



COALITION FOR A COLLEGE AND CAREER READY AMERICA

The **Coalition for a College and Career Ready America (CCCRA)** is a group of like-minded organizations committed to engaging with federal, state, and local policy leaders to increase U.S. K–12 student performance, raise high school graduation rates, and ensure that America’s education system prepares all students for postsecondary education and the demands of today’s workplace.

The nation should not—and can no longer afford to—tolerate an education system in which more than one in four high school freshmen fail to graduate on time, including almost half of African American and Hispanic students. Too many of those who do graduate are not prepared for college and a career as reflected in low ACT/SAT scores, high college remediation rates, and employer dissatisfaction with the entry level workforce. By 2018, two-thirds of the nation’s jobs will require education after high school, and projections show that the United States will be 3 million postsecondary degrees short. The nation’s continued prosperity requires help for every child to achieve his or her full potential.

To reach this goal, federal policy must promote actions that hold states, districts, and schools accountable while also providing them with the flexibility necessary to customize reform strategies based on data and meet the unique needs of their students. Federal policy must also provide appropriate incentives for states and districts to set clear goals that meet the national ambitions for the U.S. education system. Federal, state, and local policy must also be aligned to focus on ensuring college and career readiness for all students.

The CCCRA’s mission is to support and strengthen reform voices at the local and state level by connecting them to the national policy conversation and introducing them to strategies that hold the greatest promise for improving student achievement. The CCCRA spotlights states, districts, and organizations that are implementing promising education reforms and yielding results in increased student achievement and educational attainment. Through its work, the CCCRA seeks to help CCCRA members across the nation become advocates for effective reform practices so they can act decisively to engage parents and communities and foster similar gains locally in order to secure a brighter future for all young people. The CCCRA is committed to supporting actions and policies that do the following:

- **Embrace clear and high standards and provide the supports needed to prepare students for success.**
 - **College- and career-ready standards and assessments.** All young people need certain skills and knowledge to be successful in college and a career—whether they live in Alabama or Wyoming. States are moving ahead with setting clear goals for what students should know and be able to do by the end of high school. Many states are also working to develop a new generation of assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards – which have been adopted by 45 states and the District of Columbia – that will provide a better measure of what students know and are able to do, and provide timely and useful information about student progress.

Moving forward, student success will not only depend on states having clear college- and career-ready standards and assessments; achievement will also be dependent upon effective implementation of these tools. Providing professional development opportunities to educators to help them learn the new standards and develop curriculum and classroom tools that match the standards must be a priority to ensure effective implementation. The CCCRA supports the work of states and districts that are implementing college- and career-ready standards and making the changes necessary to ensure that teachers, parents, administrators and students have the supports they need.

- **Effective teaching.** Research clearly shows that the most critical change schools can make is to ensure that all students are taught by highly effective teachers. Too often, the schools with the neediest students have the fewest effective teachers. Today's salary, tenure, and evaluation systems are not equipped to discover, develop, and support effective teachers and encourage them to stay in the classroom. New models for recruiting, preparing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers show promise in providing schools with the tools and support needed to increase teacher effectiveness and maximize student achievement. In order to cultivate and encourage the next generation of effective teachers, the nation must devote the resources needed to provide meaningful feedback systems and professional development as well as other classroom tools and supports critical for educators to hone their craft.
- **Provide states and districts with access to robust data, high-quality data systems, and technical assistance.**
 - **High-quality data systems.** Better data and better use of data are critical to measuring and raising student achievement. States need ways to track student performance from pre-kindergarten through postsecondary education and into the workforce. For educators, parents, and students, data systems can provide the tools to improve performance and intervene effectively. This information can and should be used to inform policy and resource allocation decisions. Data can also tell parents and teachers what skills students have mastered along the way and what needs to be learned next. Additionally, accurate measurement of high school graduation and college completion rates demands a high-quality data system. Educators should participate in determining the information that is most needed and developing ways to get results into the hands of teachers more quickly—not months later.
 - **Public information sharing.** In order to foster deeper investment and involvement in education schools and districts must provide clear information to parents and community stakeholders on fiscal management and student achievement, including data that shows if students are reading and doing math at grade level. Schools and districts must be accountable to their communities and demonstrate student performance in a straightforward and transparent manner. While data transparency is critical – it is not enough by itself. Parents and communities must also be provided the adequate context in order to use this information to take action and advocate on behalf of their students.

- **Recognize the important roles that high-quality innovative models and public charter schools play in today’s education system.**
 - **Quality and innovation in education.** Quality exemplars can serve as incubators for promising reforms and provide educators and policymakers with tangible examples of best practices on a wide range of issues, from instruction and data to school turnaround. States that limit the growth and expansion of these models are at a disadvantage. Policies should encourage educators to pursue innovative efforts with measurable results, while ensuring that all school operators are held to the highest standards for the use of public funds. States should also advance and protect laws that support innovation, ensure quality, and guard gains in student achievement.
- **Support turning around all of our nation’s low-performing schools as they face challenges in providing their students with a quality education.**
 - **All students.** Access to a quality education should not depend on a student’s zip code. Decades after *Brown vs. Board of Education*, students of color are still much more likely to attend low-performing schools than are their white peers. Policymakers must ensure that all students, regardless of their background, receive a college- and career-ready education.
 - **Customized solutions.** Every school is different, every student is unique, and one-size-fits-all approaches do not work. Turnaround efforts should be developed and implemented to address the specific needs of individual schools. Parents and community stakeholders should be involved early and throughout this process in order to ensure that improvements and solutions reflect their needs, aspirations and priorities.
 - **Comprehensive interventions.** There are no silver bullets in education reform. In order to serve all of the nation’s students, struggling schools need a wide array of coordinated strategies, including effective instruction, strengthened curriculum, personalized instruction and wraparound services.
- **Align state and federal policy with the above principles and put them at the core of any major education initiative, including reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).**
 - While Race to the Top and other federal programs provide funds and unprecedented opportunity to further key reforms in education in some states, future legislative efforts, such as ESEA, must support state and local efforts to prepare all students for college and the modern workplace.