

1. How Do States Define Career Readiness?

This is the first in a series of four related papers from the Center on Education Policy (CEP) describing career readiness assessments across states and districts. The major findings from all four papers—drawn from survey responses from state directors of career and technical education or their designees in 46 states—are presented in the CEP summary report *Career Readiness Assessments Across States: A Summary of Survey Findings*.

Key Finding

- ***Only 14 of the 46 states responding to the survey have a statewide definition of what it means for high school students to be career- or work-ready.*** The states that reported having such a definition include Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey, North Dakota, and Virginia. Another 20 states said they are working on developing such a definition.

Status of statewide definitions of career readiness

As shown in **table 1**, only 14 of the 46 states responding to the survey—Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey, North Dakota, and Virginia—said they have a statewide definition of what it means for high school students to be career- or work-ready. In light of the ongoing policy debate about whether the skills needed for career readiness are the same as those required for college readiness, we asked states whether they are using the same definitions for both of these concepts. Eleven (Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New Jersey, and Virginia) of the 14 states that have a definition of career readiness reported using the same definition for both, while three states (Kentucky, Nebraska, and North Dakota) have different definitions for career readiness and college readiness.

More than one-third (20) of the responding states said they are in the process of articulating a statewide definition of career readiness. For example, New Hampshire noted that a definition for college and career readiness has been proposed and is expected to be final in January of 2014. Nine states said they do not have such a definition of career readiness, and one additional state respondent did not know at the time of our survey. Three states selected the “other” response item and provided varying explanations. For example, New York reported that while there was major consensus that the definition of college and career readiness was the same, the state does not have a concrete definition of career readiness. As a member state of the consortium, Tennessee replied that they use the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers’ (PARCC) definition of career readiness. Lastly, Texas noted that the state has adopted college- and career-ready standards and measures a student’s readiness to succeed in credit bearing college courses.

Table 1 Status of statewide definitions of career readiness

State-reported status	States
Has a definition	CO, DE, GA, KS, KY, MD, MI, MN, MO, MT, NE, NJ, ND, VA (14* states)
In the process of articulating a definition	AK, AR, CA, HI, IN, ME, MD, MS, NV, NH, NM, NC, OH, OR, PA, SD, VT, WV, WI, WY (20* states)
Does not have a definition	AZ, CT, DC, ID, IL, IA, OK, SC, WA (9 states)
Other	NY, TN, TX (3 states)
Don’t know	UT (1 state)

Table reads: Fourteen states reported having a statewide definition of what it means for high school students to be career- or work-ready.

*Maryland indicated they have a statewide definition of career readiness AND they are currently in the process of articulating a definition of career readiness. This state is included in both tallies.

State Definitions of Career Readiness

We also asked states to provide their definition of career readiness, if they had one. Sixteen states—including two in which definitions were still under development—provided these definitions, which are displayed in **table 2**.

Table 2 State definitions of career readiness

State	Same definition as college readiness?	Definition
Kentucky	No	http://education.ky.gov/CTE/cter/Pages/CareerReadiness.aspx
Nebraska	No	http://www.education.ne.gov/NCE/Standards.html
North Dakota	No	ND has adopted the Career Readiness Partner Councils definition. http://www.careerreadynow.org/docs/CRPC_4pager.pdf
Colorado	Yes	http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdegen/downloads/PWRdescription.pdf
Delaware	Yes	Each Delaware student will graduate college- and career-ready. Students will be prepared to successfully plan and pursue an education and career path aligned to their personal goals, with the ability to adapt and innovate as job demands change. Students will graduate with strong academic knowledge, the behaviors and skills with which to apply their knowledge, and the ability to collaborate and communicate effectively. Each student should be an independent learner, and have respect for a diverse society and a commitment to responsible citizenship.
Georgia	Yes	The level of achievement required in order for a student to enroll in two- or four-year colleges and universities and technical colleges without remediation, fully prepared for college-level work and careers. This means that all students graduate from high school with both rigorous content knowledge and the ability to apply that knowledge.
Kansas	Yes	Being college- and career-ready means an individual has the academic/cognitive preparation, technical skills, employability/workforce skills and career interest development to be successful, without remediation, in postsecondary institutions, and/or the attainment of a technical credential or industry-recognized certification.

State	Same definition as college readiness?	Definition
Maryland	Yes	College- and career-readiness includes mastery of rigorous content knowledge and the abilities to apply that knowledge through higher-order skills to demonstrate success in college and careers. This includes the ability to think critically and solve problems, communicate effectively, work collaboratively, and be self-directed in the learning process. More specifically, a student who is college- and career-ready should: Be prepared to succeed in credit-bearing postsecondary introductory general education courses or in an industry certification program without needing remediation; Be competent in the Skills for Success (SFS) which can be found at http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/NR/rdonlyres/2990BAB1-3E67-4E08-9DOE-297014ADE008/10606/SFSFeb1998.pdf . (SFS includes learning, thinking, communication, technology, and interpersonal skills.); Have identified potential career goal(s) and understand the steps to achieve them; and Be skilled enough in communication to seek assistance as needed, including student financial assistance.
Michigan	Yes	Career- and college-ready means that a high school graduate has the core foundational knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in workforce training, certification programs, and entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses that provide preparation for careers leading to a self-sustaining wage, pathways to advancement, and competitiveness in the global economy. This means that they: Use technology and tools strategically in learning and communicating; Use argument and reasoning to do research, construct arguments, and critique the reasoning of others; Communicate and collaborate effectively with a variety of audiences; Solve problems, construct explanations and design solutions.
Minnesota	Yes	Postsecondary and workforce readiness includes the knowledge and skills that high school graduates need in order to do credit bearing coursework at a two-or four-year college or university and/or to embark successfully on a career-track employment position (that pays a living wage, provides benefits, and offers clear pathways for advancement through further education and training). http://www.collegeready.umn.edu/resources/documents/roadmap_small.pdf
Missouri	Yes	College and career readiness means that a high school graduate has the necessary English and mathematics knowledge and skills—including, but not limited to, reading, writing, communications, teamwork, critical thinking and problem solving—either to qualify for and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing two- or four-year college courses without the need for remedial coursework, or in workforce training programs for his/her chosen career that offer competitive, livable salaries above the poverty line, offer opportunities for career advancement, and are in a growing or sustainable industry.

State	Same definition as college readiness?	Definition
Montana	Yes	Montana graduation requirements state that prior to graduation students will complete 20 units of study that enable all students to meet the content and performance standards. Of these units 13 must meet predetermined criteria to ensure breadth, while the remaining 7 courses allow students to personalize their coursework to reflect their interests. http://www.mtrules.org/gateway/RuleNo.asp?RN=10%2E55%2E905
New Jersey	Yes	New Jersey's College and Career Ready Taskforce endorsed definitions of college and career ready in its Final Report: http://www.state.nj.us/education/genfo/readiness.pdf The content knowledge and skills that high school graduates must possess in English and mathematics - including, but not limited to, reading, writing, communications, teamwork, critical thinking, and problem solving – to be successful in any and all future endeavors. More specifically, to be college ready means being prepared to enter and succeed in any postsecondary education or training experience, including study at two- and four-year institutions leading to a postsecondary credential (i.e. a certificate, license, associate's or bachelor's degree) without the need for remedial coursework, and being career ready means that a high school graduate possesses not only the academic skills that employees need to be successful, but also both the technical skills, i.e. those that are necessary for a specific job function, and 21st Century employability skills, i.e., interpersonal skills, creativity and innovation, work ethics and personal responsibility, global and social awareness, etc. that are necessary for a successful career.
Virginia	Yes	The Virginia indicators are as follows: Participating in a college preparatory curriculum that includes Algebra II and chemistry; Earning advanced proficient scores on mathematics, reading, and writing Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments; Earning an advanced studies diploma. Other indicators of students' preparedness for credit-bearing courses in postsecondary education include: Participation in Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and dual-enrollment courses; Participating in the Virginia Early College Scholars program. This program allows eligible high school students to earn at least 15 hours of transferable college credit while completing the requirements for an Advanced Studies. More information is available at: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/college_career_readiness/index.shtml
Indiana	(in process)	Students are college- and career-ready when they are able to enroll and succeed in postsecondary coursework without the need for remediation.

State	Same definition as college readiness?	Definition
North Carolina	(in process)	The state has put forward substantial effort in the definition of career readiness. There are components of the career ready definition that are the same as the college ready definition like the ability to think critically and solve problems/ the ability to do math problems at high levels, and the ability to read and understand complex text. The career ready discussions have also included a measure of technical skill and the expectation of some types of work-based learning experiences. Technical skills are often measured in terms of industry-recognized credentials.

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