



The Reality of College Readiness in the 21st Century

Recent statistics on college readiness are sobering. While students spend years preparing to enter college, studies show that these preparations are falling short.

Check out these three statistics:

- The College Board, the company that designs and administers the SAT exam, set a college and career readiness benchmark of 1550 points on the SAT in 2012. However, in its 2012 report, the College Board showed that only 43% of students taking the SAT met that benchmark.
- ACT, Inc., the company that designs and administers the ACT exam, reports equally grim findings. According to an ACT report on college readiness and reading, only 51% of the high-school graduates who took the ACT exam demonstrated college-level reading.
- A 2010 report from the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education concurs with the College Board and ACT. According to the report, 60% of first-year college students are not actually ready for college.
- Why the readiness gap? According to the National Center report, high schools and colleges have not agreed on what actually constitutes readiness. So even when students are on a college-prep track during high school, that doesn't guarantee preparedness.
- What does that mean in practical terms? In the eyes of your high school, your teen might be totally ready for college. However, that readiness standard may bear little or no relationship to what your teen's college is expecting.
- The good news is that you can bridge readiness gaps. Want to ramp up on college readiness?
- 8th grade is the new 11th grade. College readiness should start early. As educator and futurist Ian Jukes puts it, "We need to prepare students for THEIR future, not OUR past." Things have changed dramatically since our high school days, including the college prep process. We have to start preparing our kids for success in college much sooner than we needed to prepare ourselves.
- Move beyond the basics. Your teen's school will make sure they take basic, core required courses that meet the national standard. But as we've seen, there's a gap between that standard and what colleges expect. So go the extra step of taking courses beyond the very basics. Add advanced math, science and literature courses, for example.
- Research. Got a few specific colleges in mind? Research their standards for admissions and use that as a guideline to help you and your teen plan their courses and extracurriculars.



- Get help. Chat with your teen's school counselor to find out what colleges are looking for. Many schools also offer parent workshops that can help you bone up on college readiness.

These proactive steps help your teen not only get into college, but also to thrive there. Lack of readiness affects retention, as students who are not adequately prepared are more likely to drop out. The College Board statistics demonstrate a direct correlation between students who meet its readiness benchmark and students who stay in college. By making sure your teen is ready, you are boosting their chances for college success.

As a parent guiding your teen on the path to college readiness, being aware of these statistics is the first step in helping your teen. As you address readiness, you help build a more successful college experience for your teen and support their academic and career goals.