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What Is College and Career Readiness?

A Summary of State Definitions

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On March 13, 2010, President Barack Obama issued a blueprint for reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). In his opening letter, he declared that America “. . . must ensure that every student graduates from high school well prepared for college and a career” (United States Department of Education, 2010). The blueprint, however, does not provide a clear, concise definition for what constitutes being “well prepared.” Furthermore, although there have been numerous attempts in the past by researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders to define what it means to be college and career ready, none of these groups exactly agree what makes a student equipped for postsecondary life. However, a consensus is emerging: a student is college and career ready when he or she can both enroll in *and* successfully complete postsecondary collegiate or vocational programs *without* remedial academic work or assistance (Conley, 2012).

In the United States, about twenty percent of states have officially created and adopted definitions of college and career readiness. These states—Arizona, Florida, Idaho, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Nevada, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia—collectively define it as encompassing the knowledge, skills, academic preparation, and foundations expected to ensure student success in two- and four-year college credit-bearing courses, without remediation. These courses may lead to a certificate, license, associate’s degree, or bachelor’s degree, and generally require more rigorous knowledge in English Language Arts

and Mathematics. Texas extends this knowledge requirement for students and believes “. . . a strong knowledge of basic science [and] . . . a fundamental knowledge of American culture and the world beyond . . . ” are as important as English literacy and mathematical competence (Texas Higher Education Board & Texas Education Agency, 2009).

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The remaining states have not adopted an official definition of college and career readiness. With the exception of Nebraska, the others have joined the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI), ACT College and Career Readiness System (ACCRS), or both. These two organizations have created their own definitions^{1,2}, which generally reflect the same curricular objectives and life goals as the states previously mentioned. These objectives affirm that students are college and career ready when they are able to enroll and succeed in postsecondary coursework without the need for remediation.

The table below outlines each state’s definition of college and career readiness and shows whether they associate with the CCSSI, ACCRS, or both. It is unlikely that all states will agree on a verbatim definition in the future. However, the general description emerging can not only facilitate interstate discussions on multiple levels, but also provide schools, districts, educators, students, and other stakeholders with clear objectives to effectively prepare students for postsecondary endeavors.

State	State Definition of College and Career Readiness
Arizona	Arizona officially defines college and career readiness as the knowledge and skills needed “. . . to ensure that all students [can] be successful in college, career and life.” Furthermore, Arizona specifically defines college readiness as when any “. . . graduating student is prepared for any postsecondary education or training experience, including study at two- and four-year institutions leading to a postsecondary credential (i.e. a certificate, license, associate or bachelor’s degree) [and] has the English and mathematics knowledge and skills necessary to qualify for and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses without the need for remedial coursework” (Arizona Business and Education Coalition, n.d.). Arizona also participates in the Common Core State Standards Initiative ¹ .
Florida	The Florida Department of Education officially considers students “. . . college and career ready when they have the knowledge, skills, and academic preparation needed to enroll and succeed in introductory college credit-bearing courses within an associate or baccalaureate degree program without the need for remediation. These same attributes and levels of achievement are needed for entry into and success in postsecondary workforce education or directly into a job that offers gainful employment and career advancement” (Florida Department of Education, 2011). Florida also participates in the Common Core State Standards Initiative ¹ .
Idaho	Idaho officially defines college and career readiness based on the “. . . content standards that define what students are expected to know and be able to do to enter and advance in college and/or their careers . . . Rigorous college and career readiness standards should: Be developed and continually validated in collaboration with secondary, postsecondary, and industry partners; Incorporate essential knowledge and skills (i.e., academic skills, communication, and problem-solving), which students must master regardless of their chosen career area or program of study; Provide the same rigorous knowledge and skills in English and mathematics that employers and colleges expect of high school graduates; Incorporate industry-recognized technical standards that are valued in the workplace; [and] to the extent practicable, be internationally benchmarked so that all students are prepared to succeed in a global economy” (Idaho Division of Professional-Technical Education, n.d.). Idaho also participates in the Common Core State Standards Initiative ¹ .
Kentucky	Kentucky officially defines college readiness as “. . . the level of preparation a student needs to succeed in credit-bearing courses in college. ‘Succeed’ is defined as completing entry-level courses at a level of understanding and proficiency that prepares the student for subsequent courses. Kentucky’s system-wide standards of readiness guarantee students access to credit-bearing coursework without the need for remediation in high school or college coursework or intervention programming” (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, n.d.). The Commonwealth of Kentucky also participates in the Common Core State Standards Initiative ¹ .
Massachusetts	The Commonwealth of Massachusetts defines college and career readiness as when “. . . an individual has the knowledge and skills necessary for success in postsecondary education and economically viable career pathways in a 21st century economy” (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2012). Massachusetts also participates in the Common Core State Standards Initiative ¹ .
Nevada	Nevada defines “‘college readiness’ [to mean] the demonstrated proficiency of a high school graduate to participate and succeed in an academic program leading to completion of a 2-year or 4-year college degree program” (Nevada System of Higher Education, 2011). Nevada also participates in the Common Core State Standards Initiative ¹ .
Tennessee	Tennessee defines college and career readiness as “. . . the knowledge and skills needed for entry-level work and college freshmen coursework [and] success whether pursuing a career or a college education” (Tennessee Department of Education, n.d.). Tennessee also participates in the Common Core State Standards Initiative ¹ .

State	State Definition of College and Career Readiness
Texas	Texas defines college readiness as “. . . what students must know and be able to do to succeed in entry-level courses at postsecondary institutions in Texas,” and career readiness as “. . . employees [who are] able to read and communicate well, to perform relatively complex mathematical calculations accurately, to possess a strong knowledge of basic science, to have a fundamental knowledge of American culture and the world beyond, and to be able to think critically and adjust to rapidly changing work environments” (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board & Texas Education Agency, 2009).
Virginia	Virginia defines college readiness as “. . . the level of achievement students must reach to be academically prepared for success in entry-level credit-bearing college courses” (Virginia Department of Education, 2012).

The following states do not have an official state definition of what it means to be college and career ready. However, they participate in the Common Core State Standards Initiative¹.

Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Georgia, Hawai’i, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota³, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming.

In addition to participating in the Common Core State Standards Initiative, the following states participate in the ACT College and Career Readiness System²:

Illinois, Michigan, North Dakota, Wyoming.

The following states provide no definition of college and career readiness, nor participate in either the Common Core State Standards Initiative or ACT College and Career Readiness System:

Nebraska.

¹ This state participates in the Common Core State Standards Initiative. This initiative “. . . defines the rigorous skills and knowledge in English Language Arts and Mathematics that need to be effectively taught and learned for students to be ready to succeed academically in credit-bearing, college-entry courses and in workforce training programs. These standards have been developed to be: Fewer, clearer, and higher, to best drive effective policy and practice; Aligned with college and work expectations, so that all students are prepared for success upon graduating from high school; Inclusive of rigorous content and applications of knowledge through higher-order skills, so that all students are prepared for the 21st century; Internationally benchmarked, so that all students are prepared for succeeding in our global economy and society; and Research and evidence-based.”

² This state participates in the ACT College and Career Readiness System. This system defines “college and career readiness” as “. . . the acquisition of the knowledge and skills a student needs to enroll and succeed in credit-bearing first-year courses at a postsecondary institution (such as a two- or four-year college, trade school, or technical school) without the need for remediation. ACT’s definition of college and career readiness was adopted by the Common Core State Standards Initiative, which serves as validation of our extensive research and ACT’s College and Career Readiness Standards.”

³ Minnesota has only adopted the Common Core State Standards Initiative in English Language Arts.

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College- and Career-Readiness in science presents different challenges than those posed in determining college- and career-readiness in mathematics and English language arts (ELA). The Common Core State Standards defined college- and career-readiness according to the following: a. "College ready" indicates preparation for credit-bearing course work in two- or four-year colleges, without the need for remediation and with a strong chance for earning credit toward a designated program or degree. b. "Career ready" indicates preparation for entry-level positions in quality jobs and career pathways ... Learn about college and career readiness with free interactive flashcards. Choose from 500 different sets of flashcards about college and career readiness on Quizlet. A two-year college is defined as a regional higher education institution. A four-year college is a general term for a university or a college. You should explain these three types in slight depth. - Trautman, 2.1.1 Study: Two Year and Four-Year Colleges. Define two-year college and give an example. A two-year college is defined as a regional higher education institution. 20 terms. jmeginness. College and Career Readiness Vocabulary. Benefits. Deductions. A law that any local, state, or federal legislative body enacts. Laws. written rules for conduct and actions. *serve as rules of conduct. A Summary of State Definitions Peter A. Conforti On March 13, 2010, President Barack Obama issued a blueprint for reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). 3 Texas Virginia State State Definition of College and Career Readiness Texas defines college readiness as what students must know and be able to do to succeed in entry-level courses at postsecondary institutions in Texas, and career readiness as employees [who are] able to read and communicate well, to perform relatively complex mathematical calculations accurately, to possess a strong knowledge of basic. In summary, far too many US students lack college and career readiness (CCR). Typically, discussion and standards surrounding CCR center on a student's standing on core academic skills such as mathematics and English language arts (ELA). Differences among the various definitions of CCR often lead to different conclusions about whether a student is ready for college and a career as well as vastly different implications about the readiness of US. www.act.org. © 2014 by ACT, Inc. All rights reserved. The ACT® college readiness assessment and ACT WorkKeys® are registered trademarks of ACT, Inc. in the USA and other countries. ACT Engage® and ACT Explore® are registered trademarks of ACT, Inc. in the USA. ACT Aspire™ is a trademark of ACT, Inc. in the USA.