

# SREB

Southern  
Regional  
Education  
Board

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# State College and Career Readiness Initiatives



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Most states are not making progress in solving one of the nation's most urgent education problems: High school students are not graduating well-prepared for college or career training. A core reason for this slow progress is that state leaders and policy-makers too often do not fully recognize the size and nature of the readiness problem and how to navigate the complexities involved in solving the problem on a statewide scale.

To move forward, states need to focus all of K-12 and higher education on the same set of readiness standards and related student assessments, while continuing to work to improve high school graduation rates. Research supports the need for similar readiness standards for both academic and career-oriented associate's and bachelor's degree programs.

## SREB tackles the challenge

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In 2008, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) received a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to accelerate progress in college/career readiness in eight SREB states in support of Achieve Inc.'s American Diploma Project. Based on its many years of experience and proven practices in several states, SREB has developed and refined a model college/career readiness agenda that defines the specific steps states can take to improve students' college/career readiness statewide:

1. Develop statewide college/career readiness standards in reading, writing and math that are created jointly by public pre-K-12 and higher education sectors.
2. Make college/career readiness standards key components of state high school assessments and of statewide higher education placement/readiness assessments.

3. Make school and student performance on the readiness assessments part of the state school accountability program.
4. Adjust or develop curriculum and instruction to target the specific statewide readiness standards, including the 12th grade.
5. Develop statewide plans for targeted professional development to help teachers understand the specific readiness standards and how to teach them effectively.

## How it works

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SREB's model agenda provides a general framework against which a state's progress in improving readiness is reviewed. Building on existing policy, research and practice, SREB examines the current level of readiness in each state and assists state leaders in developing and implementing a college/career readiness action agenda.

Key activities include:

- Identifying and convening a state leadership team.
- Collecting and reviewing documents relevant to college readiness in the state and conducting interviews with representatives from policy, education and business sectors to evaluate each state's current status on college/career readiness.
- Using the evaluation results to develop a state plan to strengthen the readiness initiative.
- Helping the state implement elements of the readiness plan, including assessment and accountability.
- Addressing teaching and learning in the senior year of high school and the preparation of current and prospective teachers in the core readiness standards.

## Next steps

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SREB and Achieve will disseminate the project results nationally through case studies of each state's performance in meeting the project objectives.

SREB also will publish and distribute the findings of detailed external evaluations of each state's progress in establishing — and then progressing through — the multiple action steps of a statewide readiness agenda.

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