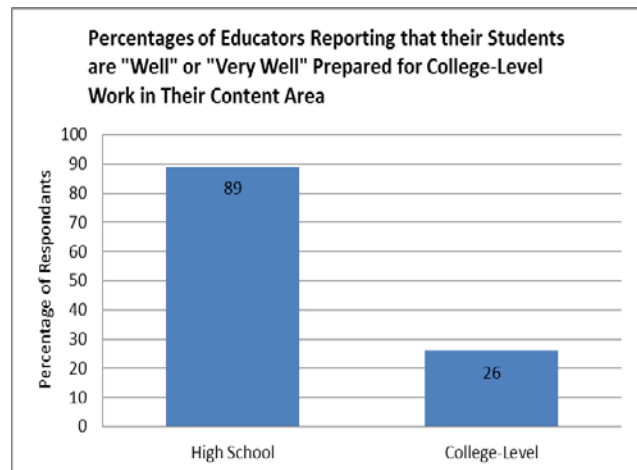




High school and college instructors disagree about college readiness.

A recent national survey of K-12 and post-secondary educators found that **89% of high school teachers considered their students “well” or “very well” prepared for college while only 26% of college instructors agreed.** This finding, one of several highlighted in *The ACT National Curriculum Survey 2012*, illustrates a lack of clarity about what it means to be college-ready and a general lack of coordination between K-12 and higher education.¹

In recognition of the demands of today’s economy, every state in the country has identified college and career readiness as an instructional goal for K-12 students. States recognize, and business leaders agree, that the majority of students need some kind of post-secondary education to compete for the jobs of tomorrow. In North Carolina, students can take advantage of early college or dual enrollment programs to get a jump on the postsecondary education they need. Students can then choose from community college-based industry certificates, licenses or two- year degrees, or a degree program at a four-year university. Among North Carolina’s business, government, and education leaders, interest is particularly focused on the state’s re-awakening manufacturing sector – the fourth largest manufacturing sector in the nation. North Carolina’s community college system recently redesigned 80 technical programs to promote certification and is actively recruiting students into manufacturing-related programs.²



*Source: ACT National Curriculum Survey 2012

However, the majority of states have not had in place or implemented standards that reflect the knowledge and skills that students need to develop to be truly college- and career-ready. This fact is evident in the high rates of underprepared students who find themselves in non-credit bearing, remedial, or developmental, courses in both community colleges and universities. According to a *Complete College America* study, nearly **20% of all students entering a four-year college or university, and 50 percent of those enrolling in a two year college require at least one developmental course.**³ This is at great expense to students, their families, the institutions, and taxpayers, and results in unacceptably high dropout rates.⁴

In response, North Carolina joined 45 other states and the District of Columbia to develop a set of college- and career-ready standards. State teams, representatives from higher education, parents, teachers, content experts, and business leaders from across the country were involved in every step of the process, and ultimately – through each individual state process – states adopted these standards as their own. North Carolina, in addition, is restructuring remediation requirements to more closely correspond with career demands and to help students enter credit-bearing coursework more quickly.⁵

As ACT’s survey demonstrates, educators in K-12, community college, and four-year institutions do not yet share a definition of college- and career-readiness, but North Carolina is taking significant steps to build such agreement. Current efforts in North Carolina’s K-12 and higher education systems address the college- and career-readiness gap both before and after high school graduation, forming a dual-pronged approach to prevent older students from falling through the cracks during this time of transition.

¹ The ACT National Curriculum Survey 2012. Found online at: <http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/NCS-PolicySummary2012.pdf>.

² Jane Stancill. (May 18, 2013). Colleges aim to lead way to tech jobs. *The News & Observer*. Raleigh, NC.

³ Complete College America. (2012) Remediation: Higher Education’s Bridge to Nowhere. Found online at <http://www.completecollege.org/docs/CCA-Remediation-final.pdf>

⁴ Charles T. Clodfelter, Helen F.Ladd, Clara Muschkin, and Jacob L. Vigdor. (2012) Developmental Education in North Carolina Community Colleges. Presented to the APPAM research conference. Baltimore, MD: Nov. 8-10, 2012.

⁵ <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2013/05/07/190496/remedial-math-classes-unnecessary.html#.UYwCcspfSJ>