



Postsecondary Pathways

Students have many options as they leave high school and enter postsecondary education or the workforce. But during the six years that the Data Quality Campaign has reviewed report cards from all 50 states and the District of Columbia, we have found that states have struggled to provide a robust picture of all of these options on their report cards. Instead, states have historically focused on information about students who move from K–12 education directly to four-year, public universities. Report cards can provide clarity about a student’s options by providing information on the pathways that students in their district and state have taken—and their readiness to do so. States should prioritize collecting and sharing information on all of a student’s postsecondary readiness opportunities and outcomes in ways that help students make the best decisions for their futures.

IN OUR REVIEW OF 2021 REPORT CARDS, WE FOUND:

37 reported postsecondary enrollment, but only **11 of those states** reported postsecondary enrollment in two-year institutions. Breaking down enrollment data by two-year and four-year programs, as well as whether the institutions are private, public, in state, or out of state, highlights the diversity of options in postsecondary education.

6 included data on students entering the workforce or the military. Information about students’ postsecondary pathways helps state and local leaders make decisions to ensure that K–12 schools are effectively preparing every student for their next step.


2 included the number of students filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), though neither state disaggregated this information by student group. Because students and their families complete FAFSA forms to apply

for financial aid, completion rates help the public understand how many students are applying to college—especially as FAFSA completion rates have decreased significantly during the pandemic.


34 included career and technical education (CTE) participation or completion, and **34 states** included dual enrollment participation or completion (though these groups did not include all of the same states). **Fifteen of these states** included CTE data, dual enrollment data, or both as part of a composite college and career readiness indicator. While composite indicators include overall numbers for advanced coursework, dual enrollment, CTE, and other work-based learning, they do not provide separate information on the types of college and career readiness pathways students took. By including CTE and career readiness data alongside college-going rates, state leaders can help students and families see the value of CTE pathways.




Bright Spots

 **Pennsylvania's** report card provides information on the following indicators, almost all of which are disaggregated by different student groups:

- Number of students who transitioned to postsecondary, workforce, and the military;
- Number of students who participated in advanced coursework (e.g., Advanced Placement), are enrolled in a college course, or participated in a CTE program of study concentration; and
- Number of students who earned industry-recognized credentials or completed work-based learning experiences.

 **North Dakota** shares postsecondary pathways data that is broken down into simple, easy-to-read line graphs. The state prioritizes data on postsecondary enrollment, which includes:

- Data on attendance at in-state, out-of-state, public, private, four-year, and two-year schools and those not pursuing postsecondary education;
- Percentage of 12th graders who have successfully submitted FAFSA applications;
- Data on dual credit and Advanced Placement participants broken down by grade level; and
- Percentage of students enrolled in any English or math college developmental course within 4 months, 12 months, and 16 months after graduation.

 **South Carolina's** report card includes the following detailed postsecondary pathways data:

- Enrollment in and completion of CTE coursework, credential attainment, and the types of industry credentials earned by career cluster (e.g., Business Management & Administration, Finance);
- Completion of college applications and FAFSA forms, as well as the number of students who took the SAT or ACT and their average scores; and
- Results for students earning Ready to Work Certificates, which measure “real-world” skills that are critical to job success.