



*The American Diploma Project:*  
Creating a Diploma That Counts

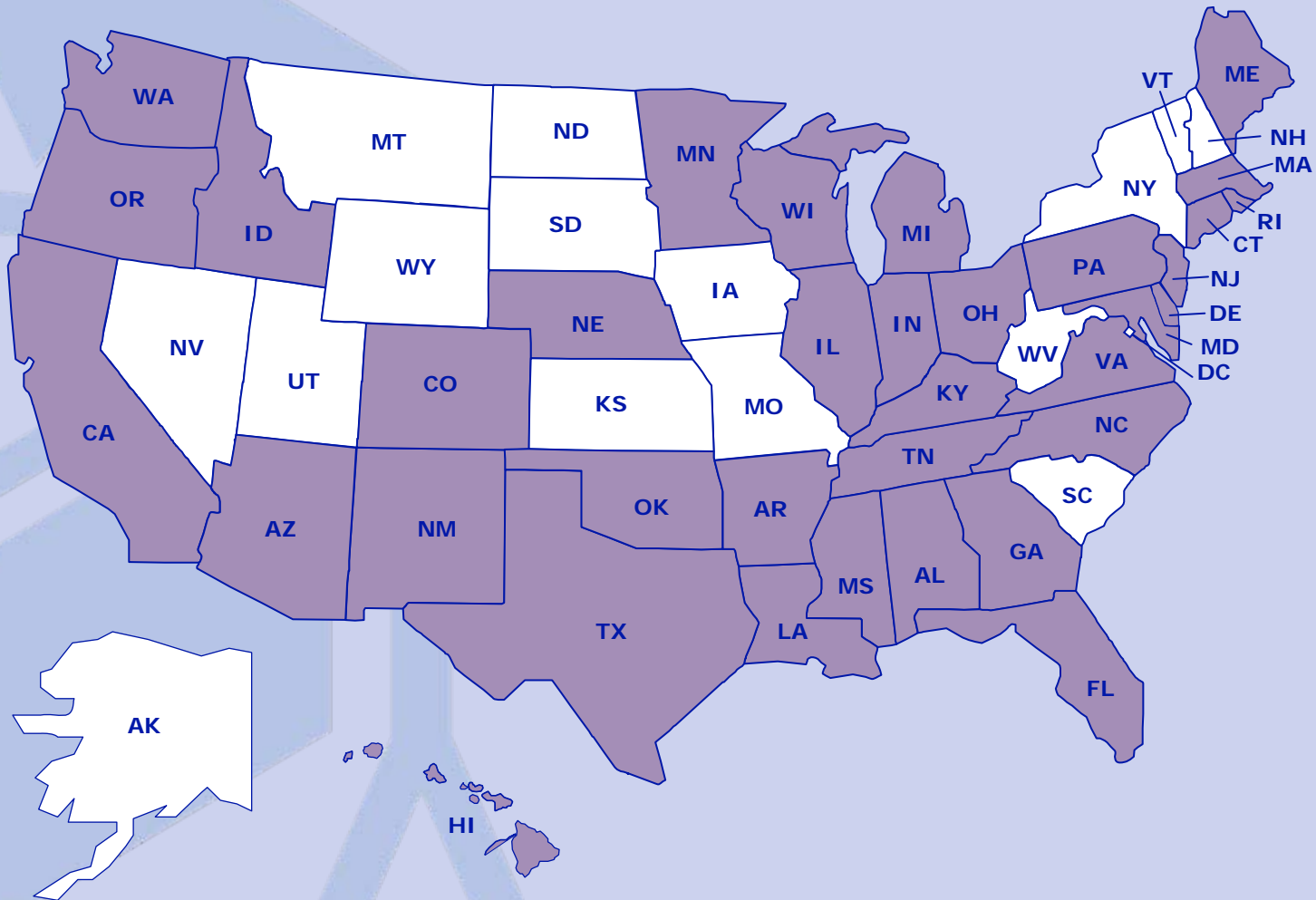
PRESENTATION TO MARYLAND  
COLLEGE SUCCESS TASK FORCE

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## About Achieve

- Achieve, Inc., was created by the nation's governors and business leaders in 1996 following the first National Education Summit.
- Achieve is a bipartisan, non-profit organization that helps states raise academic standards, improve assessments, and strengthen accountability to prepare all young people for postsecondary education, work, and citizenship.
- Achieve currently is working with 35 states through the **American Diploma Project Network** to design and implement policies that aim to close the expectations gap.

**Today, the ADP Network Includes 35 states  
Educating 85 Percent of the Nation's Students.**



# American Diploma Project Network Agenda

- Align high school standards with the demands of college and careers.
- Require students to take a college- and career-ready curriculum to earn a high school diploma.
- Build college- and career-ready measures into statewide high school assessment systems.
- Develop reporting and accountability systems that promote college and career readiness.

# American Diploma Project

- The American Diploma Project (ADP) was created to ensure all graduates leave high school ready for college and careers.
- Research by ADP sought to identify “must-have” knowledge and skills graduates will need to be successful in college and the workplace.
  - An early study examined the work high school graduates do in the college classroom and on the job, and the preparation they needed to do the work.
  - The study was conducted with Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Nevada and Texas and involved a wide variety of K-12, higher education and business representatives.

# Expectations Are the Same for Both College and “Good Jobs”

- ADP found a high degree of convergence; the knowledge and skills that high school graduates need to be successful in college (two- and four-year institutions) are the same as those they will need to be successful in a job that:
  - Pays enough to support a family, well above the poverty level, and provides benefits, and
  - Offers clear pathways for career advancement through further education and training.
- This work culminated in the ADP Benchmarks in English and mathematics, which over half the states have used to ensure their high school standards are aligned to business and postsecondary expectations.
- These standards were a starting point for the Common State Standards Initiative

# What is College and Career Readiness?

- A **career** provides a family-sustaining wage and pathways to advancement and requires training or education beyond high school.
- Being **ready** for a **career** means that a high school graduate has the English and mathematics knowledge and skills needed to qualify for and succeed in the postsecondary job training and/or education necessary for their chosen career (i.e. technical/vocational program, community college, apprenticeship or significant on-the-job training).
- **College** includes any postsecondary education that leads to a postsecondary credential (i.e. a professional certificate, license, Associates or Bachelor's degree).
- Being **ready** for **college** means that a high school graduate has the English and mathematics knowledge and skills necessary to qualify for and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses without the need for remedial coursework.

# Expectations Gap between High School & Postsecondary

- Academic standards in high school not aligned with postsecondary and workplace entry requirements
- High school graduation requirements too low
- High school assessments not meaningfully connected with students' college or career aspirations
- **RESULT:** Students can earn a high school diploma without the skills necessary for success in college and work.



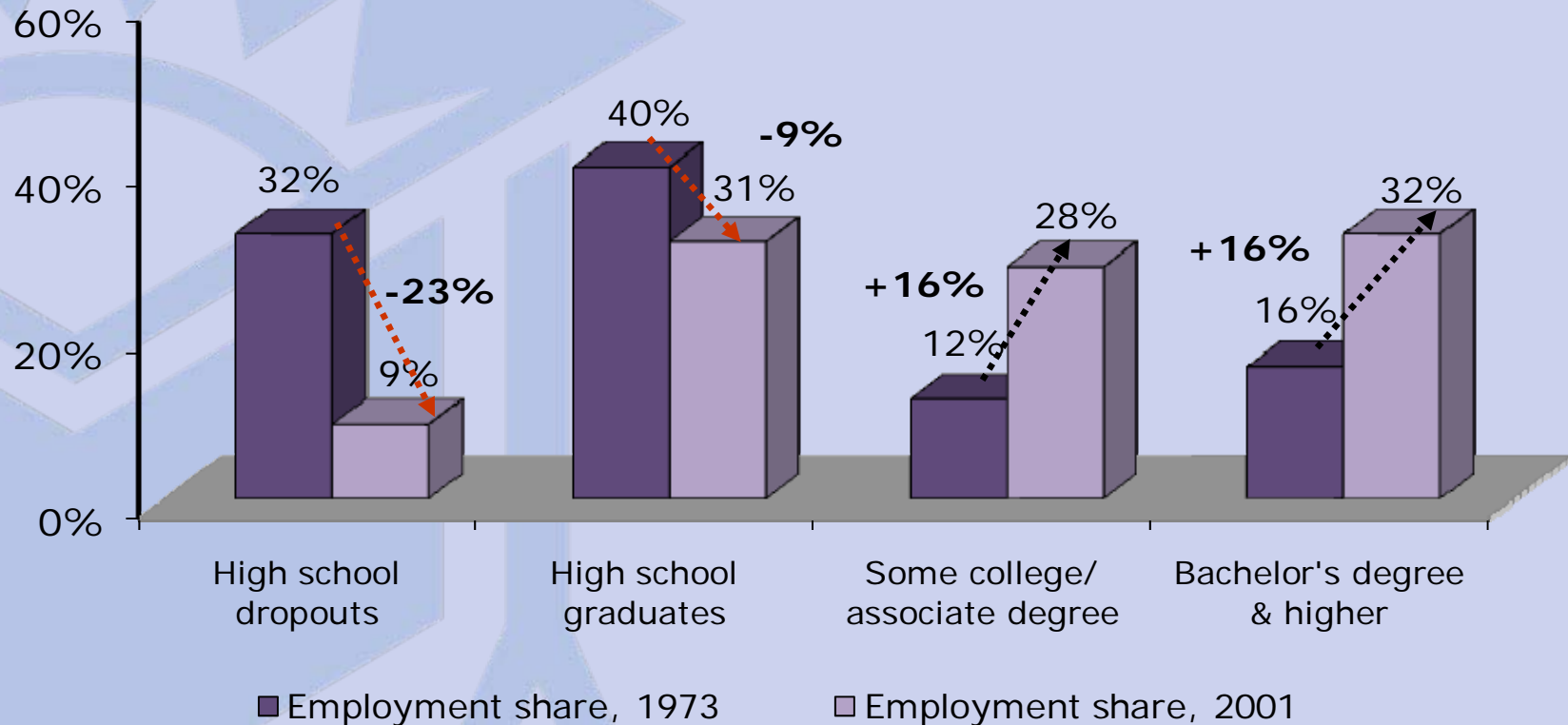


# **A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA IS NO LONGER ENOUGH FOR SUCCESS:**

*The changing economy is accelerating the expectations gap, as careers increasingly require some education/training beyond high school, and more developed knowledge and skills.*

# Jobs in Today's Workforce Require More Education & Training

Change in the distribution of education / skill level in jobs, 1973 v. 2001



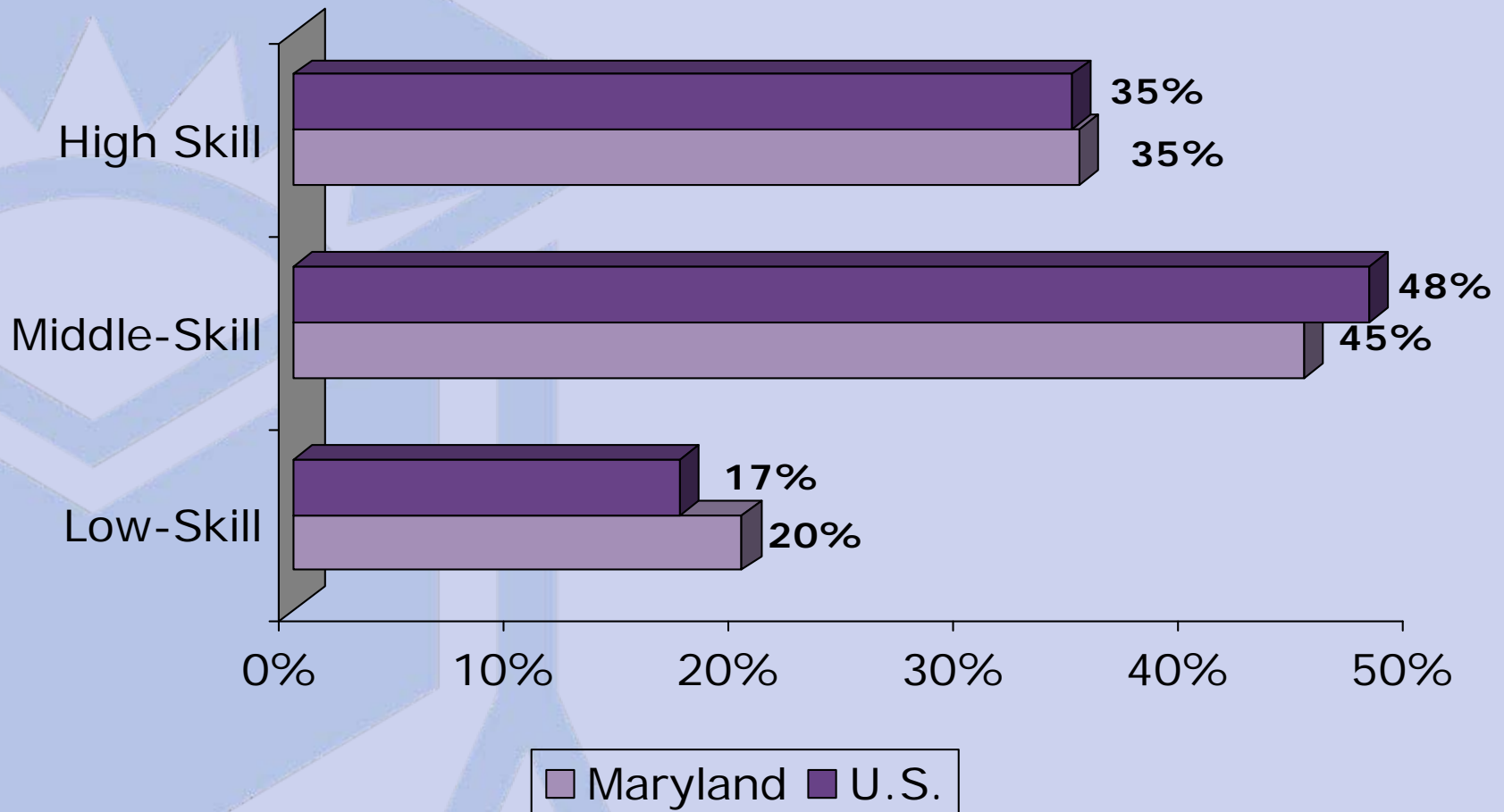
Source: Carnevale, Anthony P. and Donna M. Desrochers, *Standards for What? The Economic Roots of K-16 Reform*, Educational Testing Service, 2003.

# The Rise of Middle-Skill and High-Skill Jobs

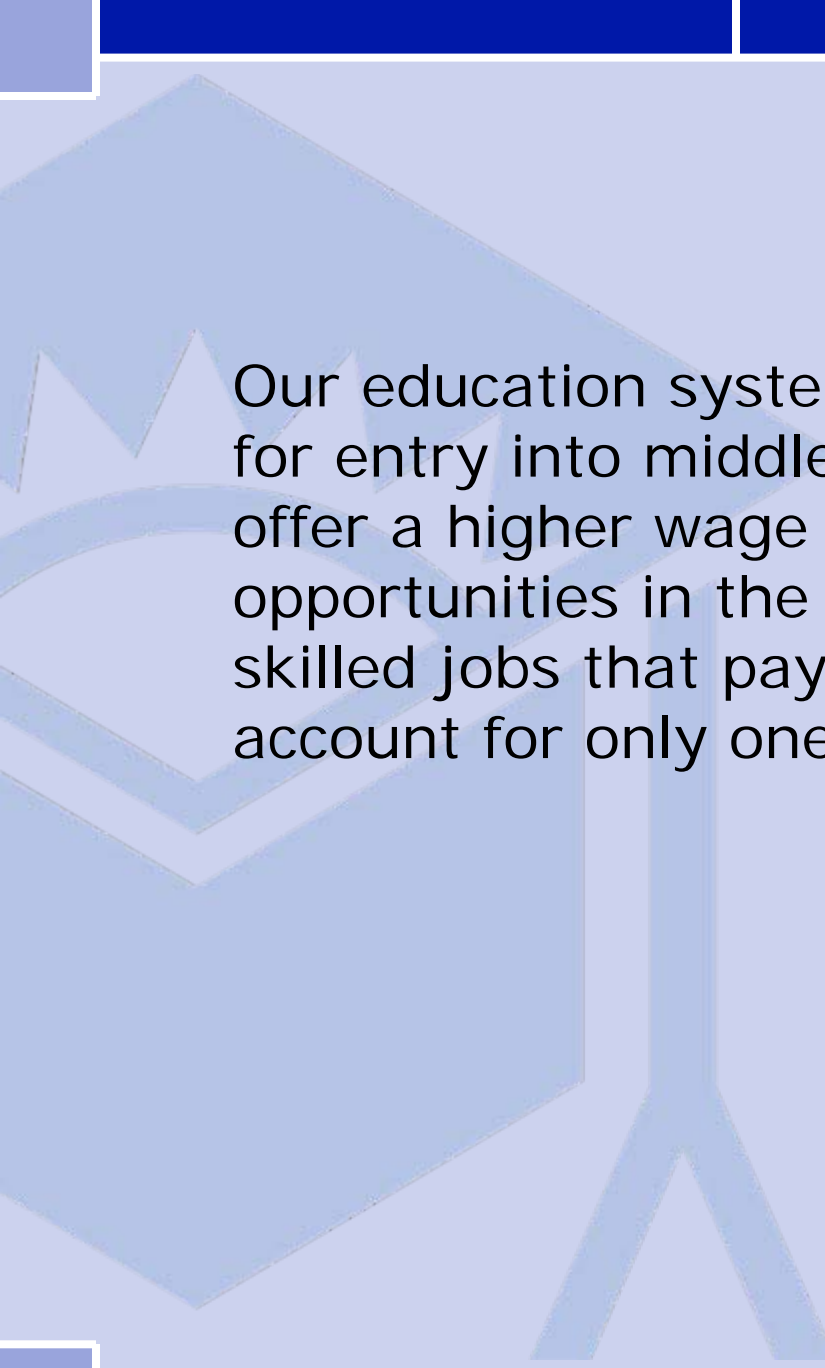
- A new study breaks the broad occupational groups into high-skill, middle-skill, and low-skill categories based on BLS estimates of the educational attainment and training of people in those jobs.
  - **High-skill** occupations as those in the professional/technical and managerial categories.
  - **Middle-skill** occupations as all the others, including clerical, sales, construction, installation/repair, production, and transportation/material moving.
  - **Low-skill** occupations as those in the service and agricultural categories.
- “Middle-skill” jobs require some education and training beyond high school (but typically less than a bachelor’s degree), including associate’s degrees, vocational certificates, significant on-the-job training, previous work experience or some college.

Source: “The Future of Middle-Skill Jobs” by Harry J. Holzer and Robert I. Lerman, Brookings Institution, February 2009.

# Projected Employment Shares by Occupational Skill Level, 2014



Source: Holzer, Harry & Robert Lerman (Feb 2009) "The Future of Middle-Skill Jobs." Brookings Institution; "Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs," [www.skills2compete.org](http://www.skills2compete.org)



Our education system should be preparing students for entry into middle and high-skilled jobs, which offer a higher wage and represent a broader set of opportunities in the workforce, rather than low-skilled jobs that pay less, have fewer benefits, and account for only one-fifth of all jobs.

# Students Overwhelmingly Want to Succeed and Attend College

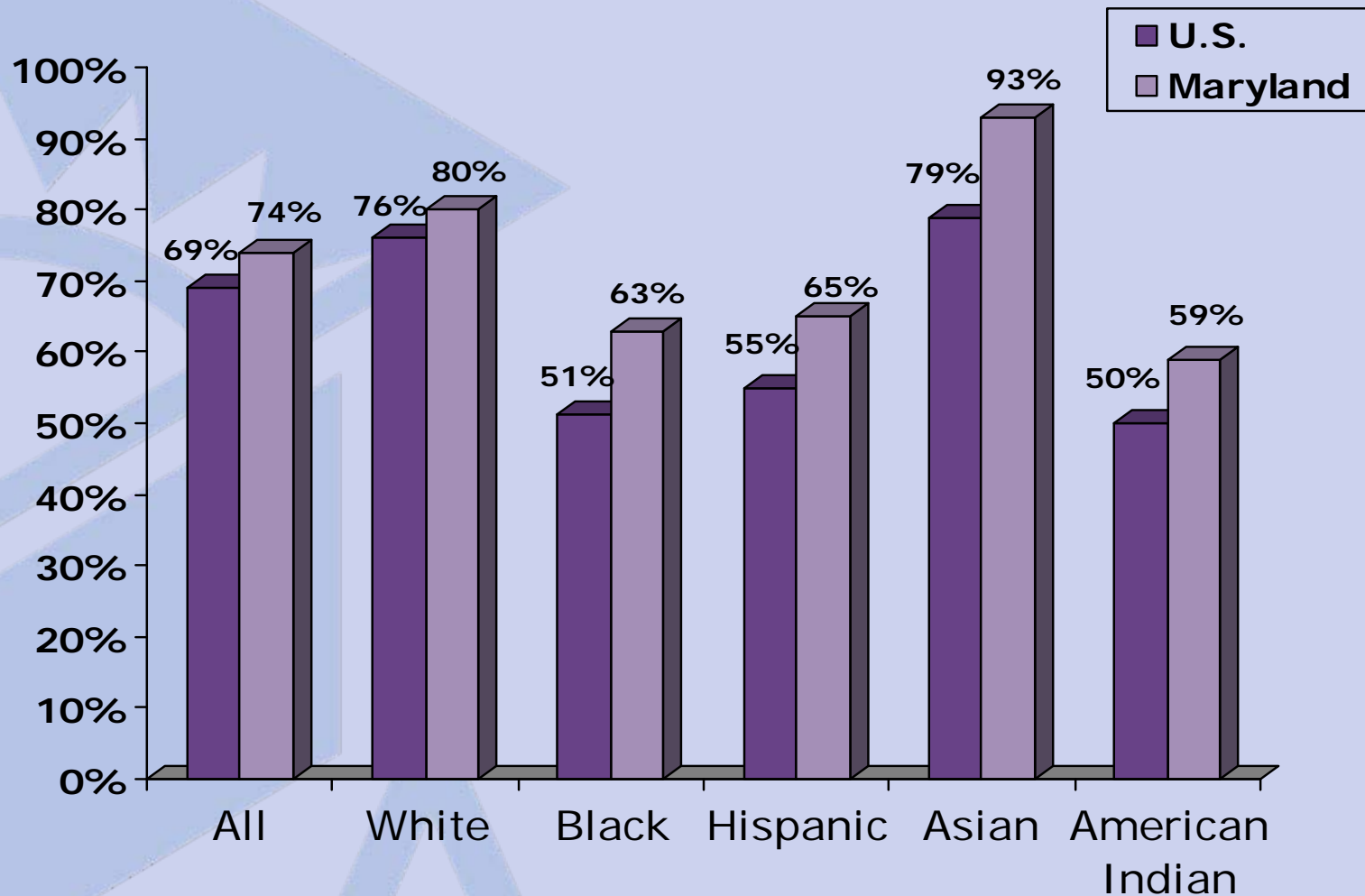
The vast majority of students intend to go on to college and do not expect to drop out of high school:

- 93 percent of middle school students report there is “no chance” they will drop out in high school
- 55 percent of middle school students believe they will “definitely” attend college; another 37 percent believe they “probably” will.
- 94 percent of high school students say that they are planning to continue their education after high school either at a two- or four-year institution.
- 95 percent of teenagers report that graduating from high school is “critical to their future success.”

***The last thing our education system should do is let students down and prevent them from reaching their goals.***

Source: *Middle Schools Poll*, Prepared for the National Association of Secondary School Principals and Phi Delta Kappa, 2007; Civic Enterprises, *The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts*, 2006; Boys & Girls Clubs of America/Taco Bell Foundation for Teens, *Teen Graduation Crisis Survey*, 2009.

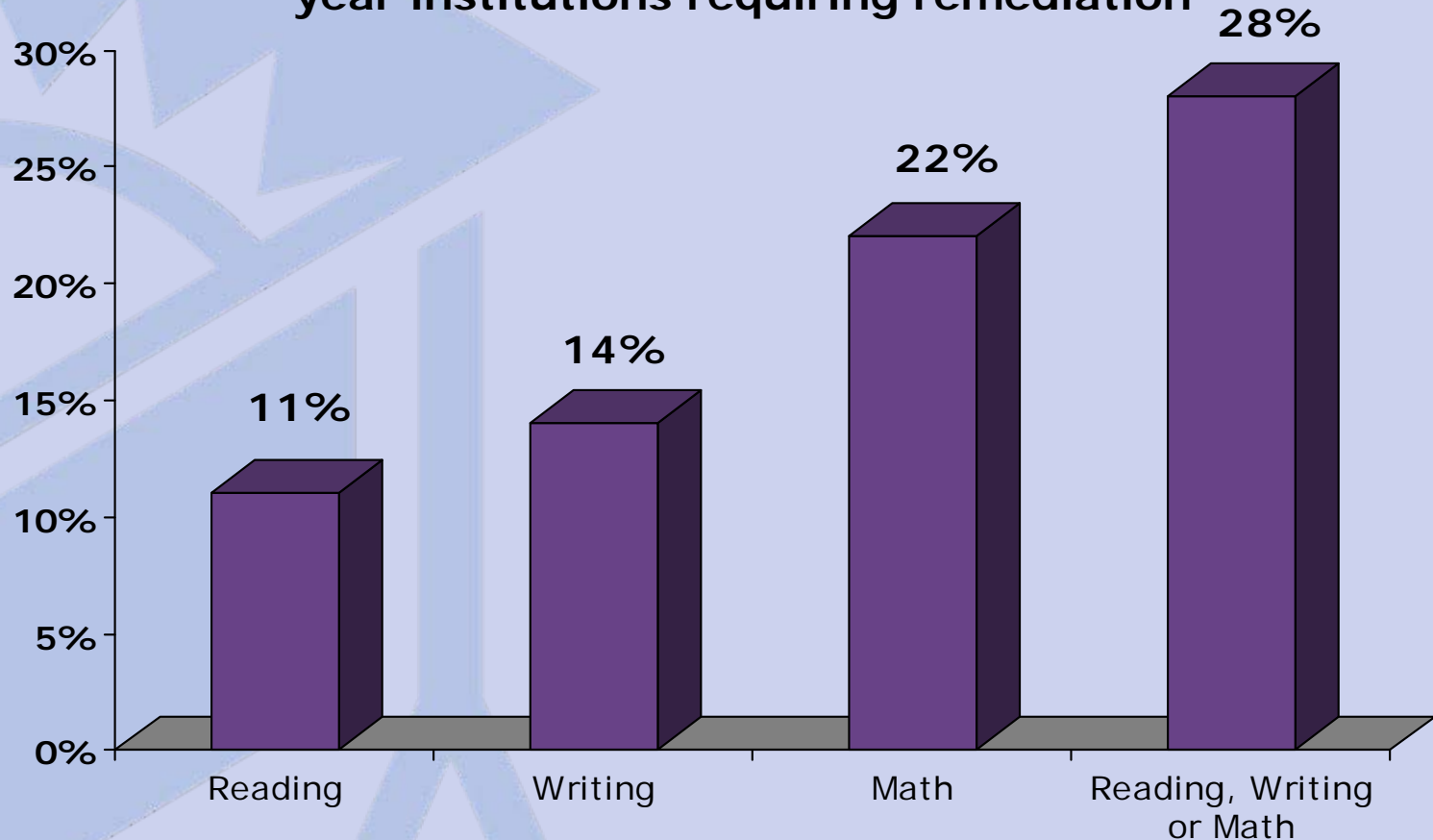
# How Many High School Students Graduate on Time in Maryland and the U.S.?



Source: Education Week, Education Counts. Developed through the Custom Table Builder, <http://www.edweek.org/rc/2007/06/07/edcounts.html>

# Enrollment in College Does NOT Equal College Readiness

Percentage of U.S. first-year students in two-year and four-year institutions requiring remediation



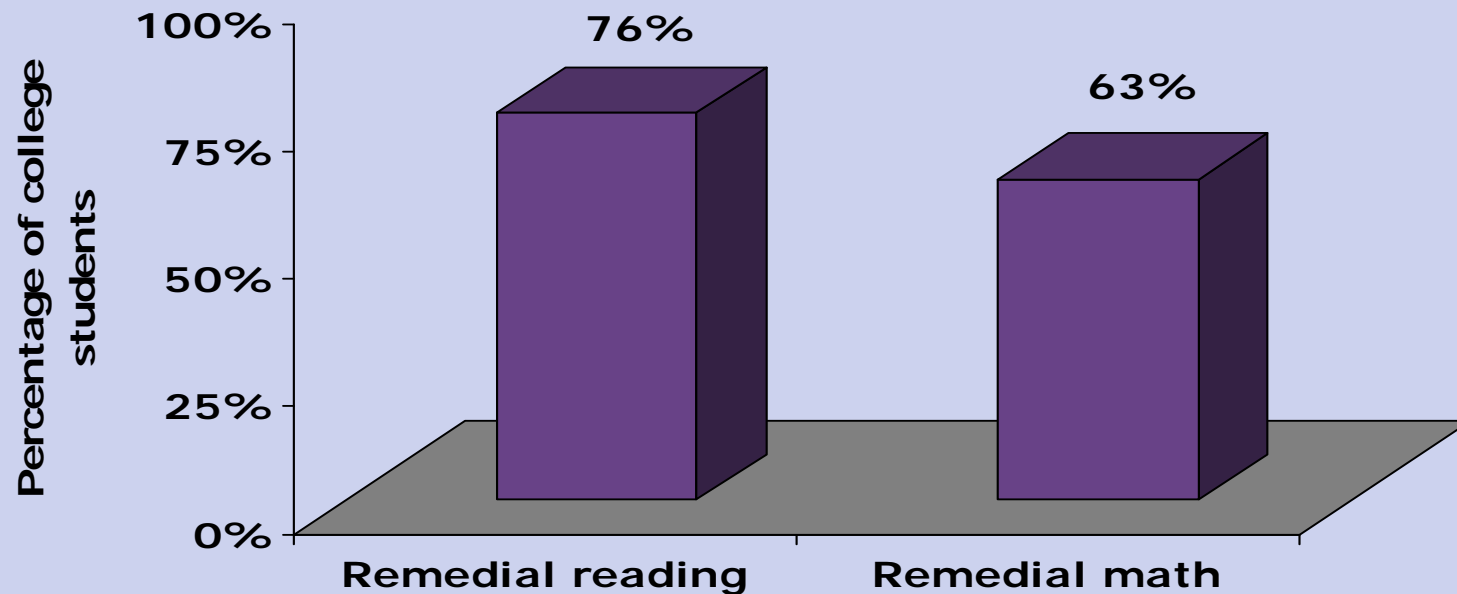
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *Remedial Education at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions in Fall 2000, 2003*; Maryland State Higher Education Commission (1996). *A Study of Remedial Education at Maryland Public Campuses*.





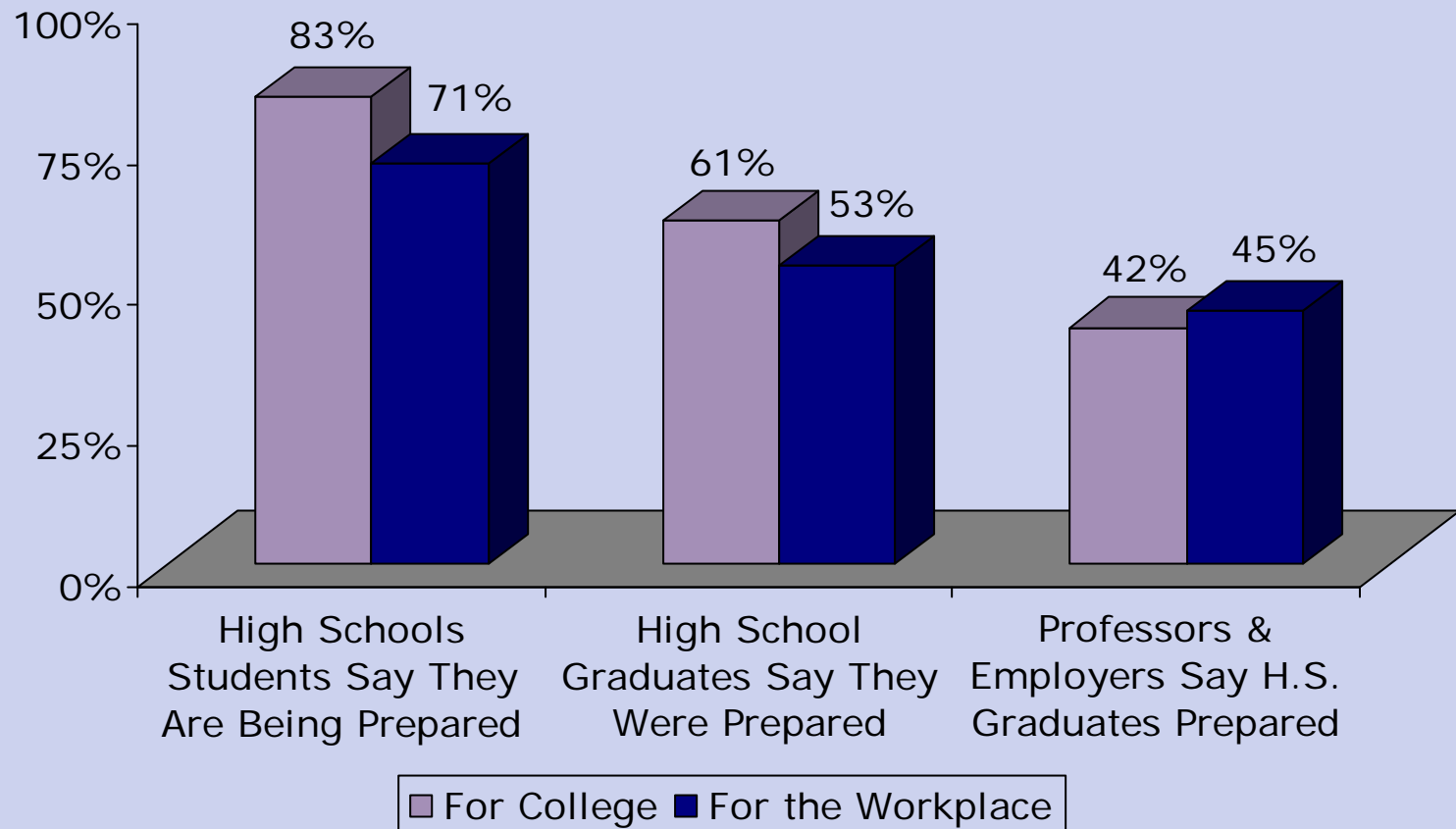
# Most U.S. college students who take remedial courses fail to earn degrees

Percentage not earning an associate's or a bachelor's degree by type of remedial coursework



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education*, 2004: % of 1992 12th graders who entered postsecondary education.

# Do high schools prepare students to meet the demands of college and work?





# **THE SOLUTION: STATE-LED EFFORTS TO CLOSE THE EXPECTATIONS GAP**

*All students deserve a world-class education that prepares them  
for college, careers and life.*

# Aligning Standards

**The goal** for states is to align their high school standards with the demands of college and careers so that students can:

- Enter into credit-bearing course work in two- or four-year colleges, without the need for remediation and with a strong chance for earning credit toward their program or degree; and
- Gain entry-level positions in quality career pathways, which often require further education and training.



# State-Led Efforts: Common State Standards Initiative

- 48 states have signed a memorandum of agreement with the National Governors Association (NGA) and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), committing to a state-led process to develop a common core of standards in English Language Arts and mathematics for grade K-12 that are:
  - Focused, clear and rigorous,
  - Internationally benchmarked and
  - Aligned with college and career-ready expectations.

# To be College and Career Ready, Students Need to Complete a Rigorous Sequence of Courses

To cover the content American Diploma Project research shows students need to be college- and career-ready, high school graduates need to take:

- In **Math** - Four courses, with content equivalent to Algebra I and II, Geometry, and a fourth course such as Statistics or Pre-calculus
- In **English** - Four courses with content equivalent to four years of grade-level English or higher

Readiness depends on more than knowledge and skills in English and math but these core disciplines undergird other academic and technical courses and are considered critical by employers and colleges alike.

To be college- and career-ready, high school graduates must have studied a rigorous and broad curriculum, grounded in these core academic disciplines, but also consisting other subjects that are part of a well-rounded education. Students must also possess the skills or habits of mind that enable them to apply their knowledge in a range of environments and situations.

# College- and Career-Ready Course Requirements

- As of 2004, only two states – Arkansas and Texas – had set their course-taking requirements at the college- and career-ready level.
- Today, 19 states and the District of Columbia have raised their requirements to include (at a minimum):
  - Four years of grade-level English,
  - 3-4 years of mathematics (including Algebra II or its equivalent),
  - At least three years of science (including a lab experience\*),
  - At least three years of social science/economics, and
  - A range of elective options (such as career and technical education pathways and fine arts).

\* All but one state explicitly require a lab-based experience or Biology and/or Chemistry/Physics









# The Importance of Rigorous Course-Taking

Students who take challenging courses and meet high standards in middle and high school are much more likely to enter high school ready to succeed.

- 87% of first-generation college-going students – who took a highly rigorous course of study in high school – persisted in college or earned a degree after 18 months.
- Only 55% of first-generation students who took just a general curriculum persisted that long.

Research finds that high school students who take advanced math double their chances of earning a postsecondary degree:

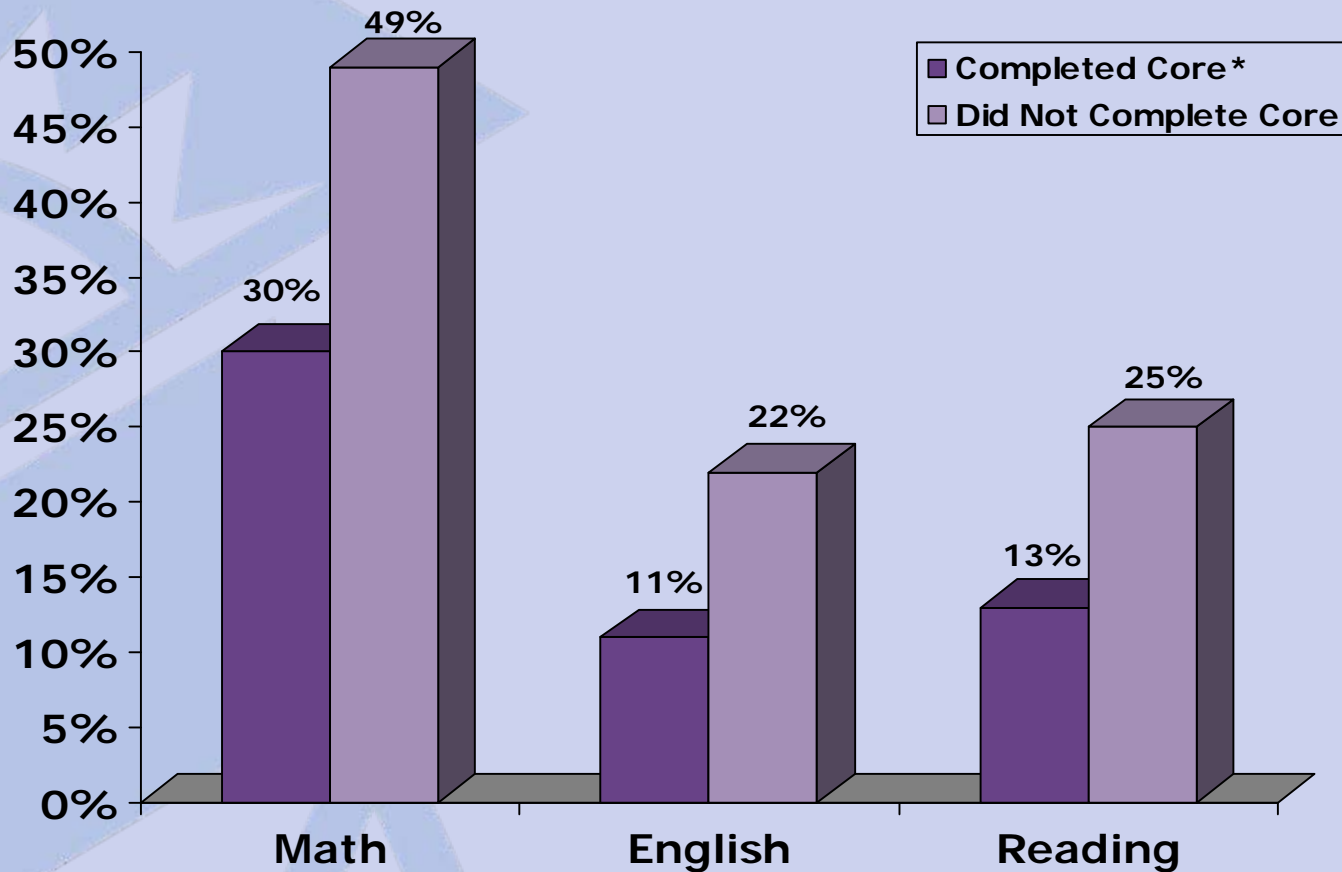
- 59% of low-income students who took advanced math in high school earned a bachelor's degree.
- 36% of low-income students who did not complete the rigorous high school course of study earned a bachelor's degree.

Horn, L. and A.M. Nuñez (2000). *Mapping the Road to College: First-generation Students' Math Track, Planning Strategies, and Context of Support*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2001/2001153.pdf>; Adelman, C. (2006). *The Toolbox Revisited: Paths to Degree Completion from High School through College*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

# Maryland's Remediation Rate, by High School Course-Taking

Percentage of first-year Maryland students in two-year and four-year institutions requiring remediation, 2006-07

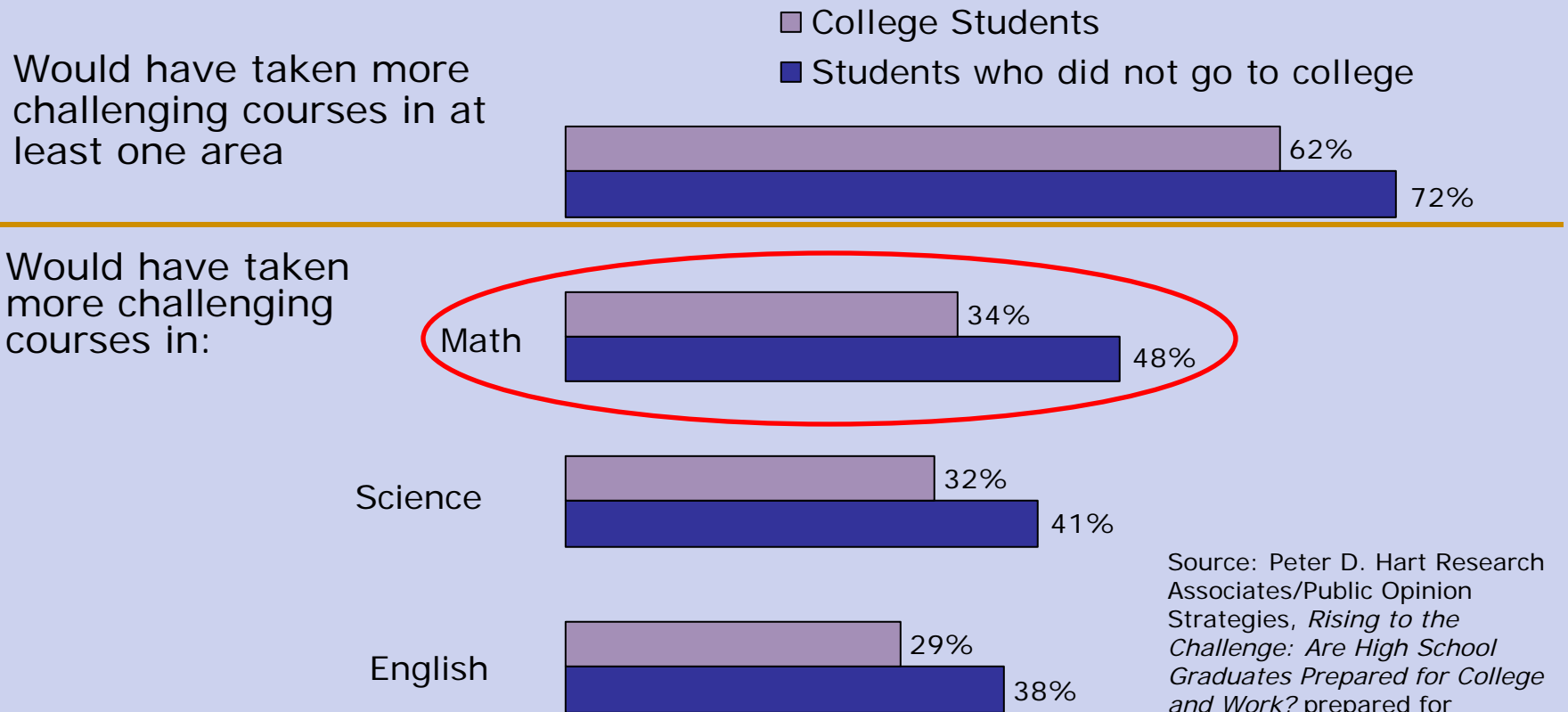


\* Maryland defines the "core" curriculum as including 4 or more years of English, 3 or more years of mathematics, 3 or more years of social science or history, 2 or more years of natural science and, 2 or more years of a foreign language.

Source: Maryland Higher Education Commission, 2008 Student Outcome and Achievement Report (SOAR).

# Nearly Half of Grads Entering the Workplace Regret Not Taking More Advanced Courses in High School

Knowing what you know today about the expectations of work ...



Source: Peter D. Hart Research Associates/Public Opinion Strategies, *Rising to the Challenge: Are High School Graduates Prepared for College and Work?* prepared for Achieve, Inc., 2005.

# Aligning high school and postsecondary assessments

## The Problem:

- Too many tests and the purposes are disconnected
- State high school assessments not challenging enough to measure college and career readiness...so no currency with higher education and the business community
- Assessments do not measure the full range of college- and career-ready knowledge and skills (such as research, analysis, critical thinking, and collaboration)
- Tests are not generating diagnostic information for educators and students

# Core Principles for Transforming High School Assessment Systems

- **“Proficient” should mean prepared:** build college- and career-ready anchor assessments
- Make tests matter beyond K–12: tests should **open doors** to higher education and employment using high school tests
- Not just more assessment—**better assessment:** measure the full range of college and career readiness skills and support richer instruction
- **Streamline testing** time and costs



## Example: California's Early Assessment Program (EAP)

- The California Department of Education and California State University (CSU) co-developed the EAP.
- The EAP builds on the state's existing 11th grade high school test in English and mathematics, the California Standards Test (CST), as well as the Algebra 2 end-of-course state test. CSU leaders had test developers create a special "Part B" with 15 additional multiple-choice questions in mathematics and 15 additional questions and a 45-minute essay in English.
- The EAP enables high school students to adjust their senior-year coursework if they need additional preparation for college.

# State-Led Efforts: ADP Assessment Consortium

## The ADP Assessment Consortium was launched to:

- Provide a common and consistent measure of student performance within and across states over time,
  - Improve Algebra I & II curriculum and instruction, and
  - Develop a common indicator of readiness for first-year, credit-bearing mathematics courses in college.
- Since the Consortium began in 2005, 15 states have joined, making it the largest multistate assessment consortium ever undertaken.
- The assessments were developed with collaboration between K-12 and postsecondary educators across the Consortium states.



# A New Vision of Accountability

States need to develop reporting and accountability systems that reflect the goal of college and career readiness for all students:

- **Broaden the indicators** used to measure high school performance so that college and career readiness becomes the central goal for schools;
  - These indicators should reflect a continuum of whether students are **approaching, meeting** or **exceeding** college and career readiness.
- Set **clear goals** for improvement on these indicators that challenge all schools to help all students reach their maximum potential;
- Provide **positive incentives** for schools to improve performance on these indicators;
- Incorporate these indicators into the school accountability formula so that when schools are not performing well, **supports and interventions** are triggered.

# Summary of Recommendations

- Leverage the common core standards
- Raise high school course taking requirements
- Align first year college courses
- Make college ready assessments part of HS assessment system
- Use those assessments as door openers; attach positive stakes
- Provide the necessary supports to students who need extra help to become college ready
- Make college readiness a central goal of the K-12 accountability system



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