



Digest

Digest means an item that has been through internal review of the Chancellor's Office and the review entities. The item now has form and substance, and is officially "entered into Consultation." The Council reviews the item and provides advice to the Chancellor.

TITLE: Achieve's American Diploma Project

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BACKGROUND

Created in 1996 by the Nation's governors and business leaders, Achieve, Inc., is an independent, bipartisan, non-profit education reform organization based in Washington D.C. that helps states raise academic standards, improve assessments and strengthen accountability to prepare all young people for postsecondary education and training, careers, and citizenship. Achieve has helped more than half the states benchmark their academic standards, tests and accountability systems against the best examples in the United States and around the world. Achieve also serves as a significant national voice for quality in standards-based education reform and regularly convenes governors, CEOs and other influential leaders in National Education Summits to sustain support for higher standards and achievement for all of the Americas schoolchildren.

To make college and career readiness a priority in the states, in 2005, Achieve launched the American Diploma Project (ADP) Network. Starting with only a handful of states, the Network has now grown to include 34 states educating nearly 85 percent of all U.S. public school students. Through the ADP Network, governors, state education officials, postsecondary leaders and business executives work together to improve postsecondary preparation by aligning high school standards, assessment, graduation requirements and accountability systems with the demands of college and careers. Achieve tracks states' progress in its annual report, *Closing the Achievement Gap*. Achieve also supports ADP network states through research and development, including the development of tools that help states change policies and practices. Chief among these are benchmark expectations—model K-12 academic standards—in mathematics and English that reflect the knowledge and skills graduates need to succeed after high school. More than 19 states have used these benchmarks to adopt college-and career-ready standards.

Achieve also provides technical assistance to the states regarding their standards, assessments, curriculum and accountability. Achieve's Alignment Institutes have assisted 19 states in creating college-and career-ready end of high school standards in collaboration with their K-12 postsecondary and business communities.

On October 23-24, 2008, Achieve hosted the latest Alignment Institute, which included California, Illinois, and Florida. Goals for participants included the following:

1. Learn about national trends in the development of standards and understand the rationale for alignment and the context for this effort in the state.
2. Identify areas of alignment and potential gaps in preparation of students for college and career by comparing state expectations for exiting high school with the ADP Benchmarks.
3. Develop ideas/strategies for engaging postsecondary faculty and employers in the alignment process with the goal of linking college and career ready standards to practices, policies and incentives for entering postsecondary and the workforce.
4. Identify state resources that the team will need to mobilize and existing state groups and organizations that can support alignment efforts.
5. Develop an alignment plan and timeline that will enable the state team to submit an initial draft or outline of college-and career-ready standards sometime between March and September, 2009 to Achieve for Quality Review I. Identify how/when Achieve might provide technical assistance.
6. Learn about the alignment efforts in California, Florida, and Illinois.

In attendance at the October Achieve Alignment Institute in Washington D.C. representing California were the California Department of Education; California Community Colleges; California State University; University of California; Policy Analysis for California Education; School Innovations and Advocacy; ConnectEd; California Business for Education Excellence; The Education Trust-West; and the Office of the Secretary of Education.

ANALYSIS

Some conclusions reached at the Alignment Institute can be summarized as follows:

1. ADP Benchmarks and CA Standards are quite closely aligned, but the standards may need some fine tuning. Some of questions/concerns raised were the following:
 - a. Some of the ADP Benchmarks aren't reflected consistently in the standards at grade levels needed.
 - b. California high schools do not address a number of their standards in their instructional programs.
 - c. Reading instruction using academic texts and complex technical texts and more expository writing should be incorporated in the regular high school program and not just in remedial offerings
 - d. "Working in teams," an ADP benchmark is not reflected in the CA Standards.

2. California might consider raising high school graduation requirements to include Algebra 2 (more in line with A-G requirements), particularly in light of the expansion of EAP to include community colleges.
3. There was strong support for moving forward with implementing EAP to include community colleges. Participants would like to see EAP implemented in all community colleges (as soon as possible) so all students receive the same message and have the same opportunities. Community colleges will need to decide how to assist 11th grade students who are not eligible for transfer level English and math and/or assist CSUs with providing professional development for high school instructors. UC also expressed the possibility of using EAP if it can analyze the questions in the CST. The involvement of the Academic Senate is central to the effort, including how to inform faculty and encourage their participation.
4. Everyone involved needs to see the test item on the CST and EAP in order to move forward with assessment-related projects.
5. Achieve will do the following:
 - a. Take a look at alignment of ADP Benchmarks, the California Standards and the ICAS competency statements for mathematics and English.
 - b. Take a look at EAP performance levels required for transfer level English and mathematics and see how they compare to performance levels required for enrollment in these courses based on one or more of the most commonly used placement instruments. For example, does the placement test require similar levels of performance as the EAP for placement in English 1A and in a math course with an Algebra 2 prerequisite?

Achieve doesn't envision creating a formal larger California team for California meetings but expects that we will include appropriate representatives from major groups when meetings are held in California. A California meeting will be held in early 2009 to be followed by the second tri-state Alignment Institute in March, 2009 (specific date TBD), which will be held in California.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that Consultation Council discuss additional representation on a larger team for California meetings. Representation from CEOs, CIOs, CSSOs and others might be considered as well as additional faculty members representing the ASCCC. In addition, work done for the American Diploma Project will clearly interface with the work being done in the Assessment and Placement Action Planning Group (APG).