

FINAL REPORT

of the

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS TASK FORCE

April 30, 2012

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Executive Summary

Providing all New Jersey students with an education that will lead to meaningful higher education and career opportunities is one of the primary goals of our educational system, and establishing rigorous standards and competent measures is crucial to the faithful attainment of that goal.

It is essential that these standards and measures are suitable not only for school-based decision making but also for providing highly relevant and reliable information to higher education institutions regarding the ability of a student to engage in college level coursework and to employers in making informed hiring and training decisions. For example, one of the aims of the Task Force is to ensure that high school students are fully prepared for college and careers, thus obviating the need for separate assessment tools since, there will be equivalence between the criteria for assessing readiness for graduation and the criteria for determining the need for remediation at a higher education institution or the training needs of a prospective employee. Therefore, it is imperative that the higher education and business communities, together with the P-12 sector, participate in the process of developing and approving the standards and measurements that define college and career readiness. This Task Force was constituted and charged with engaging in that cross-sector analysis.

The Task Force recommendations are as follows:

RECOMMENDATION 1- Insofar as the state Board of Education has already formally adopted the Common Core State Standards as its curriculum framework for P-12 education, and insofar as these standards are widely recognized as appropriate standards for college and career readiness, the Task Force recommends that these standards also be adopted as the framework for the state Department of Education's initiative to develop a model curriculum in language arts literacy and mathematics that will guide college and career readiness for the state of New Jersey.

RECOMMENDATION 2- The Task Force recommends that the current system of student assessment of the achievement of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards at the high school level, including the use of the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) and the Alternative High School Assessment (AHSA), be replaced with a system of end-of-course assessments that will be developed and correlated with the Common Core State Standards at the secondary level. The Task Force also recommends that assessment and measurement devices designed by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) be used to assess and measure student achievement of the Common Core State Standards. Further, the Task Force recommends that the state Department of Education should develop a process to determine both the number of PARCC end-of-course assessments that students will be required to pass, as well as the "passing" proficiency scores that students will be required to achieve in order to qualify for the state-endorsed high school diploma.

RECOMMENDATION 3- In addition to end-of-course assessments in the Common Core State Standards subject areas, the Task Force recommends that the state Department of Education should address how best to develop and administer end-of-course assessments in identified non-common core subject areas in which current New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards

exist, and should require that students take and pass certain non-common core subject area end-of-course assessments designated by the Department as a condition for graduation.

RECOMMENDATION 4 - The Task Force recommends that new graduation requirements for the state-endorsed high school diploma be written that include, among other requirements, a stipulation that, in order to receive a diploma, students must pass end-of-course assessments correlated with the Common Core State Standards as well as identified non-common core end-of-course assessments. Further, the Task Force recommends that these new graduation requirements be phased in over a period of time, pursuant to a plan developed by the State Department of Education. The Task Force believes that the required end-of-course assessments will be a reliable indicator of college-ready proficiency thereby obviating the routine use of the Accuplacer[®] assessment in determining remedial needs of high school seniors transitioning to the college level. Finally, the Task Force recommends that, upon the full enactment of the new graduation requirements, including the implementation of PARCC end-of-course assessments, the HSPA and Alternative High School Assessment (AHSA) be discontinued.

RECOMMENDATION 5- The Task Force recommends that the state Department of Education should provide the necessary leadership in re-defining course requirements and sequences in the transition to end-of-course assessments and moving away from requirements that emphasize seat time. The Task Force also recommends that the state Department of Education explore the relevance of the currently established subject-specific credit-hour requirements (also known as modified Carnegie units) to the achievement of the Common Core State Standards and non-common core end-of-course assessments. The Task Force further recommends that local education agencies continue to be permitted to establish, within state guidelines and state-approved criteria, course sequences and structures most appropriate to their students' needs.

RECOMMENDATION 6 – The Task Force recommends a phased implementation plan for the transition from the current graduation requirements and HSPA to end-of-course assessments.

RECOMMENDATION 7- The Task Force recommends that the state Department of Education carefully examines the following issues during the time of transition.

- Time
- Potential Need for Changes in Teacher Education Programs
- Bridging the Gap

Most importantly, perhaps, the Task Force examined the need for transitional programs. In order to bridge the gap between the present and 2017-18, when the Accuplacer[®] will no longer be necessary, the Task Force has introduced an idea to establish a short term interim process. High school students who do not achieve agreed-upon levels of proficiency on the SAT or ACT at the end of grade 11 will have the option of taking the Accuplacer[®] test (during the transitional period) to identify remediation needs and provide guidance for their placement in one or more appropriate bridge courses.

The Task Force believes that these recommendations will provide students with the education necessary to leave high school ready for college and careers. However, the Task Force also recognizes that some of these recommendations must be phased in over a period of time in order to ensure fairness to students whose academic preparation to date may be insufficient to allow

them to meet new performance expectations. Nevertheless, the end result will reduce or eliminate the need for remedial or developmental coursework once students transition to college, and businesses will be presented with a more accurate depiction of the needs and abilities of prospective employees.

Section 1

The Problem of College and Career Readiness

Education, both for the individual and the state of New Jersey, is critical to the promise of liberty and equal opportunity. It is the key to achieving the American dream, maintaining a civil society and, beyond serving as a great equalizer for individuals to achieve in America, it is critical to the state's and the nation's long term economic prosperity and security by contributing knowledgeable and highly skilled individuals who are educationally equipped to achieve for a lifetime.

New Jersey continues to exemplify leadership in education throughout the United States. While it ranks second or third in the nation for spending in primary and secondary education, outperforming its national counterparts, New Jersey also ranks high nationally in high school completion and in students' high aspirations for access to college. Even with such success, the current approach to aligning school completion with college and career readiness remains very challenging for schools, colleges, and employers. There is a disconnect in policy and performance that leads to inefficiency, poor information, underperformance for investment, and unfulfilled promises for outcomes for school completion, college, and workforce entry. This is extremely costly in terms of loss of human capital and high expense of remediation, both of which further burden schools, colleges, employers, and families, and contribute to a loss of public trust in the value of the investment in education.

New Jersey's students consistently outperform their counterparts in nearly every other state in language arts literacy (reading and writing) and math. Nevertheless, despite the high achievement that our students demonstrate, substantial problems remain. For example, while New Jersey ranks second in the nation in reading in grades 4 and 8, it also has one of the largest achievement gaps in eighth grade reading and math between low-income children and those from

more affluent families. Moreover, despite the fact that New Jersey is among the top five states in public school graduation rates (*The Condition of Education*, 2011, p.214), in many districts throughout the state, “barely half the children who begin 9th grade successfully graduate from high school. Perhaps most alarmingly of all, while New Jersey has the nation’s highest [high school] graduation rate, a distressingly high percentage of those who do graduate are unprepared” for college or careers (Education Transformation Task Force Initial Report, 2011, p.3). As illustrations of these assertions, data compiled by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS, 2008) show that, in New Jersey, 82% of ninth graders eventually graduate from high school within four years (many take longer than four years to graduate);¹ 58% enroll in college in the succeeding fall term; 41% are still enrolled in their sophomore year of college; but only 22% will earn a college degree.

Moreover, in 2009, 91% of first-time full-time freshmen at Bergen Community College required some form of remediation in either language arts literacy or math or both. In 2007 and 2009 respectively, 61% of incoming freshmen at Union County College and nearly 90% of students entering Essex County College also required remediation in at least one subject area. Similar problems with students needing significant remediation have also been experienced in the four-year colleges. In 2010, among the state’s public four-year colleges and universities, the percentage of first-time full-time freshmen who were required to enroll in at least one remedial course ranged from 3.5% at The College of New Jersey to 67.3% at New Jersey City University. The mean for the state colleges and universities, including Rutgers University, was 32.3% (see www.state.nj.us/highereducation/IP2011/index.htm). Many students required remediation in as many as three areas: reading, writing, and math.

¹ It is important to note that the state is implementing new criteria for determining graduation rates.

Equally alarming, anecdotal data collected in periodic employer surveys and interviews by the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce suggest that only half of recent high school graduates could pass eighth grade mathematics aptitude tests, which are the gateways to entry-level jobs.

To address this persistent problem, the state Department of Education organized the College and Career Readiness Task Force, a group of P-12 and higher education practitioners and business community representatives charged with two primary responsibilities: clearly articulating the knowledge and skills that students should master to be "college and career ready" and ensuring that New Jersey has the appropriate graduation requirements and high school assessments in place to evaluate the mastery of these readiness standards.

The Task Force was specifically charged to address the following questions:

1. What does college and career readiness mean?
2. What is the appropriate way to assess this level of achievement?
3. What graduation requirements should be required, including comprehensive examinations and end-of-course assessments?
4. What processes, benchmarks, and timelines should be established to guide the transition from the current system to the new system?

As indicated above, the Task Force was broadly representative of stakeholders in the educational enterprise in New Jersey. It included a superintendent, a principal, and a teacher from both P-12 (including a former Abbott district) and vocational school districts from different geographic regions in the state; senior administrators (presidents and vice presidents) of county/community colleges, state colleges and universities, and Rutgers - the senior research institution; executive directors of the state's higher education agency and the State College/University and County College Associations, individuals from the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce representing the business community and the NJDOE Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and chief officers and directors of various units within the state Department of Education (e.g., Chief of Staff; Standards, Assessment, and Curriculum; Data Research,

Evaluation, and Reporting; Literacy; Programs and Operations; Assessments; and Career and Technical Education). The Task Force convened six meetings and two regional public hearings between October and December 2011 and was charged to submit its final report to the Commissioner by December 31, 2011. In the paragraphs that follow, the Task Force reports on the meaning of college and career readiness and the scope of the problem of student under-preparedness, and it offers recommendations for the transition to the Common Core State Standards and some approaches, strategies, and tools for assessing student achievement of the standards. Further, the report identifies several issues that require further examination.

What Does College and Career Readiness Mean?

“Although nearly two thirds of high school graduates go on to college immediately after completing high school, many of these are unprepared for college-level work” (Aldeman, 2010, p.2). But, what does it mean to be unprepared for college-level work? Fortunately, there is an emerging consensus among researchers, scholars, and other educational and business professionals about what it means to be “college and career ready.” At a recent *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) reauthorization hearing in Washington D.C., as noted in *The Washington Post* (April 29, 2010), ACT’s Education Division president, Cynthia Schmeiser, told legislators that “ACT defines college readiness as the acquisition of the knowledge and skills a student needs to enroll and succeed in credit-bearing, first-year courses at a postsecondary institution, such as a two- or four-year college, trade school, or technical school. Simply stated, she offered, ‘... readiness for college means not needing to take remedial courses in postsecondary education or training programs.’”

In addition, according to reports published by the American Diploma Project Network (Achieve, 2011a, 2011b; Achieve, ADP, n.d.), *college and career readiness* refers to the content

knowledge and skills that high school graduates must possess in English and mathematics – including, but not limited to, reading, writing, communications, teamwork, critical thinking, and problem solving – to be successful in any and all future endeavors. More specifically, to be *college ready* “means being prepared to enter and succeed in any postsecondary education or training experience, including study at two- and four-year institutions leading to a postsecondary credential (i.e., a certificate, license, associate’s or bachelor’s degree) without the need for remedial coursework,” and being *career ready* means that a high school graduate possesses not only the academic skills that employees need to be successful, but also both the technical skills, i.e., those that are necessary for a specific job function, and 21st Century employability skills, i.e., interpersonal skills, creativity and innovation, work ethics and personal responsibility, global and social awareness, etc., that are necessary for a successful career (Green, 2011, ACTE, n.d.).

Statement and Dimensions of the Problem

The New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards were first adopted by the state Board of Education in 1996. The standards are said to describe what students should know and be able to do upon completion of an elementary and secondary public education and provide local school districts with clear and specific benchmarks for student achievement in nine specific content areas, including language arts literacy and mathematics (New Jersey Department of Education, *Curriculum and Instruction*, n.d.). However, there is growing concern among educational and business and industry stakeholders that the language arts and math standards and the assessment tools used to measure students’ achievement of those specific standards do not always adequately measure student preparedness to meet present and future college and career needs. According to John Reh, a senior business executive with broad management experience, “If you still believe that our schools provide adequate training to make students labor-ready,

you're living in a dream world. Yes, some job seekers make the effort to learn on their own the skills needed for a new job, but most get that training on the job" (Reh, 2011, ¶10).

There are three specific dimensions of this problem. First, there is growing concern that the language arts literacy and math New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards may not be the best indicators of the specific language arts literacy and math knowledge and skills that high school students will need to possess in the future in order to successfully enroll in rigorous college-level courses or to engage in entry-level job and career positions. Second, some of the tools that are currently used to measure the achievement of the language arts literacy and math New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards may also be inadequate. For example, there is concern that the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA), the state-approved standardized test used in grades 11 and 12 to measure achievement of the language arts literacy and math standards, may not always fully assess the extent to which students have actually acquired the necessary language arts and math knowledge and skills necessary to graduate from high school prepared to meet the challenges for college and career in the 21st Century. This is due, at least in part, to political realities that many states, including New Jersey, face. Current research (e.g., National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education [NCPPE] and Southern Regional Education Board [SREB], 2010) suggests that some states find it politically unrealistic to establish proficiency levels (i.e., passing scores) on graduation exams that are so high that large numbers of students cannot pass. As a result, many states with high-stakes high school exit tests establish passing scores "that measure proficiency at the 8th – 10th grade levels" (NCPPE/SREB, 2010, p.3) in order to minimize the number of students who may not graduate. Consequently, such exit tests, like the HSPA, fail to fully measure students' language arts literacy and math knowledge, particularly at the 11th and 12th grade levels. Thus, many students

are graduating from high school inadequately prepared to meet the challenges for college and career in the 21st Century. Third, in some schools and grades, there is a lack of valid alignment between the state-approved tests and the units and courses in which students engage at all levels of P-12 education. Grade inflation and social promotion continue to exacerbate this misalignment. At times, some students may receive grades that do not accurately reflect what they have learned, but they continue to be promoted from one grade to the next without adequately demonstrating that they have actually achieved the appropriate grade level core curriculum standards. In summary, the absence of adequate standards and tools continues to create significant difficulties and problems for the P-12, higher education, and business and industry sectors in New Jersey.

Putting the Problem in Perspective

Until recently, there has not been agreement among the P-12, higher education, and business and industry sectors about the knowledge, skills, and abilities that high school graduates need to know and be able to do to be college and career ready. Each sector sets readiness expectations independently of each other, and none of them do a good job of clearly communicating to the other what those expectations are (NCPPE/SREB, 2010). Accordingly, identifying or developing appropriate assessments to measure those skills has been challenging.

P-12 Sector

Within the elementary and secondary (P-12) sector, it has become increasingly difficult to find appropriate and valid measures of what students know and are able to do by the time they are ready to enter college. State-approved exit exams (e.g., HSPA), scores on commercially-produced assessments of college readiness (e.g., SAT, ACT), course grades on official transcripts, the accumulation of Carnegie units, and the high school diploma itself do not fully

demonstrate what knowledge and skills high school graduates actually possess. This occurs in large part because of a disconnect between P-12 schools and institutions of higher education about what skills and knowledge are necessary for college.

In her doctoral dissertation at Rutgers University, Mary DeHart (2007, p.7) reports that “high school and college assessments are clearly different in content, structure, and method of grading,” and she further asserts that “the stated goal of the HSPA is not to provide evidence of college readiness.”

In addition, traditional readiness assessments like the ACT and SAT often do not adequately measure students’ attainment of specific college readiness skills simply because, in most states, “explicit readiness standards have not been developed, and, for the few states that have begun to develop [them], the tests have not been tailored to the state’s specific curriculum. [Such] generic national assessments of college readiness are not connected tightly enough to the state curriculum” (NCPPE/SREB, 2010, p.5).

Further, there is inadequate transitioning (and transition benchmarks) from elementary to middle (or junior high) to secondary school levels. In other words, unit assessments and course tests and tools lack precision as indicators of achievement, and there is a lack of congruence between school curriculum units and courses and the state standardized tests (e.g., NJ ASK and HSPA). Again, there are various reasons for this, including a lack of alignment among the *intended* curriculum, that which is articulated in the state’s curriculum standards; the *taught* curriculum, that which is actually delivered in the classroom; and the *tested* curriculum, that which is tested with assessment instruments (Edvantia, 2005). As a result, students pass courses and are promoted from one grade level to another without an accurate assessment of whether they have mastered the standards and are prepared for the transition. This continues at all grade

levels and culminates at the point of graduation resulting in many students, even those with legitimate high school diplomas, being inadequately prepared to undertake college-level courses without the need for some remediation.

The absence of valid measures of student learning and the lack of adequate tools to determine appropriate transitioning result in justifiably confused and angry students and parents, who question how children can pass courses, transition from one grade to another, and then fail the exit examination (i.e., HSPA). Students must then re-take the HSPA until they can pass it, or they're required to take an alternative measure, the Alternative High School Assessment (AHSA), which has been widely criticized for its lack of rigor (i.e., the administration of the test has led to too many high school diplomas being earned through the AHSA process rather the more traditional route).

Higher Education Sector

As has been mentioned above, the state-approved exit exams (e.g., HSPA), scores on commercially-produced assessments of college readiness (e.g., SAT, ACT), course grades on official transcripts, the accumulation of Carnegie units, and the high school diploma itself do not always fully demonstrate what college and career-ready knowledge and skills high school graduates actually possess. Therefore, before incoming students can enroll in appropriately leveled courses, colleges and universities (both two- and four-year institutions) must rely on their own assessment and placement devices to judge what incoming students actually know and are able to do. These devices often demonstrate that many students are under-prepared for college-level work.² In New Jersey, all 19 county colleges and some of the four-year colleges and

² In New Jersey, about 70% of first-time, full-time students enrolled in the fall 2008 semester needed to take at least one remedial course (*The Report of the Governor's Task Force on Higher Education*, 2011, p. 12). Further, in New Jersey, \$70 million (and nationally between \$2.5 and \$3 billion) is spent annually on developmental education "to teach students in college what they should have learned in high school" (*Education Week*, Aug. 3, 2010).

universities use Accuplacer[®], the College Board's developmental education assessment tool. The county colleges, but not all four-year institutions, use the same passing score on the Accuplacer[®]. One of the aims of the Task Force is to ensure that high school students are fully prepared for college, thus obviating the need for assessment tools like Accuplacer[®] since there will be equivalence between the criteria for assessing readiness for graduation and the criteria for determining the need for remediation at a higher education institution.

Aside from the unforeseen need for remediation, some county college students also face additional problems. For example, because of a lack of appropriate student advising, insufficient student planning, and/or student indecisiveness, many county college transfers learn that some of their county college credits are not transferrable to four-year institutions.³ As a result, because of the need for remediation and/or credit transfer difficulties, many students are faced with the prospect of re-defining their time-to-graduation expectations to more than four years. This increases the cost of a college education significantly, adds to student (and/or family) debt, delays entrance into career paths, and ultimately contributes to a less educated national (and New Jersey) labor force.

It also has undesirable effects on retention and degree completion. Research indicates that only 44% of students who are referred for remedial reading and 31% referred for remedial math actually complete their recommended sequences (Bailey as cited in *Creating a Blueprint*, 2010), and, according to the National Educational Longitudinal Study (as cited in *Creating a Blueprint*, 2010, p.6), "only 25% of students who take developmental education courses complete a degree within 8 years." Moreover, most students who do not complete their remediation sequences are more likely to drop out of college altogether (*Creating a Blueprint*, 2010).

³ While this remains a lingering problem, much progress has been made as a result of the so-called Lampitt Law, the Comprehensive Statewide Transfer Agreement (2008).

Business and Industry Sector

Increasingly, spokespersons for business and industry are reporting that high school graduates are unprepared for entry level jobs and career positions. For example, “in a 2005 survey by the Washington-based nonprofit group Achieve, Inc.,⁴ employers estimated that 39% of recent high school graduates were unprepared for entry level jobs, and 45% were not prepared to advance beyond those positions” (Musgrove, 2010).⁵ Because of the uncertainty in measuring what high school graduates know and are able to do, the hiring process in business and industry is made more difficult because of the difficulty in assessing what additional training potential employees may require in order to prepare them adequately for entry-level positions.

Business and industry, therefore, is required to expend substantial amounts of time, energy, and money on training entry-level workers (as well as continuing professional development) so that these employees can meet minimal expectations for continuing employment. This includes not only technical skills that are unique to the job, but also basic communication skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing, math, computing) and human relations skills (teamwork, interacting with diverse groups). This phenomenon is common to low-wage positions and many entry-level professional positions.

When the dimensions of the problem are synthesized, one unmistakable conclusion is plainly evident. At precisely the time when the country needs suitably prepared college graduates and professionally trained workers, the current educational systems are woefully unprepared to meet that challenge. This places the state and the nation at significant economic risk and global disadvantage.

⁴ Created in 1996 by the nation's governors and corporate leaders, Achieve, Inc. is an independent, bipartisan, non-profit education reform organization based in Washington, D.C. that helps states raise academic standards and graduation requirements, improve assessments, and strengthen accountability.

⁵ Ronald Musgrove is the former governor of Mississippi and chair of NAEP's *12th Grade Preparedness Commission*. His editorial appeared in the August 3, 2010 edition of *Education Week*.

Impact of the Problem on Our Citizens and Our State

The immediate challenge both to the nation and New Jersey is to ensure that its citizens possess the levels of education necessary to meet job requirements for the next 15 years. Researchers at Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce estimate that "by 2018, we will need 22 million new college degrees, but we will fall short of that number by at least three million postsecondary (associate or better) degrees. In addition, we will need at least 4.7 million new workers with postsecondary certificates" (Spence, 2010, p.1). The shortfall noted above amounts to a deficit of about 300,000 college graduates every year between 2008 and 2018, and it results from the increasing demand by business and industry for employees with increasingly higher levels of education and training (Spence, 2010).

The lack of an educated labor force is particularly acute in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, which are especially critical to our continued national and international competitiveness. Although it is estimated that only 5% of all jobs in the United States in 2018 will be in STEM occupations, they include professional scientists, engineers, and mathematicians as well as the qualified technicians and skilled STEM support workers in hundreds of technology-driven industries (Carnevale, Smith, & Melton, 2011).

Aside from the fact that an unprepared labor force has a profound effect on diminishing economic opportunities among our citizens, creating a severe economic drain on national resources, and seriously jeopardizing our ability to compete internationally in an increasingly global economy, it also has a significant impact locally on the citizens of New Jersey. Improving the college and career readiness of New Jersey's high school graduates will result in some immediate benefits to the state. The following represent the most notable examples of such benefits.

It will help to reduce or eliminate the need for remedial work among students entering college. This will decrease both public costs for higher education, and the length of time from college entry to degree attainment (thus decreasing private costs for higher education, including tuition and related payments, by families and students, as well as student debt), and it will increase the number of college-educated and professionally trained workers. The effects of these three outcomes are far-reaching, especially with regard to meeting the challenge noted above for college-educated and professionally trained employees to meet job requirements over the next 15 years.

Over time, it will help to increase citizen wealth (Carnevale & Rose, 2011) and improve a stagnant economy. With a baccalaureate education, the average full-time full-year worker can expect to earn 84% more over a lifetime than someone who has a high school diploma. Moreover, in selected STEM-related occupations, “at the extreme, the highest earning majors may earn as much as 314% more at the median than the lowest-earning majors at the median” (Carnevale, Strohl, & Melton, 2011, p.6). This will have a corresponding positive impact on an eroding tax base within the state and help to increase public funding for high priority needs.

It will also help increase adequately trained entry-level workers in the labor force and also contribute, in time, to reduced unemployment (Achieve, 2011). According to data used by the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce (2011) from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), after three years of recession in the U.S., in 2010, the unemployment rate among workers with a master’s degree was 4%, with a bachelor’s and associate’s degree 5.4% and 7% respectively, among workers with only a high school diploma 10.3%, and among workers who dropped out of high school 14.9% (see www.bls.gov/emp/ep_chart_001.htm). In turn, over time, it may contribute to aiding the impoverished and reduce the need for public social service providers

who serve the impoverished (e.g., health care providers, counseling agencies, law enforcement, and related organizations).

Summary

In summary, the objective is to improve the preparedness of the workforce to meet the future needs in New Jersey and the nation. To accomplish this, it is necessary to improve the readiness of students to graduate from high school armed with the knowledge and skills that they will need to be ready for their postsecondary endeavors. The benefits that will accrue from the attainment of this objective will yield significant positive societal changes, including an increased number of citizens with value-added postsecondary experiences; a better prepared workforce; increased citizen wealth; lower rates of unemployment; and a renewal of our nation's capacity to provide educational and economic opportunity, to reverse the economic drain of valuable resources, and to re-establish the nation as a leading competitor in a global society.

Section 2

Addressing the Problem: Transition to the Common Core State Standards

RECOMMENDATION 1

Insofar as the state Board of Education has already formally adopted the Common Core State Standards as its curriculum framework for P-12 education, and insofar as these standards are widely recognized as appropriate standards for college and career readiness, the Task Force recommends that these standards also be adopted as the framework for the state Department of Education’s initiative to develop a model curriculum in language arts literacy and mathematics that will guide college and career readiness for the state of New Jersey.

In June 2010, the state of New Jersey formally adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), thus setting in motion a plan to develop a “model” curriculum in language arts literacy (P-12) and mathematics (P-12) aligned to the Common Core State Standards as a resource for district implementation of the CCSS. In doing so, New Jersey was the ninth state to adopt the standards. Since then, 46 states and Washington, D.C. have joined the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

About the Common Core State Standards

Led by the National Governors Association’s Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers, teachers, school administrators, researchers and scholars, and representatives of both higher education and business and industry from all over the United States developed the Common Core State Standards to provide “a clear and consistent framework to prepare [the nation’s] children for college and the workforce” (*About the Standards*, 2010). The standards are informed by respected models both nationally and internationally and are intended to “align instruction with the [common core] framework so that many more students than at present can meet requirements of college and career readiness” (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010, p.5). Finally, there is agreement among the P-12, higher education, and business and industry sectors throughout the country that these

standards are precisely the ones that best represent what high school graduates need to know and be able to do to meet the college and career readiness demands of the 21st Century.

Why the Common Core State Standards?

The Common Core State Standards have been characterized as revolutionary (Kurabinski, 2011) in that they offer the capacity to change instructional practices, structure the state's schools for better opportunities for all students, and, because the standards are college- and career-ready, they will help prepare students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in education and training after high school. Further, in contrast to the present New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards, the new standards are more focused, coherent, and clear; they help students (and parents and teachers) to better understand what is expected of them. The expectations are consistent for all and are not dependent on a student's zip code.

Content of the Common Core State Standards

Mathematics

“The [CCSS] standards for mathematical practice describe varieties of expertise that mathematics educators at all levels should seek to develop in their students. These practices rest on important ‘processes and proficiencies’ with longstanding importance in mathematics education. The first of these are the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) process standards of problem solving, reasoning and proof, communication, representation, and connections. The second are the strands of mathematical proficiency specified in the National Research Council's report *Adding It Up*: adaptive reasoning, strategic competence, conceptual understanding (comprehension of mathematical concepts, operations, and relations), procedural fluency (skill in carrying out procedures flexibly, accurately, efficiently, and appropriately), and productive disposition (habitual inclination to see mathematics as sensible, useful, and

worthwhile, coupled with a belief in diligence and one's own efficacy)" (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010b, p.6). Specifically, the math standards are intended to measure students' abilities to: (1) make sense of problems and persevere in solving them, (2) reason abstractly and quantitatively, (3) construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others, (4) model with mathematics, (5) use appropriate tools strategically, (6) attend to precision, (7) look for and make use of structure, and (8) look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

English Language Arts and Literacy

"Grade-specific K–12 [CCSS] standards in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language translate the broad (and, for the earliest grades, seemingly distant) aims of [college and career readiness expectations] into age- and attainment-appropriate terms. The standards set requirements not only for English language arts, but also for literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. Just as students must learn to read, write, speak, listen, and use language effectively in a variety of content areas, so too must the standards specify the literacy skills and understandings required for college and career readiness in multiple disciplines" (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010a, p.3). Key features of the standards include: (1) reading, i.e., text complexity and the growth of comprehension, (2) writing, i.e., text types, responding to reading and research, (3) speaking and listening, i.e., flexible communication and collaboration, and (4) language, i.e., conventions, effective use, and vocabulary.

Difference Between the Common Core State Standards and the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) represent a significant enhancement of the present New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (NJCCCS) in English language arts and literacy and mathematics. Among the most fundamental differences between the two, the CCSS are more research-based, possess greater clarity, demand greater mastery of fewer standards,

seek to increase opportunities for students to be well versed in fundamental learning at a much deeper level, and offer various ways that students can demonstrate what they have learned. They [will prepare] all students for a postsecondary education or entry into the workforce at a level that allows for a livable wage and opportunities for advancement. Using the CCSS standards as the core, students will be required to apply learning to new situations in ways that allow them to create knowledge and to contribute to a body of knowledge in their field, a skill that is required both in colleges and universities and in the workforce. The CCSS standards also provide a curriculum that allows for extended opportunities for students to read widely, write in all content areas, acquire academic vocabulary related to a specific content area, and perform math levels that increase conceptual understanding (Kurabinski, 2011; Sovde & Riley, 2011).

They also require substantive shifts in instructional practice in districts and schools. According to Achieve, Inc., within the domain of mathematics, the present standards are, in places, repetitive, incoherent, unfocused, unbalanced, and disconnected (Sovde & Riley, 2011).⁶ The CCSS standards demand instructional practices that provide greater focus, coherence, and clarity, with increased emphasis on key topics at each grade level, and a coherent progression across grades. They further demand greater procedural fluency and understanding of math concepts and skills. And, finally, they do a better job of promoting rigor through mathematical proficiencies that foster reasoning and understanding across disciplines.

Within the domain of language arts and literacy, the present standards focus almost exclusively on literature and narrative writing, with little or no attention to speaking and listening skills. Further, there seems to be an assumption that responsibility for language and literacy instruction belongs singularly with English teachers. The CCSS standards, on the other hand,

⁶ Shortcomings of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards in both language arts literacy and mathematics are described in detail in an analysis conducted by the Thomas B. Fordham Institution (see <http://www.edexcellence.net/publications/the-state-of-state.html>).

require a greater balance of literature and informational texts, with greater emphasis on text complexity, argumentation, informative/explanatory writing, and research. Greater attention will also be required for instruction in speaking and listening, and the CCSS standards are expected to foster greater consultation and collaboration in language and literacy instruction among teachers of history, science, and technical subjects (Sovde & Riley 2011).

In table 1 below, a difference between the CCCS and NJCCCS in one of the eighth grade math standards is illustrated. Although similar in focus (i.e., application of the Pythagorean Theorem), the CCSS standard strives to get students to delve more deeply into the content of the standard and is more specific in its requirements for demonstrating achievement of the standard.

Table 1: Difference Between CCSS and NJCCCS: 8th Grade Math Standard - Geometry

Examples of Differences Between the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS) – Math Grade 8
CCSS – Grade 8 – Geometry Standard 8G: <i>Understand and Apply the Pythagorean Theorem</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain a proof of the Pythagorean Theorem • Use the Pythagorean Theorem to determine unknown side lengths in right triangles in real-world and mathematical problems in two and three dimensions • Apply the Pythagorean Theorem to find the distance between two points in a coordinate system
NJCCCS – Grade 8 – Geometric Properties Standard 4.2.8A-2: <i>Understand and Apply the Pythagorean Theorem</i>

Similarly, in table 2, a difference between the CCCS and NJCCCS in one of the grade 6-12 writing standards is illustrated. The CCSS standard is more detailed and shows a clear progression of achievement from grade 8 to grades 11-12 that is not evident in the NJCCCS standard. The new CCSS will provide for a sequential progression toward college and career readiness building upon knowledge and skills learned earlier in students’ schooling.

Table 2: Difference Between CCSS and NJCCCS: Grade 6-12 Writing Standard

Examples of Differences Between the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS)		
CCCS – Writing Standards 6-12		
Grade 8 – Standard 1	Grades 9-10 – Standard 1	Grades 11-12 – Standard 1
Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence. <i>Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims and organize the reasons and evidence logically.</i>	Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. <i>Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claim(s), and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, and reasons and evidence.</i>	Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. <i>Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claim(s), and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, and reasons and evidence.</i>
NJCCCS – Grade 12 – Writing as a Product		
Standard 3.2.12B.3: Draft a thesis statement and support/defend it through highly developed ideas and content, organization, and paragraph development		

How the Common Core State Standards Compare With Other Respected Standards

A reasonable question regarding the new standards (CCSS) is how they measure up against standards that enjoy widespread reputations for excellence, both nationally and internationally. In response, the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC) compared the Common Core State Standards with the content and curriculum standards in three states: California, Massachusetts, and Texas, as well as with those of the International Baccalaureate (IB) program and the *Knowledge and Skills for University Success*, a set of expectations endorsed by 28 research institutions and used by the College Board as a reference in its own standards. These standards were selected “because they were either...exemplary, were explicitly written at the college readiness level, or represented a rigorous instructional program focused on college readiness” (Conley et al. 2011, p. 3). The comparative study found “substantial

concurrence between the Common Core State Standards and the comparison standards, with some greater alignment in mathematics than in language arts and literacy....The findings further suggest a general level of agreement between the Common Core State Standards and the comparison standards regarding what is important for high school students to know and be able to do and the cognitive level at which they need to demonstrate key skills in English language arts and mathematics in order to be ready for college and careers” (Conley et al., p.5).

Limitations of the Common Core State Standards

The Task Force acknowledges that, at this time, the Common Core State Standards are not intended to address all of the readiness skills necessary for 21st Century college and career employment. While the CCSS standards focus on the academic knowledge (i.e., language arts literacy and mathematics) and selected employment skills (e.g., speaking, listening, critical thinking, perseverance in problem solving) that are necessary for college and career readiness, there are other academic knowledge (e.g., science, engineering, art, music) and career readiness skills (e.g., work ethic, personal responsibility, intra- and inter-personal skills) that remain unaddressed by the Common Core State Standards at this time. The Task Force recognizes that it will be necessary for the state Department of Education to examine strategies to address and measure academic standards and career readiness skills in addition to those set forth in the Common Core State Standards.⁷

Plan and Timeline for the Transition

The Task Force recognizes that the transition to the Common Core State Standards presents a number of challenges, including the implementation schedule. According to officials

⁷ It is worth noting that, in 1996, the New Jersey Board of Education adopted cross-content workplace readiness standards and indicators that apply to all of the subject areas of the Core Curriculum Content Standards. These standards continue to be highly relevant for preparing high school graduates for jobs and careers. Later, in 1999, the New Jersey Department of Education convened a task force that developed a curriculum framework for the Standards (New Jersey Department of Education, 2001).

in the state Department of Education, the following tentative schedule has been established to guide the implementation process.

Table 3: Tentative Schedule for the Implementation of the State Core Curriculum Standards and the Common Core

Revised Core Curriculum Content Standards (P-12)	Adoption of Revised Standards	Implementation of Revised Curricula	
Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science	June 16, 2010	K-12	September 2012
Common Core State Standards for Mathematics	June 16, 2010	K-2 3-5, high school 6-8	September 2011 September 2012 September 2013
Science	June 17, 2009	September 1, 2011	
Visual and Performing Arts Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Technology 21st Century Life and Careers World Languages	June 17, 2009	September 1, 2012	
Social Studies	Sept. 9, 2009	September 1, 2012	

Establishing a Model Curriculum

As the state Department of Education engaged educators throughout the state regarding implementation of the CCSS, it became apparent that schools would greatly benefit from having available a “model” curriculum aligned with the CCSS with accompanying formative assessments. In order to develop the “model” curriculum, the Department is engaging experts and stakeholders throughout the state and is forming a statewide coalition of curriculum specialists from both P-12 and higher education. The “model” curriculum will include the following elements: CCSS-aligned unit-based student learning objectives (SLOs), 6-week unit based formative assessments, with school/classroom/student level assessment reports by SLO, as well as continuing teacher professional development in content, instructional strategies and effective use of formative assessment to improve instruction. The resulting curriculum system will serve as the foundation for higher achievement based on the CCSS for all students including a differentiation of learning for students with disabilities and English language learners. The Department is also developing a delivery system to ensure that the “model” curriculum materials

are accessible to educators across the state through an on-line curriculum and assessment platform.

Summary

The Common Core State Standards represent consensus among the P-12, higher education, and business and industry sectors about the language arts literacy and mathematics knowledge that high school graduates are expected to demonstrate. The standards (and the assessments that will attach to it) are an “essential component of a set of integrated strategies for substantially improving student achievement and closing the achievement gap. The state is fully committed to implementing college- and career-ready standards; establishing an accountability system that accurately assesses performance and triggers supports and interventions; and pursuing key reforms in policy and practice that support improvement efforts” (New Jersey Department of Education, 2011, pp.17-18). Finally, in light of the importance of substantiating its recent *ESEA*⁸*Waiver*, the transition will offer demonstrable evidence of the state’s commitment to improving education for all of its students, regardless of life circumstances.

⁸ The *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) is the predecessor legislation to *No Child Left Behind*.

Section 3

Measuring Student Achievement of the Common Core State Standards

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Task Force recommends that the current system of student assessment of the achievement of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards at the high school level, including the use of the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) and the Alternative High School Assessment (AHSA), be replaced with a system of end-of-course assessments that will be developed and correlated with the Common Core State Standards at the secondary level.

The Task Force also recommends that assessment and measurement devices designed by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) be used to assess and measure student achievement of the Common Core State Standards. Further, the Task Force recommends that the state Department of Education should develop a process to determine both the number of PARCC end-of-course assessments that students will be required to pass, as well as the “passing” proficiency scores that students will be required to achieve in order to qualify for the state-endorsed high school diploma.

Options to Measure Achievement of the Common Core State Standards

The Task Force considered different options for assessing and measuring student achievement of the Common Core State Standards at the high school level. Among these options were (a) a comprehensive model,⁹ (b) an end-of-course assessment model, and (c) a combination of both. The comprehensive model includes performance-based measures, which employ both multiple choice and constructed response items. The High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) is an example of a comprehensive assessment, which is administered near the end of the 11th grade. Other comprehensive assessment tools include already existing college-ready measurement devices (e.g., ACT and SAT). End-of-course assessments are typically administered near the end of a course of study, which include a mixture of constructed-response items, performance tasks, computer-scored items, and multiple choice items. For example, English 9, English 10, and English 11 might each be tested through an end-of-course assessment.

⁹ *Comprehensive* models of assessment employ common tests that are generally administered to all students in the same grade level near the end of the school year (Vranek, 2008, p. 6).

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Options

The Task Force also considered both the advantages and disadvantages of the comprehensive model and determined that, among its advantages, this model is cost-efficient, given its standardized format, and can be used for accountability measures and growth modeling. However, the comprehensive model was found to possess several disadvantages. Comprehensive tests, like the HSPA, are often not demanding enough to adequately measure college and career readiness skills that high school graduates need for 21st Century college and employment (Sovde & Riley, 2011). Furthermore, (a) they are generally targeted at ninth and tenth grade educational levels; (b) they assess only a slice of high school standards, rather than a deep knowledge of subjects; (c) they can potentially narrow the delivered curriculum to what is tested; and (d) they provide only a snapshot of system performance at a common point in time (Vranek, 2008).

End-of-course assessments, on the other hand, are perceived as superior to the comprehensive tests. From a P-12 perspective, they are seen as having the ability to inform classroom instruction and professional development, and they align with the Common Core State Standards and curriculum. Further, they have the potential to measure a broader and deeper range of standards, including advanced subject matter and skills, and they are typically implemented to promote more consistency of teaching and provide more timely information on learning and course quality (Vranek, 2008). Higher education institutions tend to favor end-of-course assessments (especially if they participate in the development and determination of proficiency levels) insofar as they can clearly demonstrate that high school graduates have met the necessary criteria to enter college without the need for remediation. Finally, the results of these assessments further clearly communicate to business and industry the extent to which high school graduates have acquired the academic knowledge and career readiness skills necessary for successful 21st

Century entry-level employment.

However, these assessments have some disadvantages. They could possibly increase testing frequency, they lack the efficiency that comprehensive tools possess, and it may be more difficult to use them as readily understandable accountability measures. Nevertheless, the on higher education members of the Task Force have agreed that the establishment of end-of-course assessments will provide a reliable indicator of the remedial needs of future New Jersey high school graduates, thereby obviating the need for future alternative placement assessments, such as the Accuplacer[®].¹⁰

Description of End-of-Course Assessments

End-of-course assessments are generally defined as tests designed to measure mastery of standards for particular high school courses across several grade levels. The major reason that has been cited by states that use end-of-course assessments (see Vranek, 2008) is to assess learning of specific course content at a time that corresponds closely to the time of instruction. Unlike comprehensive tests that measure content areas such as language arts literacy and mathematics, end-of-course assessments are designed to correspond with learning standards in specific courses, such as Algebra, Geometry, English, U.S. History, or Biology.

Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers PARCC¹¹

During its deliberations, the Task Force considered plans for assessment and measurement designed by The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers

¹⁰ In public testimony before the Task Force, Steve Karp, director of the Secondary Reform Project at the Education Law center, testified that, “end-of-course assessments that are collaboratively developed by educators and school leaders can be appropriate ways of moving assessment policy closer to schools and classrooms, assuring consistency across schools and districts, and supporting improved professional development and instructional practice... [I]ncluding such assessments on student transcripts can help provide a more complete picture of student progress” (Karp, public testimony, December 13, 2011).

¹¹ See Appendix D for a graphic representation of the PARCC system.

(PARCC). PARCC is a 24-state consortium¹² working toward a shared commitment to develop an assessment system aligned to the Common Core State Standards that is anchored in college and career readiness, has the ability to assess and measure higher-order skills, provides comparability across states, and provides truly useful information for educators, parents, and students alike. Its mission is to develop a common set of P-12 assessments in English language arts and math anchored in what it takes to be ready for college and careers. These new 21st Century technology-based P-12 assessments, which will build a pathway to college and career readiness by the end of high school, mark students' progress toward this goal from third grade upward, provide teachers with timely information to inform instruction and provide student support, and advance accountability at all levels. PARCC was awarded a grant of \$186 million through the U.S. Department of Education's *Race to the Top* assessment competition (one of only two such grants awarded) to support the development and design of the next-generation assessment system. The PARCC assessments will be ready for states to administer during the 2014-15 school year in place of the presently-administered state tests.

PARCC proposes to utilize two types of assessments: formative and summative. Within the formative domain, there will be a diagnostic assessment, administered to reveal early indicators of student knowledge and skills. This assessment will help to inform instructional, support, and professional development needs. At mid-year, an interim performance-based assessment will include tasks that assess keystone standards and topics in English language arts, mathematics, speaking, and listening. Results from these assessments are expected to be available to school administrators to inform instruction within two weeks of their administration.

The summative assessment components are performance-based end-of-course

¹² PARCC states collectively educate about 31 million public P-12 students in the United States.

assessments that are intended “to be administered as close to the end of the school year as possible. For example, the English language arts/literacy (ELAL) assessment will focus on writing effectively when analyzing text. The summative assessment will further include an end-of-year (i.e., end-of-course) assessment and is intended to be administered after approximately 90% of the school year has been completed and will focus on reading comprehension” (MacCormack, 2011). Administered to students by computer, the assessments will include a series of multiple choice and constructed response items, including technology-enhanced items. Scores from both the performance-based and summative assessments will be combined to form an annual accountability score (Forgione & Doorey, 2010). These assessments are proposed to be developed by P-12 teachers and educational leaders and higher education representatives within the partnership through a network of PARCC committees – which will be of varying sizes, compositions, and charges – that will tackle the technical, implementation, and policy issues, as well as the internal governance challenges associated with organizing 24 states around a new, next-generation assessment system (see <http://parconline.org/parcc-committees>).

Why PARCC?

PARCC “focuses on identifying the ideas that should be stressed and how they [can] be grouped together, and is preferred because, as Barbara A. Kapinos, senior policy analyst with the National Education Association (NEA) who reviewed the PARCC content frameworks said, ‘...the documents could be useful for individual teachers as they plan how to teach the standards, but also in building learning communities of teachers’” - an important objective for New Jersey schools (Gewertz, 2011, p.6). She added, “[With the content framework], I can see pulling teachers together to develop more specific units of study, filling the texts students might read. Not just isolated lesson plans, but units of study, with ideas that connect with one another. Then

they can share online all the things they're doing. That's a powerful kind of professional development" (Gewertz, 2011, p.6). Further, Pat Roschewski, an impartial observer who is director of assessment in Nebraska,¹³ has reported, "PARCC's frameworks offer more of an 'instructional focus,' describing the teaching needed to make students successful, while the SMARTER Balanced¹⁴ group's specification [dwell] more on 'evidence of learning' that will be required of students on a test. In summary, therefore, PARCC appears to be a favorable choice because of its potential to offer strong formative and summative (particularly end-of-course) assessments that can provide valuable information to the teaching and learning enterprise.

Difference between the HSPA and End-of-Course Assessments

There are fundamental differences between the HSPA and end-of-course assessments. The HSPA is a comprehensive test, and as such, is subject to the disadvantages noted above (see p. 31). It has the capacity to assess only a slice, rather than a deep knowledge, of language arts literacy and math. It also might potentially narrow the *taught* curriculum to what is tested (i.e., "teaching to the test"); and it provides only a snapshot of student and system performance at a singular point in time that is common to all students. Further, it is generally administered only once¹⁵ during a student's career, near the end of his/her 11th grade, and it fails to address any of New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards in subject areas other than language arts literacy and math. In particular, it doesn't measure any career readiness skills in any capacity.

End-of-course assessments, on the other hand, are subject-specific, with tests planned for six core academic content areas correlated with the Common Core State Standards: English 9, English 10, English 11, Algebra I and II, Geometry (see below for further discussion of end-of-

¹³ Nebraska has neither adopted the Common Core State Standards nor joined either assessment consortium.

¹⁴ SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) also received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to develop an assessment system aligned with the Common Core State Standards (see Appendix E).

¹⁵ Students who are unsuccessful in the attempt to pass the HSPA as 11th graders may re-take the test in 12th grade.

course assessments in non-common core subject areas). Moreover, rather than taking only a single test – in 11th grade – students will be required to take tests in the 9th, 10th, and 11th grades. End-of-course assessments, therefore, will provide valuable feedback to all stakeholders (students, teachers, and parents) as early as grade 9 regarding student strengths and weaknesses in specific high school subject areas, which can be used to inform instructional practices to reinforce student strengths and remediate student weaknesses.

RECOMMENDATION 3

In addition to end-of-course assessments in the Common Core State Standards subject areas, the Task Force recommends that the state Department of Education should address how best to develop and administer end-of-course assessments in identified non-common core subject areas in which current New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards exist, and should require that students take and pass certain non-common core subject area end-of-course assessments designated by the Department as a condition for graduation.

End-of-Course Assessments in Non-Common Core Subject Areas

It is essential that end-of-course assessments extend beyond the subject areas of language arts literacy and mathematics. Given the fact that the Common Core State Standards (and the end-of-course assessments used to measure their achievement) are limited in scope at this time, there must be additional ways to measure and assess the knowledge and skills that represent other college and career readiness requirements that are not included within the Common Core State Standards. Based on a careful analysis of the knowledge and skills necessary to be college and career ready, the state Department of Education should establish a process for identifying the non-common core subject areas that should be tested with end-of-course assessments. The state Department of Education should then determine how best to develop and administer these non-common core end-of-course assessments.

Initially, the Department should develop assessments in some of these non-common core areas, e.g. science and social studies. However, unlike the PARCC end-of-course assessments of

math and language arts, these state-developed non-common core assessments should not be mandated, and local districts should be able to establish their own assessments in these areas if they meet state criteria for rigor, structure, and validity. However, given the time that it may take to fully implement such an array of end-of-course assessments, the Task Force encourages the Department of Education to immediately issue a Request for Proposal for science, followed by one for social studies. Based on lessons learned from that procurement process, including the costs for developing such end-of-course assessments, the Department should evaluate the need and value of additional assessments in other subject areas where current New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards exist. In this regard, the Task Force recognizes that uniformity and rigor are key to the successful implementation of end-of-course assessments in non-common core subject areas.

Summary

Given that state of New Jersey has already committed to the Common Core State Standards and the PARCC assessments, and recognizing that the state's existing high school exit test (i.e., HSPA) may not fully assess the knowledge and skills that students will need to be successful in college and careers in the 21st Century, the Task Force has recommended that end-of-course assessments replace the current system of student assessment. End-of-course assessments are perceived as superior to comprehensive tests, like the HSPA, for a variety of reasons, and there is general agreement that they will provide a reliable indicator of the remedial needs of future New Jersey high school graduates, thereby obviating the need for future alternative placement assessments, such as the Accuplacer[®]. Unlike comprehensive tests that measure content areas such as language arts literacy and mathematics, end-of-course assessments are designed to correspond with learning standards in specific courses of study, such as Algebra,

Geometry, English, U.S. History, or Biology.

In addition, the Task Force acknowledges the present limitations of the Common Core State Standards and the proposed PARCC assessments and recommends that the state Department of Education provide the leadership in developing end-of-course assessments in non-common core subject areas. Specifically, the Department should immediately begin the procurement process for the development of end-of-course assessments in science and social studies and should use that experience as a guide for developing additional assessments in other subject areas. However, as the transition from the HSPA to end-of-course assessments unfolds, these state-developed non-common core assessments should not be mandated, and local districts should be able to establish their own assessments in these areas if they meet state criteria for rigor, structure, and validity.

Section 4 Graduation Requirements

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Task Force recommends that new graduation requirements for the state-endorsed high school diploma be written that include, among other requirements, a stipulation that, in order to receive a diploma, students must pass end-of-course assessments correlated with the Common Core State Standards as well as identified non-common core end-of-course assessments. Further, the Task Force recommends that these new graduation requirements be phased in over a period of time, pursuant to a plan developed by the State Department of Education. The Task Force believes that the required end-of-course assessments will be a reliable indicator of college-ready proficiency thereby obviating the routine use of the Accuplacer® assessment in determining remedial needs of high school seniors transitioning to the college level. Finally, the Task Force recommends that, upon the full enactment of the new graduation requirements, including the implementation of PARCC end-of-course assessments, the HSPA and Alternative High School Assessment (AHSA) be discontinued.

End-of-Course Assessment Requirements and Alternative Assessments

The Task Force recommends that all students must take and pass end-of-course assessments, specified by the state Department of Education, for both Common Core State Standards and certain identified non-common core subject areas, in order to be eligible to receive the state-endorsed diploma. However, so that students currently enrolled in school are not placed at-risk of not graduating because of the substantive shift in expectations engendered by these new requirements, the Task Force also recommends that these new graduation requirements be phased in over a period of time as described in Recommendation 6 below.

During the transition to these new requirements, in order to maintain an objective and consistent standard for graduation, the HSPA should be retained as the state-approved exit exam. However, the Department should take a leadership role in encouraging and tirelessly assisting local educational agencies to begin to make curricular and assessment reforms in their districts to help students to prepare for the end-of-course assessments that they will encounter in the coming years. In fact, local education agencies are encouraged to consider the implementation of

commercially produced end-of-course assessments that are expected to soon be available from organizations like ACT and the College Board (e.g., Accuplacer®), which can help students to become familiar with the structure and format of the end-of-course assessments that they will encounter when the PARCC instruments are implemented. Once the state Department of Education begins to implement the PARCC end-of-course assessments, the HSPA and the Alternative High School Assessment (AHSA) will no longer be needed and can be discontinued.

Colleges and universities, as well as other organizations and potential employers, are also encouraged to disseminate the specific subject area courses, tests, and test scores that they consider to be the minimum requirements for admission to their schools or organizations. By noting these publicly promulgated admission requirements, students, therefore, will be able to prepare themselves for entry into their chosen college or field, with the help of their schools, teachers, and parents.

The AHSA, formerly the Special Review Assessment (SRA), was originally designed and intended for use with a very small number of students who could not clearly demonstrate their knowledge and skills on the HSPA because of emotional or psychological stresses, such as test anxiety. However, over time, it fell victim to the law of unintended consequences and became an alternative avenue to graduation for students who essentially lacked the knowledge and skills that were required to pass the HSPA and qualify for a high school diploma. According to statistics compiled by the state Department of Education, in 2011, 74.3% of all high school graduates in the state passed the HSPA as part of their graduation requirements; however, another 20.7% achieved the high school diploma by passing the AHSA (*ESEA Waiver Request*, 2011). Moreover, in some schools, the percentage of students who graduate and receive diplomas using the avenue provided by the AHSA approaches or exceeds 50%. In 2011, for example,

according to data compiled by the state Department of Education, the percentage of AHSA graduates in Irvington was nearly 66%; in Asbury Park nearly 61%; and in Camden nearly 50%. This phenomenon contributes significantly to the confusion and undervaluing of the current high school diploma in New Jersey.

In offering this recommendation, the Task Force supports the principle that students who are not successful in their first attempt to pass one or more of the required end-of-course assessments may, at their discretion,¹⁶ re-take only that (those) specific module(s) within the end-of-course assessment(s) in which they were unsuccessful. To that end, students may continue to pursue course work in their high schools and may re-take modules as many times as may be necessary to achieve success, which may extend beyond the senior year. Local education agencies shall be responsible for providing opportunities for remediation in all appropriate areas assessed by the end-of-course assessments to assist those students.

For those students who persistently fail to successfully pass end-of-course assessments, the state Department of Education should explore the feasibility and desirability of encouraging other options, e.g., the General Education Diploma (GED) program advocated by the American Council of Education (Quinn, 1990, 2002), that provide alternative avenues for student success.

The state Department of Education should also provide the leadership necessary to ensure that end-of-course assessments are appropriately accessible to special needs children, English language learners, and limited-English proficient students. Specifically, the state Department should ensure that alternate performance assessments (APA), aligned with the Common Core State Standards and non-common core subject areas, are developed for students with the most significant cognitive impairments that prevent them from effectively participating in the state's

¹⁶ Students who do not pass the end-of-course assessment on their first attempt should consult with their academic advisors or guidance counselors to develop a strategy for additional attempts.

general assessments. Further, the Department should ensure that end-of-course assessments are translated into Spanish (and other languages as necessary) for those students who demonstrate difficulties or hardships in reading or writing in English.

RECOMMENDATION 5

The Task Force recommends that the state Department of Education should provide the necessary leadership in re-defining course requirements and sequences in the transition to end-of-course assessments and moving away from requirements that emphasize seat time.

The Task Force also recommends that the state Department of Education explore the relevance of the currently established subject-specific credit-hour requirements (also known as modified Carnegie units) to the achievement of the Common Core State Standards and non-common core end-of-course assessments. The Task Force further recommends that local education agencies continue to be permitted to establish, within state guidelines and state-approved criteria, course sequences and structures most appropriate to their students' needs.

Redefining Course Requirements and Sequences

The intended purpose of this recommendation is to suggest that the state should move to a more competency-based system of assessment, one that is focused more on learning, where students acquire credits by demonstrating knowledge and skill development rather than the time-based “seat requirement.”

At present, the New Jersey Administrative Code (N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1 – 5.2) stipulates the graduation requirements, including specific overall credit-hour requirements (i.e., 120), for the award of the state-endorsed diploma, as well as requirements for specifically-named content areas (e.g., language arts, math, science, social studies, health and physical education, visual and performing arts, etc.). Among other things, the Code empowers local education agencies to develop the necessary goals and objectives, student learning opportunities, and processes for assessing the extent to which students have achieved the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards as a condition for graduation. The achievement of these goals and objectives, however,

is generally more focused on inputs (e.g., teaching, contact hours) than on outcomes (e.g., clear demonstrations of knowledge and skills).

The Task Force believes that the recommendations set forth in this report will drive curricular and instructional changes in high schools and in earlier grades as academic expectations are benchmarked to the new graduation requirements. This will lead, for example, to re-defining the high school senior year experience as it presently exists and identifying students' learning and remediation needs earlier in their school careers.

The Task Force also acknowledges that some local education agencies have already essentially abandoned the use of the Carnegie units as graduation requirements by exercising the option in state regulations (N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a) (2) (ii)) that provides for district flexibility in establishing a process for the granting of high school credits through successful completion of assessments that verify student achievement of the Core Curriculum Content Standards. The P-12 members of the Task Force have also clearly articulated that the Carnegie units are no longer particularly relevant to the high school experience.

The continued relevance of specific credit-hour requirements (modified Carnegie units) as prerequisites for state-mandated graduation requirements and the award of the state-endorsed diploma is particularly thorny and complicated. The Carnegie unit was developed in 1906¹⁷ by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as a measure of the amount of time a student had studied a subject. For example, a total of 120 hours in one subject (4-5 class meetings per week of 40-60 minutes duration over a period of 36-40 weeks) earned a student one "unit" of high school credit. At the time, 14 units were deemed to constitute the minimum amount of preparation that may be interpreted as "four years of academic or high school preparation" (www.suny.edu/facultysenate/TheCarnegieUnit.pdf). In the past 100 years, the

¹⁷ Currently the Foundation has no position on the unit system.

expectations for what a high school graduate needs to know and be able to do have changed substantially, and there is general consensus among today's educators that these "units" are no longer relevant to education in the 21st Century. Student achievement needs to be measured by what students have learned and not the amount of "seat time" they accumulate.

Moving from Existing Credit-Hour Requirements to End-of-Course Assessments

Moving forward, credit-hour structures will focus on the Common Core State Standards, as well as the non-common core end-of-course assessments. The resulting course sequences will likely be similar in many ways to the credit-hour requirements necessitated by current state regulations and college matriculation expectations. The state Department of Education should lead the effort in redefining course requirements and sequences in the transition to end-of-course assessments. The credit-hour requirements (modified Carnegie units) will change accordingly. The Task Force also supports the provision that local educational agencies should have sufficient flexibility, within the context of state-approved criteria, and subject to state oversight, to develop or re-define course structures and sequences that are most appropriate to their students' needs.

As noted above, local education agencies should also have the flexibility to determine whether or not students should be required to enroll and/or successfully complete (i.e., pass) one or more specific school courses as a prerequisite to taking any given end-of-course assessment. Regardless, student performance on all required and elective courses, as well as their scores on the end-of-course assessments, should be clearly reflected on their official school transcripts, which will serve as vehicles for transparency in providing a full and complete picture of their college and career readiness.

Summary

Central to the goal of restructuring high school graduation requirements is the transition

from the HSPA to end-of-course assessments, and, ultimately, this requires that all students must take and pass end-of-course assessments specified by the state Department of Education, which must be phased in over a period of time. Inherent in the Task Force’s recommendation is the understanding that sufficient flexibility will be available to students who are initially unsuccessful in one or more modules of the end-of-course assessments to ultimately succeed or whose persistent serious cognitive impairments make passing end-of-course assessments unlikely. During the transitional period, local educational agencies should initiate the necessary curricular and assessment reforms to prepare teachers and students for these new requirements. Once the end-of-course assessment requirements are implemented, neither the HSPA nor the AHSA will be needed any longer, and they will be discontinued. Moreover, these new graduation requirements will also require the redefinition of course requirements and sequences that emphasize students’ knowledge and skill development, rather than “seat time” requirements. However, local educational agencies should have sufficient flexibility, within the context of state-approved criteria, and subject to state oversight, to develop or re-define course structures and sequences that are most appropriate to their students’ needs.

Section 5

The Next Steps: How To Get There From Here

RECOMMENDATION 6

The Task Force recommends a phased implementation plan for the transition from the current graduation requirements and HSPA to end-of-course assessments.

It will be a difficult journey to full implementation of this new vision for college and career readiness based on new, more rigorous high school graduation requirements and an array of end-of-course assessments. Not only must high quality assessments aligned to the standards be developed, but those assessments must also be piloted and validated. Teachers must be trained in how to deliver high quality instruction geared toward achievement on each of these end-of-course assessments, and a real and substantial opportunity for all students to learn the content and skills that will be assessed must be provided.

The transition from the current graduation requirements, including the HSPA, to new graduation requirements based on performance on end-of-course assessments will require three phases.

The first phase will depend on the continued administration of the HSPA during the development of the new end-of-course assessments. The state Department of Education will need to begin the RFP process for the development of end-of-course assessments in subjects beyond language arts literacy and mathematics; initially in science and social studies. The Department of Education will also need to ensure that the PARCC end-of-course assessments in language arts literacy and mathematics are pursued to completion. During this phase, the bridge programs discussed within Recommendation 7 will be established to assist high school students in identifying and remediating learning gaps. These bridge programs will extend through the second phase of the transition.

The second phase will entail piloting the new assessments and providing teacher training and development. Coursework and instructional strategies will also need to be aligned during this phase. Students will be required to take the newly developed end-of-course assessments, and the scores will be recorded on their transcripts. Aggregate student results will also be posted on the New Jersey School Report Card. However, the state Department of Education will not establish a minimum proficiency (i.e., passing) score as a graduation requirement during this phase. Instead, graduation will be dependent on satisfactory completion of the required courses, as established by local boards of education, with accountability coming from a more robust transcript. During this phase, the Department will collect substantial amounts of data to guide further implementation including end-of-course assessment validity, reliability, and suitability for appropriately diagnosing student learning and remediation needs, the alignment of courses and instructional strategies, the need for additional teacher training and development, establishing appropriate proficiency (i.e., passing) scores, and phasing in end-of-course assessments.

The third phase will provide for the full implementation of a system of end-of-course assessments and new graduation requirements, in which a minimum proficiency (i.e., passing) score will be established for each end-of-course assessment, and which students will be required to meet in a certain number of end-of-course assessments to be eligible for graduation.

Each of these phases will have different consequences for students depending on their year of graduation. To reflect this progression regarding graduation requirements, a preliminary plan is being proposed by the Task Force.

Until such time as the state Department of Education operationalizes college and career readiness using agreed-upon proficiency (i.e., passing) scores on end-of-course assessments, parents and students will have a number of options available for determining the extent to which

students are prepared for college and careers. These options will include the HSPA, SAT, ACT, and Accuplacer®. Students who achieve at or above agreed-upon proficiency levels on the HSPA, SAT, or ACT will not need to take the Accuplacer®, while students who do not achieve agreed-upon proficiency levels on those tests will be advised to take the Accuplacer®. Students scoring below agreed-upon proficiency levels on the Accuplacer® will be offered appropriate bridge courses designed to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to be college ready.

A suggested transition plan is described below.

Phase 1

This phase applies to students who are still in high school grades 9-12. During this phase, the existing HSPA (Grade 11 and Grade 12) and AHSA will remain in place. The SAT and ACT college readiness tests will be optional and for informational purposes only. The Accuplacer® will also be optional.

Currently Enrolled (2011-12) 12th Graders

If a student was unsuccessful in passing HSPA in Grade 11 in Spring 2011

- Grade 12 HSPA Fall 2011 administration and, if needed, Grade 12 HSPA Spring 2012 administration and AHSA, if necessary

Currently Enrolled (2011-12) 11th Graders

- HSPA Spring 2012 administration
- If needed, Grade 12 HSPA Fall 2012 and Grade 12 HSPA Spring 2013 administration and AHSA, if necessary
- Optional SAT, ACT, Accuplacer®

Currently Enrolled (2011-12) 10th Graders

- HSPA Spring 2013 administration
- If needed, Grade 12 HSPA Fall 2013 and Grade 12 HSPA Spring 2014 administration and AHSA, if necessary
- Optional SAT, ACT, Accuplacer®

Current Enrolled (2011-12) 9th Graders

- HSPA Spring 2014 administration
- If needed, Grade 12 HSPA Fall 2014 and Grade 12 HSPA Spring 2015 administration and AHSA, if necessary
- Optional SAT, ACT, Accuplacer®

Phase 2

This phase provides the time necessary for teachers and students to prepare for the new learning requirements demanded by the different end-of-course assessments. During this phase, high school students will be required to take the end-of-course assessments, but they will not be required to pass them as a condition for graduation. Nevertheless, end-of-course assessment scores will appear on students' official transcripts and school level performance reports. Mean end-of-course assessment scores will also appear on the New Jersey Report Card. Also during this phase, college readiness proficiency (i.e., passing) scores for the end-of-course assessments will be determined in collaboration with P-12 and higher education representatives. Those students achieving a passing score will be presumed ready for college level courses and, therefore, will not be required to take the Accuplacer[®]. In addition, beginning in 2014-15, PARCC language arts and mathematics end-of-course assessments for grades 3-8 will be aligned with the Common Core State Standards.

Currently Enrolled (2011-12) 8th Graders

- Grade 10 (2013-14) N.J. End-of-Course Assessments: Science and Social Studies
- Grade 11(2014-15) PARCC End-of-Course Assessments: Language Arts and Math
- Grade 11 (2014-15) N.J. End-of-Course Assessments in Science and Social Studies
- Optional SAT, ACT, Accuplacer[®] (The SAT and ACT college readiness scores are for informational purposes only.)

Currently Enrolled (2011-12) 7th Graders

- Grade 9 (2013-14) N.J. End-of-Course Assessments: Science and Social Studies
- Grade 10 (2014-15) PARCC End-of-Course Assessments: Language Arts and Math
- Grade 10 (2014-15) N.J. End-of-Course Assessments: Science and Social Studies
- Grade 11 (2015-16) PARCC End-of-Course Assessments: Language Arts and Math
- Grade 11 (2015-16) N.J. End-of-Course Assessments: Science and Social Studies
- Optional SAT, ACT, Accuplacer[®] (The SAT and ACT college readiness scores are for informational purposes only.)

Currently Enrolled (2011-12) 6th Graders

- Grade 9 (2014-15) PARCC End-of-Course Assessments: Language Arts and Math
- Grade 9 (2014-15) N.J. End-of-Course Assessments: Science and Social Studies
- Grade 10 (2015-16) PARCC End-of-Course Assessments: Language Arts and Math
- Grade 10 (2015-16) N.J. End-of-Course Assessments: Science and Social Studies

- Grade 11 (2016-17) PARCC End-of-Course Assessments: Language Arts and Math
- Grade 11 (2016-17) N.J. End-of-Course Assessments: Science and Social Studies
- Optional SAT, ACT, Accuplacer® (The SAT and ACT college readiness scores are for informational purposes only.)

Phase 3

Following the 2015-2016 administration of the PARCC end-of-course language arts and mathematics assessments for grades 10 and 11, and following the 2016-17 administration of the PARCC language arts and mathematics end-of-course assessments for grade 9, the state Department of Education, working with both the P-12 sector and higher education institutions, will determine college-ready proficiency (i.e., passing) scores, which will eliminate the need for the Accuplacer® assessment in determining the need for remediation among high school seniors transitioning to the college level. College admissions criteria, including remediation requirements among non-traditional adult learners, will continue to be determined at the college level. During this phase, students will be required to meet a certain number of end-of-course assessments to be eligible for graduation.

Currently Enrolled (2011-2012) 5th Graders

- Grade 9 (2015-16) PARCC End-of-Course Assessments: Language Arts and Math
- Grade 9 (2015-16) N.J. End-of-Course Assessments: Science and Social Studies
- Grade 10 (2016-17) PARCC End-of-Course Assessments: Language Arts and Math
- Grade 10 (2016-17) N.J. End-of-Course Assessments: Science and Social Studies
- Grade 11 (2017-18) PARCC End-of-Course Assessments: Language Arts and Math
- Grade 11 (2017-18) N.J. End-of-Course Assessments: Science and Social Studies
- Optional SAT, ACT (The SAT and ACT college readiness scores are for informational purposes only.)

Currently Enrolled (2011-2012) 4th Graders

- Grade 9 (2016-17) PARCC End-of-Course Assessments: Language Arts and Math
- Grade 9 (2016-17) N.J. End-of-Course Assessments: Science and Social Studies
- Grade 10 (2017-18) PARCC End-of-Course Assessments: Language Arts and Math
- Grade 10 (2017-18) N.J. End-of-Course Assessments: Science and Social Studies
- Grade 11 (2018-19) PARCC End-of-Course Assessments: Language Arts and Math
- Grade 11 (2018-19) N.J. End-of-Course Assessments: Science and Social Studies
- Optional SAT, ACT (The SAT and ACT college readiness scores are for informational purposes only.)

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Task Force recommends that the state Department of Education carefully examines the following issues during the time of transition.

The Task Force has identified several key issues that must be considered in planning and undertaking the transition from the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards and their assessment-related instruments to the Common Core State Standards and their assessment-related instruments. Among these issues are the following:

1. Bridging the gap between the present and 2017-18, when the Accuplacer® will no longer be necessary since a set passing score on end-of-course assessments will be presumed to be equivalent to readiness for college level course work.¹⁸ The Task Force has introduced an idea to establish a short term transitional process, as follows. High school students who do not achieve agreed-upon levels of proficiency on the HSPA, SAT, or ACT at the end of grade 11 could take the Accuplacer® test (during the transition period) to identify remediation needs and provide guidance for their placement in one or more appropriate bridge courses available during the summer and during the senior year. These bridge courses would have a uniform set of learning outcomes linked to achieving college readiness in identified subjects and could be offered by either the local high school or a college and either in the students' senior year or the summer prior to or following senior year. If students pass the bridge course at the agreed-upon proficiency level and decide to attend college, they could begin immediately to enroll in credit-bearing courses without having to re-take the Accuplacer®. Such courses would provide for earlier identification of subject matter problem areas and earlier remediation for students experiencing such

¹⁸ It has been reported that, for colleges and universities, the crucial date for the PARCC assessments is academic year 2018-19 because of the lead time necessary to apply the "passing" scores for purposes of college placement.

problems. Students who achieve college ready status, either through standardized testing (e.g., SAT or ACT) or through the successful completion of a bridge course, will be offered opportunities to “speed up,” to advance to college level work through enhanced dual enrollment opportunities available through a myriad of higher education providers. The state Department of Education should provide the necessary leadership in the development of these bridge courses, including the uniform set of learning outcomes that will guide them.

2. Time in the school day is not unlimited and must be used efficiently and effectively. Students who do not successfully complete a specific end-of-course assessment (e.g., Geometry) will require school-based opportunities to relearn the target skills and knowledge. This will consume valuable time. The limited time available during the school day should be carefully examined as specific graduation requirements are considered. There should be sufficient flexibility in the requirements so that students who need additional time to master the core academic requirements will not be precluded from pursuing electives that address their individual goals and objectives, such as a career and technical education program, visual/performing arts, or other specialized areas that may motivate students to persist in high school through graduation.
3. Potential changes in teacher education programs in colleges and universities represent another important issue to consider. The advent of the Common Core State Standards, end-of-course assessments, and a dynamic move to preparing all students to be college and career ready by the time they graduate from high school may require changes in the manner in which teacher candidates are further prepared. Undergraduate and graduate pre-service teacher preparation programs will need to address the Common Core State

Standards in their curricula, and they will need to ensure that their graduates are both well versed in the most current effective formative and summative assessment methodologies and have been exposed to a broad array of the most current effective instructional practices.

Summary

A plan to address the activities and challenges of the transitional period is recommended in three phases. The first phase provides for end-of-course assessment development. During this phase, the HSPA and AHSA will remain in use, and bridge courses to remediate students' learning needs will be introduced. During the second phase, new end-of-course assessments will be developed and validated, teacher professional development will be initiated, and course structures and instructional strategies will be aligned with Common Core State Standards and state curriculum standards. During this phase, students will be required to take end-of-course assessment, but they will not be required to pass them as a condition for graduation. End-of-course courses, however, will be posted on students' transcripts, and aggregate mean scores will be posted on the School Report Card. The third phase will provide for the full implementation of the new graduation requirements. Students will be required to take and pass those end-of-course assessments specified by the state Department of Education. Each of these phases will have different consequences for students depending on the year of graduation.

Finally, in recognition of the complexity of the transition from the existing system of student performance assessment and graduation requirements to the new system, the Task Force has identified several issues that must be considered. These include the introduction of a system of assessment procedures and programs to bridge the gap between the present and 2017-18 when the Accuplacer[®] will no longer be necessary; the time and costs associated with (a) developing,

maintaining, and sustaining the new system of end-of-course assessments, (b) the remedial and prevention services that will be required as part of the new system, and (c) teacher professional development to implement the new system; as well as the revisions that may be necessary in pre-service teacher education program. As the transition to the new system unfolds, these issues warrant careful consideration.

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APPENDIX A

Membership of the Task Force on College and Career Readiness

Marie Barry, Director of Career and Technical Education, N.J. Department of Education

Casey Crabill, President, Raritan Valley Community College

Bob Goodman, Teacher, Bergen County Vocational and Technical School District and
Executive Director of the N.J. Center for Teaching and Learning

Dana Egreczky, Vice President, Workforce Development, New Jersey Chamber of Commerce

Bari Erlichson, Asst. Commissioner, Chief Performance Officer, N.J. Department of Education

Jeff Hauger, Director, Office of Assessments, N.J. Department of Education

Barbara Gantwerk, Asst. Commissioner, Programs and Operations, N.J. Department of
Education

Michael Gorman, Superintendent, Pemberton Township Schools

Darryl Greer, Executive Director, N.J. Association of State Colleges and Universities

Dave Hespe, Chief of Staff, New Jersey Department of Education, Task Force Chair

Harvey Kesselman, Provost and Executive Vice President, Richard Stockton College

Steve Koffler, NJDOE Technical Advisory Committee; Adjunct Faculty at The College of New
Jersey

Mary Jane Kurabinski, Director, Office of Literacy, N.J. Department of Education

Glenn Lang, Designee for Rochelle Hendricks, Secretary of Higher Education,

Penny MacCormack, Asst. Commissioner, Chief Academic Officer, N.J. Department of Education

Courtney McAnuff, Vice President of Enrollment, Rutgers University

Larry Nespoli, Executive Director, Council of Community Colleges

Michael Pennella, Superintendent, Essex County Vocational Schools

Peter Renwick, Principal, Westfield High School

Kathleen Waldron, President, William Paterson University

Ray Yannuzzi, President, Camden County College

APPENDIX B

Charge to the Task Force on College and Career Readiness

The Department of Education is committed to ensuring that all children graduate high school ready for college and careers. Attaining this goal begins with developing a clear understanding of the skills and knowledge a student should master to be "college and career ready." That inquiry must be informed by the expectations of higher education institutions and employers as well as internationally benchmarked standards. The next, and equally critical, step is to assure that appropriate assessments are in place to evaluate the degree to which students have achieved mastery of these readiness standards.

In order to address these critical questions, the Task Force on College and Career Readiness has been established by the Department of Education. It is charged with answering the following questions:

1. What does college and career readiness mean?
2. What is the appropriate way to assess this level of student achievement?
3. What graduation requirements should be required including comprehensive examinations and end of course assessments?
4. What process, benchmarks, and timelines should be established to guide transition from the current system to the new system?

The Task Force shall accomplish this charge by:

- Evaluating the degree to which the New Jersey HSPA and ASHA are appropriately gauging college and career readiness
- Reviewing how other state are defining and evaluating college and career readiness;
- Recommending specific educational standards, course offerings, learning outcomes, graduation requirements, college entrance and placement requirements, and workforce readiness.
- Identifying the means of measuring success for schools and districts including assessment tools to measure school completion and college entrance readiness that can be relied on by P-12, higher education and employers as a valid indicator of student readiness. The review shall include recommendations concerning a new comprehensive exam and end of course assessments.
- Identifying data needs related to NJ demographics, school learning outcomes, completion and assessment, college entrance, retention and graduation, and demonstrated national best practice aligning school and college completion.
- Establishing a state level transition plan and timelines for moving from the existing system to the new system including:
 - establishing a structure and process to support implementation of the school/college completion agenda
 - engagement of appropriate constituencies, including teachers; faculty; school, college, business leaders and others
 - identifying the need for professional development
 - field testing of the new assessments.

The Task Force will provide a report setting forth its recommendations by December 31, 2011.

APPENDIX C
Task Force Process and Deliberations

Task Force Meetings

Seven meetings of the Task Force were held in Trenton on the following dates:

October 12, 2011
October 25, 2011
November 10, 2011
November 23, 2011
December 8, 2011
December 19, 2011

Public Meetings

Two public meetings were held as follows:

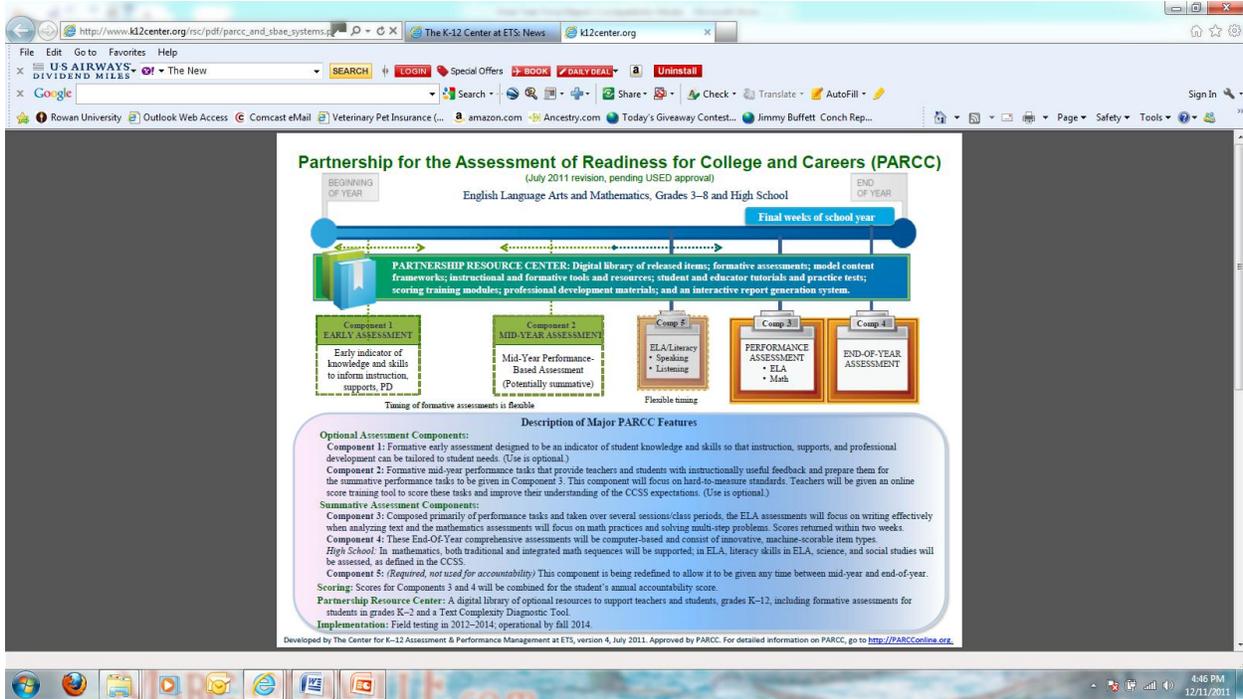
December 13, 2011 at the County College of Morris
December 15, 2011 at the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey

Other

In addition to these meetings, two additional meetings are anticipated on January 11, 2012 and February 17, 2012 to discuss the Acting Commissioner's questions and potential revisions to the final report.

APPENDIX D

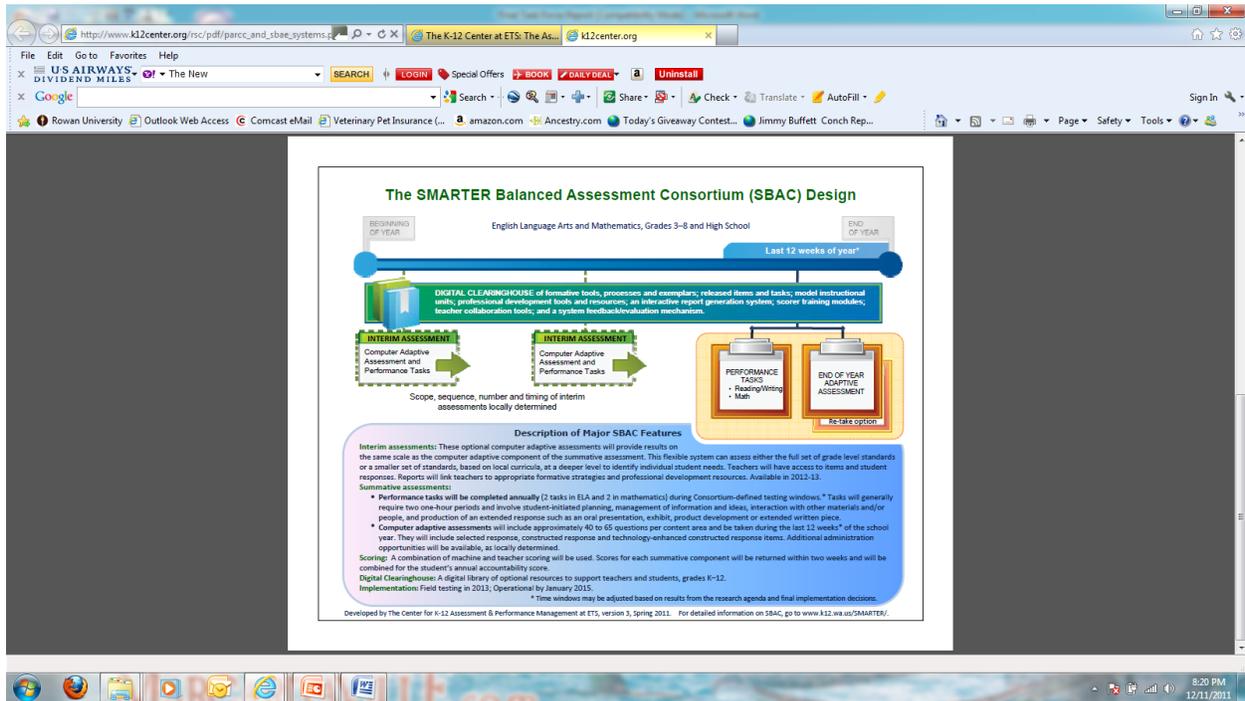
Graphic Illustration of the PARCC System



Source: The Center for K12 Assessment & Performance Management at ETS
(see http://www.k12center.org/publications/assessment_consortia.html)

APPENDIX E

Graphic Illustration of the SBAC Assessment System



Source: The Center for K12 Assessment & Performance Management at ETS
 (see http://www.k12center.org/publications/assessment_consortia.html)

The SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) is a 31-state consortium¹⁹ that was awarded a \$176 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education to develop a comprehensive assessment system including formative (interim & benchmark) and summative assessments linked to the Common Core State Standards. The formative exams and resources will be available for teachers throughout the year and will inform instruction by giving teachers diagnostic information about the extent students have mastered concepts and developed necessary skills. Grounded in cognitive development theory about how learning progresses across grades and how college and career-readiness emerge over time; these assessment will provide comprehensive and content-cluster measures that include computer adaptive assessments and performance tasks, administered at locally determined intervals (Forgione & Doorey, 2010).

The summative assessment, which is intended to be administered during the last 12 weeks of the school year, will include a series of performance tasks in reading, writing, and mathematics as well as an end-of-year assessment for accountability of the standards for the year. Designed to provide valid, reliable, and fair measures of students' progress toward and attainment of the knowledge and skills required to be college and career ready, these formative assessments will capitalize on the strengths of computer adaptive testing, i.e., efficient and precise measurement across the full range of achievement and quick turnaround of results. They will produce composite content area scores based on the computer-adaptive items and performance tasks. Professional development resources will also be available through this effort (Forgione & Doorey, 2010).

¹⁹ SBAC states collectively educate about 21 million K-12 students in the United States.