



# The Florida Senate

*Interim Project Report 2006-115*

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Committee on Education

Senator Evelyn J. Lynn, Chair

## HIGH SCHOOL REFORM

### SUMMARY

#### RESEARCH AND THE THREE R'S: RIGOR, RELEVANCE, AND RELATIONSHIPS

Our nation's high schools have been called obsolete and the high school diploma is often referred to as a broken promise.<sup>1</sup> Remediation rates for high school graduates enrolling in Florida's Community Colleges is as high as 50 percent and while some statistics show a slight decline in our dropout rate, our four-year graduation rate hovers at 71 percent. The global economy is changing drastically while our high schools continue to operate based on the needs of an economy of some 80 years ago. The research is consistent in establishing the need for and requiring reform.<sup>2</sup>

While the research surrounding high school reform is extensive, the message is recurrent and stresses rigor, relevance, and relationships as the linchpins to successful reform. These three factors are inextricably connected and cannot be implemented individually or in isolation of one another. Florida has taken a leadership role in education reform efforts for many years; a comprehensive and candid review of our high schools presents an enormous opportunity to continue in this leadership capacity for the betterment of our children and economy.

**RIGOR** prepares students for the world beyond high school, whether that involves continuing education or entry into the workforce. Rigor supports the belief that all students respond to engaging and demanding curriculum and the research reinforces that

unchallenging content only serves to disengage learners.

**RELEVANCE**, also referred to as engagement, authenticity, and connections between school and the real world, enhances the curriculum and requires students to make authentic connections between what they are learning and the real world beyond the classroom. When students are able to make viable connections beyond the classroom, they are motivated to embark upon curriculum previously perceived as unattainable or simply too demanding.

**RELATIONSHIPS** between students and adults are the key to establishing a foundation that promotes and enhances opportunities for students to make sense of and internalize rigor and relevance. Meaningful relationships are the springboard for establishing personalized learning environments where every student is known well and supported by the involvement of at least one caring adult. Organizing Florida's large schools into smaller settings that enable every child to be known well can help students successfully navigate and personally apply rigorous educational content.

The Legislature may wish to consider plausible reform efforts specifically targeted to rigor, relevance and relationships with a focus on:

- The transition from middle to high school;
- Targeting of Supplemental Academic Instruction funds for high risk 8th, 9th, and 10th grade students;
- Refinement of subject area standards that include relevant input from the postsecondary and business communities;
- Expansion of quality career and professional academies; and
- Examination of the senior year.

<sup>1</sup> [www.achieve.org/achieve.nsf/](http://www.achieve.org/achieve.nsf/) The American Diploma Project

<sup>2</sup> Southern Regional Education Board (SREB); The National Association of Secondary School Principals; The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; The Aspen Institute; The U.S. Department of Education; The Learning Alliance at Brown University; The Center for Education Policy, Research and Improvement (CEPRI)

## BACKGROUND

### **Middle Grades Reform as the Foundation for High School Reform**

The 2004 Legislature enacted the Middle Grades Reform Act<sup>3</sup> that included the establishment of the Middle Grades Task Force, charged to make recommendations for middle school reform. The findings of the task force resulted in proposed legislation, primarily based on credit requirements and literacy skills for those students reading below grade level. As the proposed legislation evolved, additional emphasis was placed on reform efforts to expand into the high school arena.

Although middle grades reform addresses a younger community of learners, middle school reform has a direct impact on and is fundamentally tied to high school reform efforts.

### **Governors' Summit on High School Reform**

The Governors' Summit on High School Reform, sponsored by the National Governors' Association, was held in February, 2005. The summit demonstrated the urgency for much needed policy changes and reform at both the middle and high school levels and exposed the serious gap in preparing our students not only for postsecondary studies but an ever changing world of work and our knowledge-based economy.

Several additional studies have been conducted and recommendations made by Florida-based policy groups. Although the terminology may be slightly different, the Center for Educational Policy, Research and Improvement (CEPRI) conducted research and submitted a comprehensive report with recommendations that support the rigor, relevance and relationships model.

### **Career and Professional Education: Preparing Florida's Students for the Knowledge Economy (2004 Report by CEPRI):**

CEPRI identified career and professional education as a primary area of focus to improve the quality and effectiveness of Florida's education system. Following a comprehensive study, CEPRI recommended small learning communities, high standards and a rigorous and relevant curriculum for all students, and effective and extensive career guidance and counseling. CEPRI's policy recommendations include a strong academic

foundation at the middle grades, with exploration of available career options prior to high school. Several of the recommendations outlined in CEPRI's report were included in Senate Bill 2138, filed during the 2005 Legislative Session, but which failed to pass.

### **Florida Career Education Study Task Force:**

Florida also convened the Career Education Task Force, headed by Lieutenant Governor Toni Jennings. In its final report of September, 2004, the task force determined that there should be a greater focus on and support of career and professional education. The task force underscored the importance of improving career guidance and counseling to ensure that all K-12 students are informed and prepared for future careers. The premise of the task force findings was that students actively engaged in self awareness, career exploration, and career planning would naturally choose a more rigorous curriculum, work harder, and therefore increase academic achievement and future career options.<sup>4</sup>

## METHODOLOGY

Committee staff identified and reviewed major research studies, all of which targeted high school reform, and conducted follow-up reviews with authors and school sites involved in the research. Additionally, visits were made to school districts in beginning stages of implementation of major reform initiatives, specifically in the area of career technical ventures with Florida's business community. One in particular, the CHOICE Program operated in Okaloosa County, offered a two day workshop for other districts either interested in or beginning comprehensive career technical education reforms.

The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) currently provides funding to Broward, Pinellas, Palm Beach, Miami-Dade, Orange, and Lake Counties to facilitate implementation of smaller learning communities, a key component to high school reform efforts outlined in research.

Staff also requested extensive data from the Florida Department of Education (DOE), reviewed data reports submitted, and met with appropriate DOE staff for follow-up discussions and questions. Research information was also reviewed from studies by the Office of Program Policy and Government Accountability (OPPAGA), Council for Education

<sup>3</sup> s. 1, ch. 2004-255, L.O.F.

<sup>4</sup> Report of Florida Community Colleges and Workforce Education, September, 2004

Policy, Research and Improvement (CEPRI), Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, EdTrust, Inc., the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASPP), and National Council of State Legislatures (NCSL).

## FINDINGS

### RIGOR

The America Diploma Project, a partnership between Achieve, Inc., The Education Trust, and the Thomas Fordham Foundation, conducted a study and issued a report entitled “Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma That Counts.” The report warns that the present-day high school diploma lacks any guarantee that recipients are equipped with the skills necessary to succeed in either a postsecondary setting or the world of work. This is substantiated by the high percentages of students required to take remedial courses at the community college and university level. Interestingly, the report advises policy makers to review the lack of rigor at the middle grades, as students entering high school are ill-prepared for the demands of coursework in grades 9-12. The report contends, however, that the quality of the high school diploma can be redeemed by, among other things, requiring student mastery of more rigorous math and English. The 2004 CEPRI Report, in its discussion of postsecondary readiness, advises policy makers to consider that a rigorous college-prep curriculum is fast becoming essential for all students, not simply those who are college bound.<sup>5</sup>

“Fewer than 30 percent of teenagers think their school is very academically rigorous.”<sup>6</sup>

In addition, the research dispels the mistaken belief that students cannot successfully complete more rigorous coursework when challenged academically. Most students will, in fact, rise to the challenge if given appropriate support. “Clearly, enrollment in more demanding courses does not result in more failures. In fact, the evidence suggests that challenging content, bolstered by a quality student support system, produces lower failure rates. Many students can handle more challenging intellectual assignments than many schools

<sup>5</sup><http://www.cepri.state.fl.us/pdf/Career%20Ed%20Draft%20FINAL%20REPORT%209-8-04v2.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> The Education Trust, in a 2001 study of High School in America

are willing to give them.”<sup>7</sup>

Students enrolled in rigorous, college preparatory level courses are much less likely to be enrolled in remedial courses upon entry into college and are more apt to complete their studies on schedule. Data from DOE reflects that 42 percent of high school graduates entering either a community college or state university are required to take remedial courses prior to beginning college-level coursework.<sup>8</sup>

“The research is pretty compelling about what a rigorous curriculum will do for a student. It gets them to college, then it gets them to stay, and probably from a state perspective, one of the most important things is it gets them out earlier.”<sup>9</sup>

### Rigor and the Demand on Labor Market Needs

The rigor component of the research findings is not only a necessity or luxury simply for those who are college-bound. The fastest growing jobs in the U.S. labor market demand some level of education and training beyond high school (although not necessarily a bachelor’s degree). Over 65 percent of current jobs now require a skilled workforce, an increase of 45 percent over the past 50 years.<sup>10</sup> Seventy-percent of the 30 fastest growing jobs will require education beyond high school and 40 percent will require at least an associate’s degree.<sup>11</sup> Regardless of whether a student has aspirations of attending a four-year college or pursuing a technical trade, both will require courses of sufficient rigor at the college preparatory level in math, science, reading and writing.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Southern Regional Education Board, Research Brief-Mending a Weak Link

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.fldoe.org>, Series 2004-25F

<sup>9</sup> Jason Dean, Education Policy Advisor to Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour

<sup>10</sup> National Summit on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Jobs

<sup>11</sup> Youth at the Crossroads, A Publication of The Education Trust, Winter, 2001

<sup>12</sup> Thinking K-16, The Education Trust, Winter, 2001

### **The Southern Regional Education Board’s High Schools That Work (HSTW)**

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) oversees the implementation of the High Schools That Work (HSTW) model in over 1000 schools nationwide. In their publication *Stealing Best Practices*, one ever-present, common denominator in all successful schools is the engagement of challenging academic studies for all students, a rigorous academic core that includes the following:

- 4 credits in college preparatory English;
- 4 credits in math to include Algebra I and above;
- 3 college prep science credits;
- 3 social studies credits; and
- Mathematics in the senior year.

As a result of the findings of the High Schools That Work, as well as the *American Diploma Project* and other research studies, many states, including Oklahoma, Indiana, Illinois and Texas, have enacted legislation requiring a more stringent academic core as the default curriculum. Texas now offers three different academic “options” at the high school level.<sup>13</sup> The “minimum academic plan” is an option available only to students whose parents specifically request this preference. Otherwise, students are required to pursue either the “recommended” or “distinguished achievement” path, both commanding college preparatory level work. Texas has taken one step further in recent years by requiring parents and students to sign a release stating that they understand that by choosing the “minimum plan”, this essentially eliminates many future options for the student.<sup>14</sup>

### **Rigor and 9th Grade Academies**

The lack of rigor at the middle grades precipitates a lack of rigor at the high school. The downward trend begins in the middle school and students are subsequently left unprepared for the demands of high school work. The national statistics for 9<sup>th</sup> grade failure rates is discouraging and Florida is not immune. Failure rates for Florida’s 9<sup>th</sup> graders reached 23 percent in 2002-2003, while only 4.3 percent failed during that same period in grade eight.<sup>15</sup> In several of SREB’s successful High Schools That Work, intense

emphasis is placed on an effective transition from middle to high school, deploying the receiving high school’s most effective teachers and offering additional instructional time for students in need. In many cases, these successful schools offer what is commonly referred to as “bridge academies”, conducted during the summer and again, using teachers proven to be most effective with struggling students. In many of these sites, staff and administration at both the sending middle schools and the receiving high schools devote extensive time to helping prepare students by ensuring that they have viable although fluid five-year academic plans in place.

### **Rigor and Florida’s Review of the Sunshine State Standards**

While Florida has exercised and enjoyed a leadership role nationally with its adoption of rigorous academic standards and a system of accountability, research studies have suggested that there may be too many benchmarks and a possible disconnect (although not specific to Florida) between standards for high school academic achievement and the demands of postsecondary coursework and workforce.<sup>16</sup> Florida has begun the process for a systematic review of its state adopted Sunshine State Standards and requested funding in their 2006 budget for this endeavor.<sup>17</sup> This standards review presents a valuable window of opportunity to not only engage postsecondary educators and policy makers as partners, but to also include the expertise of business leaders and the representative workforce who will one day employ many of our students.

<sup>13</sup> Texas Education Code §28.025(e)

<sup>14</sup> “Recommended” Path includes 4 English, 3 science, 2 foreign language, and 3 math credits including Algebra II; “Distinguished Achievement” path mandates 3 foreign language credits and additional rigor to include a research project.

<sup>15</sup> FLDOE Statistical Brief, Series 2004-13B

<sup>16</sup> Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation – High Schools for the New Millennium

<sup>17</sup> \$700,000, Line Item 35, State Board of Education request dated 8-16-05.

**Tentative Timeline  
Review of Florida’s Sunshine State Standards<sup>18</sup>**

May 1, 05	All analyses and input received
June 1, 05	Review of analyses by DOE Blueprint Development
Aug. 1, 05	Revisions drafted
Sept. 15, 05	Stakeholder Review
Dec. 2005	State Board of Education adoption
Summer, 06	District and school planning and professional development
'06-'07 School Year	Implementation of Revised Sunshine State Standards

### Rigor and the “Senior Slump”

The National Commission on the High School Senior Year, funded by the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, was convened in 2001 to confront what many educators refer to as “the Senior Slump.” This senior skip year tends unfortunately to often function as a rest stop, when what is most needed is intensive, genuine engagement of students combined with realistic goals for their futures. This loss of academic engagement for many of our seniors should serve to encourage policy makers to revisit and transform requirements for the senior year.<sup>19</sup> Enhancing academic requirements and expectations for high school seniors, this capstone year should involve rigorous academic internships, research projects, community service, or college-level courses to prepare students for the demands of the workforce or postsecondary pursuits. As stated previously, *Best Practices in High Schools That Work* includes mathematics in the senior year. At present, Florida requires only three mathematics credits for graduation, which tends to discourage senior year math courses for many students.

### RELEVANCE

A 2003 study by the National Research Council found that most high school students see little connection to what they are expected to accomplish in school and the world beyond.<sup>20</sup> Most have misguided perceptions and

have little or no sense of purpose or direction. Further studies by the Southern Regional Education Board through the High Schools That Work (HSTW) project show that 35-40 percent of high school students lack any goals beyond graduation. The HSTW data reinforces the view that when students’ interests, aspirations, and aptitudes are genuinely connected to the larger world beyond high school, these students are capable of levels of challenging coursework not previously expected. In other words, schools must supply students with essential information and do so along-side caring adults who can help them make sense of this sometimes overwhelming information. Most kids can, in fact, connect the dots when given appropriate support and scheduled time to dialogue, reflect, and process.

“When students reach the middle grades (and beyond), they are more likely to question the value of what they are expected to learn. By connecting learning to the world outside of school, reformers believe that students can find meaning and motivation to do well in school.”<sup>21</sup>

### Relevance and Career Preparation

As a result of 2004 legislation<sup>22</sup>, Florida convened the Career Education Task Force, headed by Lieutenant Governor Toni Jennings. The Task Force determined that there is a need for greater focus on, and support of, career and professional education.

Career counselors and occupational specialists as a profession encourage educators to provide career-related information that is developmentally appropriate, usually awareness at the elementary, exploration at the middle grades, and preparation at high school and postsecondary levels. Florida CHOICES, a comprehensive software program, is offered free to all Florida schools and provides in-depth, current information about occupations, employment openings and projections, educational requirements, appropriate postsecondary schools, and financial aid for academic and career planning. When used efficaciously, a student can successfully build an extensive planning portfolio via multiple interest assessments and a wide-range of comprehensive databases including financial aid, job market trends, salary information, scholarship availability and links to additional sites such as Florida Academic Counseling and Tracking for Students (FACTS.org) and the Occupational Outlook Handbook

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.firn.edu/doe/curric/index.html>

<sup>19</sup> National Commission on the High School Senior Year - [http://www.woodrow.org/CommissionOnTheSeniorYear/Report/FINAL\\_PDF\\_REPORT.pdf](http://www.woodrow.org/CommissionOnTheSeniorYear/Report/FINAL_PDF_REPORT.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Attitudes, Aptitudes, and Aspirations of American Youth, 2003, National Research Council

<sup>21</sup> “What Does the Research Tell Us?” Southern Regional Education Board

<sup>22</sup> Chapter 2004-357, L.O.F.

from the US Department of Labor.

### Relevance and Career Academies

Many Florida school districts have embraced the growing career-related research and initiated implementation of career technical academies. In successful professional academies, emphasis has been carefully directed at marketing these programs to dispel any notion that the career academies are simply repackaged vocational training. In June of this year, Staff attended a CHOICE Workshop, hosted and organized jointly by Okaloosa County Schools and their local Workforce Development Board. The Okaloosa CHOICE Program engages students in rigorous college preparatory level work while simultaneously preparing their students for high demand jobs with industry level certifications.<sup>23</sup> The CHOICE model provides a structure for organizing career training to ensure that outcomes are focused on viable occupations and industry needs and are based on career clusters as defined by the USDOE.<sup>24</sup> The CHOICE program is outcome-based so that students achieve a high school diploma and industry certification for employment, movement into postsecondary training and college, or both. Bay, Collier, Charlotte, Franklin, Marion, and Santa Rosa Counties also attended the CHOICE Workshop and profiled their distinctive career academy models. While all districts operate their career academy programs differently, one common denominator was constantly stressed in order to assure program success: school districts offering substantive, high quality career and professional academies must be engaged in and committed to constant collaboration and regularly scheduled planning opportunities with local Workforce Boards, postsecondary institutions, and local business and industry leaders.

The Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) is currently in the process of conducting a two-tiered survey of Florida's school districts to gather information to determine career academy trends in Florida and to assess levels of effective implementation within those academies.<sup>25</sup>

### Relevance and Review of Florida's Sunshine State Standards

Many reports encourage state policy makers to align high school standards with the knowledge and skills

required for postsecondary education and workforce needs.<sup>26</sup> As stated previously, Florida is in the early stages of an extensive review and refinement of the Sunshine State Standards and Benchmarks. The review is expected to consolidate the number of standards and benchmarks to emphasize rigor, align standards to relevance from the perspective of the business community, and to more closely reflect tested benchmarks. The DOE requested budget funds for this analysis and also for evaluation of committee member training and the research associated with Florida's adoption of instructional materials.

### RELATIONSHIPS

The Education Trust's *Thinking K-16* petitions educators to seize every opportunity to "break large schools into smaller learning communities that are more personal for both students and teachers" – not for the purpose of tracking students based upon perceived aptitude or academic skill sets.

An extensive review of the research confidently establishes the importance of rigorous academic coursework for all students, regardless of plans beyond high school. Making relevant connections between academic coursework and the demands of the outside world are both intuitive and supported soundly by the research findings. The balancing leg of the research stool highlights the importance of meaningful and effective relationships between adults and students. Students who excel academically or athletically or those students involved in delinquency issues have had, historically, an attentive and available audience with adults in our schools. Unfortunately, the majority of students in large school settings tend to make their way anonymously, almost invisibly, with little or no direction or meaningful contact and connection with adults.

The Council for Education Policy, Research and Improvement (CEPRI) in its report *Career and Professional Education: Preparing Students for the Knowledge Economy*, offered explicit policy recommendations with regard to quality, extensive guidance being provided to all students, thus enabling them to make informed decisions about choices beyond high school.<sup>27</sup> CEPRI's recommendations included that "Every student in Florida should be made aware of career options by the start of high school and provided with extensive guidance in order to plan their

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.choiceminstitutes.com>

<sup>24</sup> [www.careerclusters.org](http://www.careerclusters.org)

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/reports/inprogress.html>

<sup>26</sup> The American Diploma Project – [www.Achieve.org](http://www.Achieve.org)

<sup>27</sup> Final Report, September 2004, Policy Recommendation # 2

coursework in accordance with their career aspirations.”

### Relationships and Florida’s Average School Size

Florida’s average school size (see comparative chart below), coupled with existing ratios of students to guidance counselors, hinders meaningful interaction and relationships between adults and all students in our schools. The research, however, offers a variety of organizational options as potential solutions to Florida’s large school settings. Smaller Learning Communities, Schools within a School, Career and Professional Academies (CAPS), and Teachers as Advisors all have as their foundation the following:

- 1) High academic expectations – (rigor);
- 2) Students properly informed regarding personal aspirations and the world outside of and beyond high school – (relevance); and
- 3) An adult, or team of adults, to offer guidance and encouragement and to help facilitate decision making along the way – (relationships)<sup>28</sup>.

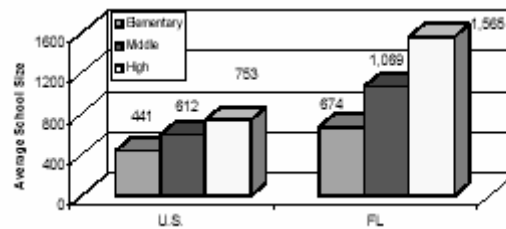
Because of prohibitive costs, small school settings do not appear to be on Florida’s immediate horizon. School size, combined with discouraging average student-to-guidance counselor ratios of 419:1<sup>29</sup> beg for alternative methods of addressing the relationship piece of the research. Virtually every school cited in quality schools research, and primarily those sites effectively engaged in the *HSTW* initiative, employs a “teachers as advisors” or similar model.<sup>30</sup> This model enables every student to be known well by at least one adult who serves in a guidance capacity. Time is regularly scheduled as a part of the school calendar to disseminate and discuss pertinent school, personal, career and postsecondary information. Teacher advisors serve under the guidance and direction of certified guidance counselors and administrators. They do not counsel students; they guide students. They are provided regularly scheduled time to establish rapport with students through a small group setting. Guidance counselors, in turn, are able to devote more time to serious student problems, those problems for which they have been trained.

<sup>28</sup> Gates, SREB, EdTrust, Brown University, etc (rework citations)

<sup>29</sup> DOE: Middle School=509:1; High School = 419:1

<sup>30</sup> Using Rigor, Relevance and Relationships to Improve Student Achievement: *How Some Schools Do It*, SREB 2004

### Florida’s School Sizes Compared Nationally



## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Legislature may wish to consider the following reforms in order to rejuvenate our high schools and prepare our students for the world beyond.

**Market the Urgent Need for Reform Efforts** – Florida should strongly consider a linked set of reforms for grades 6-12.

Following last February’s National Governors’ Summit on High Schools, *Education Week* reported that many observers remain skeptically cautious, stating that meaningful reform efforts will fail without adequately convincing the public that genuine reform is essential. Policy makers should commit to comprehensive reform that embraces rigor, relevance, and relationships as a single course of action and to a marketing campaign that reaches all Floridians. The marketing campaign should address both the urgency for needed reform and publicly paying much deserved honor to Florida’s teaching profession as a whole.

### Bridge the Transition Between Our Middle and High Schools

- Require systematic articulation between eighth grade sending schools and ninth grade receiving schools.
- Encourage school districts to triage funding for summer bridge academies for students needing academic “catch up” prior to entry into ninth grade.
- Insist that all eighth graders leave middle school with a four- or five-year academic plan.
- Require a freshman cornerstone year at the high school that includes small group advisement and concentration on academic and career planning and preparation.

**Require a Comprehensive, Cross-Representation of Business Leaders, Postsecondary Institutions, and Elementary, Middle, and High School Educators in the review, refinement and rewrite of Sunshine State Standards.** Florida’s Community Colleges and Universities and labor market representatives can clearly articulate potential inconsistencies or a disconnect regarding standards and the skills needed for postsecondary and career level work. Meaningful involvement from the business community can help to focus on the most essential benchmarks and integrate relevance in order to achieve authenticity and greater “real world” exposure in our classrooms.

**Require a Rigorous, College Prep Level Core for All Students**

- Emphasize higher level math skills, which are deemed the single strongest predictor of academic success, and require math in the senior year.
- Continue emphasis on literacy skills and reading initiatives at the high school level and reading in the content areas.
- Insist on a comprehensive commitment to preservice training of teachers at the postsecondary level and dedication of professional development funding that parallels the recent commitment to reading achievement.

**Require that Supplemental Academic Instruction (SAI) funds be earmarked and prioritized based on needs directly correlated to student achievement data:** Prioritize SAI funding for high risk 8<sup>th</sup> graders, prior to arrival at the high school, and to 9<sup>th</sup> graders at risk of failing and or dropping out.

**Reinvent the Senior Year:** Consider policies that orchestrate legitimate academic engagement for high school seniors, based upon the culmination of four- or five-year plans and realistic goals for the future.

Re-examine, adjust, and invigorate expectations and requirements for high school seniors. This capstone year should involve a continuation of rigorous academic work, intern- and extern-ships, research projects, community service, or college-level courses to prepare students for the demands of the workforce or postsecondary pursuits.

**Continue to Support High Quality and Effective Career and Professional Academies**

There are many different types of career academies at the high school level. Policy makers should insist on a stringent evaluation of different models and consider

data on level of rigor, employment rates, graduation rates, industry certifications, postsecondary pursuits (when applicable), return on investment, and genuine engagement and input from business and industry.