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Thank you for your request to our REL Reference Desk regarding evidence-based information about the high school to college transition. Ask A REL is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the ten regional educational laboratories (REL) that, by design, functions much in the same way as a technical reference library. It provides references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations on research based education questions.

The information below represents the most rigorous research available. Researchers consider the type of methodology and give priority to research reports that employ well described and thorough methods. The resources were also selected based on the date of the publication with a preference for research from the last ten years. Additional criteria for inclusion include the source and funder of the resource.

**Question:** *Is there evidence that aligning the standards of college gateway courses, such as English, Math, and Economics, with the Common Core Standards of high schools better prepares students as they transition from high school to college in that they have a more seamless transition and better expectations?*

### **Search Process**

**Key words and search strings used in the search:** *standards AND transition to college; academic transition to college; high school to college transition AND standards.* These terms were sometimes combined with *Common Core* or *CCSS*.

### **Search databases and websites:**

1. ERIC: <http://www.eric.ed.gov/>
2. JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/action/showAdvancedSearch>
3. Google Scholar: [www.google.com/scholar](http://www.google.com/scholar)
4. Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Resources: <http://ies.ed.gov>
5. What Works Clearinghouse: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

### **Results:**

Based on the database searches described above, there were no results that reflected rigorous research addressing your question when searching for research on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Because the CCSS are still being implemented (and the aligned assessments still being created), little data is available that would reflect *rigorous research*, as defined by the Department of Education – Institute of Education Sciences. Below are some resources that represent current thinking in the area of high school to college transition.

### **Sample Citations Retrieved:**

Ascher, C., & Maguire, C. (2007). *Beating the odds: How thirteen NYC schools bring low-*

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*performing ninth-graders to timely graduation and college enrollment.* Providence, RI: Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University.

[http://annenberginstitute.org/sites/default/files/product/204/files/BTO\\_Report.pdf](http://annenberginstitute.org/sites/default/files/product/204/files/BTO_Report.pdf)

**Abstract/Summary:** A report on a qualitative study of thirteen NYC high schools that are successfully preparing low-performing ninth-graders for timely high school graduation and enrollment in college. The study identified four key strategies used by these schools and offers recommendations for systemic support to maintain and scale up their success.

National High School Center. (2012). *The first year of high school: A quick stats fact sheet.*

Washington, DC: National High School Center at the American Institutes for Research.

Retrieved from

[http://www.betterhighschools.org/pubs/documents/NHSC\\_FirstYearofHighSchool\\_Oct12.pdf](http://www.betterhighschools.org/pubs/documents/NHSC_FirstYearofHighSchool_Oct12.pdf)

**Abstract/Summary:** This fact sheet highlights statistics related to the transition into high school for U.S. students. The statistics indicate a noticeable trend in the lack of progress of many students throughout freshman year. Many students are held back in ninth grade--creating what is known as the "ninth grade bulge"--and drop out by tenth grade--contributing to the "tenth grade dip." [Note: Also includes 9th grade transition strategies.]

Porter, A. C., & Polikoff, M. S. (2012). Measuring academic readiness for college. *Educational Policy*, 26, 394-417. doi: 10.1177/0895904811400410

**Abstract/Summary:** Recent years have seen increased attention to the high school- college transition. Students are enrolling in college in record numbers, yet they are also taking increasing numbers of remedial courses. How to measure and report on academic readiness for college is an important policy issue receiving attention from the National Assessment Governing Board, Achieve, and several states. The focus of this article is how to create a measure of academic readiness for college, either by building and validating a new assessment or validating and repurposing an existing assessment. After first describing the disjuncture between high school and college and discussing definitions and indicators of academic readiness, the authors identify four strategies that might be used to create a readiness assessment. The pros and cons of each strategy are discussed.

Reindl, T. (2006). Getting serious about student success: High school-college alignment. *College and University*, 81, 49-50.

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**Abstract/Summary:** The efficiency and effectiveness of the nation's human capital pipeline has become a prime area of focus in the policy arena, spurred on by international data that show the U.S. lagging in high school and college completion. For policymakers, education leaders, and even students and parents, it is becoming increasingly clear that the transition between secondary and postsecondary education remains a "dead zone," a place where confusion reigns and dreams die. The high school-college handoff leaves too many students underprepared-- or even unprepared--for what's next, which in turn leads to remediation and attrition. Sealing the cracks in our educational pipeline and thus boosting student success rates means addressing a combination of financial, social, and academic factors. Of these, it is the academic dimension, specifically, the alignment of curricula and standards, that is at once the most intractable and ripest for change. In this article, the author contends that, in order to keep the United States competitive in the race to develop and employ human capital, policy initiatives in the area of alignment should focus on three simple observations: (1) Students are not taking enough of the right courses to succeed in college; (2) Student assessments are poorly timed and are not rigorous enough; and (3) Postsecondary options for high school students are underused.

Venezia, A. (2003). Connecting the systems: What can postsecondary education do to work with K-12 to help students better prepare for college? *Peer Review*, 5, 27-30.

**Abstract/Summary:** Studied high school- to- college transition policies and K-12 stakeholder knowledge of these policies in several states. Arrived at several recommendations for further research and policy actions to strengthen the link between K-12 and postsecondary education.

Tierney, W. G., Bailey, T., Constantine, J., Finkelstein, N., & Hurd, N. F. (2009). *Helping students navigate the path to college: What high schools can do: A practice guide* (NCEE #2009-4066). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wvc/publications/practiceguides/>.

**Abstract/Summary:** Access to higher education remains a challenge for many students who face academic and informational barriers to college entry. This guide targets high schools and school districts, and focuses on effective practices that prepare students academically for college, assist them in completing the steps to college entry, and improve their likelihood of enrolling in college. One of the five recommendations is to surround students with adults and peers who build and support their college-going aspirations.

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## Referrals

- National High School Center: <http://www.betterhighschools.org/>
- College Readiness Project: <http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/e-assesscollegereadiness.aspx>
- Center for Social Organization of Schools (CSOS) at Johns Hopkins University: <http://www.jhucsos.com/>
- Educational Policy Improvement Center: College and Career Readiness: <http://www.epiconline.org/readiness/>
- Common Core State Standards Initiative: <http://www.corestandards.org>
- Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC): <http://www.parcconline.org>
- Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org>
  
- **Institute of Education Sciences (IES), public search engine available at:** <http://ies.ed.gov/pubsearch/>
- **What Works Clearinghouse:** <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

### ***Disclaimer:***

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