

The college ‘preparation gap’ in a single graphic

By [Valerie Strauss](#), Published: May 22, 2013 at 4:00 am [E-mail the writer](#)

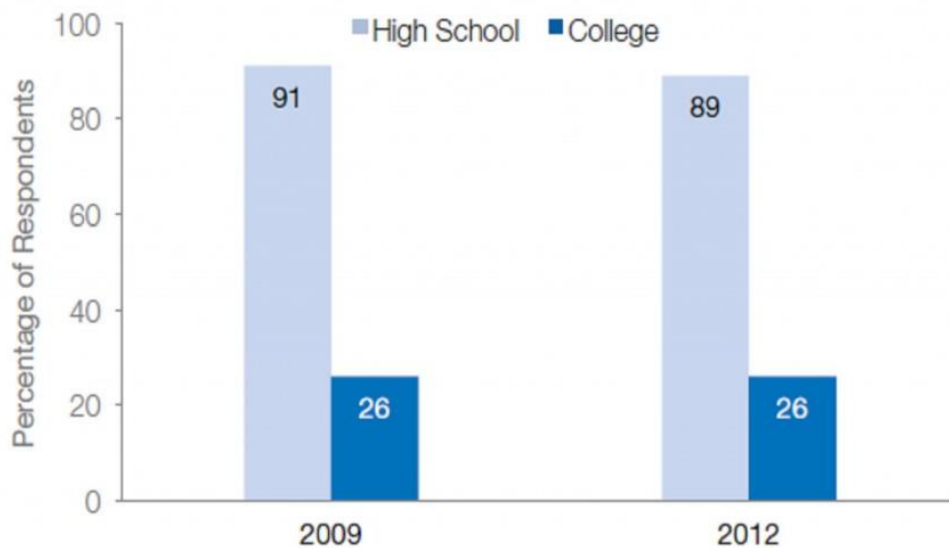


(Dennis R.J. Geppert/AP)

An annual [national survey of school curriculum](#) concludes that there is a “large gap” between how high school teachers perceive their graduating students’ readiness for college and what professors expect freshmen to know.

While a vast majority of high school teachers believe their students are ready for college work, most postsecondary teachers don’t, as shown in the following graphic from the report called “ACT National Curriculum Survey® 2012: Policy Implications on Preparing for Higher Standards.”

Figure 2: Percentages of Educators Reporting that Their Students Are “Well” or “Very Well” Prepared for College-Level Work in Their Content Area



Note. The data in this chart are from *ACT National Curriculum Survey 2009*, by ACT, 2009, Iowa City: Author, and *ACT National Curriculum Survey 2012*, by ACT, 2013, Iowa City: Author.

From: ACT National Curriculum Survey® 2012

The gap in perception about college readiness “suggests a continuing lack of curricular alignment between the K–12 and post-secondary education systems that may be hampering the efforts of K–12 to prepare students for life after high school,” the report says. It also says:

* Many classrooms may need better and/or more secure access to computer technology in order to effectively administer new assessments aligned to college- and career-ready standards; also, potential inequality of access to computers across schools, districts, and states may create or exacerbate reliability issues with assessment results.

* Especially at the high school level, where there are differing degrees of familiarity with the improved standards, state and local efforts to implement the standards have not yet achieved their goals. This suggests that not enough teachers are yet ready for the necessary changes in curriculum that are likely to accompany the switch into a classroom environment driven by college- and career-ready standards.

* Nevertheless, K–12 teachers tend to be generally optimistic about the value and potential effectiveness of college- and career-ready standards. This suggests that most of these teachers support the effort to improve standards and will work to help make it a success in the classroom.

The report also discusses the [Common Core State Standards](#), which are now being integrated into most schools across the country. It says that a majority of teachers say they either don't know anything about them, or at best know a "moderate amount."

The authors recommend that K-12 and post-secondary educators collaborate to align course material so that more graduating high school students are ready for the rigors of college. And they call for more and better professional development for K-12 teachers about college- and career-ready standards.

The report was issued by ACT, the nonprofit organization that owns the ACT colleges admissions test and also provides assessment, research, information, and program management services in education and workforce development. ACT, it should be noted, has its own set of [college readiness standards](#).

ACT's annual curriculum report surveys thousands of teachers and college instructors in English/writing, math, reading and science to see how skills and knowledge are being taught in each grade. In addition, both high school teachers and college professors assess the college readiness of high school graduates.

Surveys were sent to a nationally representative sample of K-12 teachers and college professors; for this survey elementary school teachers were added for the first time. The report does not say how many were sent out, but there were 9,937 participants in the 2012 survey.