Education Commission of the States Releases Brief on How States Define College Readiness

There are benefits and drawbacks to each approach

Denver - The Education Commission of the States (ECS) released Defining College Readiness, the second of six Progress of Education Reform briefs that will be released in 2012.

The pressure is on for states to establish a definition of college readiness. One of the main drivers is the Common Core State Standards—adopted by 46 states and the District of Columbia—which incorporate expectations for college and work readiness. In addition, states seeking waivers from No Child Left Behind mandates must adopt college-ready standards and assessments in reading and math, and states that have received Race to the Top funds must show that the funds are increasing students’ readiness for college.

Defining College Readiness summarizes three approaches states are taking to identify high school students’ levels of college-readiness. The first approach, used by states such as Virginia and Texas, defines performance expectations that describe what students who are college-ready should know. Other states, such as Florida, require students to obtain a minimum score on state assessments. A third group of states, including Kentucky, requires students to obtain a minimum score on college admissions tests, such as the ACT or SAT, or placement exams.

None of these approaches is perfect. Each has potential benefits and drawbacks, as well as important policy considerations. Read the entire seven-page brief for a full summary of each approach.

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About ECS

Since 1965, ECS has tracked policy, translated research, provided advice and created opportunities for state education policymakers to learn from one another. We are the only nationwide, nonpartisan organization to bring together governors, legislators, chief state school officers, higher education officials and others to identify, develop and implement public policies to improve student learning at all levels. ECS is located in Denver, Colorado and maintains the nation’s most extensive clearinghouse on education policy.

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