



## **Chief State School Officers Offer Statements of Support for *Opportunities and Options* Report**

More than 40 Chief State School Officers from across the country have offered their support for [\*Opportunities and Options: Making Career Preparation Work for Students\*](#). The Council of Chief State School Officers today published a series of actions states are taking to close the skills gap and make sure more students graduate from high school prepared for successful careers.

The recommended actions in the *Opportunities and Options* report, produced by CCSSO's Career Readiness Task Force, seek to elevate career readiness programs in K-12 public schools. The work of the Task Force was supported in part by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

The following is a list of Chief State School Officers who have already voiced support for the *Opportunities and Options* report. Click on a state name to see a Chief's statement of support.

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[Hawaii](#)

[Idaho](#)

[Illinois](#)

Indiana

[Iowa](#)

[Kansas](#)

[Kentucky](#)

[Louisiana](#)

Maine

[Maryland](#)

[Massachusetts](#)

[Michigan](#)

Minnesota

[Mississippi](#)

Missouri

Nebraska

[Nevada](#)

[New Hampshire](#)

[New Jersey](#)

[New Mexico](#)

[New York](#)

[North Carolina](#)

Oklahoma

[Oregon](#)

[Rhode Island](#)

[South Carolina](#)

Tennessee

[Texas](#)

[Utah](#)

Virginia

[Vermont](#)

[Washington](#)

[West Virginia](#)

[Wisconsin](#)

[Northern Mariana Islands](#)

U.S. Virgin Islands

## **Statements of Support for *Opportunities and Options: Making Career Preparation Work for Students***

"In Alabama, collaboration between K-12 educators, two and four-year colleges, and business/industry has resulted in an unprecedented effort to make sure graduates are prepared for the world that awaits them after high school. Our commitment is to make sure Alabama's educational standards are truly aligned to the expectations of higher education and the workforce, thus allowing students to seamlessly progress into, and succeed at, college-level instruction and/or the high-skilled industry work."

"In order for our students to compete with and outpace students from across the nation, and around the world, it is critical that we arm them with the knowledge, skills, and abilities that are in demand in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We owe it to our students to not only make sure they graduate, but do so with credentials to secure a meaningful, high-paying position or enroll in an institution of higher learning with nominal or no need for remediation."

---- Alabama Superintendent Dr. Thomas R. Bice

"In Alaska 4 out of 5 of the career level jobs that our students will be pursuing don't require a 4 year degree. We have to provide our students with the skills they need to be successful. I support the Career Readiness Report that clearly identifies the steps states need to take to improve the opportunities that we are offering our students."

---- Alaska Education Commissioner Mike Hanley

"This report contains insightful recommendations that will help improve career technical education throughout the nation. Educators, by working together with business leaders, can design strong programs that provide students with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills they can apply in the real world of a career as well as in college. Our new Career Pathways programs in California have already produced positive results for participants – attendance is rising, rates of enrolling in postsecondary programs are up, and earnings for graduates are increasing."

---- California Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson

"Our renewed focus on career readiness can also drive relevance into our classrooms. At a systemic level, partnering regularly with industry and workforce can create a flywheel of innovation and a cycle of revising and updating our graduation requirements in order to prepare students not just for our current understanding of the 21<sup>st</sup> century but for the jobs of the future."

---- Colorado Education Commissioner Robert Hammond

"The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Public School System supports the report of the CCSSO Task Force on Improving Career Readiness. The reason behind our support on this report is that the CNMI Public School System will be able to use some of the recommendations to improve and enhance its Career and Technical Education program. The PSS is an integral part of preparing youth for the workforce and through the recommendations offered, we will be able to transform our career and technical education program. A key component of this

transformation is the partnership of the private sector to play a role in giving our youth the opportunity for authentic work-based learning experiences.

---- The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Commissioner of Education  
Rita A. Sablan

“In order to prepare every Delaware student to be successful in college and a career after high school and have the opportunity to choose his or her life path, we must partner with our business community to ensure our students graduate with the skills and knowledge most essential to fill Delaware’s employment needs. This expectation is reflected in the continued effort to strengthen our career preparation programs so that every student has the opportunity to earn a meaningful post-secondary degree or credential and seek competitive employment.”

--- Delaware Secretary of Education Mark T. Murphy

“I fully support the recommendations of the Career Readiness task force report. The report moves CTE to center stage and shines a spotlight on career education’s ability to engage all students in real world, relevant learning that is directly linked to their futures. The recommendations will support the development of intrinsic motivation that will power students through high school and beyond.”

---- District of Columbia State Superintendent of Education Jesús Aguirre

“The recommendations and action steps align with goals that Florida has championed during the past decade: To shift from a vocational education system to a career and technical education system that prepared students, through an articulated career pathways approach, culminating in a postsecondary credential/certificate or degree. Recommendation No. 1’s important policy approach is the cornerstone of Florida’s Career and Professional Act, which requires demand-driven programming to prepare students for college and high-skill, high-wage and high-demand careers. I welcome the opportunity to work with CCSSO to advance and promote promising practices and policy for quality career and technical education.”

---- Florida Commissioner of Education Pam Stewart

“The recommendations set forth in this report are of crucial importance to Georgia’s students, and students across the nation. Upon graduation, our students will enter a world and a workforce that are changing rapidly, and it is our job to prepare them with the skills they need to thrive. Strategic partnerships with the employer community, strong career preparation programs, and communication of the importance of career readiness to schools, students and parents will remain a top priority as we progress toward this goal.”

---- Georgia School Superintendent Dr. John Barge

“This report reinforces our responsibility to ensure that all of our students graduate from our schools ready for college, careers, or both. Today’s students are our future teachers, entrepreneurs, medical technicians, business professionals and government leaders. Hawaii is committed to continuing our community and industry partnerships to provide programs and curriculum that put students on a path to reach their goals.”

--- Hawaii State Department of Education Superintendent Kathryn Matayoshi

"I have always said that a high-quality education system and a robust economy are inseparable. You cannot have one without the other. That is why I am proud to support Opportunities and Options, a set of bold and concrete recommendations I know will ensure every Idaho high school student graduates better prepared for a career. With these recommendations, we can create an education system in Idaho in which the business and education communities work closely together to make school more relevant and rigorous for every child, no matter which career path they choose to pursue after high school."

-----Idaho Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna

"It is so important that we remember our desire for all students to transition into a career. These recommendations are critical to how we think about and measure such preparation. Students need pathways that anticipate such transitions beginning in middle school. We should communicate to all parents and students the value of career readiness."

---- Illinois Superintendent Christopher Koch

"Economic growth cannot be achieved without a seamless, high-quality education system that is aligned with labor-market demand. These recommendations from the Council of Chief State School Officers' Career Readiness Task Force will serve as important planning tools for states as they work not only to reduce skilled-worker shortages, but also to define what it means to be career-ready and to set expectations accordingly."

--- Iowa Department of Education Director Brad Buck

"Kansas educators are committed to increase the percent of our graduates that have the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful at the postsecondary level, or directly into the workforce. A partnership with PreK-Higher Education, including business and industry, will be critical for us to have a common focus on success. Engaging students with individual plans of study, quality career preparation programs, and monitoring multiple indicators and evidence of student success, including college and career ready preparation will help Kansas reach our goals."

--- Kansas Interim Commissioner Brad Neuenswander

"Kentucky is committed to the integration and elevation of career and technical education (CTE), and fully supports the recommendations in the report prepared by the Council of Chief State School Officers Task Force on Improving Career Readiness. Transforming CTE will take effort, partnerships and creativity, but Kentucky is committed to making the necessary changes for the good of its students and the future of the Commonwealth."

---- Kentucky Education Commissioner Terry Holliday

"In order for our children to successfully compete for high-wage jobs in the global workforce, it's imperative that secondary schools, colleges and universities, and industry engage. These recommendations are right on target. In Louisiana, we're doing this right now with our Jump Start regional teams, made up of school districts and businesses, developing innovative courses for students pursuing career credentials such as Industry Based Certificates and associates degrees."

---- Louisiana Superintendent John White

"The goal of public education must be to prepare graduates for differentiated career options. All too often we have focused narrowly on four-year college attendance as the ultimate pathway to a viable career. This new report, 'Opportunities and Options,' sets state education systems on an important path that includes a commitment to work with business and industry, and a pledge to increase quality career pathways for all students."

--- Maryland Superintendent of Schools Lillian Lowery

"I am pleased to see the CCSSO encouraging partnerships between schools and employers, and I hope such activities will help students understand that what they learn in the classroom today will be important for their future. Massachusetts has worked on similar efforts through both the Massachusetts Governor's Career Pathways Committee and my department's Connecting Activities efforts."

--- Massachusetts Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education Mitchell D. Chester

"Skilled trades and 21<sup>st</sup> Century manufacturing jobs are in demand, and they need a high quality education pathway to meet the high tech requirements of their global and automated evolution. All students should have access and opportunity to succeed in these expanding careers. The recommendations in the Opportunities and Options report will focus our schools in the directions we need."

---- Michigan Superintendent Mike Flanagan

"We have a wonderful opportunity through our high school career preparation programs to provide businesses with the qualified people they need and to set students on the path toward meaningful careers. These programs equip students for college and industry certifications that lead to high-demand, high-skilled jobs. By 2020, nearly two-thirds of all jobs will require postsecondary education or training. By aligning our programs to employers' needs, we help meet labor market demands and ensure students are prepared for careers that can sustain a family."

---- Mississippi Superintendent of Education Dr. Carey M. Wright

"Under the leadership of Governor Sandoval, Nevada is working hard to close the skills gap between those with a standard high school diploma and those with postsecondary education. This Career Readiness Report will help us ensure that ALL Nevada students have pathways to success after high school and that the needs of our business community are also met."

---- Nevada Superintendent of Public Instruction Dale Erquiaga

"For several years, we have recognized that the bar for success in college for New Hampshire high school graduates has risen, particularly in the areas of literacy and mathematics. This report makes it clear that new expectations for career readiness will require a deeper look at the current and future workforce needs of New Hampshire businesses and industries, a consequential higher bar for career preparation in our high schools, and greater accountability for our schools in meeting career preparation expectations."

---- New Hampshire Deputy Commissioner Paul Leather

“‘Opportunities and Options’ sets forth a blueprint to advance career readiness throughout the nation. It’s an issue that has been a top priority in New Jersey, and we applaud CCSSO’s work on this front.”

---- New Jersey’s Acting Commissioner of Education David C. Hespe

“The communities we serve know what success looks like and we owe it to our students to implement a system that delivers high standards. When we hold ourselves accountable to ensure our students are prepared, the result is a brighter future for our state.”

--- New Mexico Secretary of Education Hanna Skandera

“CCSSO’s report *“Opportunities and Options: Making Career Preparation Work for Students”* provides a helpful framework for prioritizing career readiness and for creating more career-based learning opportunities for students. As New York builds multiple pathways to graduation and to college, career and citizenship readiness for our students, we are committed to partnering with educators, businesses and community leaders to ensure students have work-based learning opportunities and access to high-quality, rigorous pathways aligned to high-demand, high-skill jobs. We look forward to partnering with CCSSO and other states to further improve the career readiness of our students.”

--- New York Commissioner of Education and President of the University of the State of New York John B. King, Jr.

“Many jobs that pay well in the United States go unfilled because of the lack of skilled workers needed by employers. North Carolina, as well as other states, has begun to focus intently on ensuring that students are career ready. The CCSSO report provides a road map to help us address the skills gap in our nation by implementing the recommendations found in the report. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction will continue to collaborate with partners such as the Community College system, the Department of Commerce and our economic development representatives to develop a system that will reward work ready communities.”

----- North Carolina Superintendent June Atkinson

“This document serves as a wonderful guiding tool as we work to continuously improve our educational system. This commitment to high quality career and technical programs will create new opportunities for our students to thrive and be successful in their career.”

--- Oregon Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction Rob Saxton

“This timely report emphasizes some key strategies that can help all states improve the quality of career preparation: identifying statewide and regional areas of need, developing close collaboration between schools and businesses so that students and teachers have the opportunity for instruction in actual workplace settings, and raising the quality of education for all students. In Rhode Island, our goal is to ensure that our students leave career-preparation programs with either industry-recognized credentials, postsecondary-education credits, or advanced standing in apprenticeship programs.”

---- Rhode Island Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education Deborah A. Gist

“In South Carolina we are working hard to enact the policies recommended in this paper. Throughout the state our traditional high schools are partnering with our career centers, technical colleges and industry to ensure all students, not just the 30 percent who will earn a 4-year college degree, are prepared for life after high school. Apprenticeships are booming and we are working to provide more flexibility in the traditional, one-size-fits-all high school curriculum.”

----- South Carolina Superintendent of Education Dr. Mick Zais

“Equipping all of our children to compete meaningfully in a rapidly changing economy is the critical work of educators. We fully support a critical and continuing examination of educational practices and policies to insure that are able to truly equip our children for life in a modern economy. College *and* career readiness is at the heart of that work. We support the approach outlined in this timely CCSSO report.”

--- Utah Superintendent of Public Instruction Brad C. Smith

“Vermont supports the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) Task Force on Improving Career Readiness (<http://bit.ly/CCSSOCareerReady>). We have a history of placing high value on our education systems, including the Flexible Pathways Act of 2013 (Act 77) and the Education Quality Standards of the State Board of Education. As a small state we need to continue to improve our engagement and alignment with employer needs; providing opportunities and options for our students to live and thrive in Vermont. We look forward to working with our employers and other state agencies to create new opportunities for career readiness, including Career Technical Education programs of study and internships in high-demand fields.

----- Vermont Secretary Rebecca Holcombe

“There has been a lot of talk about getting students ‘college- and career-ready.’ We’ve increased rigor in the classrooms and we have a pretty good idea what it means to be ‘college ready.’ But ‘career ready’ is a bit murkier. The Career Readiness Task Force has done a good job of highlighting what states need to do to get students to that level. What I appreciate most about the Task Force’s recommendations is the need to involve the labor market. Since I’ve become state superintendent, one area I’ve repeatedly stressed is partnerships. Education cannot be done in a vacuum; it takes everyone. Using the employer community will help students understand the specific jobs that are available, which will in turn direct their education accordingly.

“A second crucial aspect of the recommendations concerns quality education. ‘Career readiness’ should never, ever be synonymous with ‘less rigorous.’ All students who want to choose a career-ready path in high school deserve and demand that that path be of the same caliber as a college-ready path. I look forward to determine how the Task Force’s recommendations can be applied to Washington state.”

--- Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction Randy Dorn

“West Virginia believes the CCSSO Career Readiness Report provides critical recommendations to advance education for all students. West Virginia’s simulated workplace environment

embraces these recommendations by allowing students the opportunity to take ownership of their education within an authentic workplace culture. Simulated workplaces encourage local business and industry experts to join onsite review teams to assist schools in meeting their workforce needs and expectations.”

--- West Virginia Superintendent of Schools Michael Martirano

“Wisconsin remains committed to improving career readiness for all students. We have several efforts underway at the department and I continue to be encouraged by the cross-department work being done around this issue in Wisconsin. As part of the Governor’s Council on Workforce Investment, we are exploring workplace learning initiatives where kids get hands-on opportunities at local businesses. As part of a joint effort with the state legislature, by the 2017-18 school year, all students will design their own Academic and Career Plans that allow them to explore different professions and learn what skills are needed to succeed. We are also looking at ways to incorporate career readiness into our school and district report cards. I am pleased with the direction Task Force Chair Terry Holiday is leading our group and look forward to future discussions around career readiness.”

---- Wisconsin Superintendent Tony Evers

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