

Supporting Secondary School Redesign

SUMMER 2007

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 3

HIGH SCHOOL AND NCLB REAUTHORIZATION

THE GRADUATION PROMISE ACT & THE GRADUATES ACT

The Center for American Progress, The Alliance for Excellent Education, Jobs for the Future, and the National Council of La Raza have worked together to create the Graduation Promise Act. These groups drafted the Graduation Promise Act in anticipation of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The goal of the legislation is to outline the appropriate federal role in addressing the drop out crisis across the country. The Graduation Promise Act is comprised of three grant opportunities for states to support their high schools and to pilot innovative initiatives to tackle the drop out crisis.

Title I accounts for \$2.4 billion of the \$2.5 billion allocated in the Graduation Promise Act and is a formula grant from the federal government to the states. The formula is a combination of concentration of poverty and the average freshman graduation rate of each state. The federal government gives money to states in exchange for the development of a differentiated system of high school improvement based on adequate yearly progress measures.

Title II creates a \$60 million annual investment through a competitive grant process to expand the field of effective models for students who are at risk of dropping out. It is open to eligible entities, which could be a local education agency, state education agency, or a non-profit organization. Groups would get a grant by establishing a particular need for a model and the research base for it. There is a requirement that grantees gather data on the effectiveness of the design and the outcomes and that there be a third party evaluation of the whole grants program.

Title III is a State Policy Innovation Fund that offers \$40 million in competitive grants to up to twenty states over the course of five years. The states will apply through an application where they will identify an area of policy innovation and apply to the U.S. Department of Education for funding. This is built on the premise that there are front runner states that have begun to move aggressively to raise graduation rates and raise standards.

Representative Rubén Hinojosa (D-TX) and Senators Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), Richard Burr (R-NC), and Health, Education, Pensions, and Labor Committee Chairman Edward Kennedy (D-MA) introduced this [legislation](#) in the House and Senate.



Senators Reid and Pryor introduced another piece of legislation similar to Title III of the Graduation Promise Act called The GRADUATES Act. This Act offers \$500 in competitive grants to state and local education agencies to partner with businesses or community organizations to create high schools. The models will only be replicated and continue to receive funding if they produce evidence of achieving academic gains for their students.

The Alliance for Excellent Education, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Jobs for the Future, the National Governors Association, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have expressed their support for the [legislation](#).



Table of Contents

- 1 High School and NCLB Reauthorization
- 2 CCSSO Update
- 3 Adolescent Literacy Resources
- 4 Postsecondary Education Options Resources
- 5 Additional Resources

CCSSO UPDATE

Summer Institute Portland, Maine

Chiefs from across the nation recently met in Portland, Maine for CCSSO's annual Summer Institute. Participants enjoyed provocative speakers and productive conversations about the direction of education. The following presenters shared ideas particularly relevant for high school redesign:

- Marc Tucker, president of the National Center on Education and the Economy and Co-Chair of the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, presented the New Commission's report, *Tough Choices or Tough Times*. The report proposes significant reforms that include offering a rigorous high school exit exam in tenth grade, greatly increasing the number of students attending community and technical colleges, and providing a rigorous eleventh and twelfth grade curriculum for students who scored at the highest levels on the exit exam. For a more complete understanding of the Commission's vision, see the [executive summary](#).
- Daniel Pink, author of *A Whole New Mind*, argued that right brain skills are becoming more prized in today's global economy. Pink emphasized the need for education to reflect this changing reality.

Secondary School Redesign Product Development

CCSSO has been hard at work with state education agency (SEA) staff, content experts, and partners to develop tools and resources to help states more effectively implement secondary school redesign initiatives. The tool ideas were shaped by SEA staff who attended CCSSO's April Secondary School Redesign National Meeting in Austin, Texas. The following are descriptions of the tools in the works.

- **Adolescent Literacy Online Toolkit**
CCSSO, in partnership with the Public Consulting Group's Center for Resource Management and several other content experts, is developing an Adolescent Literacy Online Toolkit. This toolkit is designed to be used by states with their districts and schools to provide content area high school teachers with resources and support for integrating literacy instruction into their content area teaching, with the end goal of improving both students' literacy skills and their grasp of core content. The toolkit includes a Teacher Self Assessment Rubric and Planning Tool for teachers to assess their current literacy practices, sample lesson plans and lesson narratives that show literacy strategies at work in the classroom, and a question and answer section for each of the four core content areas where experts make the case for the importance of literacy instruction in those areas and provide key guidance for teachers. The Adolescent Literacy Toolkit will be available online by the end of September.
- **Postsecondary Education Options White Paper**
The paper will identify dual enrollment indicators that should be measured and the kinds of data systems that are needed to calculate and track those indicators so states better understand who is being served, how they are being served, and student outcomes. The paper will also include guidance for local education agencies (LEAs) as to data they should be collecting, how they should be collected, and how to use the data to improve programs.
- **Secondary School Redesign Web Portal**
This portal is designed to provide key resources to state education agencies seeking to deepen their understanding of secondary school redesign and enhance redesign efforts in their states. These pages provide relevant research, state planning documents, case studies, and tools that can help put a state vision for secondary school redesign into practice. For the first time, CCSSO is able to provide some of the best resources that states have created and used when working on secondary school redesign efforts on one site. In addition to state resources, this site includes national and regional resources that provide the larger context and more broad-based perspective on the issues. You will find access to resources specific to the following categories: 1) Supporting Instruction, 2) Facilitating Transitions, and 3) Providing Leadership.
- **Leadership Self-Assessment Rubric**
The leadership rubric is an organizational assessment framework for SEA officials to use within their organization to determine readiness to lead and support redesign efforts statewide. This framework includes tools on data elements and analysis, stakeholder analysis, message development, and organizational redesign recommendations to successfully support the implementation for secondary school redesign efforts. The tools include elements that in particular prompt and encourage SEA officials to consider how existing school improvement strategies for struggling high schools are integrated into emergent, broader statewide high school reform efforts.

States who attended the Secondary School Redesign National Meeting in April will be attending CCSSO's follow up meeting in September to preview the tools and offer suggestions for improvement and dissemination strategies.

ADOLESCENT LITERACY RESOURCES

Literacy Instruction in the Content Areas: Getting to the Core of Middle and High School Improvement

The Alliance for Excellent Education, with support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, presented their report, *Literacy Instruction in the Content Areas: Getting to the Core of Middle and High School Redesign* on June 12, 2007. In the report, co-authors Cynthia L. Greenleaf and Rafael Heller made the case that content area literacy instruction must be a cornerstone of any movement to build high quality secondary schools.

Literacy instruction has traditionally been a focus of the elementary curriculum but has not always been emphasized at the high school level. However, current high school reform initiatives have recognized the importance of adolescent literacy instruction in preparing students for college, work, and citizenship. This report makes the case for an expanded agenda for adolescent literacy reform. Data demonstrate that teaching literacy skills in English classes is not enough, so the report calls for a concerted effort to require literacy instruction in every content area at the secondary level.

As students enter the secondary years, they are not only required to read more, but they are also required to read more *complex* and *varied* forms of text. Each content area presents readings of varied styles, vocabularies, text structures, purposes, and intended audiences. Because of this, every content area has its own set of characteristic literacy practices.

This report stresses the importance for content area teachers to not only teach their content, but also to explicitly teach content-specific literacy practices so students can think, read, write, and speak like a scientist, mathematician, historian, or literature expert.

The Alliance contends that in order to address this expanded agenda, federal, state, and district policy makers must do the following:

1. Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of content area teachers and stress that basic reading instruction is not their responsibility
2. Require members of each content area to define the literacy skills that are needed in their respective areas and should be taught
3. Provide ongoing professional development to secondary school teachers in teaching the literacy skills that are essential to their content area
4. Encourage school and district regulations, educa-

tion funding systems, and state standards and accountability systems to work together to give content area teachers positive incentives and appropriate tools with which to provide reading and writing instruction

The challenge is not to merely call attention to the adolescent literacy problem, but to connect adolescent literacy instruction to the rest of the secondary school improvement agenda. For more information, see the full [report](#).

Federal Support for Adolescent Literacy: A Solid Investment

The Alliance for Excellent Education also released an issue brief in June 2007 that calls for federal support for adolescent literacy. The issue brief offers a summary of what has been happening with literacy at the federal level.

This brief also outlines the need for a clear, comprehensive policy agenda. In the recent research, several recommendations have come through loud and clear. Common recommendations advise policymakers to:

- Encourage schools, districts, and states to have comprehensive and actionable plans for improving adolescent literacy
- Invest in assessment tools that schools can use to identify struggling readers, track their progress, and adjust instruction to meet their needs
- Invest in targeted intervention to allow students that are behind to catch up with peers
- Invest in ongoing professional development programs that help secondary teachers provide effective literacy instruction
- Invest in accountability systems that give teachers incentives to provide literacy instruction
- Invest in ongoing research and evaluation of strategies to improve adolescent literacy.

The full issue brief is available [online](#).

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION OPTIONS RESOURCES

Ready for What? Preparing Students for College, Careers, and Life After High School Diplomas Count 2007

This summer Education Week released its annual report, *Diplomas Count*. The report uses information from the Occupational Information Network developed for the U.S. Department of Labor and the American Community Survey. Combined, these resources illustrate the proportions of adults holding jobs at various levels, their median earnings, and their average education levels. The findings make clear that to hold a job with a at least a median salary of \$35,672, an employee must have some education beyond high school. Currently, only 70 percent of students graduate from high school within four years and that number drops to 46 and 52 for black and Hispanic males, respectively. The report compares the kinds of jobs in a given labor market with the average level of educational attainment by the current high school population to show how well education systems are preparing their students for the realities of their local economies.

The report contends that while it is known that students need education beyond high school in order to improve their prospects in the current and future labor markets, it is less clear what specific skills are needed. In order to gain clarity, states are beginning to define “college and work readiness,” as well as increase graduation requirements and implement more rigorous exit exams. More information about *Diplomas Count* and specific information about your state is available [online](#).

edweek.org

Justesen Outlines CTE's Future, Importance of Business Partnerships, Sharing Best Practices

The Association for Career and Technical Education interviewed Troy Justesen, Assistant Secretary for the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE), to get his thoughts on OVAE's vision for the future of career and technical education (CTE). The following are Justesen's major thoughts regarding (CTE) in the 21st century.

- OVAE works closely with the Employment Administration at the Department of Labor to align CTE curriculum with U.S. employment needs. Increasing the relevance of CTE courses in this way is crucial to U.S. economic health.
- Another OVAE priority is improving the rigor of CTE courses to comply with NCLB and ensure that students are work- or college-ready without remediation upon completion of CTE programs.
- It is essential to evaluate CTE programs and use data to determine best practices that should be replicated in CTE programs across the country.

The complete interview is available [online](#) via a podcast.



The Promise of Dual Enrollment: Assessing Ohio's Early College Access Policy

Knowledge Works and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education wrote *The Promise of Dual Enrollment: Assessing Ohio's Early College Access Policy* to assess the progress of Ohio's Early College Access Policy. Their major findings include the following

- Data limitations make it difficult, if not impossible, to track students as they move from high school to post-secondary education. It is also difficult to break out data for specific demographic groups.
- Less than five percent of Ohio students have taken advantage of postsecondary education options (PSEO) in a given year.
- Students who participate in PSEO programs typically take rigorous course loads of more than six credit hours per semester.
- Nine out of ten PSEO students are white and two out of three are female. Participation is lower in the urban centers and rural areas.
- PSEO students are more likely to go to college, graduate, and finish earlier, but this analysis does not account for self-selection bias.
- The state pays for student expenses associated with taking college courses with funds that would usually go to local school districts. School districts had to make cuts in other areas of K - 12 education due to this loss of funding. The state funds are also not enough to cover all costs to the colleges so students must pay for some expenses out of pocket which denies some students access to dual enrollment programs.

The full report is available [online](#).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A Plan for Success, Communities of Color Define Policy Priorities for High School Reform

The Alliance for Excellent Education organized the creation of the Campaign for High School Equity which wrote *A Plan for Success, Communities of Color Define Policy Priorities for High School Reform*. Its members include the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Education Fund, the League of United Latin American Citizens, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund, the National Council of La Raza, the National Indian Education Association, the National Urban League, and the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center. The goal of *A Plan for Success* is to convey to lawmakers reauthorizing ESEA of the need to address the crisis in American high schools that is disproportionately affecting minority students. The Campaign for High School Equity's policy priorities are as follows

- make all students prepared for college and work.
- redesign the American high school
- hold high schools accountable for student success.
- provide students with the excellent leaders and teachers they need to succeed
- invest communities in student success
- provide equitable learning conditions for all students

Campaign for High School Equity
Preparing every student for graduation, college, work, and life.

MDRC Education Policy Videos

Over the past four years, MDRC has created short videos summarizing some of the latest research and policies in education reform. Videos available on their [website](#) include the following

- *Making Progress Toward Graduation: Evidence From the Talent Development High School Project*
- *Career-Related Experiences in High School Can Help Students Earn More Later*
- *Closing the Education Achievement Gap*

mdrc

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

One Massachusetts Avenue, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20001-1431

Dropout Rates in the United States: 2005

The National Center for Education Statistics released a report in June 2007 on dropout rates in the United States. The report uses the following four dropout measures to provide a comprehensive picture of the issue both recently and over time as well as breaking down findings demographically.

1. Event dropout rate: The number of students who have left high school between the beginning of one school year and the beginning of the next without earning a college degree.
2. Status dropout rate: The percentage of people in a certain age range that do not have a high school degree or an equivalency credential.
3. Status completion rate: The percentage of people in a certain age range that have completed high school or earned an equivalency credential.
4. Averaged freshman graduation rate: The percentage of high school freshman who graduate within four years after starting ninth grade.

The full report is available [online](#).



New Hampshire High School Reform

New Hampshire Public Radio interviewed education leaders working on high school redesign in New Hampshire. To hear the July 24, 2007 broadcast, click [here](#) and look for the broadcast entitled "New Hampshire High School Reform." The participants discussed the following topics during their program

- New Hampshire's replacement of the Carnegie unit with a focus on content mastery, applied learning, a more rigorous curriculum, and authentic assessments
- the importance of individualized learning plans for every student and how to create them
- the new role of the teacher in this much more personalized learning environment

