



# UPDATE

July 2015

## COALITION UPDATE

**Proficient**

**MEANS**

**Prepared**

Higher Ed *for* Higher Standards (HEfHS) has launched the Proficient Means Prepared campaign to build public understanding and support at a crucial moment in states' efforts to raise standards and improve college readiness. You'll find more information, including new communications tools for higher education leaders, [here](#).

This summer and fall, the results of new, more rigorous K-12 student assessments will be released in states across the country. For the first time, meeting standards will mean that students are prepared for successful transition into credit-bearing college coursework and training opportunities.

Because the assessments have been aligned to higher standards --- a true college- and career-ready standard --- than previous state tests, scores may come back lower than what students, parents, and educators are used to.

College leaders in dozens of states are stepping forward to reassure parents, students, educators, and the general public that setting high expectations is the right thing to do, that the new scores are more meaningful for students, and that higher education stands ready to help more students graduate high school truly prepared for success.

## **NASH & SHEEO Take the Lead**

This week, the National Association of System Heads (NASH) and State Higher Education Executive Officers organization (SHEEO) featured the Proficient Means Prepared campaign at their annual meeting. State higher education leaders from around the country gathered in Sante Fe, where SHEEO Chair Robert King, president of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, and NASH Chair Nancy Zimpher,

chancellor of SUNY, were joined by Governor John Engler, CEO of the Business Roundtable, in a lively discussion about the importance of high standards in improving college and workforce readiness. All agreed that state leaders must show greater resolve in the face of pressures to lower standards.

NASH, SHEEO, and HEfHS [released a public statement](#) committing higher education leaders to stand by their K-12 colleagues as they continue the critical work of raising college readiness and success rates.

[Inside Higher Ed](#) and [Politico's Morning Education](#) covered the announcement.

## Business Community Supports Effort

The Business Roundtable and U.S. Chamber of Commerce both stepped forward to show their support for the Proficient Means Prepared campaign. Governor John Engler, CEO of the Business Roundtable, applauded the effort when he spoke at the SHEEO/NASH meeting this week. He made clear that businesses see a clear link between higher K-12 standards and workforce development, and he strongly encouraged higher education leaders to remain steadfast in their support.

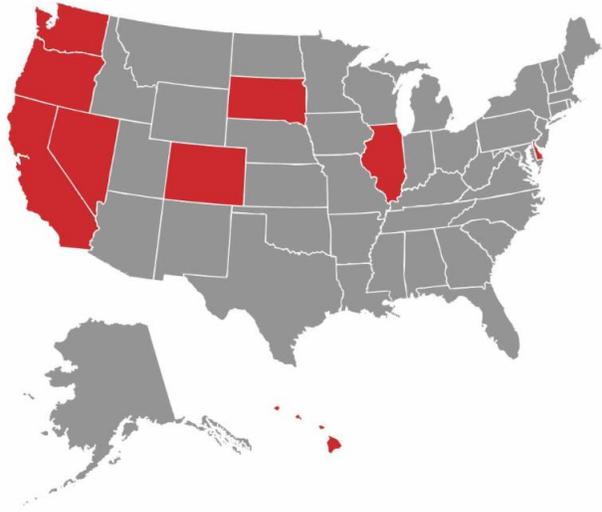
Cheryl Oldham, vice president of the Center for Education and the Workforce at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, also praised higher education's leadership in a [blog post](#) making the case for higher standards: "The business community is not immune to the effects of a low-performing K-12 education system. Currently, there are four million jobs going unfilled around the country partly because there aren't enough candidates with the skills employers are looking for. In fact, 92 percent of senior executives in the United States believe there is a serious gap in workforce skills. The share of jobs that will require a postsecondary credential will increase to 63 percent over the next decade. Today, the percentage of Americans between the ages of 26 and 64 with a two- or four-year degree is only 38 percent. It's time we get honest with students, their families, and ourselves. Proficient in the past has been an empty promise. Proficient moving forward means prepared. Prepared for college. Prepared for career. Prepared for life."

SPOTLIGHT ON CA, CO, DE, HI, IL, NV, OR, SD, and WA

## Using the New Assessments to Reduce Remediation Rates

Higher education systems and institutions in [California](#), [Delaware](#), [Hawaii](#), [Nevada](#), [Oregon](#), [South Dakota](#), and [Washington](#) all recently announced their commitment to use the new Smarter Balanced 11th grade assessments as a formal indicator of college readiness. Colleges in [Colorado](#) and [Illinois](#) have agreed to a similar policy with the PARCC assessments. In all of these states, participating colleges will waive the

placement tests for students who score college ready on the new high school exams, and those students will be automatically enrolled in credit-bearing courses when they arrive on campus their freshman year. This will send a clear signal to high school students in those states that meeting the new standards and performing well on the new tests will open doors to college opportunities. See *Education Week* coverage of the Smarter Balanced announcement [here](#).



## MAKING THE CASE

### New Assessments Will Provide More Meaningful Data

[A new report](#) by the nonprofit Achieve shows that most states have historically presented a misleading picture of student success because their previous state tests were not aligned to college- and career-ready standards. As a result, more than half of states have gaps of 30 points or more between the percentage of students who score proficient on their state tests versus those who scored proficient on the 2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress, widely considered "the nation's report card."

Achieve said the upcoming scores on the PARCC and Smarter Balanced assessments likely will provide a much more meaningful and realistic picture of student achievement.

The Foundation for Excellence in Education recently released an interactive website called [Why Proficiency Matters](#) to inform parents about the proficiency gap in their state and explain why the new, more challenging assessments most states have adopted will provide more meaningful data.

### Kentucky and Tennessee Demonstrate the Power of Proactive Communications

In 2010, Kentucky became one of the first states to implement the Common Core State Standards and assessments based on those standards. Several years earlier, Tennessee raised its standards based on its Tennessee Diploma Project. The Hunt Institute recently [released a report](#) that shows how these two states worked proactively to develop public understanding and support for the new expectations well

in advance of the new assessment scores coming out.

Key lessons from the report: Be proactive, coordinate efforts, simplify messages, engage partners (notably in business and higher education), connect education to the economy, and listen a lot.

## New Poll Shows Strong, Sustained Support for High Standards

The vast majority of Kentucky educators and parents continue to support the state's higher standards, according to [survey results](#) recently released by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Overall, 88 percent of the respondents gave the standards a "thumbs up" and did not indicate any changes were needed. About 12 percent of respondents said they would like to see some changes. Of those, 71 percent wanted to see one or more of the standards moved to a different grade. Nearly 4,000 people took part in the online survey; about half were teachers or retired teachers, about 20 percent were parents, 8 percent were administrators or school district staff, and about 8 percent represented business or the community at large. The remainder were students, professors, and state agency partners. The support is especially significant given that Kentucky is well ahead of other states in implementing higher standards and aligned assessments.

### About Higher Ed for Higher Standards

Higher Ed for Higher Standards is a coalition of [higher education leaders](#) that strives to ensure that Americans realize the importance of higher K-12 standards for higher education and student success after high school. [Join us!](#)

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