

How Are States Reporting on College and Career Readiness?

Introduction

Preparing students for success in college and careers is one of the primary goals of our education system. How states track and report progress toward the goal of college and career readiness is important for public accountability and transparency; making data available publicly provides a window into how students—and the institutions that serve students—are doing. This brief describes the range of college and career readiness measures states are currently reporting publicly. The brief also provides guidance for what states should be doing to measure students' college and career readiness.

What Are States Reporting Now?

Other than federally required indicators (student achievement in mathematics and English language arts, graduation rates), state public reporting on college and career readiness measures varies widely. This brief looks at 2014 public data reporting from all 50 states and the District of Columbia and identifies metrics that might correlate to or predict college and career readiness in the areas of:

- Academic content
- Pathway knowledge
- Lifelong learning skills
- Postsecondary outcomes¹

State Academic Content Metrics

The 3 *Rs*—reading, writing, and arithmetic—are the most widely understood purpose of schooling in America, and all states have made substantial investments in measuring student academic performance in these areas. As Figure 1 shows, all states and the District of Columbia report student performance on

¹ These areas align with the CCRS Center's College and Career Readiness and Success Organizer.

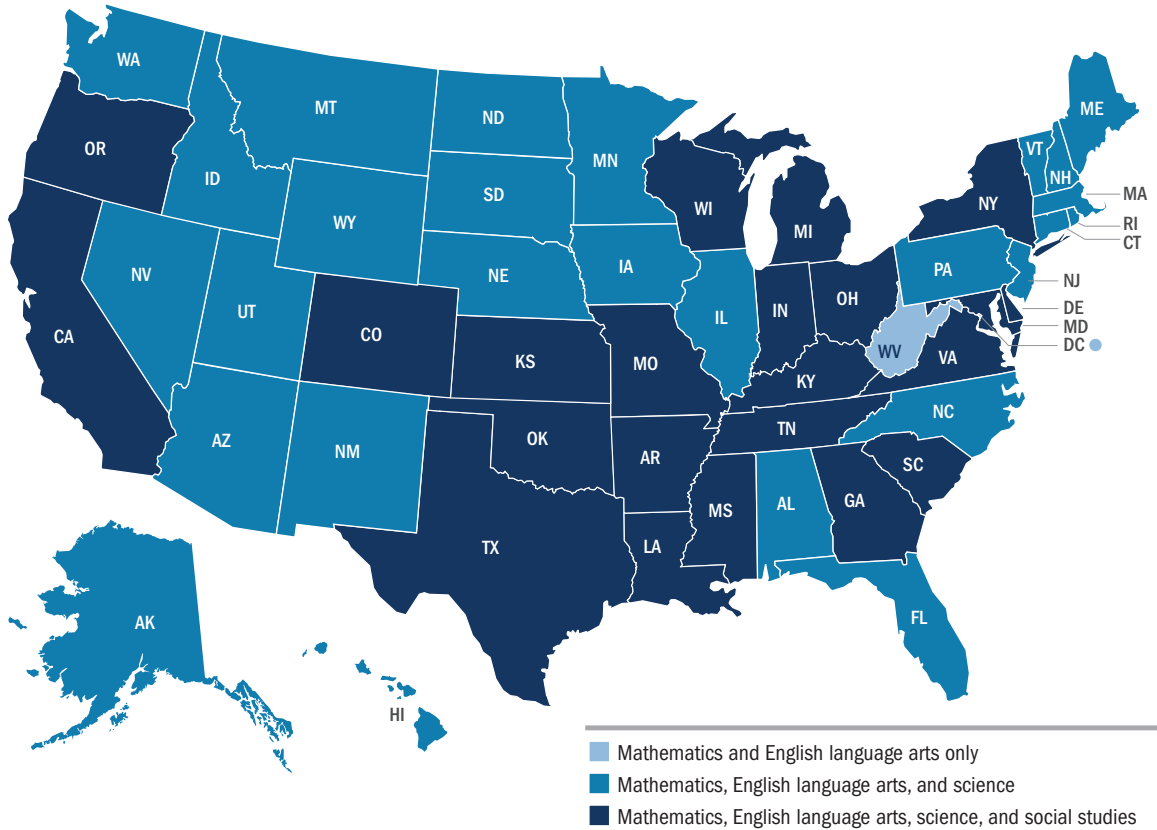
The selection process was guided by the indicators outlined in the College and Career Readiness and Success (CCRS) Center's Predictors of Postsecondary Success, with the addition of measures of risk-taking behavior, civic engagement, and other factors that are correlated with postsecondary success.

Specifically, the scan includes measures that were reported:

- A. Publicly
- B. Between 2013 and 2014
- C. By the state or higher education institutions or consortia as part of a data-sharing agreement

assessments of mathematics and English language arts (including end-of-course exams and graduation exams). Forty-nine states report student performance on assessments of science. Of those states that report science, 21 states also report performance on assessments of social science.

Figure 1. State Reporting on Common Student Academic Content Measures



Note: Academic content measures reported above include student performance, by subject, on state assessments, including proficiency exams, end-of-course exams, or graduation exams.

Many states choose to report additional academic content measures. ACT and SAT scores are popular measures, because the tests are widely used and the results are easily accessible.



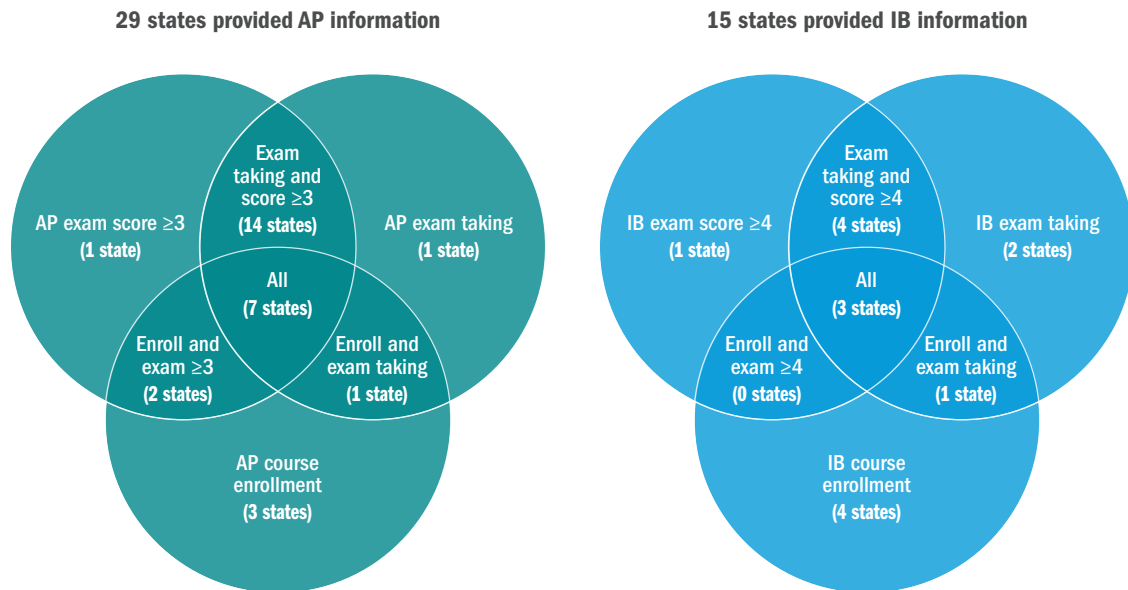
- 24 states reported student performance on the ACT.
- 17 states reported participation in the ACT.
- 12 states reported on the number or percentage of students meeting ACT benchmarks or specific cutoff scores.



- 21 states reported student performance on the SAT.
- 17 states reported participation in the SAT.
- 6 states reported on the number or percentage of students meeting SAT benchmarks or specific cutoff scores.

Many states also report information about Advanced Placement (AP) and/or International Baccalaureate (IB) scores. This information is easily accessible, but a report of scores on the exams without a report of the number of students taking the course (or at the very least, the exam) does not convey a true picture of student success.

Figure 2. AP and IB Data Reporting Across States



Beyond standardized exam scores, course taking is another source of information regarding students' college and career readiness.

- **College preparatory coursework.** Fifteen states reported student participation in dual enrollment courses, and five states reported students' completion of a college preparatory course sequence (by the states' respective definitions).
- **Art and foreign language coursework.** Five states reported students' enrollment and credits in arts or foreign language, which are requirements for college admission in some states.

State Pathway Knowledge Metrics

Readiness for careers at the end of K–12 education is key for the more than 50 percent of high school graduates who either do not enroll in postsecondary education or who work and attend college at the same time (United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). As part of federal Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act reporting, all states are required to collect and report data on students who participate in career and technical education (CTE), as well as data on those students who “concentrate” (take two or more courses in the same CTE pathway). Industry certifications are the most commonly reported non-Perkins measure of workforce readiness. However, as Figure 3 shows, only 34 states currently report any measures of career pathway knowledge—including Perkins or other measures—to the public.

Figure 3. State Reporting on Common Student Pathway Knowledge Measures

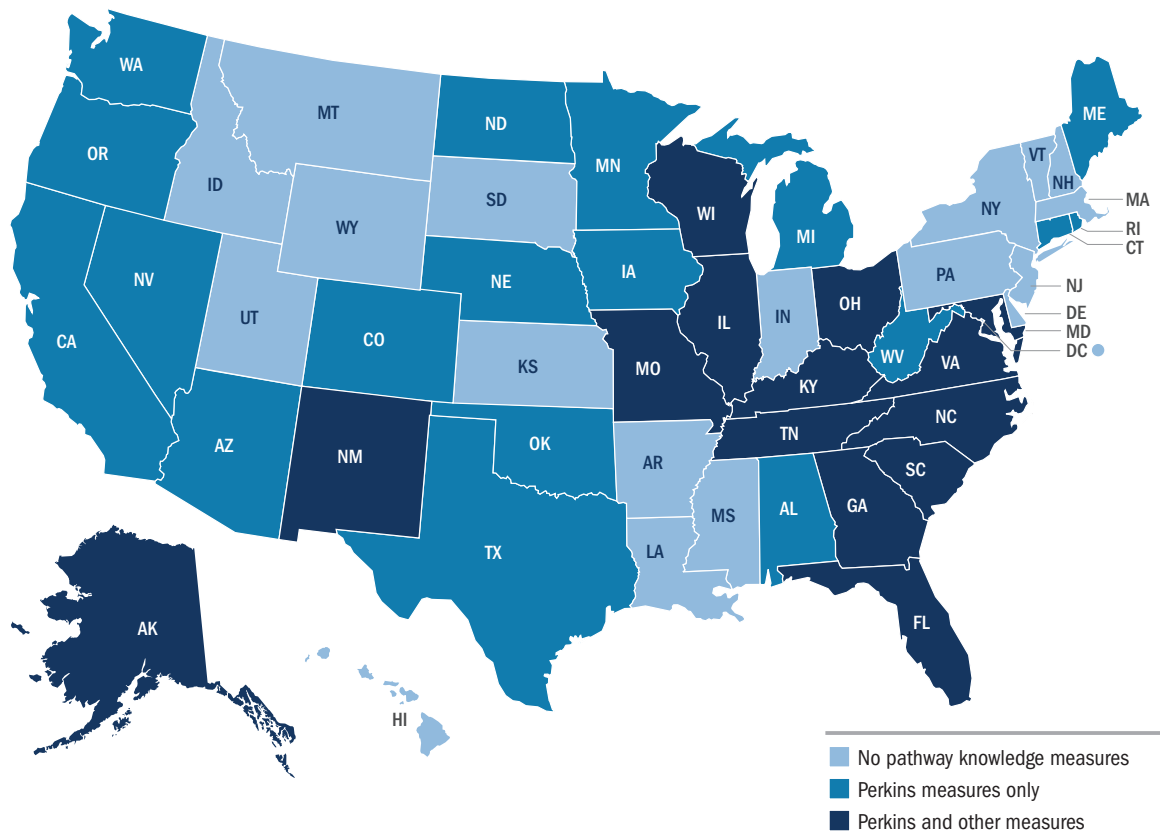
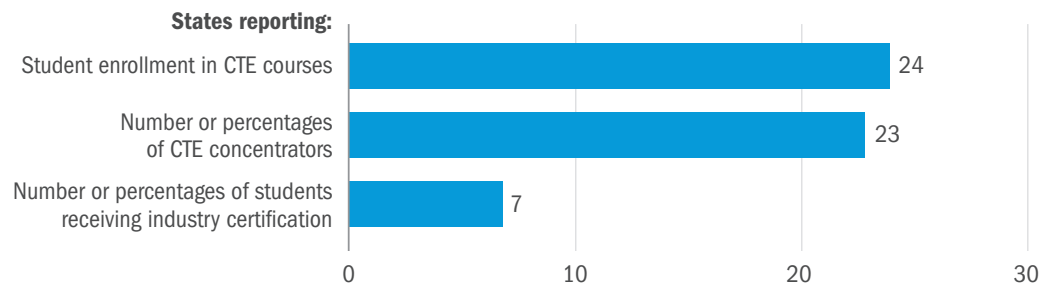


Figure 4. Perkins and Other Common Pathway Knowledge Measures



STATE POLICY Examples

Georgia and Kentucky stand out as examples of states that have made significant efforts to measure and report their students' progress toward career readiness.



Georgia reports career and technical student organization participation; industry credentials; JROTC (Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps) enrollment; CTE-specific dual enrollment; and a number of unique indicators, such as “Grade 5 students with a complete career portfolio” and “middle school students earning a passing score in three career exploratory courses” and “percentage of graduates completing a career-related work-based learning program or capstone program.”



Kentucky provides, in addition to CTE participation and concentration percentages and industry certifications, test results for the Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery, ACT WorkKeys (which is tied to the National Career Readiness Certificate), and its own Occupational Skills Standards Assessment.

Other states with unique indicators include North Carolina, which reports students earning CTE postsecondary credit in high school, and Maryland, which reports work-based learning participation by category (for example, internships, mentorships, service learning, CTE work experience).

Lifelong Learning Skills

As presented on the CCRS Center's *College and Career Readiness and Success Organizer*, lifelong learning refers to social and emotional skills, higher order thinking skills, employability skills, civic skills, technology skills, and financial literacy. There are a few common measures that states use as proxies for self-management and related lifelong learning skills: attendance or truancy, dropout, discipline, and risk behaviors. These are imperfect and incomplete proxy measures; more complete measures of student progress and success with lifelong learning skills are needed.

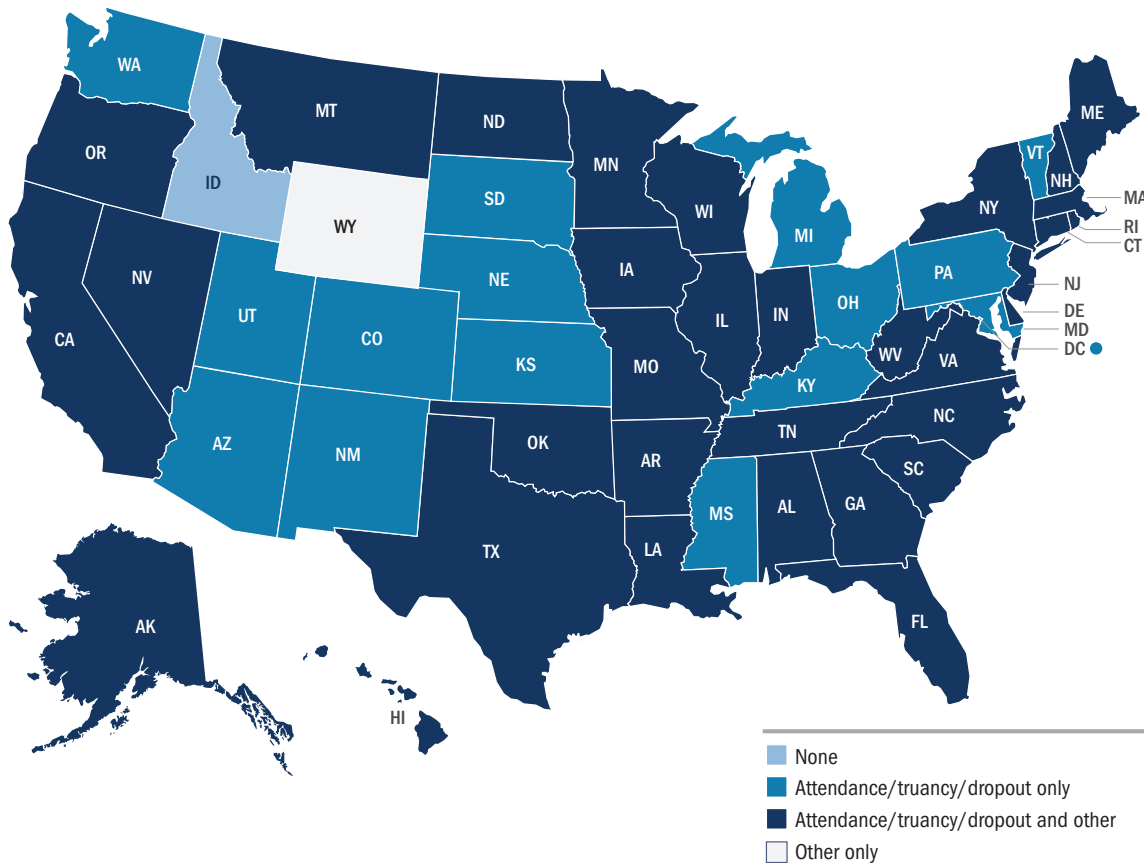
Attendance and truancy are predictive of school success and completion, so it is unsurprising that they are commonly reported state measures. As Figure 5 shows, 48 states and the District of Columbia publicly report student attendance, truancy, and/or dropout information, and 33 of those states report other measures as well, primarily discipline measures.

There is still a real need for reliable, valid measures of student skills in the area of lifelong learning, and many states are doing their best to identify and report proxy information.

- **Discipline and risk behaviors.** Discipline and risk behavior data are negative proxy measures for social-emotional skills. Twenty-five states report discipline information publicly. Seven states report state-level results of the Youth Risk Behaviors Survey, which reports on alcohol/drug use, safer sex practices, physical activity and dietary habits, and behaviors that contribute to violence. Three more states report results of state-specific surveys that cover similar information.
- **Civic involvement.** Hawaii reports student voter registration, and Oklahoma and Alaska indicate the average number of student volunteer hours by school.

- **Extracurricular activities.** Wisconsin tracks student participation in three types of co-curricular activities (academic, athletic, and music).
- **College knowledge.** Two states report student survey results that demonstrate “college knowledge.”

Figure 5. State Reporting on Common Student Lifelong Learning Skill Measures

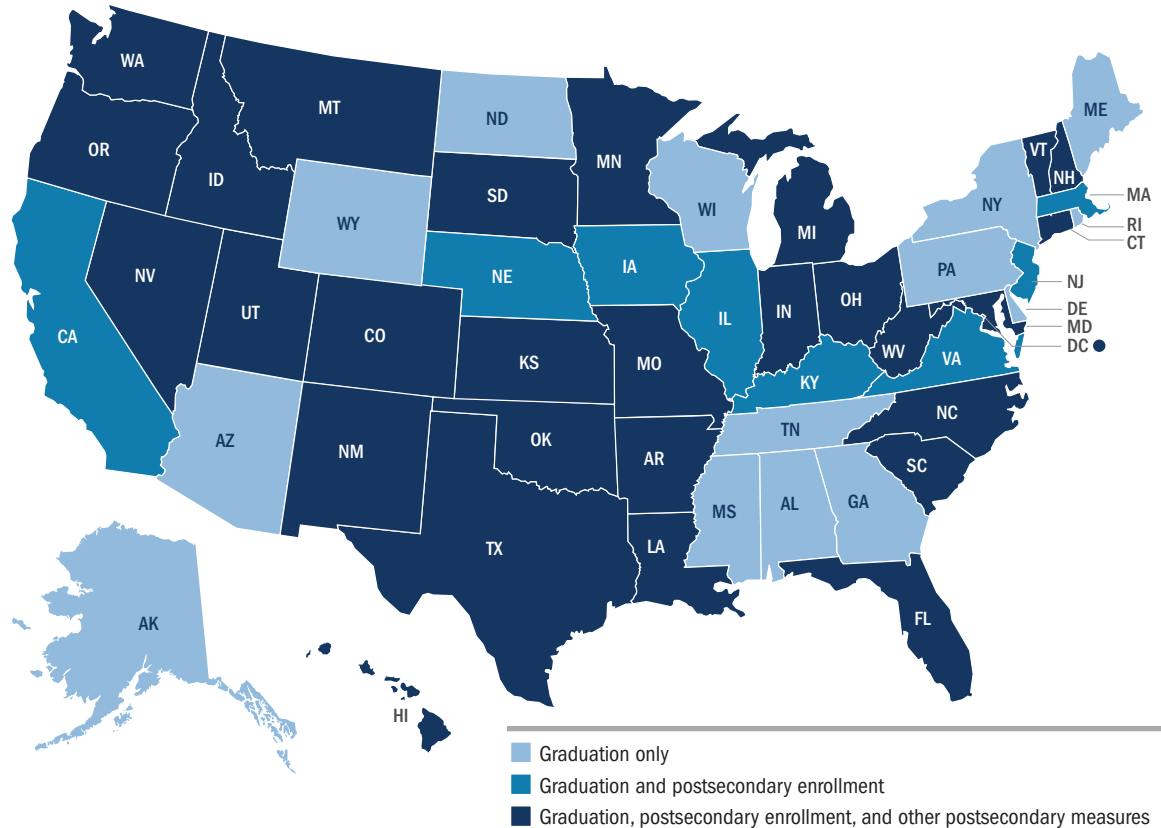


Note: Other measures include discipline and risk behaviors, civic involvement, and extracurricular activities.

State Postsecondary Outcome Metrics

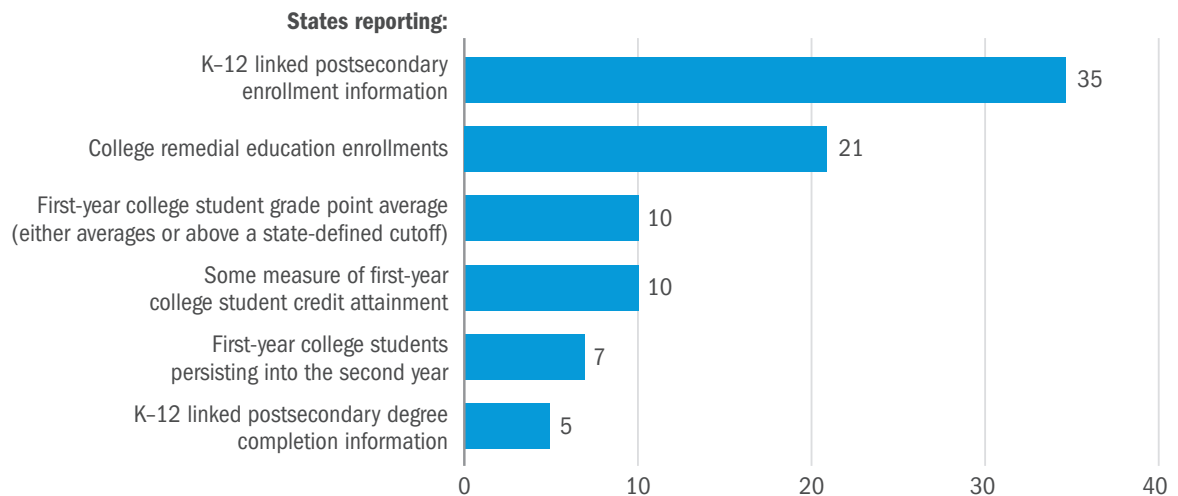
One of the best measures for determining college readiness is examining how students fare in college, but states do not all track or report on student postsecondary success. All 50 states and the District of Columbia report graduation and/or completion rates, but only 36 states provide any information about what their K–12 students do after graduation. As Figure 6 shows, 36 states and the District of Columbia report on postsecondary enrollment; of those, 28 states and the District of Columbia also report other measures.

Figure 6. State Reporting on Common Student Postsecondary Outcome Measures



Postsecondary enrollment, performance, and persistence data vary widely, because there are no federal reporting standards or requirements, and each state brokers the state's own agreements between the state and the university systems to determine what will be measured and reported and how. Many states use National Student Clearinghouse information to track postsecondary education performance; this is the most consistent and reliable source but is a fee-based service (National Student Clearinghouse, 2015). Figure 7 presents some common measures of postsecondary enrollment, performance, persistence, and completion after high school graduation. In addition, 15 states report student participation in dual enrollment—students taking college courses while the students are in high school.

Figure 7. Common Postsecondary Enrollment, Performance, Persistence, and Completion Measures



What Should States Be Doing to Measure Students' College and Career Readiness?

Several clear recommendations emerged from the scan.

Data should be easily accessible. Elimination of data silos within state departments of education is slowly helping easily accessible data become a reality, but there are a few other easy ways to improve public access to most state data reporting:

- Make it easier to *find* the reports (e.g., make better use of metadata, use 301 link redirects to avoid “page not found” errors, and centralize links to data sources from a single webpage).
- Create searchable databases, which are much more transparent for the end user than static and disconnected PDF documents or spreadsheets.

Data should be easily understandable. Create and link to definitions for terms such as *college and career readiness, at risk, or on track*. When referring to specific state programs, provide a link to a page that explains the program. Data sources and limitations should be clearly stated (e.g., “college enrollment data include only in-state, public, four-year colleges”).

States should increase public reporting of existing data. Most states can make significant improvements simply by reporting the data they already have. Sixteen states and the District of Columbia report no pathway knowledge information to the public, despite reporting the data to the federal government as a requirement of the Perkins act.

States should expand the breadth of data reporting. States should expand the breadth of indicators they report, particularly indicators identified by research as being significant predictors of students' college and career readiness and success:

- Third-grade literacy
- Eighth-grade Algebra I completion (and 10th-grade Algebra II completion)
- Successful core course completion in middle school (Hein, Smerdon, & Samboldt, 2013)

States should increase the depth of reporting on existing measures. For those measures states choose to report, the goal should be to provide the most meaningful information possible about student progress and success. Measure “students enrolled in AP and IB courses,” for example, as well as “students scoring at or above benchmark” on the exams. Measure “students earning credit in dual enrollment courses” rather than just “students enrolled in dual enrollment courses.” Measure “students requiring remediation” rather than just “students taking remedial courses.” Providing data that are disaggregated at the school level rather than the district or state levels also allows for a better picture of student performance.

States should pursue the identification and collection of better measures. States should support districts in understanding multiple ways to assess lifelong learning skills and work with researchers to pilot assessments. The CCRS Center's 2015 report *Lifelong Learning Skills for College and Career Readiness: Considerations for Education Policy* contains several recommendations for states related to identifying, piloting, and verifying assessments of lifelong learning (McGarrah, 2015).

Conclusion

As the Elementary and Secondary Education Act goes up for reauthorization, the role of public transparency in reporting is becoming increasingly important. Accountability systems are shifting from federal to state hands, and state governments will be answerable to their citizens for how those systems are constituted and implemented. Greater public transparency allows all individuals who are invested in a state's schools—and in its children—to see how schools and districts are progressing toward the goal of college and career readiness for all.

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