

Navigating State Policies for High School and Postsecondary

Find policies in this report that affect students as they make their way from the middle grades to high school graduation and into college and careers.

Readiness Definitions

Most SREB states use one definition of college and career readiness. Many of the definitions address academic knowledge and skills, remediation, entry-level coursework, and, in some states, characteristics or employability skills. SREB encourages states to revisit definitions periodically so definitions, goals and policies stay aligned.

College and Career Planning in K-12

Each of the 16 states supports college and career planning from the middle grades onward. While plan timing differs by state, most SREB states start college and career planning in the middle grades using individual student plans developed with counselors, parents or advisors. Support also comes from programs such as mentoring, federally-funded GEAR UP programs, financial aid and application support, and in a few states, direct-admission initiatives.

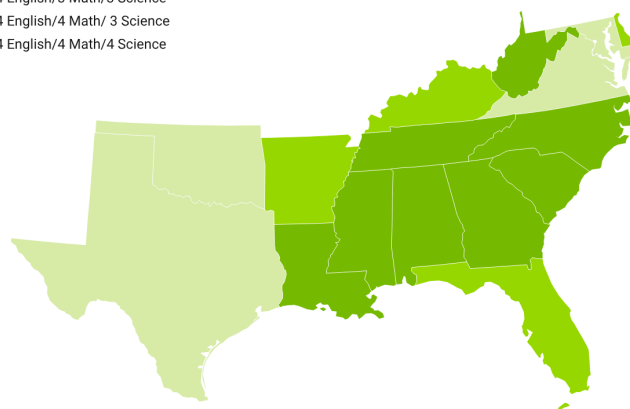
Graduation Requirements

Standard diploma requirements differ by state in credit minimums, course mix, diploma pathways and endorsements, and assessments. Among all 16 states, required credits run from 21 to 24 credits. Many add requirements such as personal finance, computer science, CPR training, service hours or FAFSA completion. Several offer endorsements or seals, and testing ranges from end-of-course exams to civics or citizenship tests.

Course-Taking Requirements in the SREB Region

Standard Diploma Option

- 4 English/3 Math/3 Science
- 4 English/4 Math/ 3 Science
- 4 English/4 Math/4 Science



Map: SREB • Source: SREB Analysis of state documents • Created with Datawrapper

Accelerated Learning Options

Accelerated learning options let high school students earn college-level or career-technical credit through dual enrollment and dual credit, early college programs, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exams, credit by exam, and in some states, early graduation.

Eligibility rules vary. States also differ on AP/IB credit policies and who pays tuition or exam fees.

Admission Requirements

Admission policies are set by states, institutional governing boards or individual institutions, and often differ for four-year and two-year or technical colleges. Four-year requirements typically combine high school course units, a GPA floor and test scores; among states listing unit counts, requirements run from 15 to 20 units. Two-year colleges mostly require a diploma or equivalent, with some open-admission or ability-to-benefit options.

Placement Policies

Placement policies determine whether entering students may take college-credit courses or must take remedial or developmental courses. Placement rules are set by the state, a system or individual institutions, and sometimes by institution type. Most rely on ACT, SAT, ACCUPLACER or other placement tests, and some add multiple measures such as high school GPA.

State Financial Aid for Undergrads

State-funded undergraduate financial aid is sorted into 3 categories: merit-based, need-based and hybrid. 14 of 16 states have merit-based aid, 14 have need-based aid and 10 have hybrid aid. Eligibility commonly involves high school GPA, test scores, FAFSA completion or workforce-program enrollment. Award amounts and renewal conditions, such as college GPA and credit-hour minimums, vary widely.

Postsecondary Feedback to High Schools

All 16 states have some form of postsecondary feedback for high school, but formats differ. Each state has a responsible agency, statute and/or data system for the feedback that sometimes includes annual reports or dashboards. Different measures include college enrollment, remediation, credit accumulation, retention or completion for recent graduates, employment or earnings.



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