



NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Matt Maurer (202) 955-9450 ext. 322, mmaurer@communicationworks.com
Sandy Boyd (202) 419-1542 or sboyd@achieve.org

Nine States Join Forces to Launch New Algebra II Test

Common Assessment Represents New Model For Multi-State Efforts to Improve High Schools

WASHINGTON—April 10, 2007—A consortium of nine states has joined forces to launch a new, common student assessment in Algebra II, marking the largest effort a group of states has ever undertaken to develop a common assessment based on common standards. The test represents a promising new model for multi-state reform efforts at a time when the overall lackluster achievement of high school students has fueled debates about the creation of national standards and extending No Child Left Behind Act to high schools.

The consortium of states includes Arkansas, Kentucky, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island. The project is an initiative of the ADP Network, a group of 29 states committed to preparing all students for college and work. ADP Network states educate nearly 60 percent of all U.S. public school students.

The ADP Network, formed by Achieve at the 2005 National Education Summit on High Schools, helps states align high school standards, assessments, curriculum and accountability with the demands of college and work. Achieve provides policy leadership, technical assistance and other support to the ADP Network states. It will assist the Algebra II test consortium of states by supporting development of the test, providing an annual report comparing the performance of participating states, and helping the states share and develop tools and strategies for improving teaching and learning in high school math.

“The states in this initiative have shown real leadership”, said Michael Cohen, president of Achieve. “By pooling their human and financial resources to create common tools, they are freeing up time and energy to focus on the additional steps necessary to improve achievement.”

The test will first be administered in May 2008, when it is projected that more than 200,000 students will participate in the assessment. The test will initially be used by the nine states that are part of the consortium, but other states, including those that are not members of the ADP Network, will be allowed to administer the test and join the partnership. The test will be used differently across states as each decides how best to phase in the new assessment over time.

“This test demonstrates the ability of states to come together to establish consistent expectations for student achievement, anchored in the real world demands students will face when they complete high school,” said Dr. Ken James, Arkansas Commissioner of Education. “The test will allow us to compare performance across states and to drive consistent rigor and content in high school Algebra II courses. Most importantly, it will help us determine what works so we can adjust both the curriculum and instruction accordingly.”

Algebra II is one of several “gatekeeper” courses in high school that research indicates can be a significant predictor of college-readiness and success. Two landmark studies conducted by the U.S. Department of Education have indicated that the highest level of math taken in high school is the most powerful predictor of whether a student will ultimately earn a bachelors degree, and that students completing Algebra II in high school more than doubled their chances of earning a four-year college degree.

“Doing well on this test will signify that students are prepared to do college-level work in math, so we are exploring using this exam for college placement purposes,” said Jack Warner, Rhode Island Commissioner of Higher Education. “We are also excited about the possibility that as more students take the exam and understand the importance of Algebra II, we will reduce the need for remedial math in higher education and improve students overall ability to succeed in college.”

“Regardless of whether they choose to continue their education or enter the workforce after high school graduation, students need to know how to analyze and solve problems,” said Prudential Financial Chairman and CEO Arthur F. Ryan, co-chair of the Achieve Board of Directors. “Students who can pass a rigorous Algebra II exam will have a definite advantage in the job market and will be more likely to get jobs that pay well.”

The test is being developed and will be owned by Pearson Educational Measurement. The test will be based on standards developed by Achieve, Inc. as part of its work to create and support the ADP Network. Later this year, Achieve will release a set of guides that can be used to ensure that academic standards and instruction throughout high school are consistent with knowledge and skills required for success on the new test.

#

Created by the nation’s governors and business leaders, Achieve, Inc. is a bipartisan, non-profit organization that helps states raise academic standards, improve assessments and strengthen accountability to prepare all young people for postsecondary education, work and citizenship. Achieve was founded at the 1996 National Education Summit and has sponsored subsequent Summits in 1999, 2001 and 2005. At the 2005 Summit, Achieve launched the American Diploma Project Network. For more information, please visit www.achieve.org.