billion over the next five years.

Students who complete rigorous programs of study in high school, as established by a state or local educational agency and recognized by the U.S. secretary of education, are eligible for Academic Competitiveness Grants. U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings immediately recognized four options for eligibility:

- Advanced or honors diploma programs
- State Scholars Initiative requirements: This federally funded state program sets course requirements modeled after the National Commission on Excellence in Education recommendations, which are four years of English, three years of math (algebra 1 and 2, geometry), three years of lab science (biology, chemistry, physics), three and a half years of social studies (chosen from U.S. and world history, geography, economics, government), and two years of foreign language.
- Course requirements similar to the State Scholars Initiative: This program of study includes four years of English; three years of math, science, and social studies; and one year of a foreign language.
- Advanced placement (AP) or international baccalaureate (IB) courses and test scores: Students who have taken two AP or IB courses and received passing scores on the exams for those courses are considered eligible.

These guidelines define rigorous secondary school programs of study for the 2006–07 and 2007–08 school years while long-term coursework guidelines are established. States that wished to identify alternative rigorous programs of study for 2006–07 submitted proposals to the depart-

ment. At the end of June, ED released information on the recognized rigorous secondary school programs of study for each state for the 2006–07 award year.

In 14 states and the District of Columbia, no rigorous programs of study qualify students for the Academic Competitiveness Grants beyond the pre-recognized options listed above. But 36 states have at least one additional recognized rigorous program of study through which students may qualify for the grants, 11 of which have more than one approved alternative.

The U.S. Department of Education has authorized a broad spectrum of options for this first grant year, although most of the approved rigorous programs of study fall into the following categories:

- Higher education admission standards or postsecondary scholarship requirements (**19 states**): This includes states that have defined coursework admission standards for entry into postsecondary institutions, or have outlined the coursework that high school students must complete in order to qualify for state scholarships for higher education.

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BUILDING STATE FRAMEWORKS OF HIGH SCHOOL REFORM

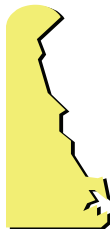
Individual Learning Plans: Three State Approaches

State approaches to developing and implementing Individual Learning Plans (ILPs)—personalized student education plans that include information such as high school courses, postsecondary education and career goals and interests, and extracurricular activities—are as varied as the information that goes into them. But even with those differences, states that require their students to complete ILPs are driven by common purposes and face similar challenges. CCSSO found out how three states—Delaware, Kentucky, and Washington—are implementing sophisticated statewide ILP systems to help personalize the high school experience and make it more relevant, while easing students' transitions into postsecondary education and careers. All three states are in various stages of leveraging technology and connecting the plans to advisory systems to make ILPs more powerful tools for students and educators. And all need to further explore how postsecondary institutions and workplaces can build from the rich information in ILPs.

Delaware

Delaware is using its Phase One Honor States Grant from the National Governors Association to support its new ILP system, which will be piloted in six high schools and their feeder middle schools this upcoming school year. In the fall of 2007 all high school freshmen will have ILPs, and by 2010 all high school students will be on board.

The state's ILPs will facilitate five years of planning for students, beginning in eighth grade, and outline career goals, career assessment information, student needs, and the supports and level of education needed to help students reach their goals. One of the state's main objectives is to include student achievement data and use it to inform the ILPs so that the plans ensure that each student's high school experience is designed to address his or her unique instructional needs through enrichment activities, additional instructional supports, or other interventions.



The state has also been requiring students to select specific career pathways in which they have to take at least three related courses. State officials believe that ILPs will help students meet this requirement, make it more meaningful, and ensure that the planning and implementation of career pathways is done early on in a student's high school experience and not as an afterthought.

One priority for the state is to work on an advisory program to accompany use of the ILPs that will enhance relationships among students and adults and help all the professionals in a school building share the load for mentoring and advising students. Delaware has selected the advisory component of SREB's [High Schools That Work](#) initiative as its model advisory program. The state has also contracted with [TransCen, Inc.](#), a nonprofit company that specializes in school-to-work transitions and career development for people with disabilities. With TransCen's help, the state department of education will implement the advisory program to be used in conjunction with the student ILPs, provide professional development on ILPs to mentors that will help them be effective users and interpreters of student data for the purpose of guiding students toward successful academic outcomes, and design an evaluation system that will include before and after surveys of users to determine whether the purposes of the ILPs are being met.

In addition, the state education agency is exploring various delivery programs and electronic systems for the ILPs.

For more information about Delaware's ILP system, contact Regina Greenwald at the Delaware Department of Education, rgreenwald@doe.k12.de.us.

Kentucky

According to Linda France, deputy commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Education's Bureau of Learning Results Services, helping students make successful transitions is at the heart of Kentucky's new ILP system.

Back in 2002, the state had required its students to complete Individual Graduation Plans (IGPs). But when the state's new regulations for minimum high school graduation requirements passed earlier this year, those IGPs were transformed into the state's current requirements (now ILPs) to reflect the emphasis on transitions and the belief that high schools should not just prepare students for graduation. Instead, the state wants to stress that high schools must prepare students to be successful in postsecondary education and the workplace. The new regulations also require students to develop their ILPs beginning in the sixth grade so that the plans address the middle to high school transition.



But perhaps the biggest change is Kentucky's shift from paper-and-pencil ILPs to a new web-based ILP system, which will connect to the statewide data system and be used for the first time this upcoming school year. The state education agency has worked with [Career Cruising](#), a developer of online career guidance resources, to create a sophisticated online system that will standardize the use of ILPs across districts and make the ILPs multidimensional tools. Districts are not required to use the web-based system, but all costs are covered by the state and training on using the online system will be provided for every district across the state.

The online ILPs allow students to access Career Cruising's guidance system and their results on state assessments, which are automatically uploaded from the state department of education's data system. Students also record which high school courses they will take to meet their goals and can compare their course schedules with Kentucky's and their schools' graduation requirements. An ILP completion status bar shows authorized users a student's progress in completing the ILP standards for their grade level. Those standards have been set by the Kentucky Department of Education to

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ensure that students are completing age-appropriate activities.

Administrative tools allow schools and districts to view individual students' ILPs and ILP data in the aggregate. For example, teachers, counselors, and administrators can analyze which colleges most students have indicated they are interested in attending or how many sophomores are on track to complete their ILPs. A parent login also permits parents to view their child's ILP and make comments.

A training phase to help schools implement the web-based ILPs will begin in September 2006 with the goal of all students in grades 6–12 to be working on their ILPs by December. Ongoing call-in support, online support materials, and parent guidance will also be provided by Career Cruising staff. Like Delaware, schools are required to use advisory systems to accompany implementation of the ILPs.

For more information about Kentucky's ILP system, click [here](#). (The website is under construction and information will continually be added.) For a Career Cruising PowerPoint with screenshots of the ILP web tool, click [here](#).

Washington

Washington state requires several different types of plans depending on the needs of each student. For example, student learning plans (SLPs) must be provided for students who are not successful on any or all content areas of

the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). The SLPs include actions the school will take to improve the student's performance, strategies to help parents improve their child's skills, and courses and other steps needed to help the student meet academic standards and graduate on time. In addition, all high school students beginning with the class of 2008 must complete a High School and Beyond Plan as one of four main graduation requirements. The state recommends that the high school and beyond plans include information on students' learning styles and their goals for high school and immediately afterwards. Students must also accrue a minimum of 19 course credits in specified areas, obtain a certificate of academic or individual achievement, and complete a culminating project.

Kyra Kester, special assistant for partnerships at Washington state's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), says that the state has become more sophisticated in offering professional development and technical assistance to help schools and districts go beyond minimum SLP requirements and be more efficient in connecting separate but related efforts.

The state hosts a professional development conference each year at which it presents different high school SLP models and how to incorporate advising into use of those plans.



The state is also using [Navigation 101](#), a student planning and guidance initiative created by the Franklin Pierce school district, to help districts and schools initiate early advising (in the fifth or sixth grades) on an ongoing basis. About 30 districts are in various stages of implementation and the state has established a competitive grant process to encourage more districts to take part. Twenty-five districts will receive awards of \$10,000 per school building in September and 75 more will receive awards in January. Washington has contracted with Franklin Pierce to provide technical assistance to participating districts on an on-demand basis.

State officials believe that Navigation 101 and similar models will help districts transform the state's graduation requirements from extra hurdles for high school seniors to rich experiences for students to work on throughout their secondary school careers.

Like Delaware and Kentucky, the state has explored how to use technology to make student plans more powerful. OSPI has created a simple web-based SLP tool that will roll out this fall. Similar to Navigation 101, the tool is an optional model that districts may use and adapt to suit their specific needs.

For more information about Washington's graduation requirements, including the High School and Beyond Plans, click [here](#).

Developing ILP Systems: Critical Questions to Consider

CCSSO asked officials from Delaware, Kentucky, and Washington for key questions that states should ask as they develop or improve their own ILP systems.

1. Why do you want to implement ILPs? What is their purpose and how will they be used?
2. Do you have commitment from the top as well as sufficient resources (both financial and human)?
3. Who implements use of the ILPs, and how they will be implemented? How will they be incorporated into the school day?
4. How will you get students and families on board?
5. How will you use technology to make the system sensible and accessible for students and families?
6. How will the ILPs be used to facilitate personalization and foster a connection with at least one adult in the school?
7. How will you develop an advisement system that goes hand-in-hand with the ILPs and sustains the goals of the ILPs?
8. Are you willing at the school, district, and state levels to confront the hard questions and conversations that will be raised through use of ILPs?

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Rhode Island's High School Diploma System

Rhode Island held High School Summits in 2000 and 2002 to address concerns about student performance. At those summits, the education community decided it was necessary to significantly raise graduation requirements while providing intensive support to high school students. How Rhode Island has gone about accomplishing those tasks sets it apart from many other states. Instead of adopting high-stakes tests that students must pass in order to graduate, the state passed its Board of Regents high school regulations in 2003 that focus on literacy, personalization, and graduation by proficiency. Together, the requirements are known as the Rhode Island High School Diploma System and the class of 2008 will be the first students to graduate under the new system.



requirement. Also, an 18 month grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation supported three state networks focused on the development of reliable local assessments—exhibitions, graduation portfolios, and common tasks. From those networks, RIDE and the [Education Alliance at Brown University](#) developed local assessment [toolkits](#) that contain resources and step-by-step guides to help schools develop, implement, and sustain graduation portfolios and exhibitions and use common tasks as part of their local diploma system. The initial Gates grant has ended, but

the state is exploring further funding sources to hire a local assessment consultant to support districts and schools in the field.

Under the regulations, schools must ensure that all students graduate with strong literacy skills that position them for postsecondary success. Schools have had to develop literacy programs that offer discipline-specific literacy instruction for all students, targeted literacy instruction for students in need of additional help, and intensive literacy instruction by a reading specialist and development of a Personal Literacy Plan for students in need of substantial help.

Schools must also create more personalized learning environments for high school students. They can use approaches such as student advisories, schools within schools, individual learning plans, and dual enrollment. The end goal is for every student to be assigned to an adult at the school who is knowledgeable about that student and tracks his or her progress. And the increased personalization does not stop with the students. All school staff must participate in annual professional development focused on literacy, personalization, and graduation by proficiency. Also, all high schools must provide weekly common planning time for teachers.

Finally, schools must choose at least two types of performance-based assessments through which students must demonstrate proficiency in core academic subjects in order to graduate. Those performance-based assessments might be portfolios, capstone projects, or public exhibitions. The purpose of the performance-based assessments are for students to demonstrate that they have mastered applied learning skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, research, and communication in addition to knowledge of the core curriculum.

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) has provided various supports to districts and schools as they implement the High School Diploma System requirements. First, detailed guidance documents provide districts and schools with extensive information on implementing each

In addition, the state is offering technical assistance to help schools and districts strengthen their performance-based assessments. According to Peter McWalters, the state's commissioner of education, often districts' and schools' performance-based activities (and the core content they measure) are sound, but local interpretations of proficiency and efforts to measure applied skills are not as strong or consistent. A big challenge has been figuring out how to bring common standards to disparate local assessments. The state has been working with the [Center for Assessment](#), an organization that helps states design and implement effective assessment and accountability policies and programs, to make local assessments more objective and reliable.

At the end of the summer, RIDE will be conducting its first formal review of schools' efforts to meet the High School Diploma System requirements. Officials from the state education agency anticipate some pushback from districts and schools after these audits are conducted, particularly because the state education agency's recent budget request of the legislature to provide targeted funds for technical assistance related to the diploma system were not granted. However, the legislature raised education budgets by 4.8 percent for all districts, and state officials plan to encourage districts to use those resources to fine tune their local assessment systems and other diploma system efforts. And state officials hope to continually find best practice examples across the state and push them out to other districts and schools so that everyone has the necessary resources to continuously improve their systems.

For more information on the Rhode Island Diploma System, including links to the regulations, guidance, toolkits, and technical assistance bulletin, click [here](#).

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(Academic Competitiveness Grants, continued from Page 1)

- State coursework requirements or recommendations for graduation (**11 states**): This includes states that have defined the coursework students must complete in order to graduate or states that have outlined recommended coursework.
- Dual enrollment programs (**11 states**): Similar to the AP option, these programs of study typically require students to complete two or more dual enrollment courses with at least passing grades for college credit.
- Southern Regional Education Board's [High Schools That Work](#) (HSTW) Award of Educational Achievement (**7 states**): This program of study requires students to complete the HSTW-recommended curriculum in at least two of the three subject areas (English, math, science); complete a concentration in a career/technical field, mathematics/science, or the humanities; and meet all three performance goals on the HSTW assessment.

In most cases, the required programs of study approved under the first two bullets include at least four years of English and three years of math, science, and social studies. In addition to the approved alternate programs of study, the department recognized advanced diploma requirements in 19 states.

First-year college students may receive up to \$750 and second-year students up to \$1,300 in Academic Competitiveness Grants if the student has successfully completed one of the approved rigorous secondary school programs of study. Second-year recipients must also have attained at least a 3.0 grade point average in their first year of study.

To qualify for the grants, students must also be eligible for federal Pell Grants, be United States citizens, and be full-time students enrolled in a two- or four-year degree-granting institution of higher education.

For more information on the recognized rigorous secondary school programs of study for each state for the 2006–07 award year, click [here](#).

RESOURCES & PUBLICATIONS

High School Reform and Work: Facing Labor Market Realities, Paul E. Barton, Educational Testing Service



This [report](#) describes how the occupational structure has changed over the past several decades, including the rising levels of education among workers. It analyzes two decades of surveys about what employers say they look for when hiring and the pervasive view that recent high school graduates are not ready for “adult” jobs. Projections of job openings and what they tell us about the education levels needed for the workforce of the future are also included. The report highlights the skills and knowledge that will be required for high school graduates to secure good jobs without a college diploma.

Transforming High School Teaching and Learning: A District-wide Design, Judy Wurtzel, The Aspen Institute



Drawing on the expertise of teachers, principals, superintendents, policymakers, and researchers, this [report](#) offers both a framework and concrete suggestions for a new approach to high school improvement across an urban school district. The paper suggests a set of design specifications for strengthening the interaction of student, teacher, and content, thereby increasing student performance. It also considers effective approaches to managed instruction.

Who's Counted? Who's Counting? Understanding High School Graduation Rates, Lyndsay Pinkus, Alliance for Excellent Education



This [report](#) explains why so many different graduation rate formulas and statistics exist, addresses why states report them differently, and defines the policy changes needed to ensure that educators, school officials, parents, and the public receive timely and accurate information about how many students are actually graduating so that they can assess their schools' effectiveness and make improvements. The report serves as a “users' guide” that helps individuals navigate through the maze of graduation rate calculations and reporting requirements; explains the role that graduation rates play in holding schools, districts, and states accountable; and provides a detailed chronology of reform initiatives. It also describes the various calculation methods and includes a state-by-state comparison of the most commonly reported graduation rates.

Case for Action and Identifying Potential Dropouts: Key Lessons for Building an Early Warning Data System, Achieve, Inc.



Achieve recently revamped its website to include a new section, “[Case for Action](#),” which houses powerful advocacy tools and examples of places that are practicing

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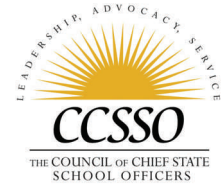
proven reforms and seeing results. This section includes a database of communications tools and model public awareness campaign materials, PowerPoint presentations, fact sheets that address common questions around high school reform such as “Will Raising High School Graduation Requirements Cause More Students To Drop Out?”, summaries of compelling poll data, and updated education pipeline and economic data. In addition, Achieve has released a [report](#) that includes a brief overview of research on drop-outs and identifies the best strategies for building an early warning data system.

Honoring Progress: An Update on the NGA Center Honor States, National Governors Association



In May, the National Governors Association (NGA) released the first issue of its bimonthly [newsletter](#) about the progress of the NGA Honor States Grant Program, a \$23.6 million, governor-led effort to improve college and work ready graduation rates. The first issue explores science, technology, engineering, and math education—or STEM—a priority for governors as they try to enhance workforce competitiveness in a global economy. The newsletter also highlights the progress that three states—North Carolina, Rhode Island, and Texas—have made in the area and list some resources for policymakers interested in learning more.

Secondary School Redesign Conference, *Rigor and Reality: Taking Secondary School Reform Statewide*, Council of Chief State School Officers



Speakers' PowerPoint presentations and other resources from CCSSO's June conference in Atlanta are now available [online](#). The conference helped state officials network, share, and learn with officials from other states about progress, strategies, and achievements in states' implementation of high school redesign activities since 2005; develop a greater understanding of national secondary school reform initiatives and how states are customizing those initiatives to meet the needs of their student populations; and learn new knowledge and skills that will lead to greater state capacity to deliver effective services to school districts and their high schools. Breakout sessions covered topics such as high school assessments that inform instruction, defining and tracking indicators of high school student success, integrating core academic subjects with career and technical education, multiple pathways for high school students, and new models of learning.

CCSSO Secondary School Redesign Web Forum

At CCSSO's Secondary School Redesign Conference in Atlanta, ***Rigor and Reality: Taking Secondary School Reform Statewide***, state education agency officials participated in cross-state group discussions focused on academic rigor, transitions into and out of high school, and measuring student achievement.

CCSSO will be continuing those conversations among state officials through an online web forum, which will be accessible from its [website](#). For more information, including how to register to take part in the discussions, contact Melissa McCabe at melissam@ccsso.org or 202-336-7072.

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. Through leadership, advocacy, and service, the Council assists chief state school officers and their organizations in achieving the vision of an American education system that enables all children to succeed in school, work, and life.

Council of Chief State School Officers

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