

Phase One Honor States Grant Proposal Summaries

Ten states have been selected for Phase One of the NGA Center for Best Practices Honor States Grant Program. The grant program is guided by the NGA Action Agenda which defines five high school reform priority areas:

- Restore the Value of a High School Diploma
- Redesign High Schools
- Give Students the Excellent Teachers and Principals They Need
- Set Goals, Measure Progress, and Hold High Schools and Colleges Accountable
- Streamline and Improve Educational Governance

Along with implementing the work outlined in their 2-year proposals, these ten Phase One states (as well as the sixteen Phase Two states) have agreed to the following “non-negotiables:”

1. Set 10-year performance goals for improving the high school graduation and college readiness rates (disaggregated by student race/ethnicity and family income), and publicly report the goals along with baseline and improvement data.
2. Commit to adopting a longitudinal, 4-year cohort high school graduation measure that tracks individual students and permits valid comparisons among states. An NGA Center task force is developing a recommendation for a graduation rate definition that governors should adopt. The recommendation and accompanying Issue Brief will be released at the NGA Annual Meeting in July 2005.
3. Demonstrate an on-going commitment to an aligned governance structure for P-16 education. This entity should have gubernatorial leadership, or leadership accountable to the governor, and should have explicit responsibility for a discrete number of objectives.
4. Commit to actively participate in the National Education Data Partnership initiative, including use of the SchoolMatters.com website, sponsored by Standard & Poors, and other secondary data sources to complement the state’s information system for high schools. Describe how the state will make use of the available data to inform The NGA Center for Best Practices Honor States Grant Program and related high school reform efforts.
5. Create and execute a communications plan to build and sustain public will for high school redesign. States will finalize their plans after participation in an NGA-sponsored communications workshop, where common messages learned from national research will be shared.

In addition to these common efforts, the ten grantees have each proposed a set of objectives and activities which are summarized in the following pages.

Please note that these summaries only describe the work included in this 2-year grant and do not portray the overall work of each state in high school reform.

Arkansas

Team Lead: Ken James, Commissioner of Education

Tentative National Partner(s): Achieve, College Board

PROJECT GOALS

- Develop college ready/workplace ready standards in mathematics and English/Language Arts
- Expand and develop the end of course tests and/or augment those tests to assess those standards
- Expand and implement the longitudinal data tracking system
- Develop an effective communications system that will link the partnerships that must occur and assure “buy-in” from those partners

ACTIVITIES

College and Work Ready Standards Arkansas will propose college and work ready standards for mathematics and English/language arts. Arkansas’s team will create these proposed standards by gathering working groups of key stakeholders, conducting up to twenty focus groups across the state, and analyzing high school tests and widely used college admissions and placement exams such as the American College Test (ACT). The standards that are developed in this process will be reviewed by Achieve, Inc. for rigor and comparability with other states.

College and Work Ready Assessment Arkansas will propose assessments to measure if high school students achieve the benchmarks set by the college and work ready standards. Arkansas will build upon the pre-existing end of course tests by either expanding them further or augmenting them. If possible, Arkansas will partner with other states to develop common assessments or test items.

Delaware

Team Lead: Valerie Woodruff, Secretary of Education

Tentative National Partner(s): Achieve

PROJECT GOALS

- Restore the high school diploma so that it represents the skills and knowledge students need to be successful in either postsecondary education or the workplace
- Encourage all public high schools to establish a learning community that respects and supports learning for all students, staff members, families and communities
- Provide all public high school and college students the supports necessary to succeed in either postsecondary education or the workplace ultimately resulting in the individual's ability to be financially independent

ACTIVITIES

Individual Learning Plans Delaware will establish an Individual Learning Plan program that sets the path and logical steps for academic achievement along with providing the student with the core values of a democratic society. Each student will meet with a mentor or advisor to ensure that their plan is aligned with student aspirations and career pathways. By the end of the grant, all incoming high school freshman will have five year Individual Learning Plans that connect students to career pathways.

College and Work Ready Graduation Requirements, Curriculum, and Assessment Delaware will revamp its high school graduation requirements to align with the entrance requirements at the state's two public universities. In addition, the state will develop a recommended curriculum beginning with English/language arts and mathematics that will be designed around grade level expectations in conjunction with state assessment standards. The curriculum will be expanded to include model units and formative assessments for all content areas and will provide the framework for district curriculum alignment in these content areas. Finally, Delaware will pilot a college and workplace readiness exam.

Career and Technical Education Delaware will adjust its career and technical pathways to align to industry recognized certifications. The state will also provide funding for all eligible public high school students to attend Delaware Technical and Community College.

Advanced Placement By May 2006, all Delaware public high schools will offer Advanced Placement courses in most core content areas of English language arts, science, mathematics, and social studies.

Professional Development A select number of the high schools under improvement will pilot the use of personalized teacher goal plans as part of their school's professional development. High schools will align the school-wide, ongoing professional development program with the individual career goals of teachers. The state will also expand the school leader induction program and provide professional development around how to bring students with special needs back into the regular classroom.

Indiana

Team Lead: David Shane, Senior Advisor Education and Employment

Tentative National Partner(s): Achieve

PROJECT GOALS

- Facilitate the selection and initial phases of implementation of new high school designs that are nationally recognized, either proven or in acceptable experimentation, and predict to success in steM courses in higher education and work in life
- Bring every middle school Mathematics teacher to mastery of teaching Algebra I & II to digital millennial generation students such that the students master it as well as see it as the foundation of fundamental knowledge for steM courses in high school and beyond
- Establish and have results from communities of practice, supported by effective closed loop feedback and open loop collaboration, among post-secondary and high school faculties in steM, so that high school faculty see and deliver the student learning needed for success in post-secondary work

ACTIVITIES

STEM High School Redesign Indiana will encourage its high schools to embrace new educational models that support student success in the STEM areas and will provide technical assistance to individual schools to support the reform.

Teacher Preparation Reform The state will push all state public colleges and universities to require future teachers to acquire a major in a subject area, not just education. The state will encourage more students to major in STEM-related areas, as a prerequisite to earning a teaching degree in that area. With the help of Mathematics departments and schools of education, Indiana will develop a statewide curriculum for bringing Indiana math teachers up to subject matter mastery. In addition, Indiana will track student performance in middle school algebra and high school STEM subjects and link it to the institutions from which teachers graduated. The state will further hold higher education institutions accountable by asking them to guarantee the preparedness of their graduated teachers by providing further professional development to them if needed.

Louisiana

Team Lead: Veronica Howard, Education Policy Advisor

Tentative National Partner(s): Achieve, Ed Trust

PROJECT GOALS

- Improve/increase readiness for high school-level work
- Assure rigor and relevance in high school curriculum
- Accelerate student learning
- Redesign the structures and practices of high schools

ACTIVITIES

Secondary Transitions Project Low-performing students will be offered coursework designed to accelerate their progress. These “catch-up” courses will provide double the mathematics and reading instruction time and will be designed to incorporate systematic and highly structured curricula and teaching strategies, highly motivational materials and activities of interest to teenagers, and diagnostic assessments. The goal will be to identify and address academic problems as early as possible, to get low-performing students to the college-prep track as early as possible, and to keep students engaged in school.

College and Work Ready Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment Louisiana will align graduation requirements with the skills and knowledge needed for success in college and the workplace. This statewide reform will involve revising the state’s content standards, grade level expectations, and the comprehensive curriculum so that they all align with the college and work ready standards. Furthermore, Louisiana will establish a college readiness measure that will utilize coursework completion and assessment data. The state will consider implementing additional quality enhancement measures, such as benchmark or end-of-course assessments, diagnostic tests, and model assignments with rubrics and student work if pre-existing measures are not sufficient.

Dual Enrollment Louisiana will implement the Louisiana Early Start Award Program to provide greater opportunities for high school students to earn college credits and industry-based certifications while still in high school. The program will partner with two- and four-year state colleges and universities to create a more unified system.

Maine

Team Lead: Sue Gendron, Commissioner of Education

Tentative National Partner(s): College Board

PROJECT GOALS

- Implement State policy to restore the value of the high school diploma in Maine through the re-examination of: academic standards outlined in Maine's Learning Results; curriculum requirements for graduation outlined in State statute; and high school assessments that ensure that each student graduates ready for college, work and citizenship in the 21st Century
- Develop and implement State policies, programs, and guidance to promote the redesign of all Maine high schools into equitable, rigorous, and personalized learning environments by adapting systems of teaching and learning that result in improved student performance, particularly in low performing high schools, and through the development of statewide literacy and Early College programs
- Develop and implement State policies to hold high schools and post-secondary institutions accountable for student success as they transition from high school to the Community College or University of Maine System
- Streamline and improve educational decision-making and governance through the appointment of the PK-16 Council to oversee the implementation of the recommendations outlined in PK-16 Task Force report "Achieving Prosperity for All Maine Citizens," a plan for an integrated and seamless public education system that guarantees all students are prepared for college, careers, and citizenship
- Develop and implement a statewide media and public information campaign to build broad stakeholder understanding and commitment in support of secondary and post-secondary educational reform in Maine

ACTIVITIES

College Ready Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment Maine will gather post-secondary and high school faculty to identify foundational skills and knowledge all students must have to succeed in college and avoid remediation. With this information, academic standards will be revised, a core curriculum will be developed, and graduation requirements will be strengthened. All high school students will also take the SAT in their junior year, beginning in the Spring of 2006, as the state high school assessment and to support college readiness.

Expanding High School Reform Maine will provide ongoing technical assistance for high school restructuring through the Center for Educational Transformation and the Maine Department of Education. The state will develop and implement policies and programs that focus on adolescent literacy instruction across all of the content areas. In addition, Maine will support innovative programs designed to recreate the senior year, including strengthening the *Early College for ME* program, which provides planning and financial support to students who have not made plans to enroll in or pay for college.

Accountability Maine will develop a process to review each district's comprehensive education plan to address effectiveness and to improve monitoring and implementation efforts.

Massachusetts

Team Lead: Stafford Peat, Administrator, Secondary Support Services

Tentative National Partner(s): College Board, Achieve

PROJECT GOALS

- Raise the value of the high school diploma for all students
- Target reform to under-represented students in high need schools and districts
- Expand the Pre-K to 16 data infrastructure to allow the state to measure its progress and hold itself accountable

ACTIVITIES

College Ready Standards and Curriculum Massachusetts will review and modify its K-12 Curriculum Frameworks to align with what is expected of students in their freshman year of college. The state will then utilize these adjusted standards to develop a recommended "Curriculum for College and Work Readiness."

Math and Science Dual Enrollment With the help of the legislature, consultants, higher education workgroups, and with public and educator feedback, Massachusetts will reinstate its dual enrollment program with a focus on math and science. The state will concentrate its attention on encouraging more at-risk youth to participate.

Algebra II End of Course Exam Given the proven connection between Algebra proficiency and school success, the state will develop and implement a rigorous end of course exam for Algebra II by the beginning of the 2007 school year.

Teacher Preparation Accountability Massachusetts will track the performance of high school students and their teachers from kindergarten through senior year in college. A student's performance data will be linked to information about his/her teachers which will in turn be linked to the corresponding teacher preparation programs. Equipped with this information, teacher preparation programs will be improved to yield better results for kids.

Michigan

Team Lead: Diane McMillan, Education Consultant

Tentative National Partner(s): Achieve, ACT

PROJECT GOALS

- Create high school content standards that are aligned to postsecondary education and training
- Increase early college-level learning opportunities in high school

ACTIVITIES

College and Work Ready Standards and Assessment Michigan will develop content standards in English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies that reflect the knowledge and skills required for college and work success. The state plans to implement the new standards in a way that offers flexibility on a school-by-school basis. Curriculum guides and professional development training, particularly for career and technical educators, will be created to ensure that standards are effectively adopted in classrooms.

These new standards will be integrated into the high school assessment to create a new exam, the Michigan Merit Exam. This test will serve as a high school assessment and a college-entrance exam.

Early College Opportunities Michigan will expand opportunities for students to take college credit courses while in high school. State action will involve developing legislation and policies to create credit-based transition programs and increase participation in these programs. Significant efforts will be made to ensure that districts, high schools, and parents are aware of these early college learning opportunities.

Minnesota

Team Lead: Alice Seagren, Commissioner of Education

Tentative National Partner(s): College Board

PROJECT GOALS

- Increase public awareness of and support for Governor Pawlenty's *Get Ready, Get Credit* initiatives to increase the number of Minnesota high school students pursuing rigorous academic courses, particularly in math and science, and to introduce new workforce readiness programs
- Strengthen the *Minnesota P-16 Education Partnership* to improve system-wide coordination of high school and post-secondary education (including work-readiness, certification and training programs, and two-year and four-year college and university programs) and establish a comprehensive reporting program to monitor P-16 system effectiveness and public accountability
- Increase Minnesota Department of Education technical assistance and collaboration with key policy and advocacy groups to improve math and science instruction, increase the use of digital content in teaching and learning, and increase student participation and achievement in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) courses

ACTIVITIES

STEM Curriculum and Assessment Minnesota will partner with high schools to offer more courses and increase student enrollment in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) disciplines, as well as expand the number of teachers using digital content in math and science and technology innovations through professional training activities and incentive grants. The state will offer technical assistance and professional development to STEM teachers to complement an improved teacher induction and mentoring programs, and also increase the number of schools offering math and science remediation. The statewide Lighthouse Schools program to sponsor action research for student learning gains will be expanded to include STEM schools. A Governor's roundtable on STEM for business, education and civic leaders will assess statewide needs for math and science, with a follow-up Minnesota student summit to be held on STEM opportunities and future career options.

Minnesota will strengthen the rigor of CTE programs by compiling baseline data on existing math content in courses, distributing instructional materials to increase math and science rigor, and expanding pathways leading to industry certification.

Minnesota will increase teacher involvement in the development of a new interactive life science state assessment.

The state board of teaching will take steps to improve the alignment of teacher education programs, expected teacher competencies in math and science, and state student academic content standards, and also to increase the number of teacher preparation program graduates in math and science.

Improvement of student achievement and successful transitions to postsecondary

Minnesota will expand students' rigorous course taking and opportunities for students to earn

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college credit while in high school through expanding Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and also by increasing student access across the state to the College Level Examination Program (CLEP). The state will offer schools assistance to implement college-level preparatory standards, help teachers prepare students to take CLEP exams, and expand student and parent access to CLEP information.

Minnesota will also redesign testing programs to replace the state's Basic Skills Test with portions of the higher level Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment Series II tests, fund the ACT EPAS assessment system for early assessment of students' college readiness in grades 8 and 10, and provide teacher training in how to use EPAS data to address achievement gaps, especially in math and science.

The progress of P-16 students will be tracked through a new postsecondary accountability system.

Several P-16 Education Partnership work groups have been charged with supporting the high school retooling efforts of the Honors Grant, furthering the cooperation and coordination of high school reform.

Rhode Island

Team Lead: Janet Durfee-Hidalgo, Education Policy Officer

Tentative National Partner(s): Achieve, Jobs for the Future

PROJECT GOALS

- Improve articulation between high school and higher education employing content standards in English and math, engage more students in rigorous college and work-ready curricula, and actively participate in the American Diploma Project Network
- Implement a dual enrollment project with guidance from Jobs for the Future, including a quality control component
- Strengthen higher education's data warehouse and build reciprocal links to the PK-12 data system
- Support improved instruction and curriculum alignment with a science-focused pilot program in the high schools
- Streamline and improve educational governance and embed an effective communications strategy in all project components

ACTIVITIES

College Ready Standards Rhode Island will define college ready standards of performance in math, reading, and writing and contract with national consultants to review these standards for quality. Additionally, Rhode Island will work with representatives of state workforce development programs as well as business and industry to align college ready standards with work ready expectations.

Science Pilot Program Rhode Island will support substantive reform of the high school science curriculum. Changes will include the addition of Physics First and Micro-Scale Chemistry and the inclusion of engineering standards and activities into the curriculum and instructional practice. With the help of the East Bay Educational Collaborative, Rhode Island will provide intensive professional support to teachers and department heads from five participating pilot schools.

Dual Enrollment Rhode Island will employ the expertise of Jobs for the Future to review current dual enrollment activities around the state, analyze current state and institutional policies to identify barriers and supports for dual enrollment, and outline action steps for improving and expanding such options for Rhode Island students.

Virginia

Team Lead: Linda Wallinger, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction

Tentative National Partner(s): College Board, Kuder

PROJECT GOALS

- Bring visibility to the importance of redesigning Virginia high schools
- Build capacity among school administrators and teachers of college-level courses to provide innovative leadership and strong academic instruction to high school students in Virginia, particularly those in underserved schools
- Increase the likelihood of transition into high school and promotion to higher grades; planning for post-secondary education or work; rigorous course selection to match planning; and reduction of dropouts in the 30-targeted high schools

ACTIVITIES

Transition, Readiness, and Access Virginia will expand its Project Graduation program which includes regional academies, online tutorials and practice tests, and opportunities for students to complete their diploma requirements after the senior year. Virginia also plans to grow its Algebra Readiness Program which provides intervention services to middle school students who perform below average in class or on standardized tests.

Grants will be awarded to 30 targeted high schools to implement innovative strategies to decrease the ninth grade retention and dropout rate. These grants will fund innovative high school transition strategies such as personalized graduation plans, enhanced course selection and planning tools, and additional counseling opportunities. In addition, Virginia will provide targeted high schools the opportunity to offer PSAT testing to all tenth-grade students free of charge.

High School/Community College Partnerships Virginia plans to expand the Virginia Community College Bridge Partnership Program resulting in an increased number of high school students, especially minorities and high-poverty students, working with students like themselves benefiting from higher education.

College Awareness Virginia will develop a program to train guidance counselors on the many aspects of college preparation such as college selection, the application and admissions process, and financial aid. Community college academic and career advisors will assist high school students in general, and students enrolled in secondary to post secondary transitional programs including, but not limited to Tech Prep, Dual Enrollment, and Path to Industry Certification.

Professional Development Newly appointed principals as well as principals in targeted high schools will receive training and be assigned coaches/mentors. The focus will be on high schools that have a large population of minority students and/or where there is a large achievement gap among subgroups of students as well as challenges in dropout, graduation, and retention rates.

Furthermore, Virginia will fund 100 AP and dual enrollment teachers at \$1,000 to attend AP training institutes in their subject areas or take the graduate-level courses required to teach dual

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enrollment courses. The state will also provide scholarships for up to 240 teachers to be trained in the Strategic Instruction Model (SIM) developed by the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning Institute for Effective Instruction. This model provides teachers with content-focused instruction and research-validated instructional strategies.