

# Nebraska

## Ready for What?

Preparing Students for College,  
Careers, and Life After High School



A Special State-Focused Supplement to *Education Week's*

**Diplomas Count**  
THE GRADUATION PROJECT 2007

With support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation



## The Policy Context

### High School Graduation and the No Child Left Behind Act

The federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), enacted in 2002, holds states and the schools under their jurisdictions accountable for student performance. Proficiency on academic assessments must be the principal indicator of performance used under NCLB to determine whether schools are making adequate yearly progress (AYP). However, statewide accountability systems are also required to incorporate one additional academic outcome. At the secondary level, this “other academic indicator” must be the high school graduation rate.

NCLB defines the high school graduation rate as the “percentage of students, measured from the beginning of high school, who graduate from high school with a regular diploma (not including an alternative degree that is not fully aligned with the State’s academic standards, such as a certificate or a GED) in the standard number of years.” Federal regulations, however, allow states substantial flexibility over the specifics of graduation accountability. This includes choosing a formula for calculating graduation rates, setting goals for graduation rates, and establishing targets for improvement over time.

State Policy Overview – Accountability		
	<b>Nebraska</b>	<b>National Overview</b>
This table describes state accountability measures related to high school graduation rates under the No Child Left Behind Act. (Note: AMOs = annual measurable objectives)		
<b>Calculating Graduation Rates *</b>		
Formula used by the state to calculate graduation rates for the federal No Child Left Behind Act (2006-07)	Leaver rate	<b>32</b> states use a Leaver Rate
<b>Graduation Rate Performance Goals for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)</b>		
Current target (2006-07)	83.97%	<b>75%</b> in average state
Final target (2013-14)	83.97%	<b>80%</b> in average state
Minimum annual improvement required if not meeting target	Any improvement	<b>30</b> states allow any amount of improvement to make AYP
<b>NGA Compact Rate</b>		
State data system able to calculate National Governors Association Compact rate for class of 2007	No	<b>18</b> states have data to calculate NGA Compact rate
<p><b>* A Key to NCLB Graduation Rate Formulas</b></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 48%;"> <p><b>Leaver Rate</b> – Percent of students leaving high school with a standard high school diploma, expressed as a proportion of all those documented leaving with a diploma or other completion credential or as a dropout. This method is sometimes referred to as a departure-classification index. (32 states)</p> <p><b>Cohort Rate</b> – Percent of students from an entering 9th grade cohort who graduate with a standard diploma within four years. Method can account for transfers and students retained in grade. Student data may be tracked on a statewide or local basis. (16 states)</p> <p><b>Completion Ratio</b> – Number of diploma recipients divided by an approximation of the starting 9th grade class. Method cannot fully account for entering cohort membership, net transfer, and grade retention. (1 state)</p> </div> <div style="width: 48%;"> <p><b>Composite Rate</b> – Proportion of students estimated to remain in high school until grade 12 and receive a diploma. The rate for a given year is calculated by multiplying together (1) the rate of persistence between grades 9 and 12 and (2) the percent of completers who receive a diploma rather than another credential. (1 state)</p> <p><b>Persistence Rate</b> – Percent of students who remain in school from grade 9 through grade 12. Rate is calculated using information on (1) the percent of students not dropping out at specific grade levels or (2) the percent of students estimated to be promoted from grade to grade. This method does not measure high school completion. (1 state)</p> </div> </div>		

## Graduation Requirements – Class of 2007

This table describes state policies related to high school graduation, including the types of credentials available and requirements for receiving a standard diploma.

	Nebraska	
<b>High School Completion Credentials</b>		Number of states nationwide
<b>Standard diploma options</b> offered by state	Standard	---
<b>Advanced recognition</b> offered for exceeding standard requirements	No	24
<b>Alternative credential</b> offered for not meeting all standard requirements	No	28
<b>Course Credits Required to Earn a Standard Diploma</b>		Number of credits required by average state
English/Language Arts	Local decision	3.9
Mathematics	Local decision	2.7
Science	Local decision	2.5
History/Social Studies	Local decision	2.7
Other Credits	Local decision	8.3
<b>Total Credits Required:</b>	<b>200 credit hours</b>	20.4
<b>Exit Exam Required to Earn a Diploma</b>		Number of states nationwide
State requires students to pass a statewide assessment or exam to earn a standard high school diploma (class of 2006-07)	No	22
Subjects tested (English, Math, Science, History, Technology)	n/a	---
Type of test	n/a	---
Exam based on standards for 10th grade or higher	n/a	18
Appeals process or alternative route offered for students to earn a standard diploma without passing required exit exam	n/a	16
<b>Minimum-Age Policies</b>		National average
Compulsory age for public school attendance	18 (or younger with waiver)	17
Minimum age at which students can take the General Educational Development (GED) test	18 (or younger with waiver)	18

## Defining Readiness – College & Work

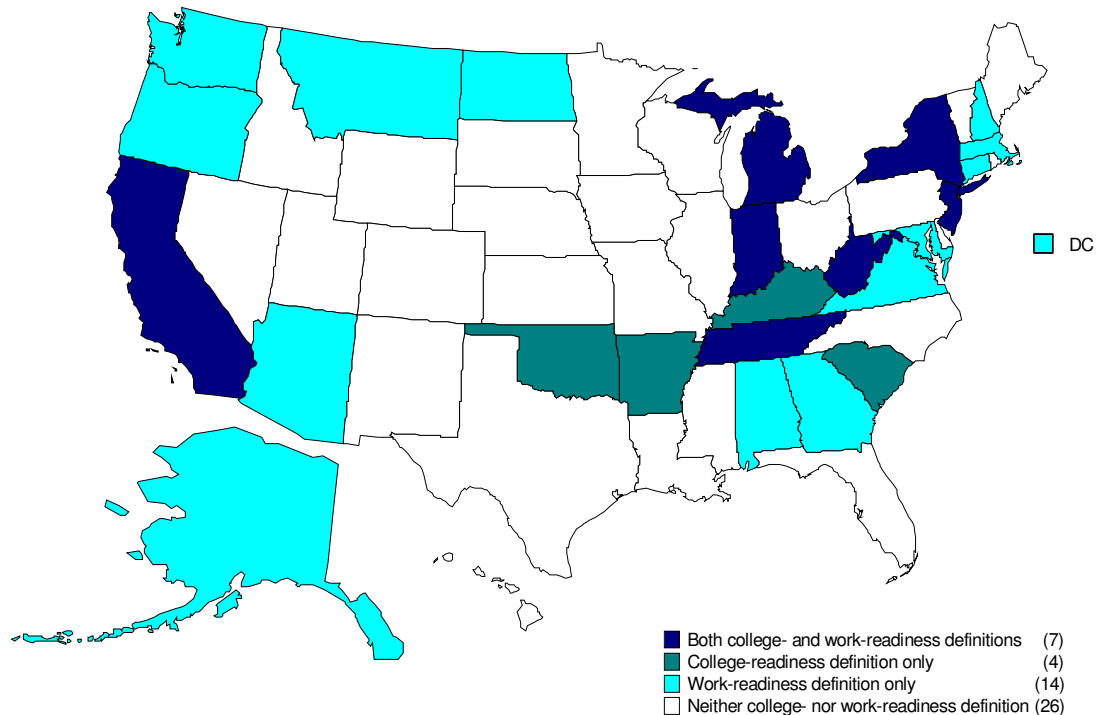
This table describes state policies related to college and work readiness.

	Nebraska	
<b>College Readiness</b>		Number of states nationwide
<b>State has defined college readiness</b>	No	11
<b>How college readiness is defined</b> Approaches to defining college readiness include: courses, skills, standards, and tests	n/a	---
<b>Work Readiness</b>		Number of states nationwide
<b>State has defined work readiness</b>	No	21
<b>How work readiness is defined</b> Approaches to defining work readiness include: courses, skills, standards, and tests	n/a	---
<b>Distinct Definitions</b>		Number of states nationwide (of 7 defining both concepts)
<b>K-12 work-readiness definition is different from college readiness</b> Definitions of college and work readiness are distinct	---	5

## A National Perspective

The EPE Research Center examined state efforts to define college and work readiness within the K-12 education system and identified four major approaches commonly used: courses, skills, standards, and tests.

This map shows that 17 states and the District of Columbia have completed definitions of either college or work readiness and another seven states have defined both concepts. About half of the states have either not addressed or not finalized readiness definitions in either area.



## Graduation Profile 2003-04

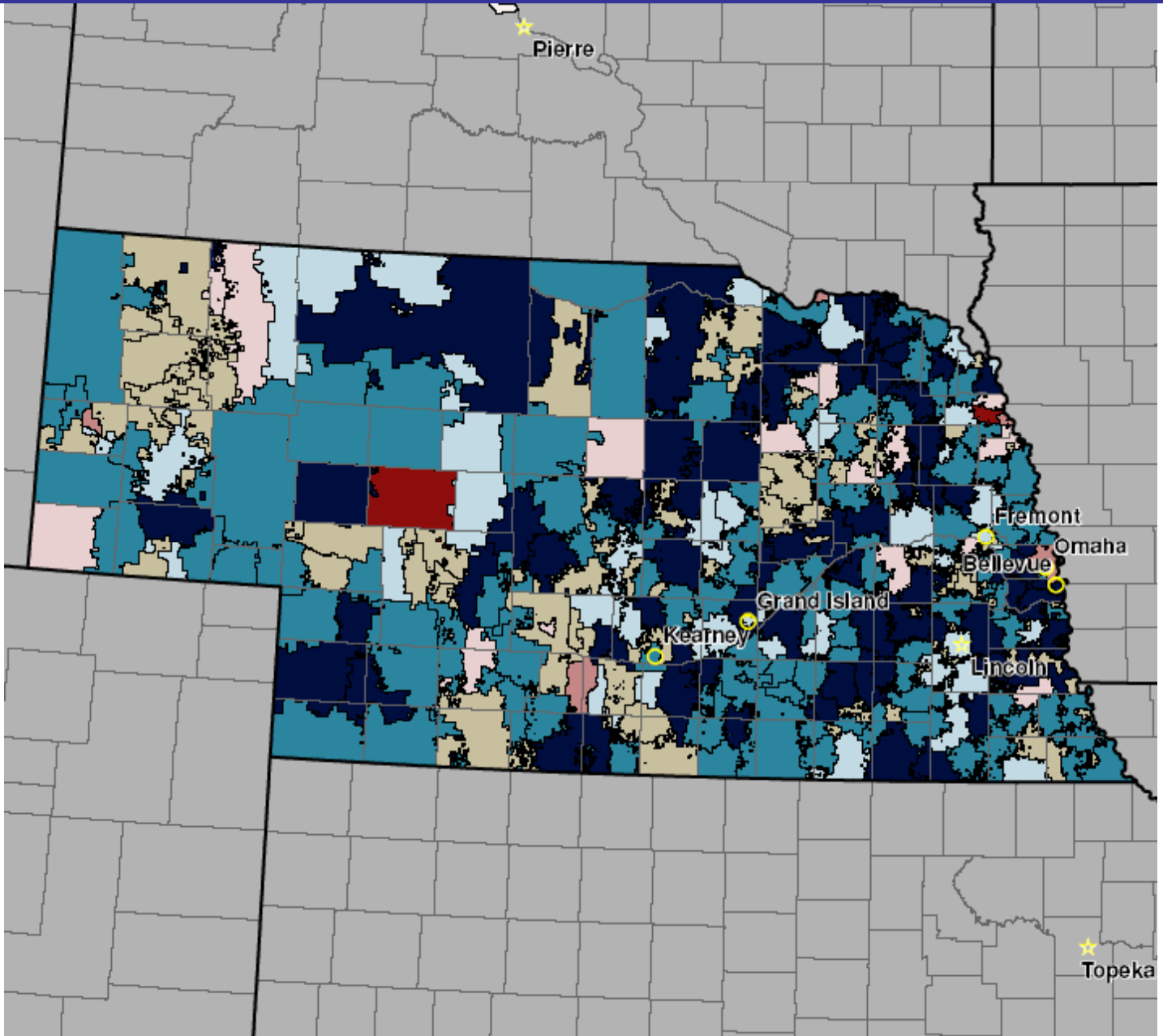
This table reports state graduation rates and demographics for specific student subgroups.

Graduation Rate by Student Group	Nebraska	Nation
<b>All Students</b>	(%)	(%)
	<b>79.8</b>	<b>69.9</b>
<b>By Gender</b>		
Male	<b>76.4</b>	<b>66.0</b>
Female	<b>80.0</b>	<b>73.6</b>
<b>By Race and Ethnicity</b>		
American Indian/Alaska Native	<b>35.2</b>	<b>49.3</b>
Asian/Pacific Islander	<b>76.2</b>	<b>80.2</b>
Hispanic	<b>53.8</b>	<b>57.8</b>
Black (not Hispanic)	<b>47.4</b>	<b>53.4</b>
White (not Hispanic)	<b>84.5</b>	<b>76.2</b>
<b>By Gender and Race and Ethnicity</b>		
<b>Male</b>		
American Indian/Alaska Native	<b>**</b>	<b>44.6</b>
Asian/Pacific Islander	<b>**</b>	<b>76.5</b>
Hispanic	<b>45.3</b>	<b>52.3</b>
Black (not Hispanic)	<b>40.7</b>	<b>46.2</b>
White (not Hispanic)	<b>81.5</b>	<b>72.3</b>
<b>Female</b>		
American Indian/Alaska Native	<b>39.6</b>	<b>50.0</b>
Asian/Pacific Islander	<b>70.9</b>	<b>82.1</b>
Hispanic	<b>58.9</b>	<b>62.8</b>
Black (not Hispanic)	<b>56.2</b>	<b>59.6</b>
White (not Hispanic)	<b>84.2</b>	<b>77.9</b>
<b>Student Demographics</b> (percent of student population in specified group)		
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	(%)	(%)
American Indian/Alaska Native	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.2</b>
Asian/Pacific Islander	<b>1.7</b>	<b>4.4</b>
Hispanic	<b>10.1</b>	<b>18.5</b>
Black (not Hispanic)	<b>7.1</b>	<b>17.2</b>
White (not Hispanic)	<b>79.5</b>	<b>58.7</b>
<b>Other Characteristics</b>		
Poverty (Eligible for free or reduced-price lunch)	<b>33.9</b>	<b>40.2</b>
English-Language Learners	<b>5.5</b>	<b>9.5</b>
Special Education	<b>16.1</b>	<b>13.5</b>

\* Value not calculated because necessary data field(s) not reported in CCD or because of small group size.

\*\* Value not reported because of insufficient data for reliable estimate.

## High School Graduation Rates for Districts in Nebraska 2003-04



### District graduation rate

(U.S. avg.: 70%)

- 90 - 100 %
- 80 - 90 %
- 70 - 80 %
- 60 - 70 %
- 50 - 60 %
- < 50 %
- No data available
- County boundary



Create maps and download detailed graduation reports for any school district in the country at:

[maps.edweek.org](http://maps.edweek.org)

## How Does the EPE Research Center Calculate Graduation Rates?

The Editorial Projects in Education Research Center uses the **Cumulative Promotion Index (CPI)** method to calculate graduation rates. The CPI represents graduating from high school as a process rather than a single event. Specifically, it captures the four key steps a student must take in order to graduate: three grade-to-grade promotions (9 to 10, 10 to 11, and 11 to 12) and ultimately earning a diploma (grade 12 to graduation).

The formula below illustrates the CPI formula for calculating graduation rates. The class of 2003-04, the most recent year of data available, is used as an example.

$$\text{CPI} = \frac{10\text{th graders, fall 2004}}{9\text{th graders, fall 2003}} \times \frac{11\text{th graders, fall 2004}}{10\text{th graders, fall 2003}} \times \frac{12\text{th graders, fall 2004}}{11\text{th graders, fall 2003}} \times \frac{\text{Diploma recipients, spring 2004}}{12\text{th graders, fall 2003}}$$

By multiplying grade-specific promotion ratios together, the CPI estimates the likelihood that a 9th grader will complete high school on time with a regular diploma, given the schooling conditions prevailing during a particular school year. The CPI counts only students receiving standard high school diplomas as graduates, following the definition of a graduate adopted by the No Child Left Behind Act.

We can use a simplified example to further demonstrate the way we calculate the CPI. Let us suppose that a particular school district currently has 100 students enrolled in each grade from 9 through 12. We will also assume that 5 percent of students currently in grades 9, 10, and 11 will drop out of school this year and that 5 percent of seniors will fail to earn a diploma at the end of the year. So, for example, we would count 100 9th graders at our starting point but only 95 10th graders the following fall.

$$\text{CPI} = \frac{95}{100} \times \frac{95}{100} \times \frac{95}{100} \times \frac{95}{100} = .815$$

Carrying out the calculation (shown above), we arrive at a graduation rate of 81.5 percent for this district. Given conditions in this hypothetical district (an effective 5 percent annual attrition rate for students at each grade level), only about 82 out of every 100 9th graders would be expected to finish high school with a diploma.

The CPI can be calculated for public school districts that have students enrolled in the secondary grades (9 through 12). State and national statistics are generated by aggregating the district-level data upward.

### Notes on Our Methodology

The EPE Research Center calculates graduation rates using data from the Common Core of Data (CCD), an annual census of public schools and school districts in the United States conducted by the U.S. Department of Education. Detailed methodological descriptions of the CCD can be found in technical documentation published by the National Center for Education Statistics (available online at [nces.ed.gov/ccd](http://nces.ed.gov/ccd)). For the 2003-04 school year, diploma counts for New York and Wisconsin were not reported to the CCD. The EPE Research Center obtained those data from the respective state education agencies.

Our goal is to provide a direct measure of the graduation rate for each of the roughly 11,000 school districts in the nation that enroll high school students. We were able to do this for districts serving the vast majority (96 percent) of all public school students nationwide. But in a small number of cases – for example, if a particular piece of information needed to calculate the CPI indicator was missing – we could not directly compute the graduation rate.

To avoid the unintentional disclosure of information about individual students, we do not report results for very small demographic subgroups, those with fewer than five students in a given category.

## Notes and Sources

### About this Report

With support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center is engaged in a four-year project to study high school graduation and related issues pertaining to late secondary schooling and the transition to postsecondary education and employment.

The second annual report from this project, *Diplomas Count 2007: Ready for What? Preparing Students for College, Careers, and Life After High School*, explores what it means to ensure that high school students graduate prepared for both higher education and the workplace. An original analysis drawing on two national databases shines a spotlight on “jobs with a future” nationally and for each state. *Diplomas Count* also examines state policies for college and work readiness and provides an updated analysis of graduation rates for the nation, states, and 50 largest school districts.

In addition to the printed report, online-only features include state-specific policy reports and a new geographical web interface. Users can create interactive maps and download a special report for any school district in the country that includes comparisons to state and national statistics.

Visit *Diplomas Count* at [www.edweek.org/go/dc07](http://www.edweek.org/go/dc07)

### State Policy Indicators

The policy indicators examined in this report include information collected by the EPE Research Center as well as data obtained from other organizations. Definitions and sources for specific indicators are described below.

#### GRADUATION RATE ACCOUNTABILITY POLICIES

##### NCLB Accountability

Accountability indicators based on EPE Research Center analysis of state accountability workbooks approved by the U.S. Department of Education (as of April 23, 2007) and supplemental state documentation.

*Formula used to calculate graduation rates for NCLB:* Graduation-rate formula described in

state accountability workbooks for use in NCLB accountability.

*Current graduation-rate target for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP):* Graduation rate that schools and school districts are expected to achieve to make AYP for the 2006-07 school year.

*Final graduation-rate target for Adequate Yearly Progress:* Graduation rate that schools and school districts are expected to achieve to make AYP for the 2013-14 school year.

*Minimum annual improvement required if not meeting target:* Minimum amount of annual improvement that schools and school districts that do not reach graduation-rate targets are expected to achieve to make AYP.

##### NGA Compact Rate

State data system is capable of calculating a graduation rate for the class of 2007 as defined by the 2005 National Governors Association Compact. Specifically, the data system has the elements the Data Quality Campaign deems necessary for calculating the compact rate, including unique student identifiers, student-level enrollment, demographic, and program participation data, student-level graduation and dropout data, and a state audit system. To receive credit, a state must also have implemented a student ID system in 2003-04 or earlier. Data are not available for the District of Columbia. Data Quality Campaign, 2006.

#### GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

##### High School Completion Credentials

Indicators provide information on state-recognized completion credentials and other forms of recognition. EPE Research Center annual state policy survey, 2006.

##### Course Credits

*Coursetaking requirements for standard diploma:* Course requirements are expressed in Carnegie units unless otherwise specified. One Carnegie unit is equivalent to one year of coursework. Credits reflect the minimum course requirements (overall and by subject) mandated by the state for a standard high school diploma. Education Commission of the States, “Standard High School Graduation Requirements (50 state),” 2007. Figures independently verified by the EPE Research Center.

##### State Exit Exams

*Exit exam required:* State requires students to pass an exit exam in order to graduate. EPE Research Center annual state policy survey, 2006.

*Subjects tested on state exit exam:* EPE Research Center annual state policy survey, 2006.

*State exit-exam type:* State exit exams are grouped into three categories based on states’ descriptions of their tests: minimum-competency, standards-based, and end-of-course exams. Center on Education Policy, “State High School Exit Exams: A Challenging Year,” 2006.

*State exit exam based on standards for 10th grade or higher:* State has an exit exam aligned to state 10th grade standards or higher. EPE Research Center annual state policy survey, 2006.

*Appeals process or alternative route:* State allows students to appeal after failing an exit exam or has an alternative route students can take to earn a standard diploma. EPE Research Center annual state policy survey, 2006.

##### Minimum-Age Policies

*Compulsory-attendance age:* Age at which attendance is no longer required. U.S. Department of Labor, “Employment Related Provisions in State Compulsory School Attendance Laws,” 2007.

*Age to take GED test:* General Educational Development Testing Service of the American Council on Education, unpublished data, June 2007.

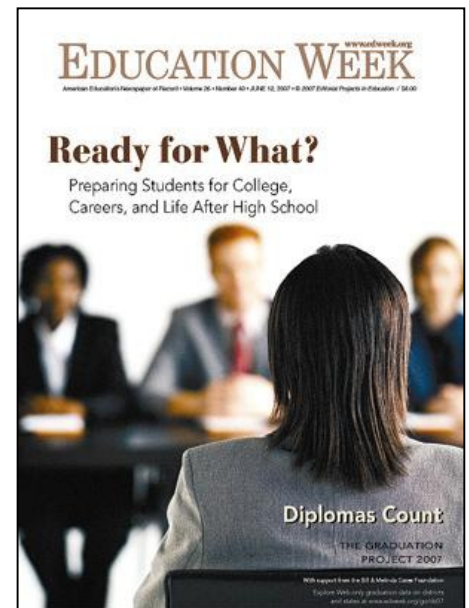
#### DEFINING READINESS

*State has defined college readiness or work readiness & How college readiness or work readiness is defined:* State has formal expectations for what students will need to know and be able to do in order to be prepared for college or the workplace. Readiness can be defined in terms of courses, skills, standards, or tests. EPE Research Center annual state policy survey, 2006.



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- **EdWeek Maps** – This powerful online tool allows users to create interactive maps and download a special graduation report for any school district in the country that includes comparisons to state and national statistics. Online at [maps.edweek.org](http://maps.edweek.org)
- **Policy Briefs** – The EPE Research Center has also produced a series of online-only briefs focusing on specific state policy issues: *What It Takes to Graduate for the Class of 2006-07*, *High School Assessments 2006-07*, and *Graduation Rates Under NCLB*.



Visit *Diplomas Count* at [www.edweek.org/go/dc07](http://www.edweek.org/go/dc07)

### About Editorial Projects in Education

**Editorial Projects in Education (EPE)** is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization based in Bethesda, Md. Our primary mission is to help raise the level of awareness and understanding among professionals and the public of important issues in American education. We cover local, state, national, and international news and issues from preschool through the 12th grade. Editorial Projects in Education Inc. publishes *Education Week*, America's newspaper of record for precollegiate education, [edweek.org](http://edweek.org), and the Agent K-12 employment resource. We also produce periodic special reports on issues ranging from technology to textbooks, as well as books of special interest to educators.

The **EPE Research Center** conducts annual policy surveys, collects data, and performs analyses that appear in the *Quality Counts*, *Technology Counts*, and *Diplomas Count* annual reports. The center also produces independent research reports and contributes original data and analysis to special coverage in *Education Week* and [edweek.org](http://edweek.org). Online at [www.edweek.org/rc](http://www.edweek.org/rc)