

Paper Thin?

Why All High School Diplomas Are Not Created Equal

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ALLIANCE FOR
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*The **Alliance for Excellent Education** is a Washington, DC–based national policy, practice, and advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that all students, particularly those traditionally underserved, graduate from high school ready for success in college, work, and citizenship. www.all4ed.org*

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Executive Summary

With the nation's rising high school graduation rate, questions persist around the level of preparedness that high school students attain to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. This report builds on prior research and shows the degree to which traditionally underserved students graduate from public high schools having earned a college- and career-ready (CCR) diploma, in comparison with their peers, in the twenty-three states that offered students multiple pathways to a diploma for the Class of 2014.

This report highlights the nine states that tracked student subgroup data by pathway for the Class of 2014. These nine states, listed in the box below, are notable for providing this degree of measurement. In general, the data reveals that traditionally underserved students in public schools in these nine states are less likely than their peers to graduate college and career ready. Specifically, data from these nine states shows the following:

- Overall, the rate at which students graduate with a CCR diploma is substantially lower than the adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) in most of these states—both in the aggregate and disaggregated by student subgroup.
- Overall, traditionally underserved students are less likely to graduate with a CCR diploma than their peers.
- Three states (Arkansas, Indiana, and Texas), which set a CCR diploma as their main graduation pathway, had smaller gaps in attainment of a CCR diploma between traditionally underserved racial/ethnic groups and their white peers.
- Gaps in attaining a CCR diploma were considerably larger in the six states that did not require a CCR diploma for high school graduation.
- Among racial/ethnic groups, CCR diploma gaps were largest for African American students in most states.
- Most states had considerable CCR diploma gaps between students with disabilities and their peers without disabilities.

Nine States Featured in This Report	
Arkansas	Nevada
California	New York
Indiana	Texas
Maryland	Virginia
Massachusetts	

The findings also reveal the following:

- Less than half of states with multiple pathways to a diploma (ten out of twenty-three) track the type of diploma pathway students complete, in the aggregate and disaggregated by student subgroup.
- In all fifty states and the District of Columbia, data reveals thirty-seven instances where states waived certain diploma requirements yet still allowed students to earn a regular high school diploma.

This analysis highlights the disparities between student subgroups within states that offer multiple pathways to a high school diploma and the work that needs to continue to ensure that all students, particularly those traditionally underserved, graduate from high school college and career ready.

Introduction

The United States achieved its highest high school graduation rate on record with 83.2 percent of the Class of 2015 graduating from high school within four years.¹ This is laudable considering twenty years ago, three out of every ten students failed to graduate from high school on time.² Yet even as the nation graduates more and more students each year, employers and college instructors continue to bemoan that public high schools are falling short of preparing students to enter postsecondary learning environments.³ These concerns are supported by various nationally recognized measures of college and career readiness.

Data from the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—a measure of academic preparedness—demonstrates that only 37 percent of twelfth graders performed at or above the proficient level in reading and only 25 percent performed at or above the proficient level in math.⁴

Similarly, research conducted by the Education Trust indicates that high school graduates are, by and large, ill-prepared for postsecondary success. Using transcript data from the federal High School Longitudinal Study, the research shows that only 52 percent of graduates from the Class of 2013 (which had a national high school graduation rate of 81 percent) completed a college-ready, career-ready, or college- and career-ready curriculum, while only 8 percent completed both a college- and career-ready curriculum.⁵

The ACT and the College Board have long identified, through rigorous evaluation, the threshold at which students who take the ACT and the SAT are prepared for postsecondary academic success. Data from the Class of 2015 reveals that only 28 percent of twelfth graders tested met the minimum ACT scores in English, reading, mathematics, and science that represent the achievement level students need to ensure a high probability of success in a first-year credit-bearing core college course.⁶ In that same vein, SAT data for the Class of 2015 shows that only 41.9 percent of tested students scored at least a 1550 on the SAT, the minimum score indicating that a student has a 65 percent probability of earning a B- or higher grade point average (GPA) during his or her first year at a four-year university.⁷

Finally, national data on high school GPAs, considered by some to be the best measure of college readiness and completion,⁸ yields the same conclusion. Only 47.1 percent of students from the Class of 2013 graduated with a high school GPA of a B (3.0) or better in core academic courses.⁹ Earlier research shows that 50 percent of students with a high school GPA of a B earned a bachelor's degree or higher within nine years.¹⁰

The importance of preparing all students to be ready for both college and a career cannot be overstated. Research from the Center on Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University indicates that two-thirds of jobs will require some form of postsecondary education by the year 2020.¹¹ Moreover, of the 11.6 million jobs created after the Great Recession, 99 percent went to workers with at least some college education, with bachelor's degree holders earning 57 percent of all wages.¹²



Photo by Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for American Education: Images of Teachers and Students in Action

In this report, the Alliance for Excellent Education (the Alliance) explores the conundrum of rising high school graduation rates and low levels of postsecondary readiness among students. This analysis, supported by past research, reveals that many states offer students multiple pathways to a diploma, and those pathways are not all created equal since many do not align with college- and career-ready expectations. With the value of the high school diploma that students are earning being inequitable across student subgroups, many students, particularly those traditionally underserved,¹³ are not graduating from high school college and career ready.

What Is a College- and Career-Ready Diploma?

For this report, the Alliance derived its unit of analysis for defining a college- and career-ready (CCR) diploma from the most common way that states promote college and career readiness—college- and career-ready standards. Consequently, the Alliance's criteria for a CCR diploma is a diploma that satisfies the full breadth and depth of a state's content standards for English/language arts (ELA) and mathematics by twelfth-grade graduation.

Progress in High School Graduation Policy and Outcomes

As the nation's only independent policy and advocacy organization with a specific focus on traditionally underserved secondary education students, the Alliance has been at the forefront of advocating to ensure that more students from low-income families and students of color graduate from high school within four years, and that when they graduate, they leave with the requisite knowledge and skills to succeed in first-year credit-bearing college courses. Over the past several years there has been important movement toward this goal.

- In 2008, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) issued regulations requiring all states to calculate the adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR)¹⁴ in the aggregate and disaggregated by student subgroup, with the first national reporting for the Class of 2011. The ACGR established a uniform and accurate measure of calculating high school graduation rates across states and ensured that student subgroup data was both calculated and reported.¹⁵
- Since the first year of reporting the ACGR in 2011, the high school graduation rate has increased from 79 percent for the Class of 2011 to 83.2 percent for the Class of 2015. There still is work to be done however, as gaps remain between traditionally underserved students and their peers.¹⁶
- Between 2008 and 2014, the number of dropout factories—high schools graduating less than 60 percent of their students in four years—in America decreased from more than 1,800 to roughly 1,000.¹⁷
- The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)—the latest reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)—increased the graduation rate threshold that triggers intervention for high schools under a state's accountability system. High schools that graduate 67 percent or fewer of their students, up from 60 percent or fewer under ED's previous ESEA flexibility policy, must receive comprehensive, locally-determined evidence-based intervention.¹⁸

Even with this progress, there still exist nearly 2,300 high schools in America that fail to graduate one-third or more of their students.¹⁹ And among those who do graduate, the majority are not graduating with the academic knowledge they need to succeed after high school, according to several national measures of postsecondary readiness. Moreover, many traditionally underserved students lack access to the advanced course work necessary to prepare them for college and career success. According to data from ED's Office for Civil Rights, 25 percent of high schools that serve predominantly African American and Latino students do not offer Algebra II.²⁰

Departing from the Alliance's past practice of focusing solely on high school graduation rates, this report explores the degree to which traditionally underserved students in states with multiple diploma pathways are graduating with a college- and career-ready diploma.

Most states have revised their content standards over the past decade—either through the adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) or through their own statewide initiatives—to address what students are expected to know and be able to do by the time they graduate from high school.²¹ In order to meet the CCSS, high school students must successfully complete four years of grade-level ELA and math content through Algebra II or Integrated Math III.²² (See the sidebar “Postsecondary Success Goes Beyond Course Requirements” on the next page for additional information about the full range of courses and experiences students need to succeed after high school.)

Therefore, the Alliance considers a state to have a CCR diploma pathway if the diploma pathway requires students to complete four years of grade-level ELA, three years of math through Algebra II or Integrated Math III,²³ and leads to students earning a state’s regular high school diploma.²⁴ Diploma pathways promulgated by state institutions of higher education that fully align with admissions requirements into those institutions also are considered CCR diploma pathways in this report. See table A1 in the appendix for a list of state diploma pathways that includes CCR diploma pathways and non-CCR diploma pathways.

Efforts like Achieve’s American Diploma Project²⁵ and *How the States Got Their Rates*²⁶ research have made strides in encouraging states to align their content standards, high school graduation requirements, assessments, and accountability systems with the needs and expectations of employers and colleges. However, several states still do not align their high school graduation requirements with state-adopted content standards in ELA and mathematics. (While most states set minimum high school graduation requirements, districts have the ability to exceed the requirements set at the state level. This report analyzes state-level graduation policy and data, which means districts within a state may have more rigorous graduation requirements or more students graduating college and career ready than the state as a whole.)

According to Achieve, for the Class of 2014, only nineteen states set high school graduation requirements at the CCR level, in alignment with the full breadth and depth of the state standards.²⁷ Moreover, as both Achieve²⁸ and the Education Commission of the States²⁹ reported, several states offer students multiple diploma options, many of which do not lead to CCR

diplomas. This report builds on that work by using all available data sources to identify the degree to which traditionally underserved students graduate with a CCR diploma in comparison with their peers, based on state-adopted college- and career-ready standards.

Methodology and Limitations

Although past reports identify the multiple diploma options across states, and to some degree, the percentage of traditionally underserved students graduating with a CCR diploma, those reports were limited to publicly available data and did not examine gaps between student subgroups. By contrast, the Alliance used publicly available statistics, collected data from state departments of education, and interviewed state departments of education staff members to look comprehensively across states to show the gaps in the rates at which traditionally underserved student subgroups earn a CCR diploma compared to their more affluent and white peers, and to highlight the degree to which states are tracking and publicly reporting this data.

The Alliance attempted contact with the departments of education in all fifty states and the District of Columbia during several months in 2016 to seek answers to three key questions pertaining to the graduating Class of 2014:³⁰

1. Does the state offer multiple pathways to a regular high school diploma? If so, what are those pathways and what courses and other requirements do students need to meet to graduate from those pathways?
2. Does the state track diploma pathways data in the aggregate and disaggregated by student subgroup?
3. Is data about student participation in the state’s diploma pathways publicly available in the aggregate and disaggregated by student subgroup?

For this analysis, the Alliance also asked a series of follow-up questions to determine the degree to which states waived certain high school graduation requirements for public school students yet still allowed these students to earn a regular high school diploma.

Postsecondary Success Goes Beyond Course Requirements

The Alliance recognizes that course work alone, particularly only mathematics and ELA courses, is insufficient to prepare students for postsecondary learning. In addition to exposure to a full range of rigorous college-preparatory course work—including science, history, foreign language, and art that open the door for admission to most four-year colleges and universities—students also benefit from career and technical education integrated with their core academic content; work-based learning experiences that include internships; and activities that build deeper learning competencies, such as critical thinking, effective communication, collaborative work, and complex problem-solving.

As with any study, this analysis has limitations of which the reader should be aware:

- Data was not available from every state; therefore, this report draws conclusions from the data that was made available to the Alliance.
- CCR diploma pathways vary across states in terms of their degree of rigor. Therefore, the Alliance cautions against making definitive conclusions based on comparisons of CCR high school graduation rates across states.
- This study is limited to state-level data. Because districts have the ability to set higher requirements for high school graduation than those set by the state, the CCR graduation rates reported in this paper may undercount the actual percentage of students who graduate having met CCR standards. However, since few states track district high school graduation requirements, there is no way to know the degree to which districts are setting higher requirements than states.
- While it might not change the data, additional qualitative information could give a more comprehensive understanding about what states are doing to prepare students for college and a career.

Findings: CCR Diploma Pathways Across the Nation

The Alliance found ninety-eight total diploma pathways across all fifty states and the District of Columbia for the Class of 2014.³¹ Of that number, roughly half (forty-seven) were CCR diploma pathways. Thirty-two states, plus the District of Columbia, offered one or more CCR diploma pathway. Twenty-three states had multiple pathways to a diploma. Four states—Alabama, New York, North Carolina, and Virginia—had specific diploma pathways for students with disabilities.

Eighteen states offered no CCR-aligned diploma pathway for students. To be clear, this does not mean that no students in the state graduated college and career ready. This means that the state did not provide a defined route to a diploma that aligned with the most commonplace policy for promoting college and career readiness across states—state academic CCR standards.

Among the twenty-three states with multiple diploma pathways, nine (Arkansas, California, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada,³² New York, Texas, and Virginia) had at least one CCR diploma pathway *and* tracked pathway data disaggregated by student subgroup for the Class of 2014. Data from these nine states (contained in figures A1–A3 in the appendix) reveals the following:

- **Overall, the rate at which students graduate with a CCR diploma is substantially lower than the adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) in most states—both in the aggregate and disaggregated by subgroup.** For example, the 2014 ACGR for all students in Nevada was 70 percent, compared with a CCR graduation rate of 29.8 percent. Meanwhile, the ACGR for Latino students in Nevada was 64.6 percent, compared with a CCR graduation rate of 20.3 percent. (See the glossary on page 14 for definitions of ACGR and CCR graduation rate.)
- **Overall, traditionally underserved students are less likely to graduate with a CCR diploma than their peers.** This was the case in every one of the nine states and for every student subgroup except for African American students in Arkansas, where African Americans were slightly more likely to graduate with a CCR diploma than their white peers (88.4 percent versus 88.2 percent).
- **The three states (Arkansas, Indiana, and Texas) with a CCR diploma pathway as their main graduation pathway³³ had smaller CCR gaps between traditionally underserved**

racial/ethnic groups and their white peers. Each of these states had a CCR gap of less than 10 percentage points for all racial/ethnic groups. For example, in Texas where the Recommended High School Program (a CCR diploma pathway) was the main diploma pathway for the Class of 2014, there was only a 0.4 percentage-point gap between the percentage of Latino students who earned a CCR diploma (85.7 percent) and the percentage of white students (86.1 percent).

- **CCR gaps were considerably larger in the six states that offered but did not require students to follow a CCR diploma pathway for graduation.³⁴** Each of these states had a CCR gap greater than 10 percentage points for all racial/ethnic groups. For example, the Maryland High School Diploma (a non-CCR diploma pathway) was the main diploma pathway for the Class of 2014. For that class, there was a 22.1 percentage-point gap between the percentage of African American students (53.7 percent) who earned the CCR diploma (the University of Maryland Diploma) and the percentage of white students (75.8 percent).

Findings by the Numbers

50 states and the District of Columbia

98 total diploma pathways

47 CCR diploma pathways

32 states and the District of Columbia offered one or more CCR diploma pathway(s)

23 states had multiple diploma pathways

9 states had at least one CCR diploma pathway and tracked pathway data disaggregated by student subgroup

5 states provided publicly available pathway data disaggregated by student subgroup

FIGURE 1: Diploma Pathways in the States

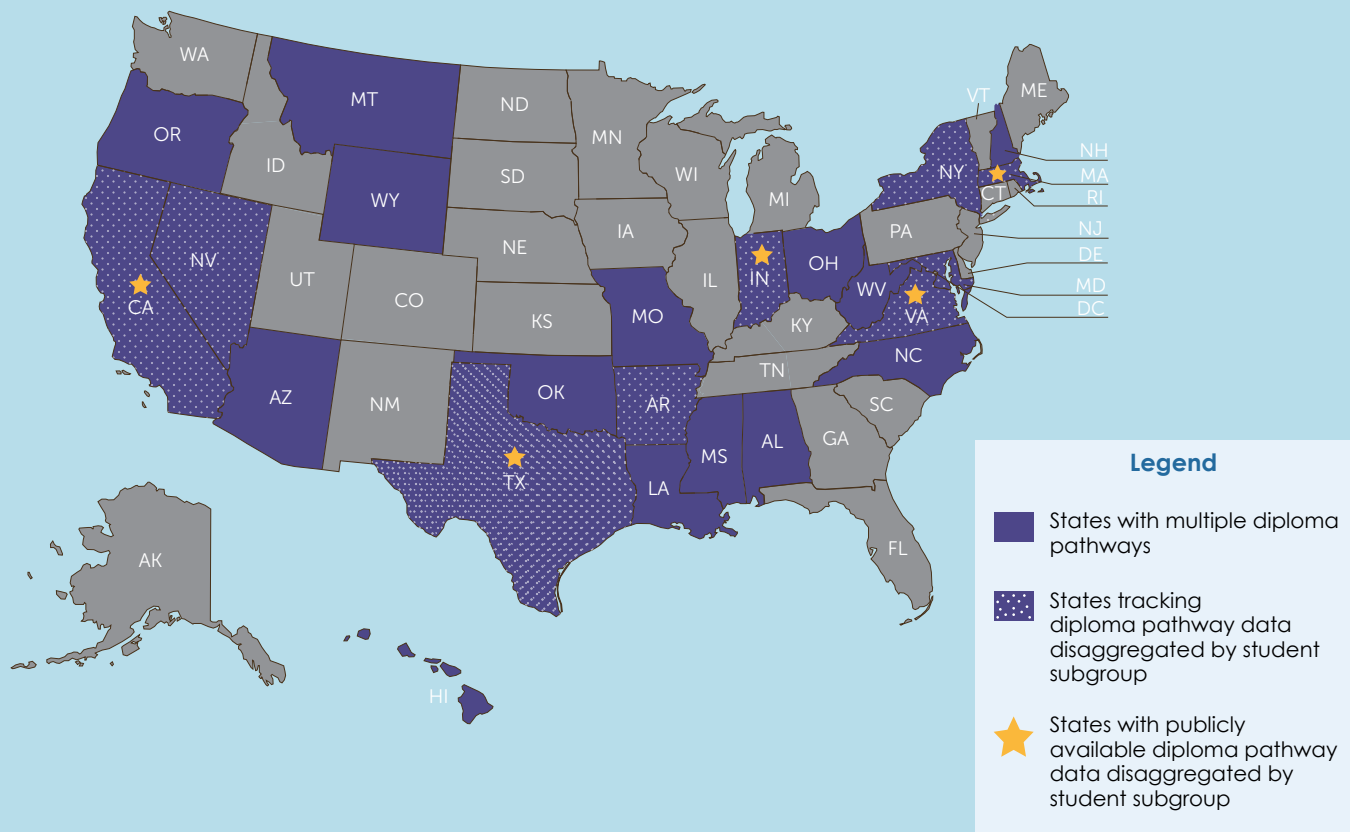
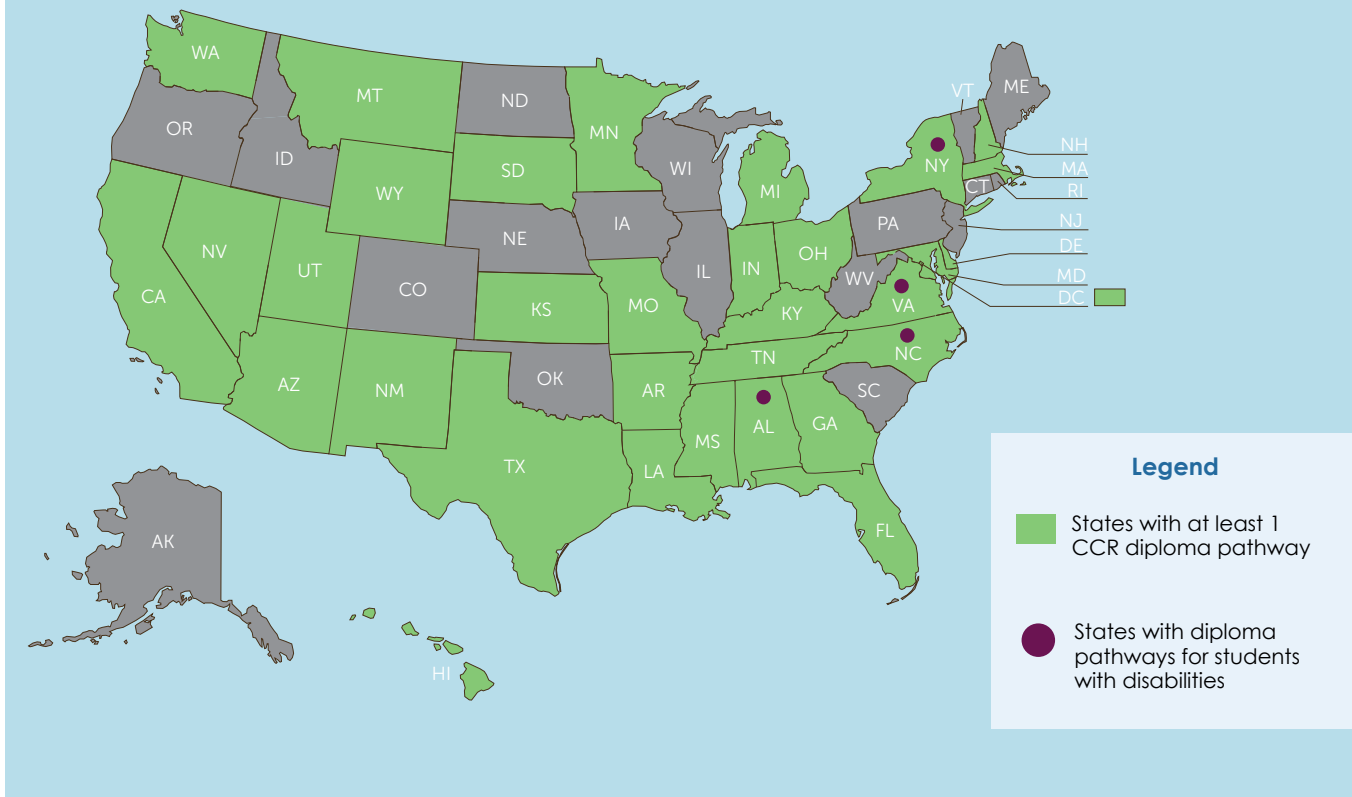


FIGURE 2: States with CCR Diploma Pathways and Diploma Pathways for Students with Disabilities



- Among racial/ethnic subgroups, CCR gaps were largest for the African American student population in the majority of states, with gaps ranging from 17.5 percentage points to 33.9 percentage points.
- In most states, there were considerable CCR gaps between students with disabilities and their peers without disabilities, with gaps ranging from 11.8 percentage points to 63.1 percentage points.

Tracking Data About Diploma Pathways

As noted earlier, twenty-three states had multiple pathways to a diploma for the Class of 2014. Of those twenty-three states, only ten tracked which student subgroups graduated with diplomas from each pathway. (Oregon is not included in the overall data analysis because neither of the state's two diploma pathways for the Class of 2014 was a CCR pathway.) Furthermore, of those ten states only five states provided *publicly available* data

disaggregated by student subgroup for each pathway (see states in green in table 1 on the next page). Having publicly available data disaggregated by student subgroup and by diploma pathway empowers parents to make the best decisions for their children.

States Offering Waiver Diplomas

In addition to tracking the availability of CCR diplomas within states, the Alliance also investigated the degree to which states alter, substitute, or remove certain state-adopted graduation requirements for students yet still allow these students to earn a regular high school diploma. The Alliance has labeled this practice as granting a "waiver diploma." This often may lead to less rigorous course work, including the incomplete satisfaction of the full breadth and depth of state-adopted content standards and/or less rigorous assessment graduation requirements.

This analysis reveals that several states provided certain exemptions for students to earn a regular high school diploma

TABLE 1: States with Multiple Diploma Pathways, Class of 2014

States Not Tracking Pathway Data (10)	States Tracking Aggregate Pathway Data Only (3)	States Tracking Aggregate and Disaggregated Pathway Data (10)	States with Publicly Available Data (10)
Alabama	Hawaii	Arkansas	California
Arizona	New Hampshire	California (=)	Hawaii (+)
Louisiana	Oklahoma (*)	Indiana	Indiana
Mississippi		Maryland (=)	Maryland (#)
Missouri (=)		Massachusetts	Massachusetts
Montana (=)		Nevada	Nevada (+)
North Carolina		New York	New York (~)
Ohio		Oregon*	Oklahoma (+)
West Virginia (*)		Texas	Texas
Wyoming (=)		Virginia	Virginia

Notes: As of School Year 2014–15, Louisiana does track pathway data and can disaggregate data by student subgroup. North Carolina is in the process of creating the Exceptional Children's Accountability Tracking System and will track and report the number of students who graduate with the Occupational Course of Study (Future Ready Occupational Diploma) starting with the Class of 2018. States highlighted in green provide publicly available pathway data disaggregated by student subgroup. Publicly available data was retrieved from state report cards, downloadable files, and/or searchable databases available through state departments of education.

=State with CCR diploma pathways set by the university system

*State with no CCR diploma pathway

+State that publicly report diploma pathways data only in the aggregate

#State where data about student racial/ethnic subgroups is not publicly available

~Data for New York's Local Diploma (the least rigorous of the three diploma pathway options in New York) is not publicly available

under special circumstances. For instance, if a student did not meet all of the graduation criteria for a standard diploma (i.e., failed to pass required assessments, such as end-of-course or high school exit exams, or failed to complete the required course work), some states provided alternative ways for students to receive a standard diploma, waived specific requirements altogether, or permitted the local school district to make such determination. In some cases, these exemptions were permissible only for students with disabilities; in others, they were available to any student. Since students would continue to receive a standard diploma with a waiver, these students were counted as graduates in the state's ACGR.

Across thirty-five states, the Alliance found thirty-seven instances where states waived certain diploma requirements yet still allowed students to earn a regular high school diploma for the Class of 2014. Fourteen states and the District of Columbia did not waive any diploma requirements and one state did not respond to this specific request from the Alliance. (See table A2 in the appendix for a list of states and the diploma requirements waived for the Class of 2014. It is important to note this table does not tell a complete story since it does not report the number of students in each state who took advantage of waiver

opportunities since many states were not able to furnish the requested waiver data to the Alliance.)

California and Indiana provide two examples of how the waiver process can be applied. California allowed special exemptions only for students with disabilities. The California Board of Education exempted students with disabilities from the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE),³⁵ an assessment required of all high school graduates, if the board determined that certain students with disabilities were not able to pass the CAHSEE as a result of their disability. Additionally, the board provided a waiver for students with disabilities who were unsuccessful at passing Algebra I, however, the state granted very few waivers through this approach.

In Indiana, students who did not pass one or both of the state's end-of-course exams in Algebra I and English 10 by the end of their senior year, yet met other graduation criteria, were eligible for one of two waiver diplomas. Unlike most states, Indiana tracks the number of students who receive a waiver diploma each year, in the aggregate only.³⁶ Indiana fosters this culture of transparency by also tracking postsecondary outcomes data for students by diploma pathway, as discussed in the next section.

TABLE 2: Indiana Diploma Options and Required Courses

Course	General Diploma	Core 40	Core 40 Academic Honors	Core 40 Technical Honors
English	4 years	4 years	4 years	4 years
Math	2 years	3 years	4 years	3 years
Social Studies	2 years	3 years	3 years	3 years
Science	2 years	3 years	3 years	3 years
Foreign Language	0 years	0 years	3 or 4 years	0 years

Source: Indiana Department of Education, Indiana Core 40 Course and Credit Requirements, <http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/ccr/core401.pdf> (accessed March 27, 2017).

Note: The Core 40 with Academic Honors requires either three years of the same foreign language or two years each of two foreign languages for a total of four years of foreign language.

TABLE 3: Postsecondary Academic Trends by High School Diploma Pathway in Indiana (Class of 2014)

High School Diploma Pathway	Percentage of High School Graduates Achieving Diploma Type	Percentage of Diploma Recipients Enrolled in College	Percentage of Diploma Recipients Needing College Remediation	Percentage of Diploma Recipients Needing Remediation Who Earned Remedial College Credits	Average College Freshman Grade Point Average	Average Number of College Freshman Credit Hours Earned
Core 40 Honors (Academic and Technical)	34%	92%	4%	89%	3.1	27.35
CORE 40	51%	59%	29%	68%	2.2	17.33
General	15%	24%	59%	50%	1.9	9.53

Source: Indiana Commission for Higher Education, College Readiness Reports, State Level Reports. Retrieved from <http://www.in.gov/che/2489.htm> (accessed March 27, 2017).

Notes: The percentage of diploma recipients enrolled in college refers to the percentage of students from the high school Class of 2014 who enrolled immediately in any postsecondary institution (public/private, in-state/out-of-state) during SY 2014–15. Percentages related to college remediation, remedial credits earned, college grade point average, and college freshman credits earned, pertain to students from the high school Class of 2014 who attended an Indiana public postsecondary institution.

Why CCR Pathways Are Important: The Case of Indiana

Indiana provides a unique case and argument for why providing all students direct access to a CCR diploma is essential to preparing them for postsecondary academic success. As a founding member of Achieve's American Diploma Project, Indiana has been a leader in the effort to raise high school

graduation requirements for all students to the CCR level. Starting with incoming ninth graders during School Year (SY) 2006–07, Indiana raised its core graduation requirements for all students from two years each of math, science, and social studies (under Indiana's General Diploma) to three years of each core subject under a new diploma called the Indiana Core 40, as table 2 shows above. The Core 40 legislation, passed by the Indiana General Assembly, accomplished two feats:

1. It raised high school graduation requirements for all students by making the Core 40 diploma the default graduation option, requiring more students to engage in rigorous curriculum prior to graduation.
2. It made the Indiana Core 40 diploma a minimum admission requirement for the state's public four-year universities.

Indiana offered four diploma options for the Class of 2014:

1. Indiana General High School Diploma (non-CCR)
2. Indiana Core 40 (CCR)
3. Indiana Core 40 with Academic Honors (CCR)
4. Indiana Core 40 with Technical Honors (CCR)

Unlike most states with multiple diploma options, Indiana tracks high school graduation rates by diploma pathway disaggregated by student subgroup *and* the postsecondary academic outcomes of its graduates by diploma pathway. This data reveals promising results in support of CCR diploma pathways. Indiana high school students who graduate from the more rigorous diploma pathways are more prepared for college, as illustrated in table 3 on the previous page. Students who complete one of Indiana's three CCR diploma pathways—the Core 40 and the Core 40 with Honors (both Academic Honors and Technical Honors)—are much more likely to enroll in college and far less likely to need remediation than their peers who graduate with Indiana's General High School Diploma.

When states do not require students to complete a CCR diploma pathway at minimum, student outcomes are more likely to reflect outcomes seen among Indiana's General Diploma graduates, where only 24 percent of these students enroll in college and three out of every five students who do enroll in college require remediation.

Policy Recommendations

There are several ways that policy, practice, and various partners can support an agenda that moves every state in the direction of implementing and sustaining CCR high school graduation requirements for all students.

State

- State high school graduation requirements should align with their CCR standards. The misalignment of high school graduation requirements and CCR standards diminishes the

value of the high school diploma and sends the message that all students are not expected to meet the rigor required with the CCR standards.

- States with CCR diplomas should make the CCR diploma the default diploma for all students. As seen in the cases of Arkansas, Indiana, and Texas,³⁷ when states automatically place students in a CCR diploma pathway—coupled with the necessary support—traditionally underserved students perform better and the gaps between student subgroups shrink.
- All states with multiple pathways should track and publicly report diploma pathway data disaggregated by diploma type and by student subgroup. Moreover, states should track this data during and through completion of postsecondary education, as Indiana does, and report the data in state and local report cards under ESSA. This will enable parents and the public to see which pathways best prepare students for postsecondary education.
- States also should track and publicly report in the aggregate and disaggregated by student subgroup data pertaining to students graduating from high school with waiver diplomas.

Local

- School districts should track and publicly report diploma pathway data disaggregated by diploma type and student subgroup, both districtwide and by school.
- School districts and individual secondary schools (including middle and high schools) should educate parents and students about the long-term postsecondary outcomes of students who select less rigorous diploma pathways so that parents clearly understand the likely outcomes of all possible diploma options.

Recommendations for Students with Disabilities

- States should ensure students with disabilities have access to and are expected to participate in CCR diploma pathways to ensure that more students with disabilities graduate college and career ready.
- States should eliminate the use of specific pathways for students with disabilities that lead to a diploma that is less rigorous than the state's regular diploma, as was discovered in four states.

- Finally, states should ensure that students with disabilities complete the same high school graduation requirements as students without disabilities for the state's regular high school diploma, and should significantly reduce opportunities to waive or modify certain graduation requirements (such as assessments or course requirements) for students with disabilities, as was found in fourteen states. If requirements are waived or reduced for these students, the alternative assessment and/or course options should be just as rigorous and lead to similarly meaningful postsecondary options for students. Additionally, parents must be fully informed about the impact decisions to waive or alter graduation requirements have on the postsecondary options for their students if opting for less rigorous requirements.

Recommendations for Parents/Guardians

- Parents/guardians are encouraged to meet regularly with their student's high school counselor(s) to ensure their students have access to rigorous course work and are on a CCR diploma pathway.

Federal

- For accountability requirements under ESSA, states should consider using the percentage of students enrolled in postsecondary education without the need for remediation and the percentage of students graduating with a CCR diploma as indicators of school quality or student success. This action, coupled with this report's recommendation for disaggregating diploma pathways data during and through completion of postsecondary education, would provide meaningful data for parents and communities while ensuring the data is acted upon as part of the state's accountability system.

Conclusion

A high school diploma should signify that a student is prepared academically to attend a two- or four-year college or a postsecondary career-based training program with a high likelihood of academic success. However, this report illustrates that most high school diploma pathways are not aligned with CCR standards and do not signify preparation for postsecondary education.

High school graduation rates are an important but incomplete indicator of success. In addition to measuring whether students receive a diploma, it also is critical to gauge the value of the diploma itself. Allowing students to walk across the stage at graduation with paper-thin diplomas—that do not signify readiness for postsecondary education—is a disservice both to students and to the economic potential of the United States. Decisionmakers at all levels must ensure that high schools prepare students for the rigor that postsecondary learning demands and align their course work with college and career expectations. Only then will a high school diploma signify that a student truly is college and career ready.



Endnotes

- ¹ "Public High School 4-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate," <https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/images/State%20by%20State%20Graduation%20Rates.pdf> (accessed December 2, 2016).
- ² U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 2016* (NCES 2016-144) (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, Author, 2016) http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_coi.asp.
- ³ Achieve, *Rising to the Challenge: Are High School Graduates Prepared for College and Work?* (Washington, DC: Author, 2014) <http://www.achieve.org/rising-challenge>.
- ⁴ NAEP has three levels of proficiency—basic (partial mastery), proficient (solid academic performance), and advanced (superior performance). Students who reach the proficient level on NAEP "have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter." Unfortunately, the majority of twelfth-grade students score at the basic level and are unable to demonstrate solid or superior performance on the NAEP. U.S. Department of Education, *The Nation's Report Card: 2015 Mathematics & Reading at Grade 12*, http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_g12_2015/# (accessed December 2, 2016).
- ⁵ M. Bromberg and C. Theokas, *Meandering Toward Graduation: Transcript Outcomes of High School Graduates*. (Washington, DC: The Education Trust, 2016).
- ⁶ ACT, "The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2015," <http://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/Condition-of-College-and-Career-Readiness-Report-2015-United-States.pdf> (accessed February 6, 2017).
- ⁷ College Board, "2015 College Board Program Results," <https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/digitalServices/pdf/2015-college-board-results-national-report.pdf%20> (accessed February 6, 2017).
- ⁸ R. Balfanz et al., *Closing the College Gap: A Roadmap to Postsecondary Readiness and Attainment*. (Washington, DC: Civic Enterprises; Baltimore, MD: Everyone Graduates Center at the School of Education at Johns Hopkins University, 2016)
- ⁹ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSL:09)*, <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/hsls09/> (accessed December 8, 2016).
- ¹⁰ ———, *Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2002)*, <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/els2002/> (accessed December 8, 2016).
- ¹¹ A. P. Carnavale, N. Smith, and J. Strohl, *Recovery: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2020* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce, 2013).
- ¹² A. P. Carnavale, T. Jayasundera, and A. Gulish, *America's Divided Recovery: College Haves and Have-Nots* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce, 2016).
- ¹³ For the purpose of this report, the Alliance defines "traditionally underserved students" as those in the following subgroups: African American, Latino, American Indian, students from low-income families, students with disabilities, and English learners.
- ¹⁴ The four-year ACGR is calculated by dividing the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma by the number of students who make up the adjusted cohort for a particular graduating class. The adjusted cohort includes all students who enrolled in the ninth grade four years earlier, minus students who dropped out, migrated to another country, transferred out, or died, plus the number of students who transfer in. U.S. Department of Education, "Four-Year Regulatory Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate School Year 2010–11," <https://www2.ed.gov/documents/press-releases/adjusted-cohort-graduation-rate.doc> (accessed November 17, 2016).
- ¹⁵ ———, "No Child Left Behind High School Graduation Rate Non-Regulatory Guidance," December 22, 2008, <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/hsgrguidance.pdf> (accessed November 17, 2016).
- ¹⁶ Information about gaps in high school graduation rates between student subgroups found at the U.S. Department of Education's ED Data Express website <http://eddataexpress.ed.gov/state-tables-main.cfm> (accessed December 8, 2016).
- ¹⁷ "Dropout factory," is a term coined by the Everyone Graduates Center (EGC) at Johns Hopkins University. Before federal regulation standardized high school graduation rates, EGC employed a very simple graduation rate estimate called "promoting power," which compares the number of high school seniors in a graduating class to the number of freshmen who were in that class three years earlier. If the number of students in the class decreased by 40 percent or more by the time students went from ninth to twelfth grade, such a school had a "promoting power" of 60 percent or less and was classified as a "dropout factory." Alliance for Excellent Education, America's Promise Alliance, Civic Enterprises, and EGC, *Progress Is No Accident: Why ESEA Can't Backtrack on High School Graduation Rates* (Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education, 2015) <http://all4ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/NoAccident.pdf>.
- ¹⁸ Alliance for Excellent Education, "Every Student Succeeds Act Primer: High Schools" (Washington DC: Author, 2016) <http://all4ed.org/reports-factsheets/every-student-succeeds-act-primer-high-schools/>.
- ¹⁹ Civic Enterprises and Everyone Graduates Center at the School of Education at Johns Hopkins University, "Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenges in Raising High School Graduation Rates. 2017 Annual Update," <http://gradnation.americaspromise.org/report/2017-building-grad-nation-report> (accessed June 5, 2017)
- ²⁰ U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, "Civil Rights Data Collection Data Snapshot: College and Career Readiness," (Issue Brief No. 3) (Washington, DC: Author, 2014) <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/Downloads/CRDC-College-and-Career-Readiness-Snapshot.pdf>.
- ²¹ As of December 8, 2016, forty-two states and the District of Columbia have adopted the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and math. Common Core State Standards Initiative, "Standards in Your State," <http://www.corestandards.org/standards-in-your-state/> (accessed December 8, 2016).
- ²² "Common Core State Standards for Mathematics Appendix A: Designing High School Mathematics Courses Based on the Common Core State Standards," http://www.achieve.org/files/CCSSI_Mathematics%20Appendix%20A_101110.pdf (accessed December 8, 2016).
- ²³ This definition aligns with the definition set by Achieve in *How the States Got Their Rates: 2014 Graduates* (Washington, DC: Author, 2015).

- ²⁴ The Alliance supports the federal definition of a regular high school diploma, which is "the standard high school diploma awarded to the preponderance of students in a State that is fully aligned with the State's standards and does not include a general equivalency diploma, certificate of completion, certificate of attendance, or any other similar or lesser credential, such as a diploma based on meeting Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals. The term 'regular high school diploma' also includes any 'higher diploma' that is awarded to students who complete requirements above and beyond what is required for a regular high school diploma." U.S. Department of Education, *Every Student Succeeds Act High School Graduation Rate Non-Regulatory Guidance* (Washington, DC: Author, 2017). <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essagradrateguidance.pdf>
- ²⁵ Achieve, "American Diploma Project Network," <http://www.achieve.org/adp-network> (accessed December 8, 2016).
- ²⁶ ———, *How the States Got Their Rates: 2014 Graduates* (Washington, DC: Author, 2015).
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ J. D. Zinth, *Standard and Advanced Graduation Requirements: A 50-State Look* (Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States, 2015).
- ³⁰ These questions focused specifically on the Class of 2014 since most states did not have data for the Class of 2015 available at the time of data collection.
- ³¹ Since the Class of 2014, some states have changed the number of diploma pathways they offer. Some states are shifting to multiple pathways while others are shifting to one pathway. Additionally, some states have either lessened or increased the rigor of their high school graduation requirements for the Class of 2015 and beyond.
- ³² Nevada uses the term "diploma type" rather than "diploma pathway" to describe the state's three diploma options.
- ³³ Although Arkansas, Indiana, and Texas offer a CCR diploma pathway as their main graduation pathway, and require students to pursue this option, students can opt out if their parents sign a waiver. Achieve, *How the States Got Their Rates* (Washington, DC: Author, 2015) <https://www.achieve.org/how-the-states-got-their-rates>.
- ³⁴ The six states are California, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New York, and Virginia. Since these six states do not require students to pursue a CCR diploma pathway, students are not automatically enrolled in such a pathway in high school and consequently, are not required to graduate with course requirements at the CCR level.
- ³⁵ The California High School Exit Examination was suspended January 1, 2016, as a result of California's adoption of the Common Core State Standards. California Department of Education, "California High School Exit Examination (CAHEE)" <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/> (accessed December 14, 2016).
- ³⁶ For the Class of 2014, 7.38 percent of Indiana's graduates received a waiver diploma.
- ³⁷ In 2013, the Texas legislature established the Foundation High School Program as the default diploma for incoming ninth graders in SY 2014–15 and eliminated the use of the Minimum High School Diploma, the Recommended High School Program (CCR diploma), and the Distinguished Achievement Program (CCR diploma) for incoming students. This new diploma does not align with the Alliance's criteria for a CCR diploma as it does not require students to graduate with Algebra II. Students may earn a "distinguished level of achievement" under the Foundation High School Program by completing four credits of math to include Algebra II, in addition to other requirements. For more details see the Texas Administrative Code Chapter 74, Subchapter B §74.11. High School Graduation Requirements, at <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter074/ch074b.html> (accessed May 15, 2017).

Glossary of Key Terms

CCR. College- and career-ready.

college- and career-ready (CCR) diploma. A diploma that satisfies a state's content standards for English/language arts (ELA) and mathematics by twelfth-grade graduation, generally requiring students to complete, at minimum, four years of grade-level ELA and three years of math through Algebra II or Integrated Math III.

college- and career-ready (CCR) diploma pathway. A defined route to a diploma within a state that has multiple pathways to a diploma that requires students to complete four years of grade-level ELA and three years of math through Algebra II or Integrated Math III and leads to students earning a state's regular high school diploma. Diploma pathways promulgated by state institutions of higher education that fully align with admissions requirements into those institutions also are considered CCR diploma pathways in this report.

college- and career-ready (CCR) gap. The gap in attainment of a CCR diploma between (1) white students and students of color, (2) students from low-income families and students without this designation, (3) students with disabilities and those without this designation, and (4) English language learners and those without this designation.

college- and career-ready (CCR) graduation rate. The number of students who graduated with a CCR diploma divided by the total number of graduates in the Class of 2014, which may include four-year and extended-year graduates.

diploma pathway. A defined route to a diploma within a state that includes specified course work required for students to earn a state's regular high school diploma.

dropout factory. A term coined by the Everyone Graduates Center (EGC) at Johns Hopkins University to refer to a high school with a "promoting power" of 60 percent or less. Before federal regulation standardized high school graduation rates, EGC employed a very simple graduation rate estimate called "promoting power," which compares the number of high school seniors in a graduating class to the number of freshmen who were in that class three years earlier. If the number of students in the class decreased by 40 percent or more by the time students went from ninth to twelfth grade, such a school had a "promoting power" of 60 percent or less and was classified as a "dropout factory."

four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate. A percentage representing the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who form the adjusted cohort for that graduating class. The adjusted cohort includes all students who enrolled in the ninth grade four years earlier, minus students who dropped out, migrated to another country, transferred out, or died, plus the number of students who transfer in. See U.S. Department of Education, "Every Student Succeeds Act High School Graduation Rate Non-Regulatory Guidance," <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essagradrateguidance.pdf> (accessed June 2, 2017).

multiple pathways. A state has multiple pathways to a diploma if it offers students more than one defined route to earn a state's regular high school diploma.

publicly available data. Data available to the public on an open-access platform such as state report cards, downloadable files, and/or searchable databases available online or onsite through state departments of education.

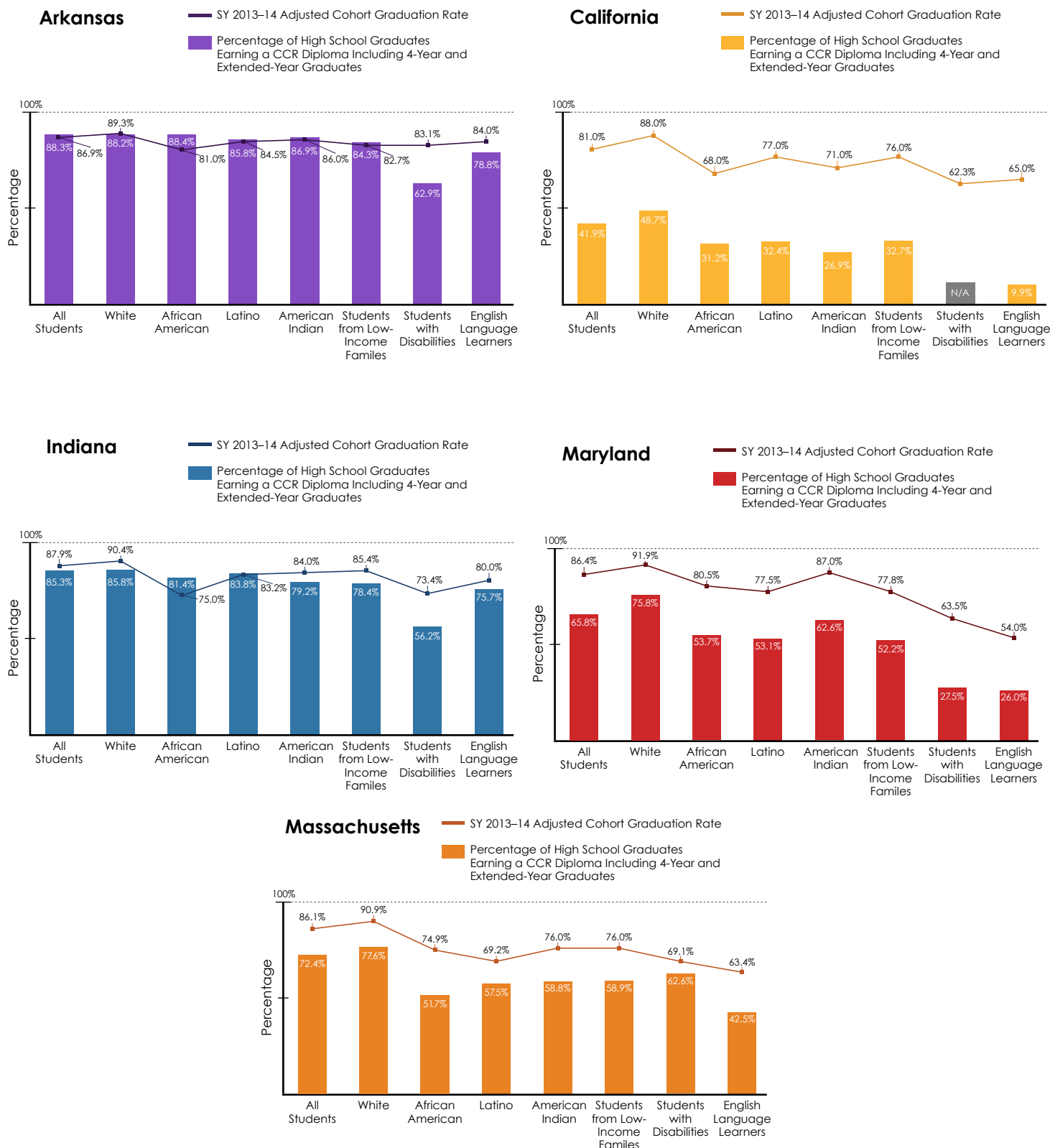
regular high school diploma. "The standard high school diploma awarded to the preponderance of students in a State that is fully aligned with the State's standards and does not include a general equivalency diploma, certificate of completion, certificate of attendance, or any other similar or lesser credential, such as a diploma based on meeting Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals. The term 'regular high school diploma' also includes any 'higher diploma' that is awarded to students who complete requirements above and beyond what is required for a regular high school diploma." U.S. Department of Education, *Every Student Succeeds Act High School Graduation Rate Non-Regulatory Guidance* (Washington, DC: Author, 2017). <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essagradrateguidance.pdf>

traditionally underserved students. African American, Latino, and American Indian students, students from low-income families, students with disabilities, and English learners.

waiver diploma. A regular high school diploma awarded to students for which the state alters, substitutes, or removes state-adopted graduation requirements.

Appendix

FIGURE A1: Percentage of High School Graduates By State Earning a College- and Career-Ready (CCR) Diploma, Class of 2014

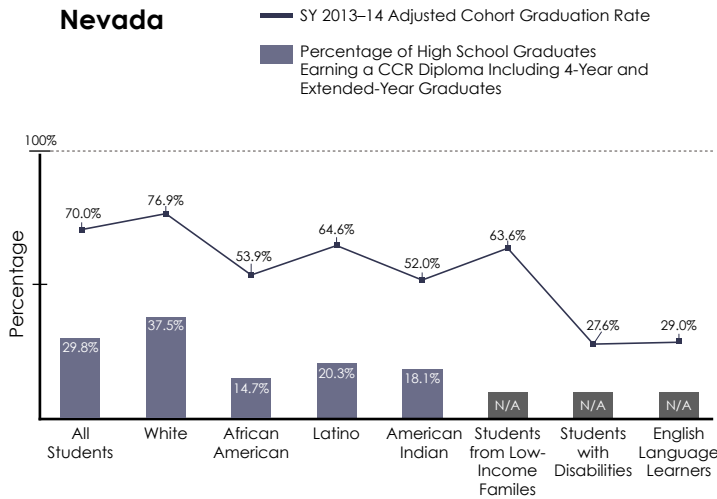


Notes: The percentage of high school graduates earning a CCR diploma is the number of students who graduated with a CCR diploma divided by the total number of graduates in the Class of 2014. The total number of graduates could include graduates from multiple cohorts. For example, in Arkansas the four-year high school graduation rate for the Class of 2014 was 86.9 percent. But among all students who earned a diploma in 2014, which may include four-year and extended-year graduates, 88.3 percent of those graduates earned a CCR diploma.

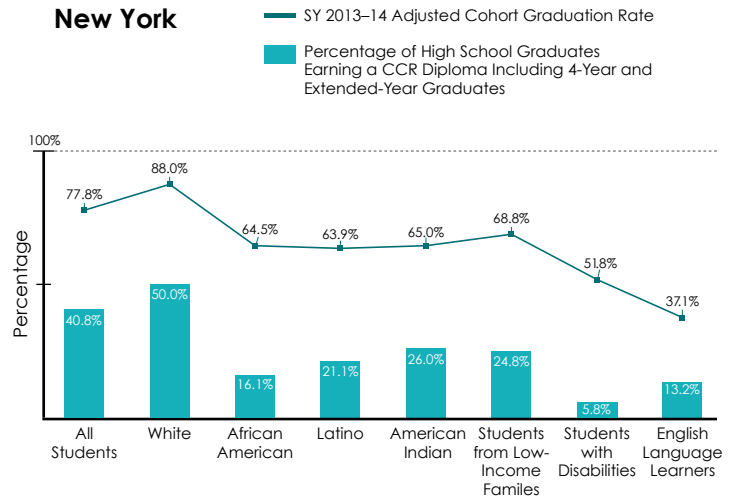
(continued)

FIGURE A1: Percentage of High School Graduates By State Earning a College- and Career-Ready (CCR) Diploma, Class of 2014 (continued)

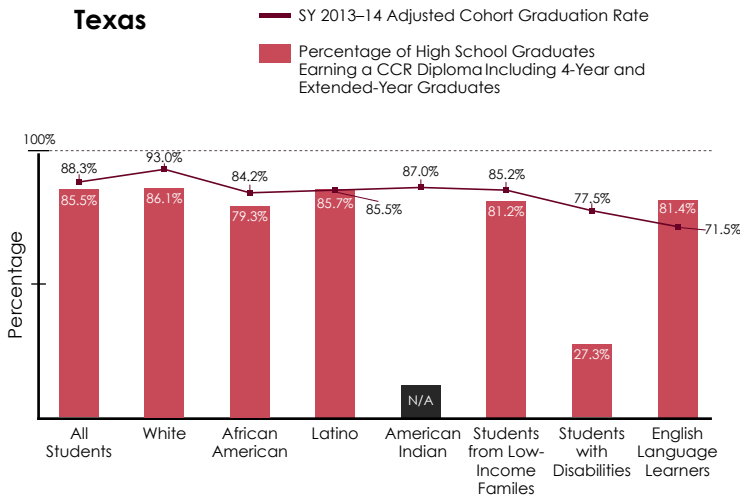
Nevada



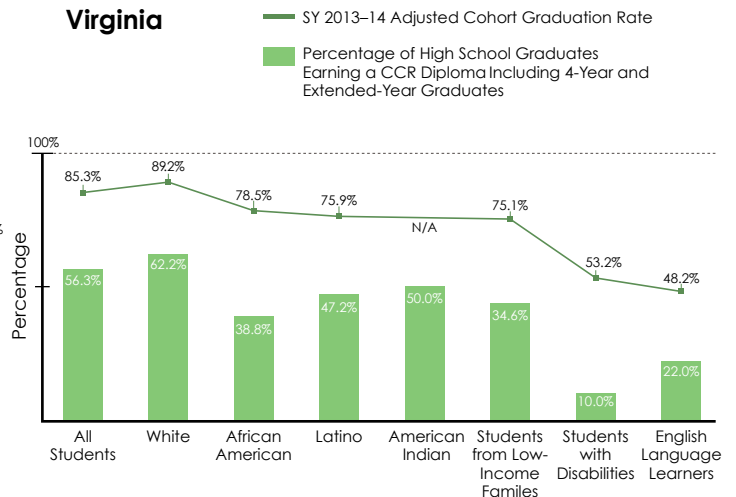
New York



Texas



Virginia



Notes: The percentage of high school graduates earning a CCR diploma is the number of students who graduated with a CCR diploma divided by the total number of graduates in the Class of 2014. The total number of graduates could include graduates from multiple cohorts. For example, in Nevada the four-year high school graduation rate for the Class of 2014 was 70 percent. But among all students who earned a diploma in 2014, which may include four-year and extended-year graduates, 29.8 percent of those graduates earned a CCR diploma.

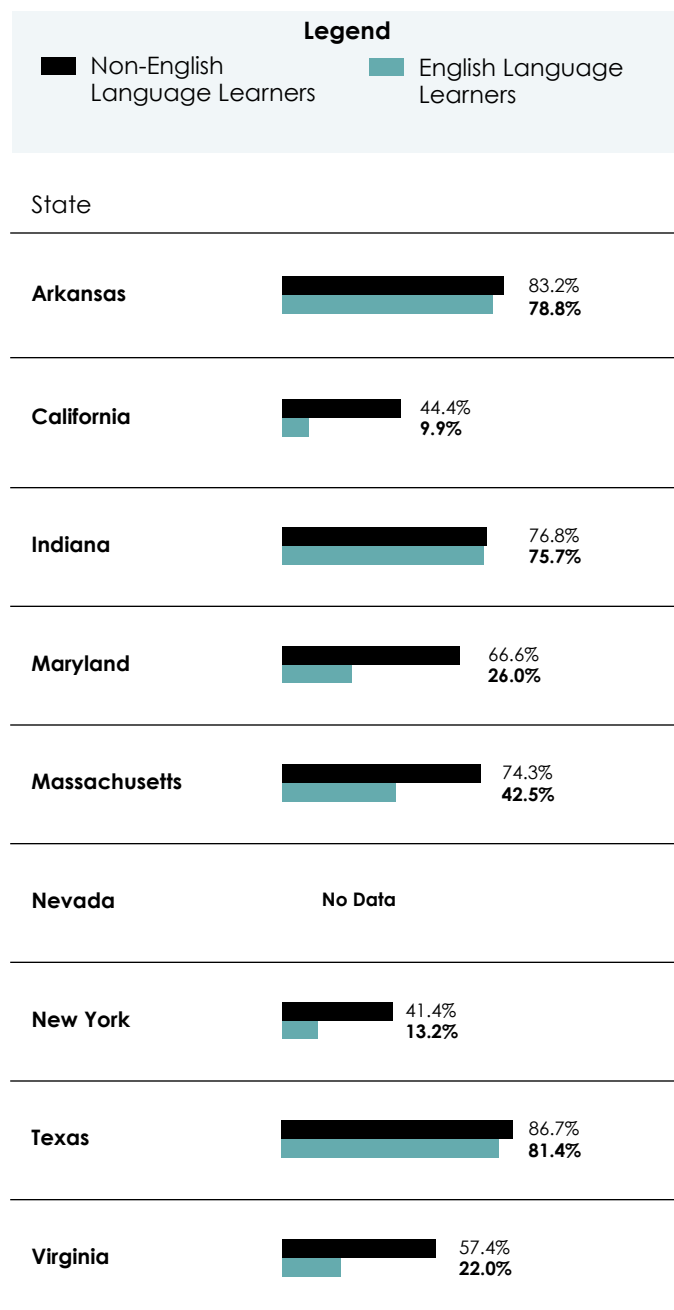
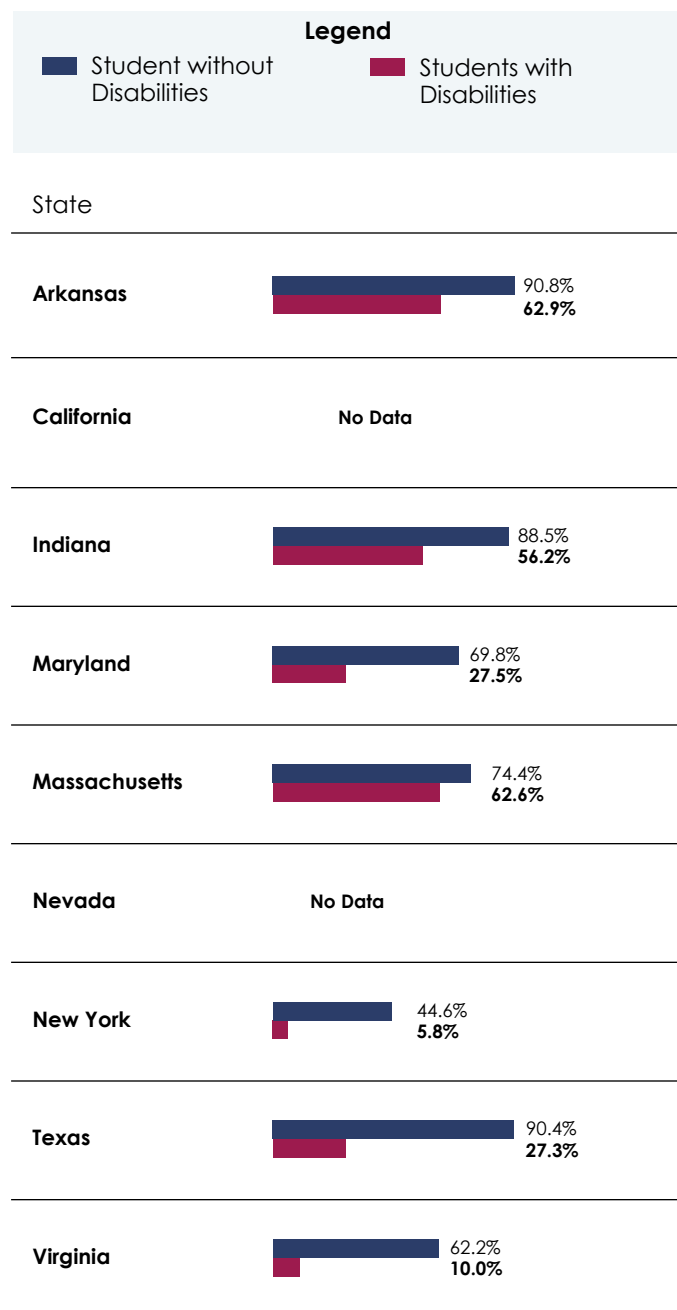
FIGURE A2: Student Subgroup Gaps in College- and Career-Ready (CCR) Attainment, Class of 2014



Notes: The "gap" refers to the percentage-point gap in attainment of a CCR diploma between (1) white students and students of color, (2) students from low-income families and students without this designation, (3) students with disabilities and those without this designation, and (4) English language learners and those without this designation. For example, in Virginia 62.2 percent of white students and 38.8 percent of African American students who graduate earn a CCR diploma. Therefore, the gap is 23.4 percentage points.

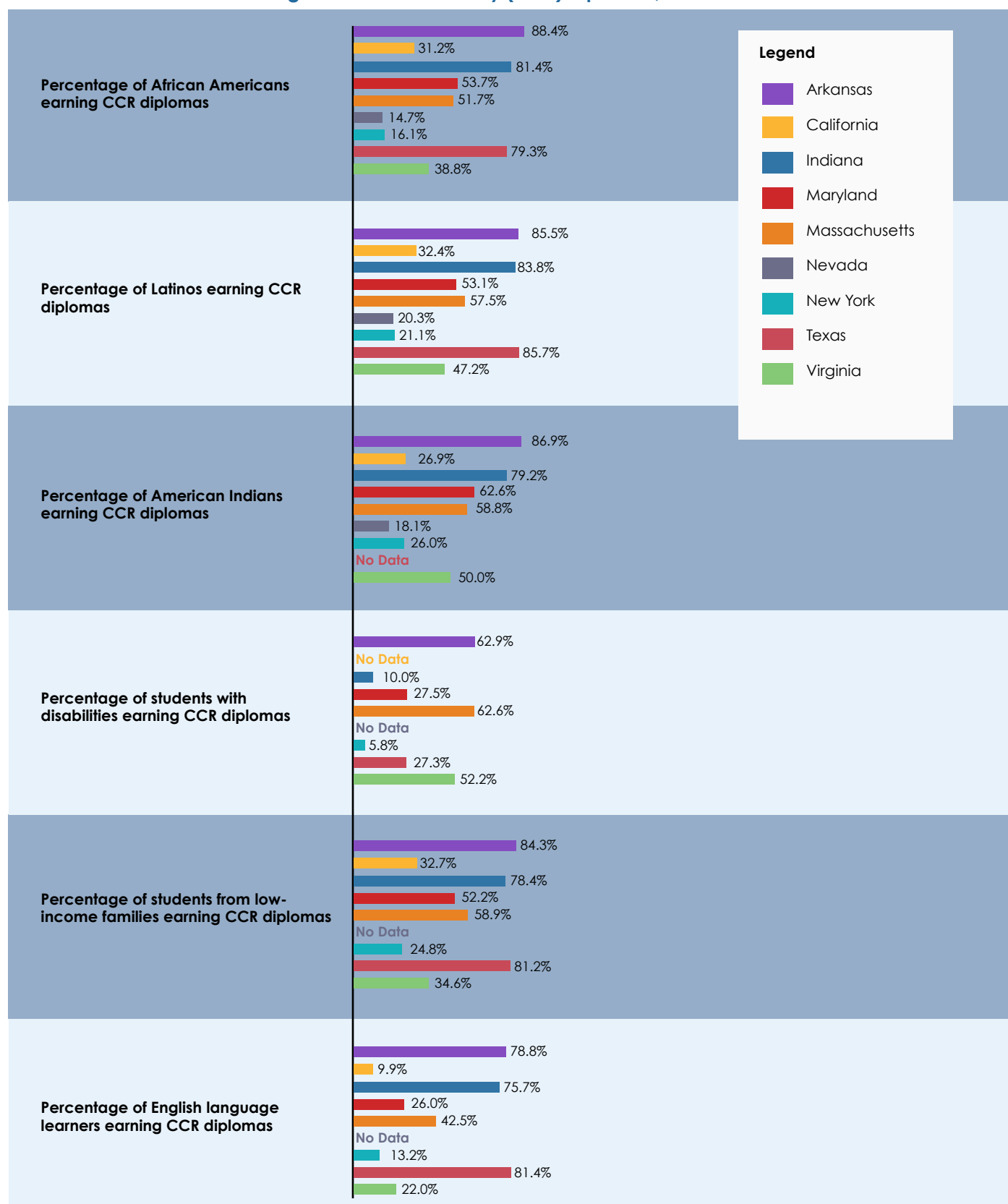
(continued)

FIGURE A2: Student Subgroup Gaps in College- and Career-Ready (CCR) Attainment, Class of 2014 *(continued)*



Notes: The "gap" refers to the percentage-point gap in attainment of a CCR diploma between (1) white students and students of color, (2) students from low-income families and students without this designation, (3) students with disabilities and those without this designation, and (4) English language learners and those without this designation. For example, in Virginia 57.4 percent of native English speakers and 22.0 percent of English language learners who graduate earn a CCR diploma. Therefore, the gap is 35.4 percentage points.

FIGURE A3: Percentage of High School Graduates by Student Subgroup Earning College- and Career-Ready (CCR) Diplomas, Class of 2014



Notes: CCR diploma pathways vary across states in terms of their degree of rigor. Therefore, the Alliance cautions against making definitive conclusions based on comparisons of CCR high school graduation rates across states.

TABLE A1: State Diploma Pathways, Class of 2014

Alabama

Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Alabama High School Diploma	Non-CCR
Alabama High School Diploma with Advanced Academic Endorsements	CCR
Alabama High School Diploma with Advanced Career and Technical Endorsement	CCR
Alabama High School Diploma with Career and Technical Endorsements	Non-CCR
Alabama Occupational Diploma	Special Education

Alaska

Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Alaska High School Diploma	Non-CCR ^a

Arizona

Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Arizona High School Diploma	CCR
Arizona Grand Canyon High School Diploma	Performance Based ^b

Arkansas

Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Arkansas Smart Core Diploma	CCR
Arkansas Core Diploma	Non-CCR

California

Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
California High School Diploma	Non-CCR
California State University/College Readiness Curriculum (A–G)	CCR

Colorado

Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Colorado High School Diploma	Local Control ^c

Connecticut

Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Connecticut High School Diploma	Non-CCR

Notes: “CCR” refers to a college- and career-ready diploma. “Non-CCR” refers to a diploma that does not meet the college- and career-ready qualifications outlined by the Alliance for Excellent Education (the Alliance) in this report. “Special education” refers to diplomas available only to students enrolled in special education courses. “Local Control” refers to states that allow graduation requirements to be set at the local level by the school district and, in some cases, schools.

^a Beginning July 1, 2017, Alaska will require three units of mathematics credit for high school graduates, as opposed to two units of credit for students graduating from high school on or before June 30, 2017.

^b The Grand Canyon High School Diploma is a recognized high school diploma available to Arizona students who demonstrate in all core subject areas the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college and career. Advancement is based on mastery, not “seat time.” Students receive personalized support so that every student can reach college- and career-ready performance levels before leaving high school. The program is voluntary for schools. Currently, twenty-one high schools offer the Grand Canyon High School Diploma. Arizona State University has identified a performance-based admissions option for students earning a Grand Canyon High School Diploma that the university will pilot for applicants seeking admission as first-time freshman for the fall 2018 semester.

^c In Colorado, the only state requirement for high school graduation is one course of civics. School districts develop their own high school graduation requirements.

(continued)

TABLE A1: State Diploma Pathways, Class of 2014 *(continued)*

Delaware	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Delaware High School Diploma	CCR

District of Columbia	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
District of Columbia High School Diploma	CCR

Florida	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Florida High School Diploma	CCR ^d

Georgia	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Georgia High School Diploma	CCR

Hawaii	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Hawaii High School Diploma	Non-CCR
Hawaii Board of Education Diploma	CCR

Idaho	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Idaho High School Diploma	Non-CCR

Illinois	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Illinois High School Diploma	Non-CCR

Indiana	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Indiana Core 40 Diploma	CCR
Indiana Core 40 Diploma with Academic Honors	CCR
Indiana Core 40 Diploma with Technical Honors	CCR
Indiana General Diploma	Non-CCR

Iowa	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Iowa High School Diploma	Local Control ^e

Notes: "CCR" refers to a college- and career-ready diploma. "Non-CCR" refers to a diploma that does not meet the college- and career-ready qualifications outlined by the Alliance for Excellent Education (the Alliance) in this report. "Special education" refers to diplomas available only to students enrolled in special education courses. "Local Control" refers to states that allow graduation requirements to be set at the local level by the school district and, in some cases, schools.

^d The Alliance recognizes the Florida High School Diploma as a CCR diploma pathway. Although this pathway does not require high school students to take Algebra II, 86.6 percent of the 2014 graduating class earned Algebra II credit.

^e Iowa requires high school graduation requirements to include, at minimum, four years of English language arts and three years each of math, science, and social studies, but the state allows school districts to make decisions about specific course work affiliated with these minimums.

(continued)

TABLE A1: State Diploma Pathways, Class of 2014 *(continued)*

Kansas	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Kansas High School Diploma	CCR ^f

Kentucky	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Kentucky High School Diploma	CCR

Louisiana	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Louisiana Basic Core Diploma	Non-CCR
Louisiana Career Diploma	Non-CCR
Louisiana Core 4 Diploma	CCR
Louisiana Core 4 Diploma with CTE	CCR
Louisiana TOPS Core Curriculum	CCR

Maine	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Maine High School Diploma	Non-CCR

Maryland	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Maryland High School Diploma	Non-CCR
Career and Technical Education Program	Non-CCR
University of Maryland Diploma	CCR
University of Maryland/Career and Technical Education Diploma	CCR

Massachusetts	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Local Control Diploma	Local Control ^g
MassCore Diploma	CCR

Michigan	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Michigan High School Diploma	CCR

Minnesota	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Minnesota High School Diploma	CCR

Notes: "CCR" refers to a college- and career-ready diploma. "Non-CCR" refers to a diploma that does not meet the college- and career-ready qualifications outlined by the Alliance for Excellent Education (the Alliance) in this report. "Special education" refers to diplomas available only to students enrolled in special education courses. "Local Control" refers to states that allow graduation requirements to be set at the local level by the school district and, in some cases, schools.

^f The Alliance recognizes the Kansas High School Diploma as a CCR diploma pathway. Although Kansas's graduation requirements do not explicitly identify Algebra II, all Kansas students are taught "three units of mathematics, including algebraic and geometric concepts," which includes the content found in Algebra I and Algebra II.

^g High school graduation requirements are set at the district and school level in Massachusetts. The state, however, requires students to meet a competency-determination standard in which they must take and pass a series of course-specific exams to earn a high school diploma. The state also mandates specific course requirements in civics and that schools teach physical education as a required subject in all grades for all public school students.

(continued)

TABLE A1: State Diploma Pathways, Class of 2014 *(continued)*

Mississippi	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Mississippi High School Diploma	CCR
Mississippi District Option	Non-CCR
Mississippi Career Pathway Option	Non-CCR
Mississippi Early Exit Diploma	CCR ^h

Missouri	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Missouri High School Diploma	Non-CCR
Coordinating Board for Higher Education Diploma	CCR

Montana	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Montana High School Diploma	Non-CCR
Minimum Core College Preparatory Program	CCR
Rigorous Core College Preparatory Program	CCR

Nebraska	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Nebraska High School Diploma	Local Control

Nevada ⁱ	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Nevada Standard Diploma	Non-CCR
Nevada Advanced Diploma	CCR ^j
Nevada Adult Diploma	Non-CCR ^k

New Hampshire	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
New Hampshire High School Diploma	Non-CCR
New Hampshire Scholars Standard Course of Study	CCR

New Jersey	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
New Jersey High School Diploma	Non-CCR

Notes: "CCR" refers to a college- and career-ready diploma. "Non-CCR" refers to a diploma that does not meet the college- and career-ready qualifications outlined by the Alliance for Excellent Education (the Alliance) in this report. "Special education" refers to diplomas available only to students enrolled in special education courses. "Local Control" refers to states that allow graduation requirements to be set at the local level by the school district and, in some cases, schools.

^h The Alliance considers Mississippi's Early Exit Diploma a CCR diploma pathway. Although this pathway does not require high school students to take Algebra II, it meets the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning requirements for enrollment.

ⁱ Nevada uses the term "diploma type" rather than "diploma pathway" to describe the state's three diploma options.

^j The Alliance considers Nevada's Advanced Diploma a CCR diploma pathway. Although this pathway does not require high school students to take Algebra II, it provides students admission to the University of Nevada.

^k Nevada's Adult Diploma is for students who drop out or are at risk of dropping out of high school.

(continued)

TABLE A1: State Diploma Pathways, Class of 2014 *(continued)*

New Mexico

Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
New Mexico Diploma of Excellence	CCR

New York

Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Regents Diploma	Non-CCR
Advanced Regents Diploma	CCR
Local Diploma	Special Education

North Carolina

Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Future-Ready Core Diploma	CCR
Future-Ready Occupational Diploma	Special Education

North Dakota

Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
North Dakota High School Diploma	Non-CCR

Ohio

Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Ohio Standard Diploma	CCR
Ohio Academic Diploma with Honors	CCR
Ohio Career-Technical Diploma with Honors	CCR
International Baccalaureate Diploma with Honors	CCR
Diploma with Curriculum Choice	Non-CCR

Oklahoma

Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Oklahoma Core Curriculum	Non-CCR
College Prep/Work-Ready Curriculum	Non-CCR

Oregon

Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Oregon Diploma	Non-CCR
Oregon Modified Diploma	Non-CCR

Pennsylvania

Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Pennsylvania High School Diploma	Local Control

Notes: "CCR" refers to a college- and career-ready diploma. "Non-CCR" refers to a diploma that does not meet the college- and career-ready qualifications outlined by the Alliance for Excellent Education (the Alliance) in this report. "Special education" refers to diplomas available only to students enrolled in special education courses. "Local Control" refers to states that allow graduation requirements to be set at the local level by the school district and, in some cases, schools.

(continued)

TABLE A1: State Diploma Pathways, Class of 2014 *(continued)*

Rhode Island	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Rhode Island High School Diploma	Non-CCR
South Carolina	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
South Carolina High School Diploma	Non-CCR
South Dakota	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
South Dakota High School Diploma	CCR
Tennessee	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Tennessee High School Diploma	CCR
Texas	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Minimum High School Diploma	Non-CCR
Recommended High School Diploma	CCR
Distinguished Achievement Program	CCR
Utah	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Utah Standard Diploma	CCR
Vermont	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Vermont High School Diploma	Local Control
Virginia	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Virginia Standard Diploma	Non-CCR
Virginia Advanced Studies Diploma	CCR
Virginia Modified Diploma	Special Education ¹
Virginia Special Diploma	Special Education

Notes: "CCR" refers to a college- and career-ready diploma. "Non-CCR" refers to a diploma that does not meet the college- and career-ready qualifications outlined by the Alliance for Excellent Education (the Alliance) in this report. "Special education" refers to diplomas available only to students enrolled in special education courses. "Local Control" refers to states that allow graduation requirements to be set at the local level by the school district and, in some cases, schools.

¹ Virginia ended the Modified Diploma, effective with students entering the ninth grade for the first time in SY 2013–14.

(continued)

TABLE A1: State Diploma Pathways, Class of 2014 *(continued)*

Washington	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Washington High School Diploma	CCR
West Virginia	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
West Virginia Core Plus Skilled Pathway Diploma	Non-CCR
West Virginia Core Plus Professional Pathway Diploma	Non-CCR
Wisconsin	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Wisconsin High School Diploma	Non-CCR
Wyoming	
Diploma Pathway Name	Diploma Pathway Type
Wyoming High School Diploma	Non-CCR
Hathaway Honors Scholarship	CCR
Hathaway Performance Scholarship	CCR
Hathaway Opportunity Scholarship	CCR
Hathaway Provisional Opportunity	Non-CCR

Notes: "CCR" refers to a college- and career-ready diploma. "Non-CCR" refers to a diploma that does not meet the college- and career-ready qualifications outlined by the Alliance for Excellent Education (the Alliance) in this report. "Special education" refers to diplomas available only to students enrolled in special education courses. "Local Control" refers to states that allow graduation requirements to be set at the local level by the school district and, in some cases, schools.

TABLE A2: State High School Diploma Waiver Options, Class of 2014

State	Modified or Waived Assessment Requirements for Any Students	Modified or Waived Course Requirements for Any Students	Modified or Waived Assessment and/or Course Requirements Only for Students with Disabilities
Alabama		X	
Alaska			
Arizona		X	
Arkansas			X
California ^a			X
Colorado			
Connecticut			X
Delaware			
District of Columbia			
Florida			X
Georgia			X
Hawaii			
Idaho			X
Illinois		X	
Indiana	X		
Iowa			X
Kansas			X
Kentucky		X	
Louisiana			X
Maine			X
Maryland	X		
Massachusetts	X		
Michigan		X	
Minnesota			

Notes: The data contained in this table cites various state options that lead to waiver diplomas, defined in this report as a regular high school diploma awarded to students for which the state alters, substitutes, or removes state-adopted graduation requirements. This may lead to less rigorous course work, including the incomplete satisfaction of the full breadth and depth of state-adopted content standards, and/or less rigorous assessment requirements (i.e., end-of-course assessments and high school exit exams). The findings in this table are based on the Alliance's methodology for collecting this data and may not agree with other analyses that may or may not have collected data specific to the Class of 2014. In collecting this data, the Alliance searched on state department of education websites and initiated a series of additional contacts through phone calls and emails to education department staff. For an in-depth analysis on course and assessment graduation requirements for students with disabilities in comparison with their peers, refer to the National Center on Education Outcomes' report, *Graduation Policies for Students with Disabilities Who Participate in States' General Assessments* (Synthesis Report 98) (2015) available at <https://nceo.info/Resources/publications/TopicAreas/Graduation/gradResources.htm>. Shaded states required an assessment for graduation.

^a Students who graduated from California high schools from the Class of 2006 through the Class of 2014 were required to pass the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) as a condition of receiving a high school diploma. Legislation signed by the governor in October 2015 suspended this requirement. The CAHSEE was last administered in 2014. For more information see California Department of Education, "FAQs About the Suspension of the CAHSEE," <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/cahseesuspendfaq.asp#q5> (accessed May 16, 2017)..

(continued)

TABLE A2: State High School Diploma Waiver Options, Class of 2014 *(continued)*

State	Modified or Waived Assessment Requirements for Any Students	Modified or Waived Course Requirements for Any Students	Modified or Waived Assessment and/or Course Requirements Only for Students with Disabilities
Mississippi	X		
Missouri		X	
Montana		X	
Nebraska			
Nevada	X	X	
New Hampshire	Data Not Available	Data Not Available	Data Not Available
New Jersey			X
New Mexico	X		
New York			
North Carolina			X
North Dakota		X	
Ohio	X		
Oklahoma	X		
Oregon			
Pennsylvania			
Rhode Island	X		
South Carolina			
South Dakota		X	
Tennessee			X
Texas			
Utah		X	
Vermont			
Virginia	X		
Washington	X	X	
West Virginia			
Wisconsin			X
Wyoming			
TOTALS	11	12	14

Notes: The data contained in this table cites various state options that lead to waiver diplomas, defined in this report as a regular high school diploma awarded to students for which the state alters, substitutes, or removes state-adopted graduation requirements. This may lead to less rigorous course work, including the incomplete satisfaction of the full breadth and depth of state-adopted content standards, and/or less rigorous assessment requirements (i.e., end-of-course assessments and high school exit exams). The findings in this table are based on the Alliance's methodology for collecting this data and may not agree with other analyses that may or may not have collected data specific to the Class of 2014. In collecting this data, the Alliance searched on state department of education websites and initiated a series of additional contacts through phone calls and emails to education department staff. For an in-depth analysis on course and assessment graduation requirements for students with disabilities in comparison with their peers, refer to the National Center on Education Outcomes' report, *Graduation Policies for Students with Disabilities Who Participate in States' General Assessments* (Synthesis Report 98) (2015) available at <https://nceo.info/Resources/publications/TopicAreas/Graduation/gradResources.htm>. Shaded states required an assessment for graduation.

TABLE A3: Percentage of High School Graduates by Diploma Pathway, Class of 2014, Race/Ethnicity

State	Diploma Pathway Name	All Graduates	White Graduates	African American Graduates	Latino Graduates	American Indian Graduates	Asian Graduates
Arkansas	Arkansas Smart Core Diploma (CCR)	88.3%	88.2%	88.4%	85.8%	86.9%	95.9%
	Arkansas Core Diploma	11.7%	11.8%	11.6%	14.2%	13.1%	4.1%
California	California High School Diploma	58.1%	51.3%	68.8%	67.6%	73.1%	29.1%
	California Readiness Curriculum A–G (CCR)	41.9%	48.7%	31.2%	32.4%	26.9%	70.9%
Indiana	Indiana Core 40 Diploma (CCR)	50.5%	47.5%	66.7%	60.5%	50.8%	39.0%
	Indiana Core 40 Diploma with Honors (CCR)	34.8%	38.3%	14.7%	23.3%	28.4%	55.9%
	Indiana General High School Diploma	14.7%	14.1%	18.6%	16.2%	20.8%	5.1%
Maryland	University of Maryland/ University of Maryland + Career and Technical Education Program (CCR)	65.8%	75.8%	53.7%	53.1%	62.6%	85.4%
	Career and Technical Education Program	7.4%	10.1%	6.2%	3.7%	9.1%	1.6%
	Maryland High School Diploma	26.8%	14.0%	40.2%	43.2%	28.3%	13.1%
Massachusetts	Local Control Diploma	27.6%	22.4%	48.3%	42.5%	41.2%	27.5%
	Massachusetts MassCore Course of Study (CCR)	72.4%	77.6%	51.7%	57.5%	58.8%	72.5%
Nevada	Nevada Standard Diploma	68.0%	60.3%	82.1%	77.5%	81.9%	51.2%
	Nevada Advanced Diploma (CCR)	29.8%	37.5%	14.7%	20.3%	18.1%	47.8%
	Nevada Adult Diploma	2.1%	2.2%	3.2%	2.2%	*	1.0%
New York	New York Local Diploma	5.3%	4.7%	8.5%	6.9%	7.8%	1.3%
	New York Regents Diploma	53.8%	45.3%	75.4%	71.9%	66.2%	38.1%
	New York Regents with Advanced Designation (CCR)	40.8%	50.0%	16.1%	21.1%	26.0%	60.6%
Texas	Texas Minimum High School Program	14.5%	13.9%	20.7%	14.3%	Data Not Available	4.6%
	Texas Recommended High School Program (CCR)	69.9%	67.3%	73.8%	71.6%	Data Not Available	60.0%
	Texas Distinguished Achievement Program (CCR)	15.6%	18.8%	5.5%	14.1%	Data Not Available	35.4%
Virginia	Virginia Standard High School Diploma	39.5%	34.7%	53.6%	47.8%	50.0%	21.5%
	Virginia Modified Standard Diploma	1.8%	1.3%	3.3%	2.6%	*	0.5%
	Virginia Special Diploma	2.4%	1.9%	4.2%	2.3%	*	1.2%
	Virginia Advanced Studies Diploma (CCR)	56.3%	62.2%	38.8%	47.2%	50.0%	76.8%

Notes: CCR indicates the diploma pathway meets the Alliance qualifications for a college- and career-ready diploma. An asterisk (*) indicates that the number of students in the student subgroup was smaller than the n-size necessary for reporting purposes. Totals may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

TABLE A4: Percentage of High School Graduates by Diploma Pathway, Class of 2014, Other Characteristics

State	Diploma Pathway Name	All Graduates	Graduates from Low-Income Families	Graduates with Disabilities	English Language Learner Graduates
Arkansas	Arkansas Smart Core Diploma (CCR)	88.3%	84.3%	62.9%	78.8%
	Arkansas Core Diploma	11.7%	15.7%	37.1%	21.2%
California	California High School Diploma	58.1%	67.3%	62.3%	90.1%
	California Readiness Curriculum A–G (CCR)	41.9%	32.7%	Data Not Available	9.9%
Indiana	Indiana Core 40 Diploma (CCR)	50.5%	59.8%	50.6%	67.4%
	Indiana Core 40 Diploma with Honors (CCR)	34.8%	18.6%	5.6%	8.3%
	Indiana General High School Diploma	14.7%	21.5%	43.8%	24.2%
Maryland	University of Maryland/ University of Maryland + Career and Technical Education Program (CCR)	65.8%	52.2%	27.5%	26.0%
	Career and Technical Education Program	7.4%	9.3%	19.2%	2.9%
	Maryland High School Diploma	26.8%	38.6%	53.2%	71.1%
Massachusetts	Local Control Diploma	27.6%	41.1%	37.4%	57.5%
	Massachusetts MassCore Course of Study (CCR)	72.4%	58.9%	62.6%	42.5%
Nevada	Nevada Standard Diploma	68.0%	Data Not Available	Data Not Available	Data Not Available
	Nevada Advanced Diploma (CCR)	29.8%	Data Not Available	Data Not Available	Data Not Available
	Nevada Adult Diploma	2.1%	Data Not Available	Data Not Available	Data Not Available
New York	New York Local Diploma	5.3%	7.7%	45.1%	10.4%
	New York Regents Diploma	53.8%	67.4%	49.1%	76.4%
	New York Regents with Advanced Designation (CCR)	40.8%	24.8%	5.8%	13.2%
Texas	Texas Minimum High School Program	14.5%	18.0%	72.6%	24.9%
	Texas Recommended High School Program (CCR)	69.9%	71.2%	26.4%	79.2%
	Texas Distinguished Achievement Program (CCR)	15.6%	10.0%	0.9%	2.2%
Virginia	Virginia Standard High School Diploma	39.5%	57.3%	53.1%	67.3%
	Virginia Modified Standard Diploma	1.8%	3.6%	15.8%	5.9%
	Virginia Special Diploma	2.4%	4.5%	21.1%	4.8%
	Virginia Advanced Studies Diploma (CCR)	56.3%	34.6%	10.0%	22.0%

Notes: CCR indicates the diploma pathway meets the Alliance qualifications for a college- and career-ready diploma. An asterisk (*) indicates that the number of students in the student subgroup was smaller than the n-size necessary for reporting purposes. Totals may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.



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