

A REPORT ON COLLEGE AND CAREER PREPARATION IN U.S. HIGH SCHOOLS

In this *Education Week* article, Catherine Gewertz reports the findings of a new study from The Education Trust on the degree to which high-school courses prepare students for college and career success:

- 31 percent of students completed a “college-ready” curriculum: 4 years of English, 3 years each of math, science, and social studies and 2 years of a world language;
- 13 percent completed a “career ready” sequence: three 1-year courses focused on a specific career field;
- 8 percent completed both sets of requirements;
- Looking at the grades students received in those courses, an additional 14 percent of students were below mastery level, i.e., not prepared for college and career success.
- 47 percent didn’t complete a college-or-career-ready sequence, most of them falling short of the math and science requirements (Algebra II was a big stumbling block).

The situation was somewhat worse for students from low-income families.

Too many students are “meandering toward graduation,” conclude Education Trust researchers Marni Bromberg and Christina Theokas. “High schools are prioritizing credit accrual, which treats graduation as the end goal. Instead of being prepared for college and career, many of our students turn out to have been prepared for neither.” The study makes the following recommendations:

- State policymakers should ensure that high-school graduation requirements are aligned with the expectations of state colleges and universities.
- States should also articulate the requirements students need to enter various postsecondary career pathways.
- K-12 district administrators need to analyze transcripts, course schedules, and credit policies to identify courses with high failure rates and the subgroups of students failing each course.
- District leaders also need to require course sequences that reflect the state’s higher-education expectations, even if those are more rigorous than diploma requirements.
- Schools need to focus more intently on postsecondary planning versus credit accrual. This involves counselors and teachers being well versed in state college and university admissions requirements.

“High-School Coursework Seen Falling Short” by Catherine Gewertz in *Education Week*, April 13, 2016 (Vol. 35, #27, p. 8), www.edweek.org
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