



# Policy Brief

## High School

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### High School Remediation

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#### The Need

The perception of remediation as a means of bringing students up to minimal standards - perhaps an 8th grade competency test or basic literacy — is common. With the majority of states increasing their [graduation requirements](#) in the coming years, and with an increasing number of states implementing rigorous [end-of-course exams](#), the need to implement effective policies addressing remediation at the high school level for students expecting to enroll in postsecondary institutions becomes increasingly acute.<sup>1, 2</sup>

Effective remediation at the high school level must serve two distinct populations:

- Those who are likely to drop out of school if they do not receive timely assistance
- Those who need additional help at the high school level before moving on to postsecondary studies, where any remediation will incur costs on them and their parents.

#### The Context

Measured purely in monetary terms, the costs of providing remediation at the high school level can seem high, but the costs of *not* providing adequate and timely remediation are even higher. The lack of student preparation while in high school for work or college costs the nation \$3.7 billion a year. Of that total, \$1.4 billion is spent providing remediation, while almost \$2.3 billion is lost due to the diminished earning potential of students who drop out of college without earning a degree.<sup>3</sup>

These costs, however daunting, do not factor in the loss of earnings for students who fail to complete high school, or their subsequent lost earnings and its negative impact on them individually and the nation as a whole. As a 2006 [report](#) from the National Center for Education Statistics states:

*Dropping out of high school is related to a number of negative outcomes. For example, the median income of high school dropouts age 18 and over was \$12,184 in 2003 (U.S. Census Bureau 2005). By comparison, the median income of those age 18 and over who completed their education with a high school credential (including a General Educational Development (GED) certificate) was \$20,431. Dropouts are also less likely to be in the labor force than those with a high school credential or higher, and are more likely to be unemployed if they are in the labor force (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2004). In terms of health, dropouts over the age of 24 tend to report being in worse health than adults who are not dropouts, regardless of income (U.S. Department of Education 2004). Dropouts also make up disproportionately higher percentages of the nation's prison and death row inmates.<sup>4</sup>*

Clearly, it is in states' interests to provide effective remediation to high school students and to reduce the need for remediation at the postsecondary level for students who have graduated high school.

What are some necessary elements that would need to be in place in the states to ensure that effective remediation is available and provided?

- A Culture of Data Analysis and Use
- Innovative and Flexible Delivery of Remediation Services

- Required Participation
- State Supports

## A State Policy Approach

### ***Fostering a Culture of Data Analysis and Use***

Nobody benefits when a student arrives in high school or college with deficiencies that could have been addressed previous to the student's promotion. Students who enter high school with poor reading skills are 20 times more likely to drop out than their highest achieving classmates.<sup>5</sup> Optimally, no student would enter high school with below-grade-level skills, but many do. For those students it is critical that their low skills are accurately identified so that they can be provided with proper instruction while in high school. Without good data, such accurate identification is impossible.

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### **Data Collection**

Quality data systems provide the basis for timely identification of students who need remediation. The availability of the right data allows schools the opportunity to identify students struggling in school and provide them with additional assistance to ensure adequate academic preparation.

A state-level longitudinal data system provides a system through which states can collect and disseminate this vitally necessary information. The [Data Quality Campaign](#) (DQC) has identified 10 essential components of a statewide longitudinal data system. While the states are making great progress in implementing components of longitudinal data systems, some key components that the majority of states have yet to implement include:

- Student-level transcript information, including information on courses completed and grades earned
- Student-level college readiness test scores
- The ability to match student records between the P-12 and postsecondary systems.

To date, four states report that they have implemented all 10 components, although nine states have implemented eight or nine.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, quality formative assessments can provide teachers with much-needed information on where students might be missing concepts — before students get too far behind.

### **Data Analysis and Use**

While identification is certainly necessary, it is not sufficient. Schools must use this information in an effective manner. To that end, state policymakers should seek to encourage and nurture the creation of a culture of data analysis and use in the public schools. As a recent DQC brief states, "Although *collecting* better data is essential, knowing how to *analyze and apply this information* is just as important for meeting the end goal of improving student achievement."<sup>7</sup>

Policymakers and practitioners — not to mention parents and taxpayers — need to know if resources and time are being put to good use. A longitudinal data system enables policymakers to evaluate programs based on data. This enables policymakers to not only ensure that allocated resources are not being wasted, it allows programs with documented success to serve as laboratories from which other teachers, schools, districts and states can learn. Policies in 10 states explicitly require districts to evaluate their remediation programs, and Georgia's department of education is required to annually evaluate the state's remedial education program.<sup>8</sup>

### ***Innovative and Flexible Delivery***

Boredom brought on by the failure to see the curriculum's relevance is a major obstacle to learning for high school students. Reporting findings from the High School Survey of Student Engagement, a [report](#) from the Center for Evaluation & Education Policy finds that:

- Two-thirds of students are bored in class at least every day
- Seventeen percent of students are bored in *every* class

- Of students who have considered dropping out of school, 60% cite not seeing value in the work they were being asked to do as the reason they considered dropping out.<sup>9</sup>

**Indiana's** School Flex program allows 11th and 12th grade students who meet specified behavioral and academic indicators to participate in an alternate program aimed at engaging them in relevant learning by allowing them to enroll in either a college, technical career education program or gain employment in a field aligned with their career academic sequence.<sup>10</sup> Selected and defined by districts, career-academic sequences are flexible sequences of courses that help students explore and prepare for a specific career area or group of related occupations. Sequences include progressive exposure to the world of work, with some leading to a certificate recognized by business and industry.

To participate in the program, eligible students must:

- Attend school for at least three hours per day
- Pursue a timely graduation
- Not be suspended or expelled
- Pursue course and credit requirements for a general diploma
- Maintain a 95% attendance rate.

Additionally, students who have fallen behind are often overwhelmed by the need to repeat entire semesters (or more) in classes they've previously failed in order to graduate, and simply quit. This means that effective remediation policies also can serve as dropout prevention policies. Accelerated, intensive and innovative instruction that allows students flexibility in demonstrating competency has the potential to re-engage students who otherwise may fail to complete their schooling. Not all students require the same intensity of intervention as some might need to catch up in a few concepts, others in a single subject area, while far fewer need intensive intervention across all subject areas.

**Kentucky** policy requires that intervention strategies with accelerated learning opportunities be provided to students who are identified through (1) the 8th grade high school readiness examination as in need of additional assistance to be successful in high school, or (2) the ACT exam as not prepared for entry into credit-bearing course at a postsecondary institution.<sup>11</sup>

High schools are required to collaborate with their districts in developing and implementing accelerated learning that:

- Allows a student's learning plan to be individualized to meet the student's academic needs based on an assessment of test results and consultation among parents, teachers and the student
- May include changes in a student's class schedule.

**Florida** requires all districts to adopt policies that provide students with:

- Alternative methods to demonstrate competency in required courses and credits
- Credit recovery courses and intensive reading and math intervention courses based on student performance on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test
- Creative and flexible scheduling designed to meet student needs.

**Alabama** authorizes local boards to establish credit recovery programs allowing students learning opportunities to master concepts and skills in one or more failed courses.<sup>12</sup> Course content must be composed of standards in which students proved deficient rather than all standards of the original course. Schools may offer these courses using computer software, online instruction or teacher-directed instruction.

Similarly, **Louisiana** provides ways for students to recover credit after they have failed a class.<sup>13</sup> Local education agencies are authorized to develop credit recovery programs for students who have taken and failed a course. Such courses must be aligned with state content standards and grade-level expectations, but flexibility is provided regarding student attendance and instructional time requirements that are otherwise in place. Additionally, the state allows students who have failed a course to take a proficiency exam for that course to earn credit.

### ***Requiring Participation***

Once a student is identified as needing academic assistance, it is important that interventions actually occur. In some instances this might necessitate that state policy require that districts or schools offer remediation, *and* that identified students participate. Of the 33 states that address student remediation

through policies targeted towards the high school level, only 10 have provisions that require - or permit local education agencies to require - student participation in remediation services.<sup>14</sup>

State policy that explicitly requires students to participate in remediation emphasizes the importance of having all students academically prepared for college and/or work.

**Utah** requires districts to provide remedial services to students identified through classroom performance, and requires student participation.<sup>15</sup> Students in **Nevada** who have failed the state's high school exit exam twice or more, are required to participate in remediation.<sup>16</sup> Schools and districts in **Arkansas** are required to use multiple means to assess whether a student is in need of remediation, including state end-of-course exams. Students that are identified as in need of remediation are required to participate.<sup>17</sup> Identified students in Kentucky must be provided with intervention services, and districts may require student participation.<sup>18</sup>

## **State Supports**

To ensure that high school remediation is effective, the state must also ensure that districts and schools have the capacity to provide the necessary services. These supports include:

- Financial
- Human
- Student-Centered.

## **Financial Support**

Districts with large numbers of students in need of additional assistance frequently are located in areas of the state where resources are scarce, be it low-income, urban or rural areas. Such districts will require resources to implement effective programs. And just as there is great diversity among school districts in each state, providing flexibility in the means of support can be advantageous.

For example, a noteworthy aspect of **Indiana's** school flex program is that although students may be enrolled for as few as three credit hours, the state continues to fund the school as though the student is attending full-time. This approach encourages schools to participate in the program, as the financial penalty for participation is removed.

Created in 2004, **Washington's** Learning Assistance Program provides additional funds to districts to for remediation of students identified as underachieving by performance on state assessments.<sup>19</sup> Initially aimed at students in kindergarten through 11th grades, the program expanded to include 12th graders in the 2007-08 school year.

To receive funds, a participating district is required to annually submit a plan to the superintendent of public instruction that reflects:

- How accelerated learning plans are developed and implemented for participating students
- How highly qualified instructional staff are developed and supported in the program and in participating schools
- How a program evaluation will be conducted to determine direction for the following school year.

**Massachusetts** has made grants available to schools that want to participate in the Expanded Learning Time Initiative, a partnership between Massachusetts 2020 and the state department (with support from the legislature and the governor). Participating schools redesign their schedules and add at least 300 more hours for all students in the school with the goal of improving core academic outcomes, enrichment opportunities, and teacher planning and professional development. The state funds \$1,300 per pupil for implementing schools. In September 2007, 18 schools (with more than 9,000 students) started the school year as Expanded Learning Time schools. Early results are promising.<sup>20</sup>

## **Support for Human Resources**

Support for human resources might take the form of additional staffing or reallocations of existing staff. Some states - such as **Florida** - take another tack and stipulate that the most at-risk students should have access to the very best teachers.<sup>21</sup> Other state approaches include support for Response to Intervention (RtI) — the practice of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student

need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals, and applying student response data to follow-up decisions.

Of note: Research on student engagement supports the fact that having a good relationship with at least one caring adult at school is critical to student success. Responding in 2006 to the fact that almost 29% of state's high school students do not make it to graduation, state policymakers in **Georgia** created a statewide program that makes available [Graduation Coaches](#) to each high school in the state. Each coach's primary responsibility is to identify and work with at-risk students and help them get back on the graduation track before they drop out. Graduation coaches also will identify, recruit and engage concerned organizations and agencies to serve in a variety of ancillary roles in their respective communities.

The state will track the success of graduation coaches by reviewing a school's graduation rate, the percentage of students who pass the state graduation exam and the number of students who must repeat a grade.

Funds acquired through **Washington's** Learning Assistance Program may be spent on providing professional development for certificated and classified staff.

### **Student Centered Resources**

To graduate with a standard diploma, high school students in **Virginia** need to earn six verified units of credit by passing end-of-course exams in English, mathematics, laboratory science, history and social science and one elective. As part of its [Project Graduation](#) initiative, the state provides students with [online resources](#), including practice tutorials, related tests, instructional modules and resources.

The **Kentucky** Department of Education, the Council on Postsecondary Education, and public postsecondary institutions offer support and technical assistance to schools and districts in the development of accelerated learning.

Several states, including [Kentucky](#), [North Carolina](#) and [Ohio](#) operate early mathematics testing programs designed to reduce the need for remediation at the postsecondary level. These programs — frequently run by a public institution of higher education — are designed to provide students with a "reality-check" on their mathematics skills while still in high school, prior to enrolling in a postsecondary institution.

Providing feedback while a student is still in high school allows students to take courses to remedy identified deficiencies. This can eliminate or diminish the need for remedial courses at the postsecondary level, which can save students tuition and time otherwise spent earning credits for college graduation.

## **Conclusion**

This paper does not attempt present a definitive list of state approaches to remediation, rather it provides the elements of effective remediation policies and examples of what some states are trying to do to meet the demands of preparing students for college and careers. As pressure increases to meet achievement goals, it is likely that many state policymakers will reevaluate the alignment of state initiatives to ensure that schools are identifying learning gaps early and are intervening as close to the point of need as possible. State policies continue to evolve. How best to serve all students at the high school level is often the most difficult "nut to crack," so ongoing, data-based reflection is critical.

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## Helping State Leaders Shape Education Policy

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- <sup>2</sup> Jennifer Dounay, [High School-Level Assessments: Include End-of-Course Exams](#), Education Commission of the States, accessed 2008
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- <sup>4</sup> Jennifer Laird, Stephen Lew, Matthew DeBell and Chris Chapman, [Dropout Rates in the United States: 2002 and 2003](#), National Center for Education Statistics, June 2006
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- <sup>6</sup> Data Quality Campaign [Web site](#), accessed 8/12/2008
- <sup>7</sup> [Building and Using Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems: Implications for Policy](#), Data Quality Campaign, April 2007
- <sup>8</sup> [Student Support and Remediation: State policy requires district or state to evaluate student remediation program](#), Education Commission of the States,
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- <sup>11</sup> [KY. REV. STAT. ANN. § 158.6459](#)
- <sup>12</sup> ALA. ADMIN. CODE R. 290-3-1-.02
- <sup>13</sup> LA. ADMIN. CODE TIT. 28, § 2323, § 2324
- <sup>14</sup> [Student Support and Remediation: Student participation requirements](#), Education Commission of the States
- <sup>15</sup> UTAH CODE ANN. § 53A-13-104
- <sup>16</sup> [NEV. ADMIN. CODE CH. 389, § 660](#), [NEV. ADMIN. CODE CH. 389, § 661](#)
- <sup>17</sup> Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-420, Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-1602, Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2009, [ARK. REG. 005.19.006](#)
- <sup>18</sup> [KY. REV. STAT. § 158.070](#), [704 KY. ADMIN. REG. § 3:390](#), [KY. REV. STAT. § 158.6453](#), [KY. REV. STAT. § 158.6459](#)
- <sup>19</sup> [WASH. REV. CODE ANN. § 28A.165.005 - WASH. REV. CODE ANN. § 28A.900](#)
- <sup>20</sup> PowerPoint presentation, Massachusetts 2020 and National Center on Time & Learning; retrieved August 27, 2008 url: <http://www.ecs.org/html/meetingsEvents/NF2008/resources/ECSPresentation-session243.ppt>
- <sup>21</sup> FLA. STAT. § 1003.413