

Action Plan for Educational Leaders and Policymakers

As a nation, we can no longer afford to graduate high school students who are not ready for college or the workplace. A well-defined and rigorous core curriculum is needed now. In order to succeed after high school, every high school student should take the *Courses for Success*: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and upper-level mathematics courses beyond Algebra II.

Everyone has a critical role to play in helping to realize this goal: educational leaders and policymakers, business and community leaders, parents and students. Your assistance is necessary and important. Here are some of the ways in which you can help in this effort.

Common Focus

- ▼ Determine if there is a common understanding among K–12 and higher education officials as to what students need to know to be ready for college and workplace success.
- ▼ Use ACT's Standards for Transition® as a common language to define these expectations.
- ▼ Conduct ongoing research on ways to positively affect student readiness for college and work at all levels: national, state, and local.
- ▼ Help build information bridges between K–12 and state higher education systems with annual reports provided by K–12 to higher education that describe the characteristics of the incoming student body, and with follow-up reports provided by higher education to K–12 that summarize actual student success one year later.
- ▼ Have postsecondary educators conduct in-service activities with K–12 teachers to share upper-level teaching expertise across the two systems.
- ▼ Integrate information about K–12 longitudinal assessment systems into teacher education programs to prepare new teachers for the kinds of information they will be receiving on a regular basis about their future students; provide pre-service teachers with the tools they need to become assessment-literate professionals.

High Expectations

- ▼ Raise expectations that *all* students can meet college and workplace readiness standards.
- ▼ Compare school and state standards to college readiness standards, using ACT's Standards for Transition.
- ▼ Identify college readiness standards that are missing from school and state standards and incorporate them as expectations for all students.
- ▼ Provide pre-service teachers in teacher education programs with the knowledge and tools they need to be able to prepare all students for college and work.

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Rigorous Curriculum

- ▼ Evaluate the K–8 curriculum to ensure that the foundational skills in reading, writing, and math are being introduced early and appropriately, and are being reinforced and mastered at the appropriate times.
- ▼ Ensure that every student has the opportunity to learn these college readiness skills and that the *Courses for Success* (Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and advanced mathematics courses beyond Algebra II) are offered at every high school, through increased course offerings in high schools, dual enrollment opportunities, summer bridge programs, distance learning, or other enrichment offerings.
- ▼ Ensure that teachers are prepared to teach rigorous courses and have staff development opportunities to continuously update their subject matter knowledge and teaching skills.
- ▼ Evaluate and improve the K–12 curricular alignment of curriculum frameworks in English/language arts, mathematics, and science to ensure that the important college/work readiness skills are being introduced, reaffirmed, and mastered at the appropriate times in K–12 education.
- ▼ Evaluate and improve the rigor of the core courses and the *Courses for Success* to make sure that they emphasize the skills students need to be ready for success after high school.
- ▼ Provide resources for teachers that offer model lessons, sample assignments and student work, and other support to help all teachers teach to the same rigorous standards.
- ▼ Commit funding to curriculum improvement initiatives.

Student Guidance

- ▼ Expand and evaluate efforts to provide career and educational planning services to all students.
- ▼ Ensure that career and educational planning activities are begun early, at least by the middle school/junior high school years.
- ▼ Raise student aspirations using systematic approaches like that provided by ACT's Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS)[®], so that all students can consider—and prepare for—the option of college.
- ▼ Take steps to ensure that all students are taking an adequate number and kind of high school courses.
- ▼ See that parents are involved in key educational and postsecondary planning steps.

Measure Progress

- ▼ Redirect funding to implement an achievement-based college readiness measure, such as the ACT Assessment[®], as part of a statewide assessment system.
- ▼ Assess students' foundational skills on a routine basis in elementary school to identify those students who are falling behind early, when there is still time to intervene and strengthen these skills.
- ▼ Identify and improve student readiness for college and work early and often using longitudinal student progress assessments like ACT's Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS).
- ▼ Incorporate college and workplace readiness measures into statewide school reporting and accountability/reward systems.