

Pennsylvania

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1) Does the state have an identifiable “P-16” effort visible? Who is in charge of this effort?

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) is a P-16 agency, overseeing education in the commonwealth from birth through college. Recently, the agency has significantly enhanced its efforts to provide better institutional transitions to overcome traditional boundaries across the educational continuum. Two areas of particular note include: (1) the Governor’s creation of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) in 2006 to systemically connect early education services and programs (for children under age five) to the elementary and secondary system; and (2) the Governor’s priority of increasing academic rigor and achievement of all students, which includes transforming high schools in Pennsylvania to better prepare more students to meet college and workplace expectations. For more information, please see the end of this survey for Context Section.

a) Does the agency include a utility or function on its website designed explicitly to help potential students locate an appropriate college or university to attend?

Yes. In order to help students locate a Pennsylvania-approved college or university, PDE lists all of the approved institutions and specific links to their websites. We also post the Pennsylvania Department of Education approved institutions to the USDOE approved list.

<http://www.pdehighered.state.pa.us/higher/cwp/view.asp?a=133&Q=43305>

Supports in helping students identify and finance post-secondary education are provided by the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA). It maintains a list of college fairs on its website:

http://www.pheaa.org/plan_for_college/PACollegeFairs06.pdf

This provides one-on-one support through its regional offices.

2) Is a mandated or recommended college preparatory curriculum in place in the state’s public high schools?

Curricular requirements in Pennsylvania are, and have traditionally been, a matter of local control in the commonwealth. For this reason, there is no state mandate for Pennsylvania schools that requires a college preparatory curriculum for all students. However, the Governor’s Commission on College and Career Success issued its report in December of 2006, and its first recommendation is that the state set, for the first time, statewide high

school graduation requirements. Rather than mandating the completion of a curriculum, however, the commission recommended that the state maintain its proficiency based high school graduation requirements and require that all students pass a series of Graduation Competency Assessments in core subjects to demonstrate content mastery. Similar to end-of-course exams in other states, students in the Commonwealth would not be required, from the state perspective, to do seat time to cover content that they already know. Students would be expected to pass these exams, or obtain a score of Proficient on the Pennsylvania State Standards Assessment (PSSA). The Pennsylvania State Board of Education is moving to introduce new regulations that would lead to the adoption of this recommendation.

Currently, Pennsylvania has several grant programs that strengthen curricular rigor.

All schools participating in Project 720 are required to move towards requiring all students to complete a college preparatory curriculum. The 118 Project 720 schools will soon require four years of math (Algebra I, Algebra II, geometry and another higher math), four years of college-preparatory English, three years of science (Biology, Chemistry and Physics or Physical Science), and three years of Social Studies (US History, World History and a course with civics education) to be completed by every student. Project 720 is designed to transform Pennsylvania's high schools by providing students with a more rigorous high school curriculum and a smaller school environment while enhancing their access to post-secondary education opportunities. Between 2004-05 and 2005-06, participating schools saw an increase in: 1) the number of students enrolled in algebra; 2) the number of students receiving personalized career and college counseling; and 3) the number of students participating in advanced placement courses.

New Project 720 grantees must commit to piloting an Algebra II exam for the 2007-2008 school year to ensure that all of their students have mastered the content of this key threshold course. This exam was developed in collaboration with nine other states as part of the Achieve American Diploma Project. The successful completion of Algebra II is one of several "gatekeeper" courses in high school that research indicates can be a significant predictor of college-readiness and success.

Pennsylvania participates in the federal AP Test Fee Reduction Grant program, which provides AP test grants to low-income individuals to reimburse them for the cost of advanced placement test fees. The College Board administers this program on behalf of the Department of Education. PDE assists in publicizing the program by informing school districts through e-mail and flyers

- 3) Has the state articulated a set of explicit competencies or skills that define what it means to be "college ready?"

In collaboration with Achieve, Pennsylvania created college and career ready benchmarks in English, math and science (still pending final vetting) as part of the efforts of the Governor's Commission on College and Career Success. These benchmarks are included in the final commission report which can be found online at:

<http://www.project720.org/images/stories//commission%20final%20report%2012-22-06.pdf>.

The commission recommended that these benchmarks be formally integrated into Pennsylvania's standards. The Pennsylvania Department of Education and State Board of Education are currently in the process of evaluating how best to move forward on all of the commission's recommendations.

- 4) Are systematic programs in place in the state that encourage students to accelerate progress by taking college-level courses while still enrolled in high school?
Pennsylvania has one of the largest state-funded dual enrollment programs in the country. The Dual Enrollment Grant Program encourages a broad range of diverse students to experience postsecondary coursework and its increased academic rigor, while still being supported in the high school environment. The program allows high school students to earn high school and college credits for satisfactorily completing non-remedial college courses. While final participation numbers are still pending, in the 2006-07 school year, PDE estimates that this program helped more than 12,900 students offset the cost of tuition, books, fees and transportation in order to take more than 18,300 post-secondary courses.

- 5) Is there a statewide policy present that governs placement into college-level courses or remedial courses? Is a standard set of placement tests recommended or required? If yes, are common cut scores for placement decisions in place or do institutions get to set their own?
No, there is not a statewide policy that governs placement into college-level or remedial courses and there is no standard set of placement tests that are recommended or required by the institution of higher education. However, the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education has expressed interest in using the Graduation Competency Assessments for entrance and placement decisions. The Pennsylvania Department of Education plans to partner with the state system as it develops the GCAs to ensure that, to the greatest extent possible, these exams are well-suited for this purpose.

- 6) Is there a visible statewide transfer and articulation policy? Does this cover all institutions or only public institutions? What are the specifics of this policy?
Yes. Act 114 of 2006 required that all 28 public institutions of higher education—14 community colleges and 14 state universities—participate in a statewide transfer and articulation system. The legislation requires a minimum of 30 credits to transfer to any of the 28 institutions. In partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the universities have been meeting monthly to achieve the requirements of the legislation, and they are on target to greatly exceed the 30 credit (10 course) minimum. By September of 2007, Pennsylvania expects that these 28 institutions will have established one-to-one equivalency agreements on more than 1300 courses, or an average of about 40 courses per institution. This list of approved courses will form a statewide “menu” for students to choose from. An e-portal will be established in the 2007-08 fiscal year that will provide easy access to this information.

At this time only public institutions of higher education (community colleges and state system institutions) are required to be a part of this effort. However, state-related colleges and universities, and private institutions of higher education have been invited to participate. To date, one additional institution--Lincoln University—has decided to participate. Other institutions will have the opportunity to join via an annual “opt in” period.

The remaining questions regarding the transfer and articulation policy refer to the above Transfer and Articulation legislation. For the purposes of this survey, we will also mention that Pennsylvania is involved in the federal Perkins III and Perkins IV legislation. This legislation is for entities utilizing Perkins funds to establish sequential, nonduplicative secondary and postsecondary programs. The programs of study must ensure secondary students transition without challenge or duplication of coursework to postsecondary programs. This requires, at minimum, two years of secondary education that includes academic and technical content articulated with a 2-year postsecondary education institution. As the state moves forward in the implementation of Perkins IV, a statewide articulation agreement will be required that requires each entity to specify content in courses offered by the secondary institution that align with course content at the postsecondary institution. Syllabi and/or competency lists of courses from the institutions involved must be maintained in the appropriate offices. Please see web sites:

http://www.pde.state.pa.us/career_edu/cwp/view.asp?A=115&Q=104261

http://www.pde.state.pa.us/career_edu/cwp/view.asp?A=113&Q=116413

- a) Is the transfer/articulation policy accompanied by a statewide transferable general education requirement? Does this name actual courses and/or credits? Are specific competencies identified that the student should meet through this coursework? Is testing used to guarantee student competency for progress or transfer?
- No. There is no statewide transferable general education requirement. As per Act 114 of 2006, the courses that will be transferable statewide are referred to as “foundational” courses, defined in the legislation as “courses required to be completed by students that provide an academic foundation for the degree, general education or advanced study in the major.” While general education courses can be included, there is no requirement to do so.

Instead, Pennsylvania has created a comprehensive statewide transfer system that provides the flexibility to respect individual institutional autonomy regarding the formation of general education requirements, while at the same time enabling students to access a transparent data system that allows them to understand exactly how a course taken at one institution will transfer to another.

Moreover, while new legislation requires all institutions to accept 30 credits as transferable towards the degree, participating institutions have submitted for review far more courses—an average of 40 courses, or 120 credits. Many of these courses are designated as general education courses. As the statewide transfer and articulation oversight committee reviews these courses against established equivalencies and accepts

them, every participating institution in the state will be required to establish one-to-one equivalencies, thereby creating a very large menu of courses that are transferable statewide. This system will be kept accurate and up-to-date, insuring that students will have access to reliable transfer information. All transferable courses will be visible via an e-portal that will be established in the 2007-2008 academic year. The e-portal will provide easy and quick student access to check the transferability of courses across all public higher education institutions in the Commonwealth.

The legislation does not name actual courses and/or credits. However, it requires the formation of a Transfer and Articulation Oversight Committee which is undergoing a year-long process to review course and credit information from the 28 participating institutions of high education. These institutions will agree on the specific course equivalencies. This process is anticipated to be completed by the end of June 2007.

Pennsylvania will provide the course review and equivalency system necessary to establish the statewide transfer system and maintain its accuracy.

Testing is not part of the transfer and articulation system as it is currently defined. The testing that would ordinarily be used for granting credit to a course will remain. If the student passes a college-level course with the acceptable grade of a C or above, it will transfer.

- b) More specifically, does an AA or AS degree from a community college in the state meet general education requirements at public four-year institutions? What mechanisms are in place to make sure this actually happens?

No; such articulation is not in place statewide, although individual institutions may have established articulation agreements that achieve this goal.

- c) Does credit from transfer courses meet specific course requirements at the transfer institution (e.g. American History counts for American History) or do just the credits transfer to count against the total needed for graduation?

Yes. The legislation requires that one-to-one course equivalencies are established.

- 7) Are there statewide test-out or competency-based provisions that will allow a student to accelerate progress toward a degree?

No, there is no statewide test-out or competency-based provisions that will allow a student to accelerate progress toward a degree.

- 8) Does the state have an easily-accessible state-supported alternative institution that allows students to complete their degrees more quickly or conveniently than through attendance at a traditional public institution?

While the Pennsylvania Department of Education does not collect any information on this subject in any official capacity, the Department is aware of online course offerings associated with all of the community colleges in the commonwealth. 13 of the 14 state-supported

community colleges have formed a collaborative called the Pennsylvania Virtual Community College (PAVCC) (<http://www.pavcc.org>) that allows students to take on-line courses after enrolling at a home school. The last, the Community College of Allegheny County also provides on-line courses.

<http://www.ccac.edu/default.aspx?id=138286>

- a) Does the state have an accessible central bank or catalog of on-line courses contributed by many institutions that enable students to do “one-stop shopping” for electronic courses?

No, Pennsylvania does not have an accessible central bank or catalog of on-line courses.

- 9) Does the state provide incentives to institutions for improvements in degree production or graduation rates? For minimizing the number of students graduating with excessive numbers of credits (e.g. more than 120 SCH)?

The state system of higher education (PASSHE) requires that all degree programs be completed with 120 credits. There are a small number of circumstances in which licensing or certification requirements require an exception to this rule.

Recently, the state’s funding support for community colleges was altered to create the Economic Development Stipend in order to provide incentives for community colleges to offer and enroll students in programs that would lead to employment in a high need occupation identified by the Department of Labor & Industry, or any occupation determined to be high priority locally. The stipend is distributed to all of the community colleges based on the number of FTE students they have in for-credit programs and noncredit courses approved for the Economic Development Stipend. The formula gives the most weight – and funding – to for-credit High Priority Occupation programs.

<http://www.pdehighered.state.pa.us/higher/cwp/view.asp?a=133&Q=125562&higherNav=|10774|>

The community college Economic Development Stipend requires that the program be designed in such a way that it can be completed in 24 months or less.

- 10) Does the state provide incentives for students who successfully complete their degrees (e.g. tuition rebates or cash bonuses)? For students who complete their programs without amassing additional credits (e.g. within 120 SCH)? Are there financial disincentives for students to take more than the number of credits needed to graduate (e.g. full or out-of-state tuition)?

Pennsylvania, through the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA), provides loan forgiveness for the following programs:

- [Nursing Loan Forgiveness for Healthier Futures](#)
- [Quality Early Education Loan Forgiveness Program](#)

- [Agriculture Education Loan Forgiveness Program](#)
- [Armed Forces Loan Forgiveness Program](#)
- [Loan Forgiveness Program for State Veterans Homes Nurses](#)

PDE does not provide incentives for graduating on a timely basis or without excessive credits.

CONTEXT:

Creation of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL)

OCDEL was created as a joint office of the Departments of Education and Public Welfare to provide more comprehensive, consistent, and high quality early childhood services to Pennsylvania's children and families so they can enter school ready to learn and ready to succeed. Through this unique collaboration, Pennsylvania's young children now benefit from an integrated early childhood education strategy that combines family and support services with education programming in the primary grades of public schools.

Prior to the creation of the office, some of the core services for young children resided in PDE and others in DPW. This new arrangement promotes improved coordination of the early childhood programs and allows more efficient operations (i.e. a shared finance and planning group) of the early childhood programs. This coordination should benefit the children and families being served as they navigate their way between different agencies and services during what can be a particularly vulnerable period for children. In addition to coordination, the office also seeks to disseminate best practices among all of the programs it oversees, regardless of provider, which will make it possible to improve services to Pennsylvania's children and families.

Prior to OCDEL, the Early Intervention program for infants and toddlers was administered in DPW separate from the Early Intervention program for preschoolers, which was administered in PDE. This led to some difficulties for parents as children transitioned from one program to the other.

Similarly, OCDEL funds Community Engagement Groups, which are charged with raising public awareness regarding the importance of early childhood education, including the promotion of effective transition practices between early childhood programs and public schools. At the OCDEL Early Childhood Conference in 2007, transition was highlighted with presentations by researchers from the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning.

OCDEL promotes a P-16 agenda in two other ways as well:

1. OCDEL has led the creation of early learning standards for infants and toddlers, preschoolers, and kindergarten (and will soon lead the creation of standards for first and second grades). These standards are being studied by national experts to ensure they align with the third grade learning standards, and this project will be completed in June 2008.

At that time, Pennsylvania will have a fully aligned set of learning standards spanning from birth through age eight.

2. OCDEL has been sponsoring meetings between community colleges and 4-year colleges and universities to move towards the creation of articulation agreements for coursework related to the training and certification of early childhood education professionals. Pennsylvania began this work in 2005 when the Pennsylvania Keys to Quality professional development system was created. Staff quickly realized that a major barrier to helping staff in early childhood programs obtain Bachelor degrees was the lack of a seamless transition from 2-year to 4-year degrees. This now is being addressed to create a smooth pathway in the early childhood field.

http://www.pde.state.pa.us/early_childhood/cwp/view.asp?a=179&q=124393&early_childhoodNav=|10734|&early_childhoodNav=

Increasing Academic Rigor and Achievement to Better Prepare Students for College, Career and Life

Pennsylvania has invested significantly in efforts that enhance the college and career readiness of our high school students. Programs aim to provide better coherence enabling successful transition from high school to college, career and life after high school. Significantly, these efforts have engaged representatives from not only the K-12 continuum, but also from higher education and business sectors in the commonwealth.

Commission for College and Career Success

In August 2005, Governor Rendell asked a group of educators, business representatives, and educational advocates to come together as the Governor's Commission of College and Career Success. Much as the name suggests, the task before the Commission was to review research and make recommendations to ensure that today's high school graduates are prepared to be the citizens and workers that the commonwealth's economy demands.

The Commission's charge was to: (1) Create clear and consistent signals and policies for Pennsylvania's expectations for high school success; (2) Conduct qualitative and quantitative research, which includes Pennsylvania, national and international studies; and (3) Create incentives for schools districts to raise academic achievement in high school and incentives for higher education to increase retention through the first two years of postsecondary education.

<http://www.project720.org/content/view/50/90/>

In December 2006, the Commission released its final report containing 12 bold recommendations for ensuring the college and career readiness of all Pennsylvania students. These recommendations were to not only enact statewide high school graduation requirements, but also to provide students with the supports that they need to be successful in high school. These include:

- Adoption of the College and Career Essentials created by the Commission as clear college and career ready benchmarks in the areas of English, math and science. These benchmarks were created in collaboration with Achieve by engaging employers and

representatives from Pennsylvania colleges and universities to clearly define their expectations for high school graduates. The Commission recommended that PDE undertake a similar process for social studies;

- Development of preK-12 model curricula aligned with the College and Career Essentials so that students can be on-track to proficiency measured by graduation competency assessments and/or the PSSA;
- Expansion of the state's student information system to include preK and postsecondary data to ensure that schools receive the information they need to identify whether their students are on track for success in either college or the workplace;
- Development of alternative pathways to high school graduation for those students that are not on-track and/or are at risk of dropping out of high school.
- Improvement of school counseling system to better assist students in transitioning to college and careers;
- Establishment of partnerships with businesses, high schools, and higher education institutions to help ensure that high schools are getting the support and feedback they need to align graduation requirements with the expectations of local businesses and institutions of higher education;
- Creation of systemic approaches to re-engage and re-enroll students who have dropped out of high school including coordinating with other state agencies to track and re-enroll disconnected youth.

Project 720

Named for the number of days a Pennsylvania student spends in school from 9th through 12th grades, Project 720 aims to increase the numbers of students who have access to college-preparatory courses in core subject areas, Advanced Placement courses, dual enrollment opportunities and smaller learning environments for better one-on-one teacher-to-student interaction. The focus on increasing academic expectations for all students is a direct response to the needs of employers and colleges for more highly skilled high school graduates

All participating districts agree to implement the core components of Project 720, as follows:

- Creation of a rigorous college and career preparatory program for all students;
- Strengthening the academic infrastructure with a focus on increasing achievement for all students;
- Creation of personalized learning environments with a focus on small learning communities and school counseling;
- Providing teachers with up to date professional development in 21st Century skills, specifically targeting data driven instructional practices and meeting the needs of diverse learners.

<http://www.project720.org/images/stories//guidelines%20-%2007-08.doc>

Career Education and Work Standards

In 2006, the State Board of Education passed the Career Education and Work academic standards for grades K-12, which require every school district in Pennsylvania to ensure that all students, by grade 12, have a complete education plan and career plan. These standards address

the need for all students to participate in age appropriate activities structured within a comprehensive career development program at all levels: elementary, middle, and high school. The standards reinforce the vital link between the student's educational achievement and college and career success. The career and education plan includes assessment and continued development of:

- Career portfolio,
- Career goals,
- Cluster/pathway opportunities,
- Individual interests and abilities,
- Training/education requirements and financing.

School districts must also ensure all students analyze the relationship of their school subjects, extracurricular activities, and community experiences to career preparation.

http://www.pde.state.pa.us/stateboard_ed/lib/stateboard_ed/Final_Form_Career_Ed_Work_Std.doc

College and Career Counseling

Pennsylvania supports a college and career counseling competitive grant program at the middle and high school levels. The purpose is to ensure school districts are involved in career exploration, career planning and goal setting processes for every student in grades 8-12, which helps students transition more easily into life after high school graduation. Participating school districts ensure that each year an increasingly large percentage of students are prepared for college and career success upon graduation. Selected schools provide all students with a college preparatory sequence of courses as defined in Project 720 and incorporate the Career Education and Work academic standards.

http://www.pde.state.pa.us/career_edu/cwp/view.asp?Q=118737&A=113

Dual Enrollment

Pennsylvania has one of the most expansive dual enrollment (or concurrent enrollment) programs in the country. The funding provides strong incentives to encourage a broader range of students to experience postsecondary coursework and its increased academic rigor, while still in the supportive environment of their local high school. **Dual Enrollment Programs** enable high school students to take college-level, credit-bearing courses at local community colleges and four-year colleges and universities that count towards high school graduation requirements. Pennsylvania's dual enrollment program also emphasizes early college, middle college, and gateway to college programs. State funds are targeted to at-risk students. The intent is to increase the number of students that go on to postsecondary education and to decrease the need for remedial coursework at postsecondary institutions.

<http://www.project720.org/content/view/36/117/>

