

RELEASE OF AMERICAN DIPLOMA PROJECT FINAL REPORT AND BENCHMARKS

**P-16 Council
Agenda Item B
March 22, 2004**

Update

The American Diploma Project's benchmarks defining readiness for both college and the skilled workplace in the areas of English and mathematics were formally released February 10, 2004, at a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. The report, *Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma That Counts*, was distributed to the members of the Council on Postsecondary Education and the Kentucky Board of Education at their joint meeting February 11 (Agenda Item A).

The benchmarks, work samples, and the policy recommendations of the ADP report have implications for all of Kentucky's education stakeholders. The benchmarks set a clear and nationally researched standard of the knowledge and skills that an incoming college student must demonstrate to be placed, without remediation, into credit-bearing college courses and that an entry-level employee in the skilled workplace must demonstrate in order not to require remediation at employer expense. By engaging in a thoughtful analysis and making appropriate improvements in the Program of Studies and the Core Content for Assessment, K-12 educators will be assured of a world-class set of academic expectations aligned with national benchmarks. By publicly endorsing these benchmarks and guaranteeing that any student able to demonstrate these competencies will be placed into credit-bearing coursework, our universities and community and technical colleges can clearly define entry-level college expectations that high school students, their teachers, parents, and guidance counselors can clearly understand. The benchmarks also provide adult educators with a clear standard for refining their curriculum to prepare adult learners not only to pass the GED but also to be ready for credit-bearing college work. They further provide university teacher preparation programs with a framework for revising their curricula to prepare teachers to teach these competencies. With the approval of key Kentucky employers, many of whom assisted in establishing the ADP benchmarks, Kentucky high school graduates will know that ability to demonstrate these competencies also will lead to preferred status in the job application process.

The KBE indicated at its June 2003 meeting that it would review the final version of the benchmarks and policy recommendations in light of its curriculum and assessment standards.

Creating a default high school curriculum in line with college preparatory requirements would have a dramatic, positive effect on college remediation, persistence, and graduation rates. A separate "pre-college curriculum" would therefore be unnecessary. When state minimum high school academic expectations are enhanced by ADP standards, high school students will be more successful in college or the workplace. The Council on Postsecondary Education will need to review its pre-college curriculum and minimum admissions policy in light of the revised academic expectations.

Kentucky's participation in the ADP has provided valuable assistance to the continuing development of a comprehensive and coherent education, workforce, and economic development policy agenda. Kentucky's education and economic development reforms began in relative isolation from each other. Kentucky's K-12 reform was undertaken before the critical importance of postsecondary education to the economic well being of the Commonwealth and its citizens was fully understood. Postsecondary reform, including revisions to the pre-college curriculum, did not have the benefit of subsequent research indicating the pivotal role of the high school senior year and the predictive value of high school mathematics on postsecondary performance. The goals outlined by Kentucky's recent new economy legislation require a clear definition of the education and workforce preparation needed to attain them. Adult education legislation was enacted prior to adult education being brought under the aegis of the Council. With the Kentucky Department of Education, the Council on Postsecondary Education, the Education Professional Standards Board, and workforce development now organized under the Education Cabinet, the national research-based ADP benchmarks offer a starting point for meeting the Commonwealth's educational attainment and workforce goals.

The ADP recommendations suggest the need for continuing dialogue among the P-16 Council's partner members toward the most appropriate means for incorporating recommendations from the ADP report into the existing agency frameworks. Some, but not all, of the topics that may need to be addressed are listed below.

For the KBE

- Should the KBE make changes in the state's minimum graduation requirements in light of the ADP recommendations?
- Should the KBE revisit the issue of individual student accountability on the CATS assessment in light of the issues raised by the ADP recommendations?

For the CPE

- Should the CPE work with Kentucky's postsecondary institutions to develop a consistent statewide placement policy that guarantees any incoming student who demonstrates competency in the ADP benchmarks a placement in credit-bearing coursework in English and mathematics?
- Should the CPE direct Kentucky Adult Education to begin refining the adult education curriculum based upon the ADP benchmarks?

For the EPSB

- The EPSB will continue to review curriculum in teacher preparation and make changes as needed. If the KBE modifies the state's minimum graduation requirements in light of the ADP recommendations, the EPSB will convey this to preparation programs and monitor accordingly during accreditation visits and annual updates.

For the KBE and the CPE

- Should the KBE and the CPE consider linkages between Kentucky's high school accountability measures with postsecondary admissions and placement policies based on the ADP recommendations?

For the KDE, the CPE, and workforce development

- Should the KDE, the CPE, and workforce development encourage business and labor organizations to give job or apprenticeship applicants who can demonstrate competency in the ADP benchmarks a preference in hiring or admissions decisions?

By involving stakeholders and ensuring appropriate buy-in from the outset, the P-16 Council's partner members can begin to formulate P-16 policies that link each level and sector of education and workforce development, and to set a clear target for college and workplace readiness at which all of Kentucky's high school students can aim.

