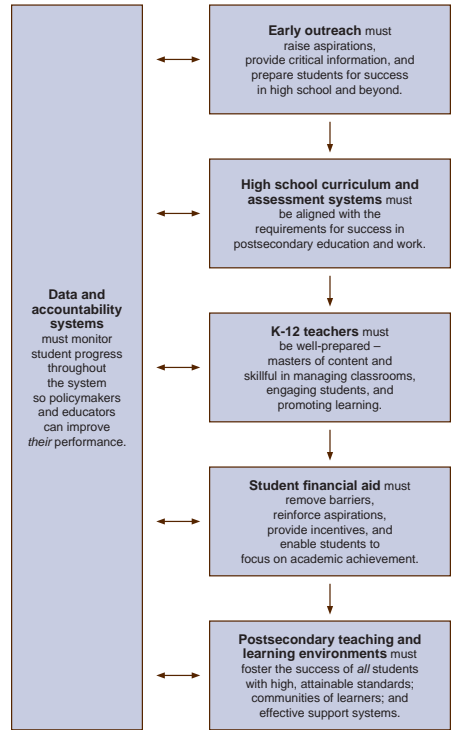


## A Systemic Solution for . . .



. . . More Student Success

### Why is a *systemic solution* required?

Consider a first grader in Ohio. Does his family understand how higher education works, and what he must do to prepare for it? Or must this vital knowledge come from others? Or consider a junior high student in Idaho. Is she planning on Algebra II, or will she settle for General Math because she doesn't think she can afford college?

A 16-year-old in Georgia has a chemistry teacher fresh out of State U. Does the teacher have a solid understanding of chemistry and how to teach it to teenagers? If the student does well in this class, will she be well prepared for organic chemistry in college? Will her test data follow her? An Arizona community college student needs to transfer to a four-year institution to specialize in radiology. Will her aid transfer with her?

A 27-year-old mother returns to college, balancing two courses per term with part-time work. Will she be isolated from other students and help with her studies? Or will the college provide a learning community and the support she needs to complete her degree?

Unless a state's educational system addresses challenges such as these, it is unlikely to achieve more student success. Every state has the capacity to foster success for every student. We owe them no less.

### Who and what is behind *More Student Success*?

This brochure summarizes the book, *More Student Success: A Systemic Solution*, published by the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO), as part of a continuing, collaborative effort to increase educational attainment in the United States. The book provides many details and examples to help policymakers and educators make choices and more effectively play their individual roles. Of course, no book contains all the answers or can do the work. But policymakers and educators who collaborate with each other, focus on results, take a systemic perspective, experiment, learn, and pursue continuous improvement will be successful.

The authors of *More Student Success* collectively draw on deep experience in many states in advancing educational attainment. The collaborating organizations involved in this publication include:

- Achieve, Inc. – The American Diploma Project Network, [www.achieve.org](http://www.achieve.org)
- Data Quality Campaign, [www.dataqualitycampaign.org](http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org)
- National Association of System Heads, [www.nashonline.org](http://www.nashonline.org)
- State Higher Education Executive Officers, [www.sheeo.org](http://www.sheeo.org)
- Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education, [www.wiche.edu](http://www.wiche.edu)

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Highlights from:

# MORE STUDENT SUCCESS



## A Systemic Solution

*Achieving better results in our schools and colleges*

The 20th century U.S. educational system is obsolete. Americans need more education and better education to thrive in the complex 21st century world.

No single program – only a systemic approach focused on student success – can do this job.

To achieve more student success these elements of the system –

- early outreach
- high school curriculum and assessment
- K-12 teaching
- student financial aid
- postsecondary teaching and learning environments
- data and accountability systems

– must be excellent and harmoniously connected to the others.



## Early Outreach

It is never too early for students and parents to start thinking about higher education. Early outreach initiatives are needed to raise aspirations and "show the ropes" to students whose parents didn't go to college.

"Add on" early outreach programs are helping many students, but most students needing help are left out. The essential components of good outreach programs must be a part of every school and community.

Building early outreach into every school will take determined effort – but it will pay great dividends.

### For more student success:

- Focus on individual students and on what sustains their learning.
- Engage students within their own culture and the community of their peers.

- Convince young people that postsecondary education is important to their futures, and if they do the right things, take the right courses, and work at their studies, they can succeed.

- Make academic standards and the college-preparatory curriculum very clear, especially in the middle grades when academic performance and courses taken expand or shrink future opportunities.

- Give students regular feedback on academic performance; provide good teaching and coaching to help them improve.

- Offer convincing assurance or a guarantee that the price of higher education is within reach for all students who do their part to prepare academically.
- Embed these components of early outreach in every school and classroom.

## High Quality Teaching

More students than ever before must be well educated. Greater educational attainment can happen only with more effective, more engaging teaching. Improving teaching in elementary-secondary schools requires cooperation with and changes in postsecondary education, as well as changes in local schools and state policy.

The success of early outreach and stronger curricula depends on the capacities of teachers in classrooms, their preparation and in-service training, and district and state policies to improve teaching and the recruitment and retention of high quality teachers.

### For more student success:

- Bring together education faculty, arts and sciences faculty, and practicing teachers to define curricular standards for preparing teachers.

- Prepare teachers in the basic principles of pedagogy, cognitive development, and classroom management, as well as in the subjects they will teach.

- Provide apprenticeships and mentoring opportunities for prospective teachers.

- Provide adequate funding for school-based "clinical training" and make this a core component of preparing teachers rather than a weakly-funded afterthought.

- Use assessment data to gauge student learning, and use feedback to improve teaching and curriculum.

- Incorporate technology into teacher training so that prospective teachers gain firsthand experience with its capacity to enhance teaching and learning.

## Data and Accountability Systems

The traditional practice of collecting aggregate information about students in individual schools or colleges leaves policymakers and educators with important unanswered questions. What happens to students who move from school to school? How well are students prepared for the next stage of their education? Which schools have found ways of fostering more student achievement? Answers to these questions are essential in a system designed for improving student success.

Data and accountability systems are urgently needed for managing the system, not from the outside, but from the inside. Good data are indispensable for self-discipline and continuous quality improvement at every level of the system. They are crucial for system success as well as for student success.

### For more student success:

Monitor the performance of individual students throughout their education to:

- Help teachers diagnose and address learning gaps.
- Relate the subsequent success of students to school practices.
- Help school leaders identify successful teaching techniques that merit broader use.
- Allow postsecondary leaders to assess the effectiveness of their teacher-training programs.
- Enable policymakers to assess and improve systemwide performance.
- Increase the commitment of all stakeholders to improve their own performance through the systematic use of data and analysis.

## Curriculum and Assessment Systems

Growing evidence makes it clear that taking rigorous high school courses prepares students for success in postsecondary education and work. Fortunately, many more states now recognize the importance of a rigorous curriculum and effective feedback for preparing students to succeed in work and in higher education.

Twenty-nine states have joined the American Diploma Project (ADP) initiated by Achieve, Inc. to strengthen high school standards, curriculum, assessments, and data and accountability systems. Twenty-four states (including 16 ADP states) are participating in the State Scholars Initiative, a state/business partnership to motivate high school students to take a rigorous curriculum.

The wide implementation of stronger curriculum and assessment policies will go a long way toward preparing high school graduates for work and higher education.

### For more student success:

- Forge agreements between K-12 systems and postsecondary institutions on the requirements for college-level study.
- Make the college-preparatory curriculum not the "honors" curriculum but the standard or "default" curriculum for all students.
- Make the college-preparatory curriculum a condition of eligibility for scholarships.
- Align high school assessments, especially of mathematics and language skills, with higher education's entrance standards.
- Use end-of-course assessments to help assure rigorous content across classrooms.

## Student Financial Assistance

Successful participation in post-secondary education will increase substantially only if low-income students are confident they can afford to attend and are motivated to prepare for college. They also need enough assistance to enable them to complete their degree programs in a reasonable amount of time.

The best student aid programs send clear signals years before students apply to college, encourage rigorous preparation, make the aid application process easy to navigate, and provide enough aid so low-income students can focus on their studies.

### For more student success:

- Make the availability of aid highly visible early in the K-12 years, especially to low-income students who are likely to consider college beyond their means.
- Use financial aid to motivate elementary and secondary school students to choose challenging courses and set high achievement goals.
- Design student aid to fit the financial circumstances and educational goals of a wide range of students, including the most needy.
- Make the process of applying for aid as straightforward and clear as possible.
- Fund aid programs adequately and increase appropriations to cover increases in student costs.
- Coordinate state aid with federal and private aid programs.
- Allow students reasonable freedom of choice, and allow them to transfer from one institution to another without major impediments.
- Make aid programs accountable and appropriate to the goals they serve; align program goals with policy goals – like expanding participation and improving preparation – that are clearly defined and well understood.

## Success in College

Every year thousands of students withdraw from postsecondary education without completing a degree or certificate. Many such students will persist and succeed when colleges and universities strategically re-design themselves for greater student success.

Each of these practices will help more students succeed. Their potential will be amplified when they become part of a pervasive campus culture focused on student learning.

### For more student success:

- Make student success a prominent feature of every institution's mission.
- Set performance standards at high but attainable levels, and help students reach them.
- Teach first-year students how to use college resources as early as possible.
- Build communities of learners organized around the classroom.
- Develop networks and early warning systems to support students needing help.
- Connect every student to meaningful activities and positive role models.
- Find and fix obstacles to student retention and success, such as courses with unduly-high failure rates and customer-unfriendly campus procedures.
- Make successful practices widely available, rather than "boutique" programs which help just a few students.