

AMERICAN EDUCATION STANDARDS

All students, no matter where they live, have a right to a quality education that will prepare them for life. Every student. No exceptions.

Whether our students are going off to college or the workforce, it is the responsibility of our public schools to give them the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the 21st century.

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In the past, high school graduates could get good-paying jobs without great math and reading skills. But the workplace is changing.

Occupations that pay enough to raise a family—jobs like electrical work, construction, upholstering, and plumbing—now demand the same math and reading skills it takes to be successful in college. Two-thirds of new jobs being created in today's economy require higher education or advanced training. College prep is work prep. And both are preparation for life.

But too many students are not learning what they need to be successful adults:

- » More than two-thirds of students attend class in states with mediocre expectations for what their students should learn.
- » Across the nation, only 18 states and the District of Columbia have raised their graduation requirements to match the real-life demands that students face after they leave high school.

All parents and taxpayers deserve honest information about how students are progressing in their learning, but states with low expectations paint a pretty picture that doesn't match reality. As a result, many parents don't even know that their children lack adequate preparation for today's world:

- » Some states are vastly inflating how much their students are really learning.
- » Although every state requires high school students to take tests, only a handful make sure those tests measure readiness for college and work.

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There is even some troubling evidence that some states are lowering their testing requirements to make students look like they are learning more than they really are.

Left unchecked, a "race to the bottom" among states would imperil efforts to raise student achievement and put America at even greater disadvantage internationally.

That's just not good enough. Not good enough for students who dream of going to college, having careers, and raising families. Not good enough for communities that depend on educated citizens. And not good enough for a country that prides itself on offering opportunities and the chance for a better life.

Education everywhere should prepare children for life anywhere.

We know we can do better. Leaders in 33 states have pledged to raise high school standards to a level that will make diplomas meaningful again.

Fourteen states have banded together to create common expectations for high school algebra—a critical gateway to success in college and work. Participating states agreed to a common end-of-course exam and aligned standards.

That is good news. Common standards make common sense.

Without clear standards, our teachers' jobs become harder and students are faced with confusion in the classroom. To sell textbooks, publishers cram them with enough material to cover all 50 state standards—literally too much to learn in one year. Teachers end up rushing through lessons and students fall behind.

Education everywhere should prepare children for life *anywhere*.

We have 50 states, but we are one nation. It is time to agree on American standards that build on the work being done by forward-thinking states.

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workplace, and for life. Every student deserves a strong curriculum in subjects like math and English.

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Let us be clear: We are *not* calling for a “federal takeover” of education or a nationally mandated curriculum. Instead, we are calling on presidential candidates to tell voters how they intend to work with Governors and local leaders to arrive at rigorous American education standards.

States and local communities are responsible for educating students, and that must be respected. The aim is *not* to “nationalize” the curriculum in each grade by having Washington officials dictate a lesson plan for every school in the country.

But in order to give all young Americans the chance to succeed, we must make it an American priority to ensure that all students master basic knowledge in subjects such as math and English. The future of our children—and the nation they will inherit—depends upon it.

Strong American Schools, a project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, is a nonpartisan campaign supported by The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation promoting sound education policies for all Americans. SAS does not support or oppose any candidate for public office and does not take positions on legislation.