



COLLEGE & CAREER PATHWAYS

Policy Summary

ExcelinEd Policy Toolkit - 2018

BUILDING A GLOBAL WORKFORCE

A comprehensive college and career pathway initiative prepares students for the rigors of college and the global workforce. While there are many moving parts, each initiative is designed to increase student acquisition of college credit and meaningful employer certifications that give students a leg up in the college classroom and the labor market and allow these students to become future contributors to the U.S. economy.

Why do we need our students to be college and career ready?

Today's high school graduates often lack the skills that employers need and the critical thinking skills that colleges expect. Skilled trades are the hardest jobs to fill in the U.S. for the 7th consecutive year, according to the 2016 ManpowerGroup Talent Shortage Survey. Globally, IT jobs are the second hardest to fill.

Meanwhile, almost 1 million U.S. high school completers in 2015 did not enroll in college the following fall, which is roughly one in three high school graduates. Over 700,000 students from the 2011 cohort did not complete college within 150 percent of the time, and almost 267,000 were still enrolled in college six years later.

Similarly, Complete College America reports more than 50 percent of students entering two-year colleges are placed in remediation, almost 40 percent of them never complete remediation, and fewer than 10 percent will earn a degree in three years or fewer.

In other words, good-paying jobs are left unfilled, and students aren't ready for the demands of college.

What are college and career pathway initiatives?

College and career readiness initiatives provide the means by which students are prepared for college and career success. Successful initiatives reach all students and share the following common elements:

1. Providing incentives tied to student performance in courses and programs that allow students to earn college credit and meaningful industry certifications;
2. Providing greater opportunities for students to access more rigorous college and career courses, programs, certifications, or degrees; and
3. Distributing information to parents and students about the available options for college and career readiness and, just as importantly, consist of policies to allow the information to become available to parents, students, schools, and teachers.

COLLEGE & CAREER PATHWAY INCENTIVES

Incentives encourage schools to prepare students by offering opportunities to earn industry-verified job certifications during high school in high-wage and high-demand fields and greater access to rigorous college-level content, such as Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB). **These opportunities better prepare students for the demands of college and the needs of the workforce.**

Industry certifications help fill the gap between the technical skills that employers want and what current high school graduates possess.



What evidence is there of the success of industry certification incentives?

States like Kansas, Wisconsin, Louisiana, Colorado, Minnesota, South Carolina, North Carolina, Nevada and Texas have recently enacted industry certification incentives, while Florida's program is the largest and longest running program. In 2007-2008, the first year before the industry certification incentive, 803 industry certifications were earned. Just nine years later in 2016-17, 86,417 students earned industry certifications. Moreover, 43 percent of high school students in Florida were enrolled in courses that lead to an industry certification, compared to 2.2 percent in 2007-2008. These certification earners are more likely to graduate from high school, have higher GPAs, and are more likely to take an accelerated course like AP, IB, or dual enrollment.

Advanced Placement incentives helps provide access to courses that better prepare students for college when they otherwise might not have had an opportunity.

What evidence is there of the success of Advanced Placement incentives?

Since the implementation of the College Board partnership and incentives for AP courses, Florida has enjoyed a 440 percent increase in total AP exam takers and a 405 percent increase in qualifying scores from 1999-2014.

Black and Hispanic students had similarly impressive gains from 1999-2017. Florida's Hispanic students saw a 929 percent increase in AP participation and an 843 percent increase in qualifying scores. Florida is one of the few states to have eliminated the AP equity gap for Hispanic students. Black students saw similarly impressive gains with a 708 percent increase in AP participation and a 585 percent increase in qualifying scores.

What are the benefits of incentives?

In the long run, everyone benefits from college and career readiness incentives.

Benefits of Industry Certification Incentives	Benefits of AP Incentives
<i>Students</i> benefit through earning a meaningful work credential that enables the student to begin a good-paying, in-demand job right out of high school.	<i>Low-income, rural and minority students</i> benefit through identification of AP capable students who may not otherwise know they are capable and the resources for those students needing a little extra help to prepare them for AP coursework.
<i>Parents and students</i> benefit through increased opportunities to earn college credit in high school, save money on college expenses, and be more prepared for college coursework.	<i>Parents and students</i> benefit through increased opportunities to earn college credit in high school, save money on college expenses, and be more prepared for college coursework.
<i>Teachers and schools</i> benefit from bonus funding for each student who earns an industry certification.	<i>Teachers and schools</i> benefit from bonus funding for each successful AP student, especially those students in low-performing schools.
<i>The state</i> benefits through the potential for realizing economic growth through a skilled workforce, which can attract, expand, and sustain high-value industries in the state.	<i>The state</i> benefits by reducing postsecondary expenses by having students graduate more on time and reducing potential remediation costs, and by gaining more college-ready students.
<i>Employers</i> benefit through verification that a student can do the job for which employers are having trouble filling.	



ACCESS, INFORMATION AND RESPONSIBILITY

Though incentives are a major component to college and career pathway initiatives, access and information play an equally important role in helping prepare students for college and the work force.

Access to rigorous courses like AP and dual enrollment is essential to college readiness. Students should have the ability to take college and career preparatory courses in their core four subjects through Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, dual enrollment, or industry certifications to better prepare themselves for what is ahead.

Information to students and parents is vital to ensuring they know what is available. Underserved students particularly benefit from partnerships, like the College Board partnership, because they are targeted and offered preparation for life beyond high school that was previously not available to them. Parents and students also need information on colleges so they can make more informed decisions. A McKinsey & Company survey of recent four-year college graduates revealed these students did not look at employment data or starting salaries. It also revealed that of those students, the majority would choose a different field of study. An Economic Security Report offers a realistic picture of postsecondary institution success by degree or postsecondary certificate in terms of prospective future earnings and employment opportunities and gives students the information they need to make a more informed decision.

All initiatives working together can better prepare high school students for life after graduation.
