

**Title:** Research on the Move-On-When-Ready program and the senior year of high school

**Date:** July 2010

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**Question:** Please provide information about the National Center on Education and the Economy's Move-On-When-Ready Program. Additionally, what does the research say about senior year of high school in terms of later success?

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**Response:**

We have prepared a brief Question & Answer to summarize the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) State Consortium for Board Examination Systems, also known informally, and referred to here, as the Move-On-When-Ready Program. Additionally, we searched for information relevant to the senior year of high school that specifically addresses current interest in the preparation of all high school students for college and career success.

***What is the Move-On-When-Ready Program?***

The Move-On-When-Ready Program is an instructional system developed by NCEE and based upon the exams used in countries it determined to have the best-performing educational systems. It is a high school program that, according to NCEE, covers the whole core curriculum aligned to the Common Core Standards. Participating schools in the state consortium will use the same syllabus with matching instructional materials, exams, and teacher training for each course. NCEE will establish the pass points for the lower division exams. Students who pass the lower division exams by the end of their sophomore year will be certified for a diploma and enrollment in an open admissions college without having to take remedial courses. Alternatively, these students can remain in high school to take an upper division program and exams that will prepare them to compete for admission to selective colleges. Students who do not pass their exams will receive learning supports in those areas in which they did not do well.

***What is the program's goal?***

The goal is to build an instructional system (i.e., curriculum, syllabus, exams, scoring of exams, and teacher support) in which all students will be ready to pass their exams and, in turn, qualify for and succeed at 4-year colleges and/or careers.

***Which exams are being considered?***

NCEE has determined that the best board exams to be adapted and/or expanded for the program are: ACT/Quality Core, Cambridge International Examinations, College Entrance

Examination Board/Advanced Placement Examinations, International Baccalaureate Diploma Program, and Pearson/Edexcel.

***How does the program intend to meet the specific needs of struggling students?***

Students who do not pass the lower division exams will have two more years to prepare to retake the exams, which can be taken multiple times. During that time high schools will target instructional interventions (based upon sub-scores on the exams) for individual students to address their specific learning needs.

***Will states need to pass new legislation to implement the program?***

Yes. Minimally a state will need legislation to (1) award a high school diploma to students who pass the lower division exams, and (2) accept in all open-admissions 2- and 4-year public colleges students who pass the lower division exams without having to take remedial courses.

***Which states are committed?***

Currently, 12 states have joined with NCEE to pilot the program. The consortium includes: Arizona, Connecticut, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

***Is the pilot operational, and how would it be funded?***

Not yet. NCEE is seeking funds from national foundations and the U.S. Department of Education Race to the Top Assessment Program to fund a consortium of states to jointly plan and implement pilot programs. State pilots will likely include up to 20 high schools before the program goes to scale statewide.

***Who should be contacted for more information?***

To learn more about the NCEE program, contact Ms. Susan Sclafani, Director of State Services, at 202-379-1800 or [ssclafani@ncee.org](mailto:ssclafani@ncee.org).

Resources

There is a dearth of research about the high school senior year specifically. Below are documents that address maximizing the senior year or, more broadly, suggest policy strategies and school structures for high school students to get a jump start on postsecondary education or a career.

California Department of Education (2010). *Multiple pathways to student success: Envisioning the new California high school, A report to the legislature and governor pursuant to Chapter 681, Statutes of 2008*. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education. Retrieved July 21, 2010 from [www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr10/yr10rel51.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr10/yr10rel51.asp)

*Summary:* The report explores the feasibility of establishing and expanding the Linked Learning approach in increasing success for California's high school students. Students enrolled in a pathways program are more likely to pass the California High School Exit Examination as sophomores, to graduate from high school, and to complete college

entrance requirements. Students in these career-themed programs also get hands-on learning experience in real-world learning environments. The report includes a number of key recommendations for policymakers and education advocates to consider, including:

- Revising the California *Education Code* to state that the purpose of high school is to educate and prepare all students to be postsecondary and career ready upon high school graduation;
- Moving the high school system from a seat-time/course completion system to a system where students progress based upon mastery of identified standards;
- Augmenting the accountability system to foster college and career readiness, increasing of graduation rates, and decreasing the number of dropouts;
- Changing the financing of high schools to an enrollment-based system and tie a portion of the funding to student graduation and retaining students in school;
- Expanding curriculum and instruction options to support rigor and relevance within the high school system;
- Consolidating Career Technical Education into a coherent system; and
- Improving the conditions to establish and expand Linked Learning programs.

Conley, D. (2007). *Redefining college readiness*. Volume 4. Eugene, OR: Education Policy Improvement Center. Retrieved July 21, 2010 from [http://www.epiconline.org/publications/college\\_readiness](http://www.epiconline.org/publications/college_readiness)

*Summary:* The purpose of this report is to provide an operational definition of college readiness that differs from current representations of this concept primarily in its scope. The report suggests that, while much has been learned about this phenomenon, particularly during the past 20 years, few systematic attempts have been made to integrate the various aspects or components of college readiness that have been investigated in some depth during this period of time. As a result, college readiness continues to be defined primarily in terms of high school courses taken and grades received, along with scores on national tests, as its primary metrics.

Conley, D. (2001). Rethinking the Senior Year. *National Association of Secondary School Principals, NASSP Bulletin 85(625)2629*. Retrieved July 21, 2010 from <http://bul.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/85/625/26.pdf>

*Summary:* The final year of high school education as it is currently designed presents numerous challenges to students, teachers, and administrators. This article describes strategies to help school administrators rethink the senior year so that high school seniors can make the transition from school to work and/or college more smoothly and successfully. A national report on the senior year is summarized and its recommendations reviewed.

Harris, J., Cohen, P., and Flaherty, T., with contributions from Duhon, C., Kennelly, L., Ikizler, A., and Stumbo, C. (2008). *Eight elements of high school improvement: A mapping framework*. Washington, DC: National High School Center at the American Institutes for Research. Retrieved July 21, 2010 from <http://www.betterhighschools.com/pubs/documents/NHSCEEightElements7-25-08.pdf>

*Summary:* The National High School Center's goal is to encourage researchers, policymakers, and practitioners at all levels to engage in comprehensive, systemic efforts to

maximize attainment for all high school students, with a focus on those students who have been historically underserved. To this end, it has developed a framework that consists of eight core elements and provides a lens for mapping school, district, and state high school improvement efforts. The eight elements are (1) rigorous curriculum and instructions; (2) assessment and accountability; (3) teacher quality and professional development; (4) student and family supports; (5) stakeholder engagement; (6) leadership and governance; (7) organization and structure; and (8) resources for sustainability.

Kirst, M. (2001). *Overcoming the senior slump: New education policies*. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership. Retrieved July 21, 2010 from [http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?\\_nfpb=true&\\_ERICExtSearch\\_SearchValue\\_0=ED455720&ERICExtSearch\\_SearchType\\_0=no&accno=ED455720](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED455720&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED455720)

*Summary:* The slump experienced by many high school seniors stems in part from the failure of the K-12 school system and colleges and universities to provide incentives for high school seniors to work hard. Senior slump appears to be the rational response of students to some disjunctions between the K-12 and postsecondary systems, including a lack of assessment in grade 12, a college admissions calendar that provides little incentive for seniors to take demanding courses, a lack of coherence and sequencing between the K-12 system and colleges, and the emphasis on access and admission to college rather than preparation for completing college. Recommendations in this report are geared toward reclaiming the senior year as a time of serious work. These policy suggestions focus on: (1) strengthening the high school curriculum and linking it to the general education requirement of the first year of college; (2) recognizing various achievement levels on statewide K-12 assessments that meet college or university standards; (3) improving college admissions and placement priorities; and (4) assigning responsibilities for K-16 issues to a single entity in each state.

National Commission on the High School Senior Year. (2001). *Raising our sights: No high school senior left behind*. Princeton, NJ: The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation. Retrieved July 21, 2010 from [http://www.woodrow.org/images/pdf/policy/raising\\_our\\_sights.pdf](http://www.woodrow.org/images/pdf/policy/raising_our_sights.pdf)

*Summary:* Educational institutions, families, and communities are not meeting the educational needs of more than 50 percent of the students enrolled in public and private schools in the United States. In 1997, only 43 percent of high school seniors reported themselves to be in demanding "academic" programs, compared with 45 percent in "general education" and 12 percent in vocational education programs. While a high school education was sufficient for the demands faced by earlier generations, children of the 21st century will need at least 2 years of postsecondary education. To address the problems students and, consequently, society experience arising from lack of coordination between elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education, the Triple-A Program was designed to improve alignment, raise achievement, and provide more (and more rigorous) alternatives. About 18 states already have created K-16 or P-16 councils to start integrating teaching and learning across the years. Appendices include acknowledgements; a list of meetings, guests, and speakers; lists of programs to improve alignment, to improve achievement, and that provide education alternatives; a list of papers and other materials prepared for the National Commission on the High School Senior Year; and a list of notes.

Zinth, J. (May 2010). *Helping students get a head start on the “real world”: State strategies for early high school graduation*. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States. Retrieved July 21, 2010 from <http://www.ecs.org/html/Documents.asp?chouseid=8605>

*Summary:* This policy brief considers several policy approaches to facilitate (or incentivize) early graduation and provides caveats and essential policy components for these various approaches: (1) proficiency-based credit; (2) virtual high schools; (3) completion of high school-level material before grade 9; (4) "dual enrollment plus": programs that allow students who may have completed high school graduation requirements early to enroll full-time in postsecondary or career/technical courses; and (5) scholarship incentives for early graduation.

### Databases and websites searched

*Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Resources:* Regional Educational Laboratory Program (REL); IES Practice Guides; What Works Clearinghouse (WWC); Doing What Works (DWW); and IES Centers.

*Search Engines and Databases:* ERIC; Google; Google Scholar; Lexis-Nexis; and ProQuest.

*Additional Resources:* Education Commission of the States; National Center on Education and the Economy; and The National High School Center.

This memorandum is one in a series of quick-turnaround responses to specific questions posed by educators and policymakers in the Western region (Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah), which is served by the Regional Educational Laboratory West (REL West) at WestEd. This memorandum was prepared by REL West under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Contract ED-06-CO-0014, administered by WestEd. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.