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Achieve Insights is a monthly briefing of newsworthy items from across states related to ensuring that all students graduate from high school prepared for college, careers, and life.

Achieve releases Strong Standards report, showing that states are maintaining high expectations

Achieve recently released a [new report](#) analyzing the English language arts (ELA)/literacy and mathematics standards of the 24 states that have reviewed and revised these standards after initially adopting the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The report, [Strong Standards: A Review of Changes to State Standards Since the Common Core](#), found most states kept their standards rigorous and maintained college- and career-ready expectations for students. The report identifies the elements of mathematics and ELA/literacy standards necessary to help prepare students for college or careers, and includes analysis of the extent to which each state's standards address those elements.

Indiana will seek a federal waiver from ESSA guidance on calculating graduation rate

Indiana's Department of Education is seeking a [waiver](#) from the U.S. Department of Education's definition, shared in ESSA non-regulatory guidance, that precludes students who obtain the state's general diploma from counting in the state's graduation rate. The federal guidance requires states to only report the graduation rate for students that earn the diploma that a "preponderance" of students in the state earn. In Indiana, a preponderance of students earn Indiana's Core 40 diploma while a smaller percentage earn a general diploma. The Indiana

Department of Education stated, "We believe that the difference between the State's and the new federal definition of a 'regular high school diploma' will negatively impact Indiana's published graduation rates, misidentify schools as needing comprehensive support, and create unnecessary confusion and mistrust of our accountability systems." Achieve's President, Mike Cohen, penned [commentary](#) on this topic saying that Indiana should not be unfairly penalized for holding students to higher expectations to earn a diploma.

Hechinger Report publishes series on how well schools are preparing students with disabilities for life after high school

In November, the Hechinger report published a series of special reports, based on interviews with students with disabilities and their families, as well as experts on educating students with disabilities. These experts argue that up to 90 percent of students with disabilities are capable, with proper supports, of graduating from high school fully prepared to enter postsecondary education or the workforce; however, only 65 percent of students with disabilities graduate on time. The series of reports is available [here](#). Achieve co-authored a [report](#) with the National Center on Educational Outcomes comparing requirements for students with disabilities and without to earn the same diploma and acknowledged when states had a diploma option available exclusively for students with disabilities versus those states without such offerings. Expecting less of students with disabilities, through a less rigorous diploma offering, does them a disservice because they leave school thinking that they are ready for college or career when they are likely not prepared.

Six State Updates

- Nevada's Superintendent Canavero [recommends](#) adding one mathematics course requirement and one science course requirement for students to earn a diploma beginning in 2022.
- The West Virginia Board of Education voted to [release proposals](#) for public comment to

reduce the state's required number of credits for high school graduation from 24 to 21.

- The Virginia Board of Education voted to reduce the number of Standards of Learning tests students need to pass to earn a diploma, from seven to five, beginning with the class of 2022. This is part of broader changes to the state's graduation requirements, which includes the development of Virginia's Profile of a Graduate.
- Massachusetts's Interim Commissioner Jeff Wulfson recommended that the state's board of education establish an interim passing scores on the MCAS assessments for students to graduate in the classes of 2021 and 2022 before fully implementing new passing scores for the class of 2023.
- The Maryland Board of Education voted to delay requiring students to pass the PARCC assessment as a graduation requirement until 2024.
- Ohio's Superintendent Paolo DeMaria recommended that the state reduce its testing requirements, including eliminating the state's 4th grade social studies test, the English language arts I end of course exam, the American Government test, and the use of the WorkKeys assessment.

All students should graduate from high school ready for college, careers, and citizenship.

