



College- and Career-Ready High School Experiences for Students Who Are Underperforming and Those Historically Underserved

To succeed after high school, students must understand how to apply knowledge to challenging, real-world situations. They must be able to think and communicate clearly, work collaboratively, and learn independently. To develop these skills, often described as “[deeper learning competencies](#),” students need to become absorbed in the subjects they are exploring. They need exposure to a rigorous, relevant, and engaging curriculum aligned with college-ready standards and career-related expectations. Students also need strong relationships with teachers and other adults in their lives; support systems that nurture their social and emotional development; and opportunities to identify and build on their passions, strengths, and interests.

But students of color, students from low-income families, and other historically underserved student groups frequently lack access to these types of learning environments. As a result, they earn diplomas and attend college at much lower rates than their more affluent and white peers. Meanwhile, those who do graduate from high school often receive diplomas that have not prepared them adequately for success in college and a career. With students of color and students from low-income families now representing the majority of K–12 public school students, the nation must do a better job of educating these students as they are the nation’s future leaders, workers, and consumers.

Advocating for High-Quality High School Graduation Requirements

To ensure that all students, particularly those historically underserved and those underperforming, graduate from high school ready for college and a career, states must set graduation requirements that align with expectations of postsecondary institutions and employers and provide students with opportunities and support to ensure they

reach these requirements upon graduation. The Alliance for Excellent Education (All4Ed) supports states with this work by advising state policymakers about the educational experiences that research shows reduce the need for postsecondary remediation. All4Ed also analyzes pathways states offer for students to earn a high school diploma and promotes equitable paths to high school graduation to ensure that all students have access to the course work, preparation, and experiences necessary to succeed after high school. Additionally, through its [Graduation Effect](#) project, All4Ed demonstrates the positive effect that increased high school graduation rates could have on local, state, and national economies and equips local leaders and activists with information and resources they need to advocate for better educational experiences for youth.

Supporting State- and District-Level Implementation

High-quality high school graduation requirements are just the starting point. School districts also must provide all students with access to advanced-level academic course work, high-quality career and technical education (CTE), opportunities to earn college credits during high school, and work-based learning experiences. Additionally, districts must integrate these experiences into a comprehensive pathway that prepares students to pursue postsecondary education. All4Ed navigates research and federal policy to provide detailed instructions and actionable recommendations for state, district, and school leaders interested in implementing programs and

practices proven to promote college and career readiness. Meanwhile, through in-person school site visits, webinars, videos, and technical assistance, All4Ed shows school district leaders, state and federal policymakers, and others what high-quality engaging learning experiences look like and documents their effectiveness for improving student learning outcomes.

Advancing Federal Policies That Promote College and Career Readiness

To advance their local efforts, states and districts also need federal support and All4Ed has a history of advancing federal policies that promote college- and career-ready experiences for all students. In 2017, members of the U.S. Senate introduced the *CTE Excellence and Equity Act*, bipartisan legislation based on All4Ed's proposal that would support funding for innovation in CTE and partnerships among school districts, employers, and institutions of higher education. All4Ed also continues to advocate for changes to the Higher Education Act to (1) strengthen students' transition from high school to postsecondary education, (2) expand options for students to earn college credit during high school and use Federal Pell Grant awards to pay for their college-level credit-bearing courses, (3) improve teacher preparation, and (4) better equip educators to implement college- and career-ready standards. Additionally, All4Ed advocates for sustained and expanded federal funding through the annual appropriations process to support programs that prepare all students for college and a career.



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The Alliance for Excellent Education (All4Ed) is a Washington, DC–based national policy, practice, and advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that all students, particularly those underperforming and those historically underserved, graduate from high school ready for success in college, work, and citizenship. all4ed.org

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