

# What's New with Kids – April 2005

## NEVADA KIDS COUNT NEWSLETTER

### Site of the Month

Last month's newsletter dealt with school readiness. This month's deals with college and work-place readiness. Yes, I bypassed 12 years of education, but I want to make you aware of a project that Nevada was involved with and to direct you to reports stemming from the project.

The American Diploma Project was created by Achieve Inc., the Education Trust, the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, and the National Alliance of Business to ensure that students were prepared with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college, the high-performance, high-growth workplace, and the armed forces. To accomplish this objective they enlisted five states, including Nevada, to help develop math and English benchmarks that identify the skills students will need to succeed; conducted a poll to determine how well schools prepare students to succeed in the aforementioned endeavors; made recommendations on how to improve high school curriculum; and specified an action plan.

Publications resulting from the American Diploma Project include *Rising to the Challenge: Are High School Graduates Prepared for College and Work?*, *The Expectations Gap: A 50-State Review of High School Graduation Requirements*, *Do Graduation Tests Measure Up? A Closer Look at State High School Exit Exams*, and *Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma That Counts*. Only two of the publications are reviewed here.

*Rising to the Challenge: Are High School Graduates Prepared for College and Work?* (available online at: <[http://www.2005summit.org/en\\_US/pdf/pollreport.pdf](http://www.2005summit.org/en_US/pdf/pollreport.pdf)>) summarizes the results of a survey of public high school graduates, employers who make personnel decisions, and college instructors who teach first-year students. Some of the findings include:

- ▶ 61% of the college students felt they were extremely well-prepared for college work expected of them
- ▶ 53 % of the nonstudents who went directly to the work force felt they were extremely well-prepared for the work expected of them
- ▶ 18% of the college professors felt that most of their students came to college extremely or very well-prepared
- ▶ 65% of college instructors felt that public high schools do not adequately prepare graduates to meet the expectations they face in college
- ▶ 65% of college students would have worked harder had they known about the expectations of college
- ▶ 77% of the nonstudents would have applied themselves more if they had known more about the expectations of the work world
- ▶ 62% of college students and 72% of the nonstudents would have taken more challenging courses in high school

*The Expectations Gap: A 50-State Review of High School Graduation Requirements* (available online at: <[http://www.achieve.org/dstore.nsf/Lookup/coursetaking/\\$file/coursetaking.pdf](http://www.achieve.org/dstore.nsf/Lookup/coursetaking/$file/coursetaking.pdf)>) reviews state high school graduation requirements, concentrating on math and English. The authors conclude that few states have made a college-preparatory curriculum the norm and recommend that students take four years of rigorous math, including algebra I and II, geometry, data analysis and statistics and four years of grade-level English with courses including literature, writing, reasoning, logic, and communication skills. How well does Nevada measure up? Nevada specifies only the number of courses students should take, not which courses. For additional information on Nevada schools' success in preparing high school students for college or the work force go to <[http://www.achieve.org/dstore.nsf/Lookup/Nevadadata/\\$file/Nevadadata.pdf](http://www.achieve.org/dstore.nsf/Lookup/Nevadadata/$file/Nevadadata.pdf)>.

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