

*Challenge to Lead 2020:  
Refreshed 2016*

SREB

# Goals for Education

Southern  
Regional  
Education  
Board

SREB.org

# SREB's Challenge to Lead 2020 Goals for Education

All children **entering school** will exhibit the knowledge and the social and developmental skills needed for success in first grade.

Student achievement for all groups in the **early grades** will exceed state standards and national averages — at rates that close achievement gaps between groups.

Student achievement for all groups in the **middle grades** will exceed state standards and national averages — at rates that close achievement gaps between groups.

Eighty percent of all groups of ninth-graders will graduate from **high school** ready for college and career training. (This likely means more than 90 percent will need to graduate from high school and more than 80 percent will need to meet readiness standards for college and career training.)

Sixty percent of working-age adults will have a **postsecondary** credential: an associate or bachelor's degree, or a career certificate. Public postsecondary institutions will make it a top priority to help states meet state needs by increasing graduates, public service and research.

Increasing percentages of **adults** without high school or postsecondary credentials will pursue opportunities to earn high school alternative certificates, college degrees or career certificates.





## Challenge 2020

# Working together on what works

Nearly two decades have passed since SREB states first committed to leading the nation on key education goals and adopted the Challenge to Lead goals for education. We have made progress since then — reaching some goals and making significant gains on others. The goals have been powerful guides to progress, so state leaders have urged they be refreshed regularly.

Since 2002, SREB states have made headway in identifying what works and how to work together to achieve more than they could separately. SREB commissions, led by governors and legislative leaders, have been instrumental in showing the way. These commissions developed recommendations that linked proven policies to the goals — to help states achieve the goals. This *refresh* of the goals incorporates the policy recommendations of three recently completed SREB commissions to the applicable goals to strengthen state efforts.

*The Challenge to Lead 2020* goals have been updated to include policies from recommendations in three new SREB commission reports.

**Accomplishments.** The goal on high school graduation rates — to exceed the national rate — seemed unreachable when it was set in 2002. But in 2013 and again in 2014, SREB states exceeded the national rate on this important indicator of educational progress. The SREB region moved its graduation rate from 69 percent in 2002 to 85 percent in 2014. The updated 2012 Challenge to Lead target — that 90 percent of ninth-graders graduate from high school — is within reach now. The actual goal — that 80 percent graduate and are ready for college and careers — remains a stretch.

While SREB states have led on other indicators, none is more significant than the achievement gains in reading and math. SREB states led the nation in gains from 2002 to 2010 on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in both reading and math at fourth and eighth grades at both the Basic *and* Proficient levels. These gains meant that, after 2010, SREB states could shift their sights upward from Basic to the Proficient level, focusing more on helping students reach college- and career-readiness standards.

**Challenges.** These years also saw greater percentages of students scoring at or above the Basic and Proficient levels on NAEP — as states made real gains. Even so, too many fourth- and eighth-graders still lagged behind: about a third of fourth-graders and a quarter of eighth-graders did not score at the NAEP Basic level in reading. These years also saw higher numbers and greater percentages of students enrolling in college to earn bachelor's degrees. But with increasing diversity among high school graduating classes, too few black and Hispanic students enrolled in colleges to ensure the region could meet its goals, and their completion rates were discouraging. Also, far too few adults in the region held postsecondary credentials to meet workforce demands.

**Context.** It would have been easy for SREB states to get by on excuses. The region leads the nation in public school enrollment growth, dramatic demographic change and rising poverty rates for children. Any one of these factors could knock most schools off their moorings and give them cause to give up. All three at once sink them, and they spiral down. That is, unless their policymakers and school leaders have answers to key questions about what it takes to make a difference.

**Answers.** Since 2002, states have learned a lot about what it takes to help all students. High-quality school programs and high-quality teachers matter. Some say “high quality” is hard to define and measure, but we know something about what constitutes it:

- rigorous standards that prepare students for the next level of education and careers;
- teachers who engage students in learning and lead them to deep understanding;
- curriculum that supports standards and links to the previous and next levels;
- assessments that inform teachers and leaders about what students know and need to know — and what can make academic programs and instruction better;
- accountability systems that help policymakers, education leaders and parents know if schools and school systems are working well; and,
- effective, secure and privacy-sensitive data and data systems on students and teachers, from pre-K to college and beyond — that with good analysis can inform education decision-making.

We’ve also learned that students need to start school ready to learn. Many students come from families that need support, and they need pre-school programs to get them ready. All students need to make smooth transitions from grade to grade so they remain ready to learn at each level. When students falter, schools need to detect it and have support in place to help them. And, schools need programs that excite students about careers and help them discover interests and abilities and connect these to school work.

**Commissions.** Dating back many years, state leaders have participated in SREB commissions to study our toughest education issues and make recommendations on how to address them. They have focused on such issues as adolescent literacy, the middle grades, high school graduation, college completion, early childhood education, and most recently, computer science. They have examined why teaching for deeper understanding — going beyond rote and procedures — is essential and why the latest research on children’s brains matters. They learned that closing achievement gaps among black, Hispanic and white students bolsters our region’s economic and cultural wellbeing and that promoting success for students from all income levels builds a stronger workforce for the future. They helped hone a college- and career-readiness agenda for the region that identifies key programs and practices that boost students’ chances for success. They also discovered how multiple academic pathways through high school to college can lead to meaningful careers. See the back cover for a listing of these commissions, their leaders and reports.

**Recommendations.** The recommendations from early commission reports influenced the reframing of the 2002 Challenge to Lead goals in 2012, resulting in *Challenge to Lead 2020*. Many of these recommendations were linked to one of six new goals so SREB’s policy analysts could track progress for state leaders more effectively on the goals and the related policy implementation.

By 2016, three more commissions had offered recommendations — on early childhood education, community colleges, and career and technical education. To ensure that policymakers make the connections between these commission reports and the goals, *Challenge to Lead 2020: Refreshed 2016* now incorporates these recommendations.

**Reasons.** In making the connection between goals and policy, SREB hopes to help policymakers continue to make a difference and press their states forward to accelerate the pace of change.



## ENTERING SCHOOL

### Challenge 2020 Goal

All children **entering school** will exhibit the knowledge and the social and developmental skills needed for success in first grade.

#### Outcome Measures:

*How to know if your state is improving*

SREB will assist states by reporting state progress in meeting these outcome measures.

- Percentages of all groups of 3- and 4-year-olds who enroll in prekindergarten programs will increase to well above national averages.
- Statewide credentialing and professional development requirements for public pre-K teachers will increase to meet national standards.
- Participation rates among all early childhood education programs using statewide rating systems will increase.
- Percentages of state-funded early childhood education programs that receive high-quality ratings on recognized national measures will increase to above national averages.
- A higher percentage of children will meet targets for school readiness based on state standards each year.
- Percentages of all groups of children, including children from low-income families, who receive intervention services — including health and developmental screenings as well as nutritional services — before entering first grade will increase to above national averages.

#### Essential Policies:

*What policies your state needs to improve performance*

SREB will assist states by reporting state progress in implementing these essential policies.

#### Align P-20 programs and state agencies to ensure students make smooth transitions.

- States should establish a policy and fiscal framework for early childhood development from birth through 8 years old as a strategic priority in the state.
- States should create a statewide cabinet or coordinating council responsible to the governor, legislature or key education or human services leader to provide policy direction and coordinate overall planning for early childhood education in the state.
- States should develop and regularly update quality standards for programs for children from birth to third grade, learning guidelines for children, and practice and standards for teachers and classrooms.
- States should align standards, curricula and assessments horizontally (within a grade level) and vertically (from prekindergarten to the third grade) to maximize the gains for young learners.
- States should coordinate public and private funding streams to ensure effective use of financial resources and to promote high-quality program services for children and families.
- States should incorporate early childhood program data — taking appropriate steps to ensure full security of information about individual students — into states' longitudinal data systems to enhance capacity to track results; they should establish cross-agency data analytics systems and processes that inform long-term policy and financing solutions.



**Steve Beshear**, Governor,  
Commonwealth of Kentucky  
Chair, Southern Regional Education Board  
Chair, SREB Early Childhood Commission

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## Essential Policies:

*What policies your state needs to improve performance*

**SREB will assist states by reporting state progress in implementing these essential policies.**

## Hold programs accountable for ensuring success for all groups of students.

- States should set a goal and establish a plan and timetable for providing high-quality learning services to the groups of young children most likely to benefit from interventions.
- States should promote effective, evidence-based and developmentally appropriate curricula in early childhood programs.
- States should establish developmentally appropriate assessment systems and strategies for young children that support teachers' and caregivers' instruction and measure children's progress in essential domains of growth and development.
- States should establish systematic quality improvement initiatives, such as quality rating systems for child development programs, as well as incentives that reward and improve performance.
- States should ensure that financing policies provide for a full analysis of the various sources of available funding that can inform policy and future investment, analyze cost-benefit of interventions and maximize benefit of available federal, state, local and private resources.

## Develop effective teachers.

- States should ensure that pre-service early childhood practitioner-training programs in postsecondary institutions provide opportunities for teaching future teachers to develop the specialized competencies they will need to work effectively with young children.
- States should regularly review, and improve as needed, licensing and professional development requirements for practitioners to ensure that workforce standards are continuously re-aligned with program standards.
- States should ensure practitioners in early childhood programs have access to high-quality and affordable professional development and that high-impact strategies, such as coaching, are available for those who need skills to meet program standards or licensing requirements.



**Fran Millar**  
Georgia State Senator

*“The bottom line is this: If we are going to change the mindset and drive dollars down to lower ages, we’re going to have to convince people that we have quality programs. ... We can do this with good data.”*



## EARLY GRADES

### Challenge 2020 Goal

Student achievement for all groups in the **early grades** will exceed state standards and national averages — at rates that close achievement gaps between groups.

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#### Outcome Measures:

*How to know if your state is improving*

**SREB will assist states by reporting state progress in meeting these outcome measures.**

- Percentages of all groups of students meeting state academic standards in reading, mathematics and science will increase annually to reach 90 percent — and achievement gaps between groups will close.
- Ninety percent of fourth-graders will score at or above the Basic level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in reading, math and science.
- Percentages of fourth-graders who score at or above the Proficient level on NAEP in reading, math and science will increase regularly — to above national averages.

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#### Essential Policies:

*What policies your state needs to improve performance*

**SREB will assist states by reporting state progress in implementing these essential policies.**

#### Align P-20 programs and state agencies to ensure students make smooth transitions.

- States should set high standards for teacher preparation programs, which should focus on both content and pedagogy; states should monitor programs to ensure teachers are able to teach the early grades standards to all groups of students.
- States should ensure that the early and middle grades math standards, curriculum and instruction are aligned so that students are ready to take and succeed in Algebra I no later than ninth grade.
- States should develop and maintain education data systems that link data on students, teachers and schools from state education and related agencies and then ensure education leaders use the data to inform policy decisions.

#### Hold school programs accountable for ensuring success for all groups of students.

- States should develop school accountability systems that focus on results for all groups of students to ensure their success in reading, math and science as they move from grade to grade. States should align curricula, assessments, reporting, professional development, and rewards and sanctions with their academic standards.
- Schools and districts should ensure students have access to technology and digital instructional materials, as appropriate, to improve learning and should ensure that their teachers are trained to help students use them effectively.
- Not later than the end of third grade, states should place students who are behind in reading in programs that can help them catch up to grade level.

#### Develop effective teachers.

- States should adopt policies and standards for leadership preparation programs. The policies should address recruitment of aspiring principals; require leadership preparation programs to offer substantive field-training; establish tiered licensure and evaluation; and call for districts to mentor and provide for induction of new leaders.
- States and districts should develop working conditions for school leaders that align with standards for leadership preparation, licensure and evaluation of principals.
- States should implement comprehensive teacher evaluation systems that use multiple measures to differentiate teachers across a range of performance.





## MIDDLE GRADES

### Challenge 2020 Goal

Student achievement for all groups in the **middle grades** will exceed state standards and national averages — at rates that close achievement gaps between groups.

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#### Outcome Measures:

*How to know if your state is improving*

**SREB will assist states by reporting state progress in meeting these outcome measures.**

- Percentages of all groups of students meeting state academic standards in reading, mathematics and science will increase annually to reach 90 percent — and achievement gaps between groups will close.
- Ninety percent of eighth-graders will score at or above the Basic level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in reading, math and science.
- Percentages of eighth-graders who score at or above the Proficient level on NAEP in reading, math and science will exceed national averages.
- All students will pass Algebra I, preferably in eighth grade, but no later than ninth grade.

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#### Essential Policies:

*What policies your state needs to improve performance*

**SREB will assist states by reporting state progress in implementing these essential policies.**

#### Align P-20 programs and state agencies to ensure students make smooth transitions.

- States should set high standards for teacher preparation programs, which should focus on both content and pedagogy; states should monitor programs to ensure teachers are able to teach the middle grades standards to all groups of students.
- States should develop and maintain education data systems that link data on students, teachers and schools from state education and related agencies and then ensure education leaders use the data to inform policy decisions.
- States should ensure the early and middle grades math standards, curricula and instruction align so that students are ready to take Algebra I on time.

#### Hold school programs accountable for ensuring success for all groups of students.

- States should develop school-level accountability systems focused on performance outcomes and grade-level progression, with particular emphasis on preparing all students for the transition to ninth grade. Curricula, assessments, reporting and professional development should align with standards. States should provide rewards for success and assistance for low-performing schools.
- States should adopt adolescent reading policies to promote improvement in middle grades literacy. The policies should identify critical reading skills students need; provide for development of a literacy-based curriculum that fosters the mastery of critical reading skills in each subject and is grounded rigorous state standards; and intervene to help struggling readers.



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Governor **Timothy M. Kaine** of Virginia, the 2008-2009 SREB Chair, led the SREB Committee to Improve Reading and Writing in Middle and High Schools.



- States should promote improved achievement in middle grades STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering and math) by: providing for a curriculum that emphasizes conceptual understanding and reasoning in STEM subjects as related to state standards; and giving middle grades teachers tools and strategies, including technology, to enrich the engagement of students in their learning.
- By the end of eighth grade, all students should have an academic and career plan, created with the school and parent or guardian. States should adopt an assessment system that identifies student potential for success in high school and beyond and provides follow-up advisement for both student and parent or guardian that is based on the results.
- States should have programs that counsel middle-graders who are below grade level on academic standards in key subjects and provide them with a plan to accelerate learning so they can catch up academically, through extended time, richer instruction and extra support.
- Schools and districts should ensure students have access to technology, digital instructional materials, online and blended learning options, and individualized instruction to meet their needs and should ensure that their teachers are trained to help students use them effectively.

### Develop effective teachers and leaders.

- States should adopt policies and standards for leadership preparation programs. The policies should address recruitment of aspiring principals; require leadership preparation programs to offer substantive field-training; establish tiered licensure and evaluation; and call for districts to mentor and provide for induction of new leaders. The policies also should provide support for principals in the state's most challenged middle grades schools.
- States should ensure teachers can advance student learning in their subjects by teaching students to use critical literacy skills in reading complex, discipline-related texts. Teachers should have high-quality preparation programs; intensive, school-embedded professional development; and specific certification/licensure requirements that enable them to develop their capacities.
- States should prepare STEM teachers to place greater instructional emphasis on conceptual understanding and reasoning than on procedural skills. Teachers should have high-quality preparation programs; intensive, school-embedded professional development; and specific certification/licensure requirements that enable them to develop their capacities.
- States and districts should develop working conditions for school leaders that align with standards for leadership preparation, licensure and evaluation of principals.
- States should develop comprehensive teacher evaluation models that use multiple measures to differentiate among teachers on their performance. They should provide teachers with feedback and information that can help them improve their teaching.




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Governor **Beverly Eaves Perdue** of North Carolina, the 2010-2011 SREB Chair, led the SREB Middle Grades Commission.



HIGH SCHOOL

## Challenge 2020 Goal

Eighty percent of all groups of ninth-graders will graduate from **high school** ready for college and career training. (This likely means more than 90 percent will need to graduate from high school and more than 80 percent will need to meet readiness standards for college and career training.)

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### Outcome Measures:

*How to know if your state is improving*

**SREB will assist states by reporting state progress in meeting these outcome measures.**

- Four-year high school graduation rates, calculated using the adjusted cohort graduation rate, will rise each year to meet annual state targets and to reach at least 90 percent by 2020.
- The percentage of all groups of students in the ninth-grade cohort who meet state college-ready benchmarks as they complete high school will increase so that 80 percent of high school graduates are ready for college and career training.
- Percentages of students in SREB states who meet state standards on end-of-course and other graduation tests will be higher than percentages in the nation.
- Rates of on-time progression through high school — from grades nine to 10, 10 to 11 and 11 to 12 — will increase over time to above national averages.
- Students will drop out of high school at lower rates than the national average.
- Each year, higher percentages of recent high school dropouts will re-enter high school and earn diplomas or GED credentials.
- Percentages of students taking and passing courses as part of accelerated learning options (such as dual enrollment and Advanced Placement) will increase, and rates will exceed national averages.
- State average scores on national college admissions exams (when taken by more than 50 percent of a state's seniors while in high school) will exceed national averages.

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### Essential Policies:

*What policies your state needs to improve performance*

**SREB will assist states by reporting state progress in implementing these essential policies.**

### Align P-20 programs and state agencies to ensure students make smooth transitions.

- States should align middle grades and high school standards with college-readiness standards and strengthen the transition to high school to improve student achievement in ninth grade. States should identify students in the 11th grade who do not meet college-readiness standards and require them to participate in 12th-grade transition courses designed to prepare them to begin college without needing remedial courses.
- States should develop and maintain education data systems that link data on students, teachers and schools from state education and related agencies and then ensure education leaders use the data to inform policy decisions.
- States should adopt adolescent reading policies to promote discipline-based reading in high school. The policies should identify critical reading skills students need; provide for the development of a literacy-based curriculum that fosters the mastery of critical reading skills in each subject and is grounded in rigorous state college- and career-readiness standards; and help struggling readers.
- States should strengthen policies on accelerated learning options so that more students statewide have access to these opportunities. These opportunities should include, for example, well-structured dual enrollment programs, early college high schools, blended or online learning programs, competency-based programs and early advanced credential programs in comprehensive high schools or shared-time technology centers that align their curricula with community and technology colleges.
- States should recognize more than one path to graduation, including career pathways that consist of a college-readiness academic core, a coherent sequence of high-quality career and technical education (CTE) courses,

dual credit-earning and work-based learning opportunities, and seamless connections to postsecondary education, training programs and the workplace.

- States should work with employers and postsecondary institutions to identify and offer assessments of technical and workplace readiness that offer long-term value to individual students, employers and the economy. For secondary students, passing such assessments should carry dual-enrollment credit toward advanced certification or degrees at the postsecondary level.

### Hold school programs accountable for ensuring success for all groups of students.

- States should focus school accountability systems equally on student performance outcomes and graduation rates, and they should expect student achievement beyond minimum competency. Curricula, assessments, reporting and professional development should align with standards. Rewards should go to high schools and technology centers that substantially increase the percentage of students on accelerated pathways to earning advanced industry and postsecondary credentials in high-demand career fields.
- States should first assist high schools with the lowest achievement levels and graduation rates. States should consider restructuring such schools around rigorous, relevant career pathways that accelerate learning and prepare students for postsecondary credentials and degrees. States should provide rewards for success and focus sanctions on districts and schools that fail to improve, even after receiving state help. States should cultivate community support for reforming low-performing schools.
- Schools and districts should ensure students have access to technology, digital instructional materials, online and blended learning options, and individualized instruction to meet their needs and should ensure that their teachers are trained to help students use them effectively.

### Develop effective teachers and leaders.

- States should adopt policies and standards for leadership preparation programs. The policies should address recruitment of aspiring principals; require leadership preparation programs to offer substantive field-training; establish tiered licensure and evaluation; and call for districts to mentor and provide for induction of new leaders. The policies also should provide support for principals in the state's most challenged high schools.
- States and districts should develop working conditions for school leaders that align with standards for preparation, licensure and evaluation of principals.
- States should set high standards for teacher preparation programs to focus on both content and pedagogy. States should monitor programs to ensure they prepare teachers who are able to teach the high school standards to all groups of students. States should provide career pathway teachers, especially those from industry backgrounds, with fast-track induction programs, professional development and ongoing support to enhance students' academic and technical readiness for college and careers.
- States should ensure that all teachers advance student learning in their subject by using literacy tools and strategies that help students read, comprehend and communicate their understanding of complex, subject-related texts orally and in writing. Teachers should have high-quality preparation programs; intensive, school-embedded professional development; and specific certification/licensure requirements that enable them to develop their capacities.
- States should develop comprehensive teacher evaluation models that use multiple measures to differentiate among teachers on their performance. They also should provide teachers with feedback and information that can help them improve their teaching.



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Governor **Sonny Perdue** of Georgia, the 2006-2008 SREB Chair, led the SREB Committee to Improve High School Graduation Rates and Achievement.





## Challenge 2020 Goal

Sixty percent of working-age adults will have a **postsecondary** credential: an associate's or bachelor's degree, or a career certificate. Public postsecondary institutions will make it a top priority to help states meet state needs by increasing graduates, public service and research.

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### Outcome Measures:

*How to know if your state is improving*

**SREB will assist states by reporting state progress in meeting these outcome measures.**

- Postsecondary enrollment rates of recent high school graduates will increase.
- Enrollment in public colleges and universities will represent the diversity of the state's recent high school graduating class.
- First-year persistence rates and progression beyond the second year will increase.
- Credit-hours that students earn toward degrees will not exceed the base requirements of degree programs by more than 10 percent.
- Percentages of college students who graduate on time will increase for students from all racial and ethnic groups, in both four-year and two-year programs. The time it takes for full-time students to earn degrees will decrease to no more than one semester beyond normal time.
- The percentage of adults ages 25 to 64 who have postsecondary degrees or career certificates (from programs of at least one year) will increase to 60 percent.
- Advanced degrees and degrees awarded in high-need fields will increase to meet established state targets, based on state needs.
- Students will pass professional licensure examinations at higher rates than national averages.

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### Essential Policies:

*What policies your state needs to improve performance*

**SREB will assist states by reporting state progress in implementing these essential policies.**

## Align P-20 and state education agencies to ensure students make smooth transitions.

- States should implement college completion plans with specific targets and responsibilities. They should set targets for the numbers of credentials by level (associate and bachelor's degrees, and career certificates from programs of at least one year) to ensure that 60 percent of adults age 25 to 64 hold at least one of these credentials by 2025. And all state agencies with responsibilities for meeting college completion targets should formalize ways to collaborate with each other in meeting the targets. The state should offer incentives to public community and technical colleges and schools districts to work together to meet the targets. These schools and colleges should develop structurally guided career pathways spanning high school and postsecondary education that clearly align with documented labor market needs and help high school students and returning adults make smooth transitions into community colleges — and on to four-year institutions or the workplace.
- States should develop and maintain education data systems that link data on students, teachers, faculty and schools from state education and related agencies and then ensure education leaders use the data to inform policy decisions.



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Governor **Joe Manchin III** of West Virginia, the 2009-2010 SREB Chair, highlighted college completion during his chairmanship.

- Colleges and universities should ensure students have access to technology, online and blended learning options, and high-quality digital content.
- States should limit credit-hours for nearly all degree programs to a recognized standard, such as 120 semester hours for bachelor's degrees and 60 semester hours for associate degrees.
- States should have financing strategies for meeting their college completion goals, and they should tie state appropriations for institutions, in part, to meeting the goals.
- States should keep college affordable by increasing state funding — tying these investments to specific attainment goals for public community and technical colleges, four-year colleges and universities. States should also hold institutions accountable for increasing access, persistence, completion and successful transitions to the labor market. In particular, states should provide community and technical colleges with incentives to make postsecondary study more affordable for students engaged in part-time studies or short-term occupational programs.
- States should have a guaranteed statewide college-transfer system based on standard, lower-division curriculum requirements. States should ensure that college credits earned in dual credit or dual enrollment programs transfer seamlessly from high school into community and technical college or four-year college and university degree programs.
- States should provide opportunities for leading employers to work with education, economic and workforce development agencies on developing structured career pathways that lead to valuable industry and post-secondary credentials and high-skill, high-wage jobs in high-demand careers.

### Hold postsecondary programs accountable for ensuring success for all groups of students.

- States should hold institutions accountable for productivity and cost-efficiency strategies — including developmental education placement procedures and technology strategies — that reduce excess credits toward degrees and lead to timely degree completion at lower costs.
- Postsecondary education agencies should ensure support for research, economic development and technology transfer, especially in science, engineering and mathematics, to support the state's social and economic needs.
- States should hold postsecondary institutions accountable for making timely graduation central to campus culture and for taking specific steps to increase the number of graduates and the completion rates.

### Develop effective leaders.

- Statewide system and institutional governing boards should set policies to hold educational leaders accountable for student success, including raising both graduation rates and the numbers of certificates and degrees awarded annually. Additionally, governing boards should monitor their institutions to ensure they conduct frequent and in-depth reviews of associate degree and certificate programs to verify clear and close alignment with documented labor market needs.



**Joe Pickens** (left), president, St. Johns River State College, Florida; and **Tim Shaughnessy**, then associate provost for academic affairs, Gateway Community and Technical College, Kentucky, led the SREB Community College Commission, 2013-2015.





## Challenge 2020 Goal

Increasing percentages of **adults** without high school or postsecondary credentials will pursue opportunities to earn high school alternative certificates, college degrees or career certificates.

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### Outcome Measures:

*How to know if your state is improving*

**SREB will assist states by reporting state progress in meeting these outcome measures.**

- More working-age adults who do not have the basic reading, writing and mathematics skills to begin a high school diploma program will enroll in Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language classes.
- Each year, higher percentages of working-age adults without high school credentials will enroll in Adult Secondary Education programs and earn GED credentials.
- More working-age adults will enroll in postsecondary studies within two years after passing GED tests.
- More working-age adults who do not have associate's or bachelor's degrees will enroll in college.

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### Essential Policies:

*What policies your state needs to improve performance*

**SREB will assist states by reporting state progress in implementing these essential policies.**

### Align P-20 programs and state agencies to ensure students make smooth transitions.

- States should design and implement statewide plans for adult education. The plans should establish statewide goals; identify funding; and assign state responsibilities for coordination, governance and partnerships with business.
- States should develop policies for adult programs (including “return-to-college” programs) that reduce barriers for returning adults: expedited admissions, child care services, online services and lower counselor-student ratios.

### Hold adult learning programs accountable for ensuring success for all groups of students.

- States should develop content standards for high-quality certificates and applied associate's degrees.
- States should promote and support the use of technology in adult learning.



*“Quite simply, the economic well-being of our region is at stake if we allow the growing group of less-educated adults in SREB states to expand further.”*

— A Smart Move in Tough Times: How SREB States Can Strengthen Adult Learning and the Work Force, 2010



#### **SREB study groups that informed the reframing of the 2002 Challenge to Lead goals in 2012:**

- **Southern Regional Education Board Committee to Improve High School Graduation Rates and Achievement** (2009), led by then Georgia Governor Sonny Purdue. *The Next Generation of School Accountability: A Blueprint for Raising High School Achievement and Graduation Rates in SREB States*
- **Southern Regional Education Board Committee to Improve Reading and Writing in Middle and High Schools** (2009), led by then Virginia Governor Timothy M. Kaine. *A Critical Mission: Making Adolescent Reading an Immediate Priority in SREB States*
- **Southern Regional Education Board Initiative on College Completion** (2010), hosted by then West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin. *No Time to Waste: Policy Recommendations for Increasing College Completion*
- **Southern Regional Education Board Middle Grades Commission** (2011), led by then North Carolina Governor Bev Perdue. *A New Mission for the Middle Grades: Preparing Students for a Changing World*

#### **SREB commissions that informed the refreshing of the 2012 Challenge to Lead goals in 2016:**

- **Southern Regional Education Board Early Childhood Commission** (2015), led by then Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear. *Building a Strong Foundation: State Policy for Early Childhood Education*
- **Southern Regional Education Board Commission on Community Colleges** (2015), led by President Joe Pickens, St. Johns River State College (Florida); and then Associate Provost for Academic Affairs Tim Shaughnessy, Gateway Community and Technical College (Kentucky). *Community Colleges in the South: Strengthening Readiness and Pathways*
- **Southern Regional Education Board Commission on Career and Technical Education** (2015), led by then Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear. *Credentials for All: An Imperative for SREB States*

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**SREB.org**

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The Southern Regional Education Board works with 16 member states to improve public education at every level, from early childhood through doctoral education. A nonprofit, nonpartisan organization based in Atlanta, SREB was created in 1948 by Southern governors and legislatures to advance education and improve the social and economic life of the region. Member states are Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.