

Education: The State We're In

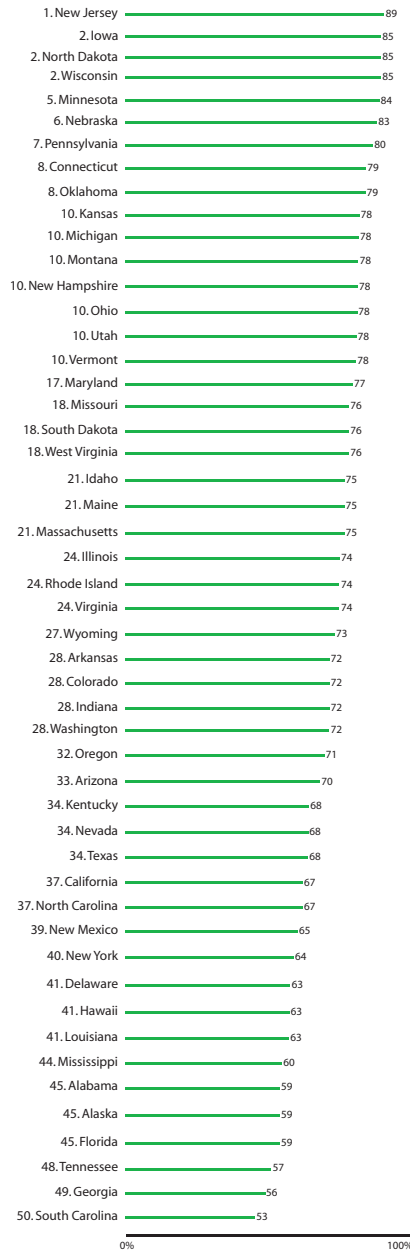
The link between high school and post-secondary education is weak

For the last 50 years, high-school graduation has been the ultimate educational goal for most American students. However, in today's global, technology- and information-driven society, a high-school diploma is no longer sufficient for achieving the American dream of a middle-class lifestyle. Our global society and economy demand many more employees with knowledge and skill sets beyond those typically learned in high school, and a college or post-secondary vocational credential is often necessary to prove that students have developed such abilities. Unfortunately, in a world where higher education is increasingly essential, too few students even meet the baseline requirements for high-school graduation. Further, many of those who do graduate are not academically prepared for post-secondary opportunities, do not enroll in post-secondary education, and do not earn a college diploma or a post-secondary vocational credential of any kind.

Nationally, the high-school graduation rate is approximately 70%.¹ Among minorities, the graduation rate is significantly lower. Approximately 56% of African-Americans and 52% of Latinos graduate from high school, compared to 78% of whites.² Completion of a high-school diploma has a huge impact on one's employment status and income; among all education levels, unemployment rates are the highest (8.8%)³ and average annual earnings are the lowest (less than \$19,000)⁴ for those who lack a high-school diploma. States vary widely in the degree to which they are succeeding in graduating students from high school. The best high-school graduation rates are in New Jersey (89%), Iowa (85%), North Dakota (85%) and Wisconsin (85%). In contrast, the nation's lowest high-school graduation rates are found in Georgia (56%) and South Carolina (53%).

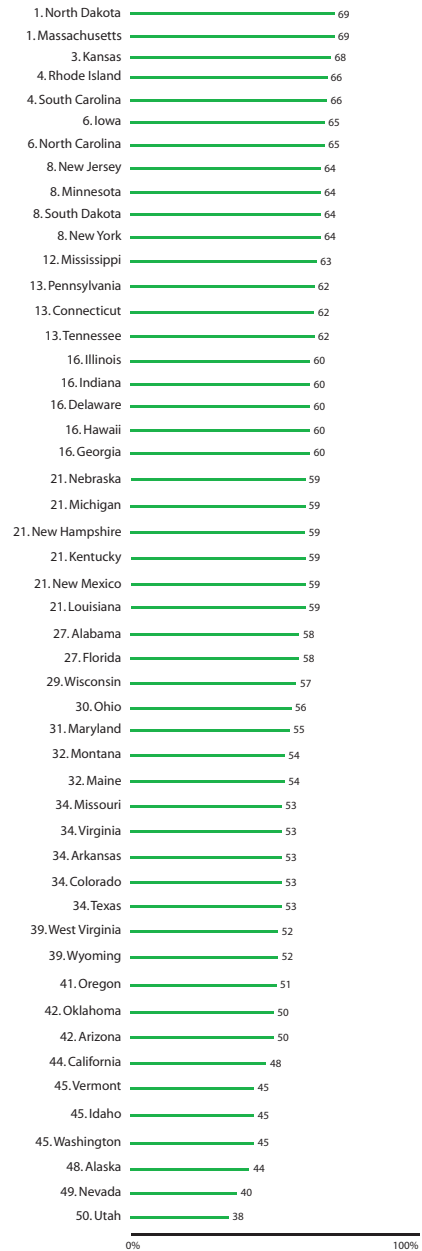
Among the students who do graduate from high school, only 57% enroll directly in college.⁵ Although the percent of high-school graduates with college-ready skills⁶ has increased over time, it remains shockingly low at just 34%.⁷ These students who are under-prepared for college must often take additional coursework to make up for what they did not learn in high school. Analyses of student transcripts reveal that

High School Graduation Rate (2002)



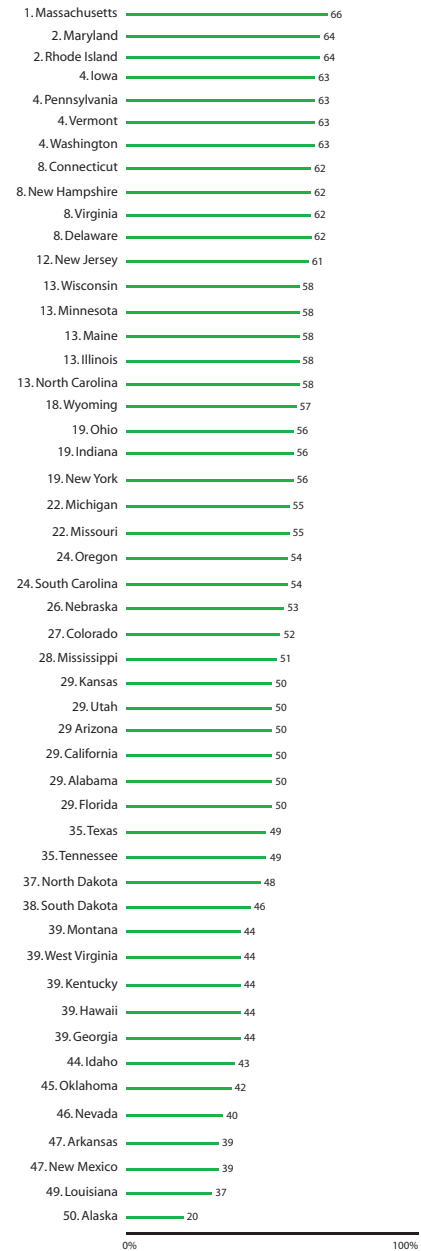
Source: Jay Greene and Marcus A. Winters, *Public High-School Graduation and College Readiness Rates: 1991-2002* (New York, NY: Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, 2005).

College Enrollment Rate (2002) (% of h.s. graduates matriculating directly to college)



Source: Committee for Economic Development, *Cracks in the Education Pipeline: A Business Leader's Guide to Higher Education Reform* (Washington, DC: May 2005).

College Graduation Rate (2003) (% of college freshmen graduating within 6 years)



Source: Committee for Economic Development, *Cracks in the Education Pipeline: A Business Leader's Guide to Higher Education Reform* (Washington, DC: May 2005).

half (53%) of all college students take at least one remedial English or math class during their college career.⁸

Lack of academic preparation, inability to pay for a full college experience, and economic pressures to seek full-time employment prevent many students from completing a post-secondary program and receiving credentialing. Across the states, little more than half of all college freshmen actually receive a bachelor's degree within six years.⁹ Massachusetts, Maryland and Rhode Island have the highest college graduation rates with 66%, 64% and 64%, respectively. Those states with the lowest college graduation rates are New Mexico (39%), Louisiana (37%) and Alaska (20%). Of the six in 10 high school graduates who enroll in college immediately after high school, only three will earn a college degree.

Renewing Our Schools, Securing Our Future: A National Task Force on Public Education addresses the leaky pipeline between high school enrollment and college completion by calling for more rigorous high-school coursework, three alternative pathways for the senior year of high school, and enhanced financial aid to help students better afford college.

- Elena Rocha

¹ Greene, Jay P. and Marcus Winters. *Public High School Graduation and College-Readiness Rates: 1991-2002*, (New York, NY: The Manhattan Institute, Feb. 2005).

² Ibid.

³ Occupational Outlook Quarterly, *More Education: Lower Unemployment, Higher Pay*, (Washington, DC: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Fall 2004). Available at: <http://www.bls.gov/opub/ooq/2004/fall/oochart.pdf>.

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, *Educational Attainment in the United States: 2004, Table 9, 2005*. www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/education/cps2004.html.

⁵ Committee for Economic Development, *Cracks in the Education Pipeline: A Business Leader's Guide to Higher Education Reform*, (Washington, DC: May 2005).

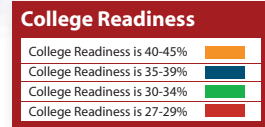
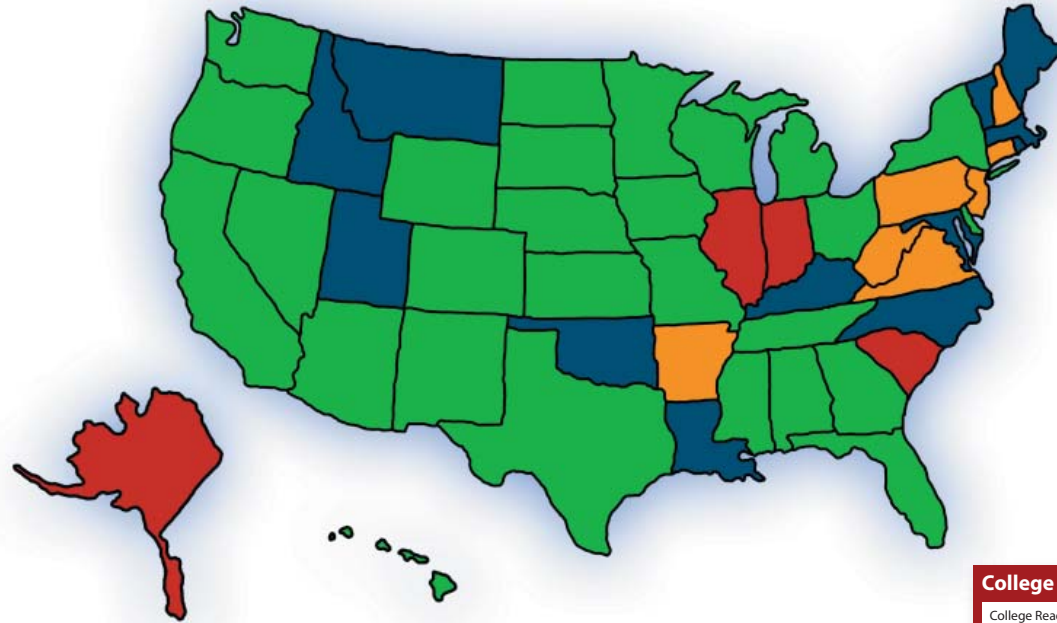
⁶ College readiness was calculated based on attainment of a regular high school degree, completion of a minimum set of course requirements, and ability to read at a basic level. See footnote 1 for more information.

⁷ Greene, Jay P. and Marcus Winters. *Public High School Graduation and College-Readiness Rates: 1991-2002*, (New York, NY: The Manhattan Institute, Feb. 2005).

⁸ American Diploma Project, *Ready or Not: Creating a High-School Diploma That Counts*, (Washington, DC: Achieve, Inc., 2004). Available at: [http://www.achieve.org/dstore.nsf/Lookup/ADPreport/\\$file/ADPreport.pdf](http://www.achieve.org/dstore.nsf/Lookup/ADPreport/$file/ADPreport.pdf)

⁹ Committee for Economic Development, *Cracks in the Education Pipeline: A Business Leader's Guide to Higher Education Reform*, (Washington, DC: May 2005).

College Readiness Rates, 2002



Source: Jay Greene and Marcus A. Winters, *Public High-School Graduation and College Readiness Rates: 1991-2002* (New York, NY: Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, 2005).

1. New Jersey	45	25. Minnesota	33
2. Pennsylvania	41	25. Nebraska	33
2. West Virginia	41	25. Oregon	33
4. Connecticut	40	25. Arizona	33
4. New Hampshire	40	25. Mississippi	33
4. Virginia	40	25. Florida	33
4. Arkansas	40	32. Nevada	32
8. Vermont	39	32. Texas	32
8. Maryland	39	32. California	32
10. Maine	38	32. New York	32
10. Massachusetts	38	32. Delaware	32
12. Oklahoma	37	32. Alabama	32
12. Utah	37	38. Kansas	31
12. Rhode Island	37	38. Michigan	31
12. Kentucky	37	38. Ohio	31
12. North Carolina	37	38. Tennessee	31
17. Montana	36	38. Georgia	31
18. Idaho	35	43. Missouri	30
18. Louisiana	35	43. South Dakota	30
20. Iowa	34	43. New Mexico	30
20. Wisconsin	34	43. Hawaii	30
20. Wyoming	34	47. Illinois	29
20. Colorado	34	47. South Carolina	29
20. Washington	34	49. Indiana	28
25. North Dakota	33	50. Alaska	27