



Texas Workforce Investment Council

Policy News Highlights

Issue 8, Quarter 3, September 2009

Texas Workforce Investment Council – *Policy News Highlights* is a quarterly review of selected reports relevant to the policy and research functions of the Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC). Federal and state agency web sites, in addition to numerous public policy and educational databases are scanned monthly for relevant and emerging issues. Reports are catalogued and stored electronically in TWIC’s Information Repository (IR). Topic areas include: economic development; higher education; K-12 education; literacy and adult basic education (ABE); and skills, training and employment.

Policy News Highlights is organized into three sections, beginning with selected articles that focus on workforce trends and issues that have received heightened attention over the previous months. The second section contains abbreviated summaries of recent articles of interest to the Council and the final section consists of a comprehensive list of all articles and their sources that were added to the IR in the last quarter.

This Quarter’s Selected Articles

This quarter, rural America has appeared more frequently in workforce news. Two articles, ***Baby Boom Migration and Its Impact on Rural America***, and ***the New Longer Road to Adulthood: Schooling, Work and Idleness among Rural Youth*** raise new questions and implications for workforce policy.

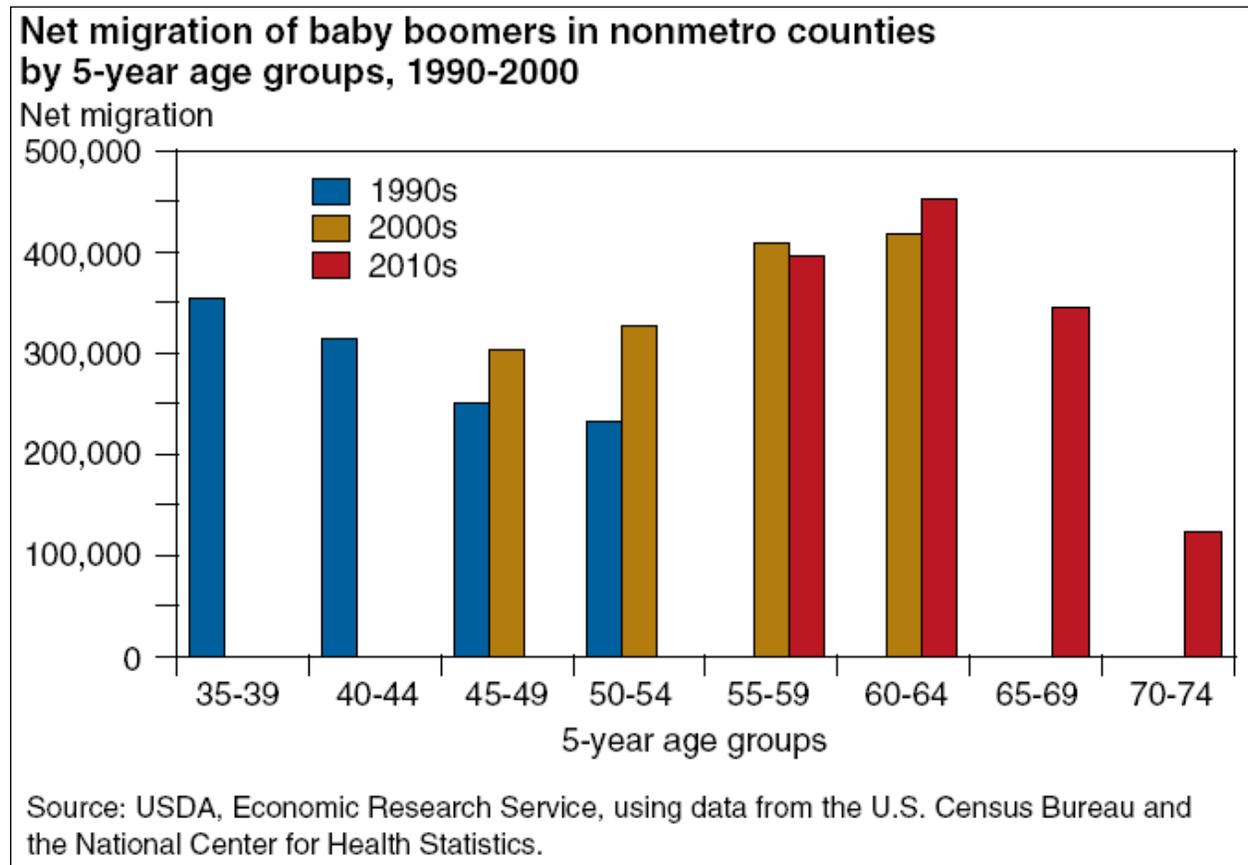
Baby Boom Migration and Its Impact on Rural America was released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Economic Research Service in August of 2009. The baby boom generation, people born between 1946 and 1964 and who are now between 45 and 63 years of age, are moving to rural and small-town areas for retirement. Baby boomers contemplating retirement are considering quality-of-life factors over employment-related factors as they ponder where to live and where to move. According to the USDA, a close look at age-specific migration patterns in the 1990s shows significant shifts in behavior for Americans experiencing life-cycle changes such as “empty nest syndrome,” and retirement. If policymakers are able to anticipate what areas will eventually be home to large concentrations of baby boomers, communities can prepare for increased demand in housing, transportation, health care and retail. All of this in turn, will impact the local workforce.

Baby boom migration is an important issue to rural America because it is such a large scale phenomenon. The U.S. baby boom cohort is approximately 83 million people or about 23 percent of the American population. The article projects that if baby boomers follow their past migration patterns, the nonmetro, or rural, population of persons aged 55-75 will increase 30 percent by 2020. That means their presence in rural America will increase between 2000 and 2010 by 1.5 million and between 2010 and 2020, by still another 1.6 million. In addition to the sheer size of their number, another significant baby boomer



characteristic for planners is that this population is at different stages of the life-cycle. Younger boomers who are still raising children and building careers have hardly thought of retirement, while older boomers with empty nests and little attachment to career progression are likely to be fully preoccupied with retirement—either planning or enjoying it. Thus, the decisions that both older and younger members of this generation make about retirement will be affecting the economy for the next 20 years. USDA researchers state that small towns and rural areas that emerge as retirement destinations will feel the economic impact of changing federal policies regarding Social Security adjustment and pension guarantees. Other repercussions will include a large demand for and the commensurate problem of providing healthcare. Housing, transportation and infrastructure will also be at issue. Already, researchers have seen that those communities identified as retirement destinations have experienced high Hispanic migrations as the latter moved to fill jobs generated by retirees.

According to *Baby Boom Migration*, a key factor that will drive retirement migration toward rural areas is the availability and cost of housing and the seasonal housing market, in particular. The 55 and older population will be influenced by the housing market as it leaves areas where housing is expensive. Baby boomers are also driven by their desire for amenities such as scenic and recreational environments as they make retirement decisions, another way in which housing availability will affect migration. Researchers observe that boomers are showing a tendency to retire to places they have been enjoying as recreational destinations in the years leading up to retirement.

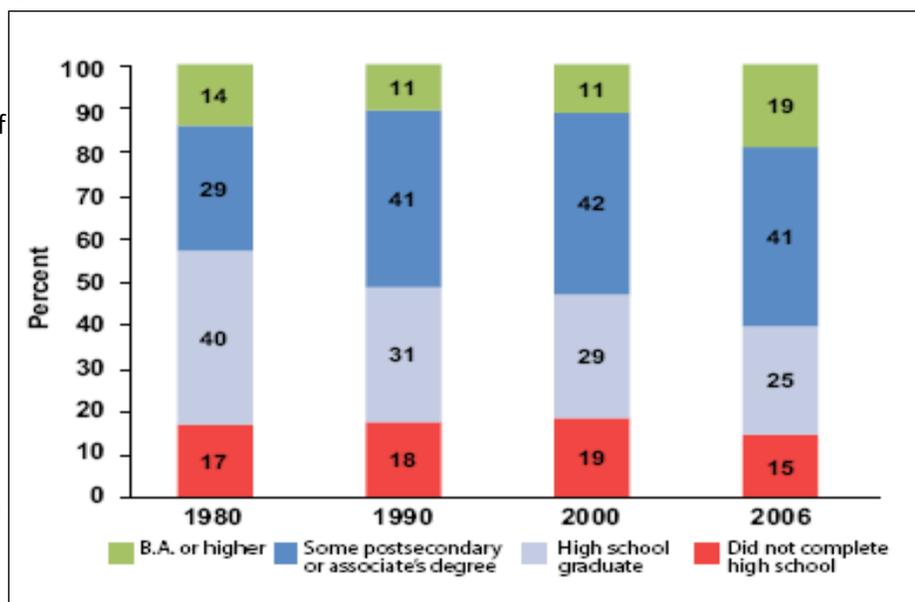


Generally speaking, policymakers are well-advised to consider the behavior patterns of baby boomers as they approach and embrace retirement and move to rural and small-town America. With the 55-74 age group living in these nonmetro areas expected to increase by two-thirds by 2020, planners and developers in all sectors—workforce, health care, transportation, service industries—will need to prepare.

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR79/ERR79.pdf>

The New Longer Road to Adulthood—Schooling, Work and Idleness Among Rural Youth, Carsey Institute, July 2009. This paper begins the observation that until relatively recently, young Americans were expected to finish their education, establish a career, and start a family by the time they were 25 years old, and all in that order. Social and economic conditions in the U.S. have changed so that young people who aspire to this middle-class life-style or “American Dream,” must now spend more time acquiring the necessary education, which in turn, results in a longer transition into adulthood. Young adults often delay forming a family or pursuing full-time employment as they spend more time pursuing postsecondary education and they frequently combine working and going to school or shift back and forth between the two. The authors of *the New Longer Road to Adulthood* point out that no studies have determined whether the longer transition period to adulthood is more complex for rural youth than it is for their urban counterparts. However, the education and work experiences of rural youth, and their tendency to move to urban areas, along with periods of idleness when they are neither working nor attending postsecondary schools are indeed important issues for rural America. This report looks at the education and work experiences of rural or nonmetro youth or “emerging adults” between the ages of 20 and 25, and documents how they combine work and school, and compares the results to similar patterns for urban youth.

The New Longer Road to Adulthood acknowledges that between 1980 and 2006, a generally increased demand in educational attainment is apparent across the board for young adults in America. The percentage of 20 to 24 year olds with some postsecondary training rose from 29 percent in 1980 to 41 percent in 2006. The writers created and analyzed four possible work and school combinations for 20 to 24 year olds: those only enrolled in school, those only working, those combining school and work, and those who are idle, that is, not engaging in either work or school. Broadly speaking, there has been a decline in the number of young adults who are exclusively working or exclusively attending postsecondary school, and an increase in those combining the two. The authors note that beginning in 2000, a noticeably smaller percentage of rural youth were exclusively in school, and that more nonmetro youth were exclusively in the workforce. Historically, nonmetro youth have had a higher percentage rate of idleness, due to lack of job opportunities. However, idleness has decreased in all residence areas to its lowest levels in 2006. Another difference between nonmetro and metro youth is that fewer nonmetro young adults have bachelor’s degrees. Only four percent of rural youth have bachelor’s degrees, while 26 percent of their



suburban counterparts and 24 percent of urban youth have four-year degrees. In contrast, a larger share of nonmetro youth have associate's degrees: 21 percent while only seven percent of suburban youth and four percent of urban youth have two-year degrees. The authors discuss other patterns within the emerging adult population. For example, most rural or nonmetro youth move from their homes, while most suburban or urban young adults raised in their respective areas remain in them. Specifically, only one in five youth living in nonmetro environments in 2000 was still there in 2005, contrasted with 75 percent of suburban and urban youth in 2005 who were still in their home environments in 2005.

According to the authors, rural youth face several distinct disadvantages in their transition to adulthood. A smaller portion of rural youth are pursuing higher education, partially because the costs of postsecondary education are considered far too high when compared to the immediate gains of employment. Many rural communities do not have postsecondary institutions in close proximity, which gives rise to another significant problem facing rural communities: when rural youth leave to attend college they do not return. This leaves a concentration of young adults in these communities who may be quite closely connected to the labor force, but who have limited educational attainment. The writers view this as problematic because failure to pursue higher education limits future opportunities for advancement and security in the workforce in general. And clearly, those who do not succeed at graduating from high school have limited employment opportunities and are at a higher risk for idleness and consequently, economic instability.

The New Longer Road to Adulthood discusses the impact of migration on rural communities, but it is a migration in stark contrast with that of *Baby Boom Migration and its Impact on Rural America*. The former is concerned with the problem of young adults moving out of rural communities and not returning, while the latter article focuses on older adults moving to rural communities in droves. It remains to be seen exactly how the issue of out-migration of young nonmetro adults will intersect with the in-migration of baby boomers to rural or nonmetro communities, but certainly there is the potential for the two trends to meet. Some policy recommendations of *the New Longer Road to Adulthood* include identifying reasonable and suitable educational goals for rural youth and devising ways to make these goals attainable while benefiting the community. For example, young adults in nonmetro areas wishing to attend college could look to grant programs that would require these individuals to return to their communities for a period of time. Rural communities can and should focus on ways to create and improve job opportunities for their young adults with local entrepreneurs using such arrangements as mentorships. These grant opportunities and partnerships could be part of the development plan rural communities build to support new baby boomer populations.

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR79/ERR79.pdf>

Of Interest - Abbreviated Summaries

Economic Development

Broadband Internet's Value for Rural America, U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, August 2009.

Internet access is prevalent throughout the country, but not universal. According to this paper, two-thirds of U.S. adults had in-home Internet access in 2008. Rural users were almost as likely to use the Internet as their urban counterparts, but broadband or high-speed Internet is not as widely available in rural areas. This is significant because broadband access is essential to fully utilizing the Internet's potential with many current applications requiring high speed transmission rates. While it is estimated that 55 percent of adults in the U.S. have broadband access, only 41 percent of rural adults do. This

paper suggests that this disparity is not voluntary, and that the higher cost of broadband (or lower return on broadband investment in rural areas) may be responsible. E-commerce, distance learning at primary, secondary and postsecondary levels, and telemedicine are areas of expanding Internet exchange that depend on broadband capacity. Another important consideration for rural America: over the last few decades most employment growth in America has occurred in the service sector, a sector that is especially adaptable to broadband applications.

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR78/ERR78.pdf>

Anatomy of an Entrepreneur, Kauffman Institute, July 2009.

This report is the latest in a series of research projects designed to better understand the effects of globalization on the engineering profession and on U.S. competitiveness. Previous studies looked at the contributions of skilled immigrants and the backgrounds of technology enterprise founders. This paper surveyed nearly 550 founders of companies in computer and electronics, aerospace and defense, health care, and service industries. The authors state that little is known today about the backgrounds of founders in high-growth industries and they believe that understanding the entrepreneurs responsible for such technological innovations as the Google search engine could be helpful in supporting and expanding their ranks. The researchers found that very few entrepreneurs come from backgrounds of extreme poverty or extreme wealth—most come from middle-class to upper lower-class backgrounds. They are well-educated, with only five percent not having bachelor's degrees. They tend to be better educated than their parents, but still over half of their fathers had college degrees or higher, along with a third of their mothers. Entrepreneurs performed well in high school and in college, and more than half were the first in their families to start businesses, so they do not always come from families of entrepreneurs. The average entrepreneur comes from a family with three children and is the middle child. Their motivations are to capitalize on an idea, to build wealth, and to own their own company. Entrepreneurs do not come from college generally, but from the existing workforce. The writers have catalogued these responses and are modeling further research projects on this subject.

http://www.kauffman.org/uploadedFiles/ResearchAndPolicy/TheStudyOfEntrepreneurship/Anatomy%20of%20Entre%20071309_FINAL.pdf

A Fresh Start: Renewing Immigrant Integration for a Stronger Maryland, Report of the Maryland Council for New Americans, August 2009.

This paper is a product of the Maryland Council for New Americans, an organization established by Governor O'Malley in December 2008, and contains recommended policies and practices for easing immigrant integration into the state's workforce. Immigrants accounted for 96 percent of the growth in Maryland's labor force over the last decade. Forty-three percent have a college degree but despite this, 26 percent of Maryland's highly skilled immigrants are in low-skilled jobs. Forty percent are classified as Limited English Proficient or LEP. *A Fresh Start* makes recommendations in four areas: workforce, citizenship, financial services, and governmental access. Among workforce recommendations, the report advocates for improved licensing, credentialing and support systems for immigrant professionals, strengthening statewide training and English Language Learning systems, and increasing coordination across public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

<http://www.newamericans.maryland.gov/documentsNA/2009Report.pdf>

“Although we each had different perspectives and experiences, we were unanimous in our desire to help integrate immigrants into our way of life as constructively and quickly as possible. Through this process we learned that our efforts to help immigrants integrate are only a recent iteration of a longstanding historic enterprise.”

***A Fresh Start,
Message from the Chairs***

A Strategy for American Innovation: Driving Towards Sustainable Growth and Quality Jobs, Executive Office of the President, National Economic Council, Office of Science and Technology Policy September 2009.

“Innovation is the key to good, new jobs for the 21st century,” and the Administration’s strategy to promote and develop American innovation consists of three broad objectives. First, the Administration proposes investing in the building blocks of innovation. This refers to expanding research to fuel new discoveries and technologies, creating a world-class workforce through a renewed commitment to education at all levels, restoring the nation’s infrastructure, and developing an information technology ecosystem that ensures all Americans have access to the Internet. Second, the strategy plan seeks to promote competitive markets that will spur productive entrepreneurship through expanding American imports, supporting open capital markets, encouraging high-growth and innovation-based business, and improving public sector innovation. Third, the Administration seeks to identify national priorities the marketplace is unlikely to develop on its own and promote them. Such priorities include investing in smart grid, energy efficiency, and renewable resources, supporting advance vehicle technologies and driving innovations in health care technology.

http://www.ostp.gov/galleries/press_release_files/SEPT%2020%20Innovation%20Whitepaper_FINAL.PDF

Higher Education

Education at a Glance 2009, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), September 2009.

The OECD is a forum where 30 democracies may come together to discuss various social, economic and educational challenges inherent to modern globalization. The member countries are Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the U.S. *Education at a Glance* uses 26 indicators to help policymakers make meaningful comparisons of education systems and to reveal important trends within these systems. For example, among OECD countries, the U.S. college graduation rate fell to 14th in 2007, from 1st in 1995. Another indicator, early childhood education enrollment for children four years old and under has increased from 40 percent in 1998 to 71 percent in 2007 in OECD countries, but the rate is 50 percent in the U.S. This year’s edition of the study contains new features, such as an analysis measuring economic returns in education to social outcomes. It also looks at some of the spending choices countries make between teacher compensation, instruction time and class sizes.

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/41/25/43636332.pdf>



Projections of Education Statistics to 2018, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), September 2009.

The NCES began this series in 1964, making this their 37th report. It is designed to provide policymakers and researchers with projections for key education statistics regarding enrollment, graduates, teachers and expenditures in elementary and secondary schools. The report contains national data for enrollment and graduates for the last 15 years and projections out to the year 2018. For example, total public and private enrollment in U.S. elementary and secondary institutions reached 55 million in 2006. This

amounts to a 12 percent increase since 1993, and the report projects a further eight percent by 2018. The report also contains state-level data for public elementary and secondary enrollment and graduation for the same time period, but does not include state-level data for private schools or students who are home schooled. With regard to enrollment in postsecondary institutions, the report states that it increased 28 percent between 1993 and 2007, with an expected further increase of 13 percent or another 20.6 million between 2007 and 2018.

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009062.pdf>

Stats in Brief: Students Who Study Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) in Postsecondary Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), July 2009.

With the growing concern over America's competitive position in the global economy, interest in STEM education has been on the rise over the past decade. This *Stats in Brief* focuses on an aspect of STEM education that has been little studied: how students in the STEM pipeline progress during their undergraduate studies. The paper looks at who enters STEM fields and who persisted and completed a STEM degree after entering college in one of these fields. Looking at three national studies spanning the mid-1990s and the mid-2000s, the study finds that about 14 percent of U.S. undergraduates are enrolled in STEM fields. Generally, the rate of entering STEM fields was higher among men than women, among Asian/Pacific Islanders, among foreign or non-native English speakers, among younger and dependent students, and among students from wealthier families. In terms of overall persistence with regard to obtaining bachelor's degrees within six years of college enrollment, STEM enrollees did better than non-STEM enrollees. However, not all STEM entrants remained in STEM fields. Looking at all STEM enrollees between 1995 and 2001, 53 percent either completed a STEM degree or stayed enrolled in a STEM field, while 47 percent had either switched to a non-STEM major, or left postsecondary schooling without earning any credential at all. Another interesting discovery was that students in STEM fields resembled one another in demographic, academic, enrollment and outcome characteristics, with the exception of STEM students in computer/information sciences. Older, less well off, less well academically prepared students entered computer/information sciences at a higher rate than younger, richer, and better academically prepared students.

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009161.pdf>

Career and Technical Education—States have Broad Flexibility in Implementing Perkins IV, United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report to Congressional Requesters, July 2009.

Career and technical education (CTE) is designed to give students academic and technical skills to help them succeed in the workforce. The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Act) of 2006 directed \$1.2 billion to states in 2008 for the support of CTE in high schools and postsecondary institutions, namely community colleges. The Act reflects a change in emphasis on vocational education to preparing students for high-demand occupations. Perkins prepares students for high-skill, high-wage or high-demand jobs through academic and technical skill achievement, increased accountability regarding student outcomes, and greater coordination between secondary and postsecondary CTE. The Act allows states considerable flexibility in designing their own accountability systems. The authors of this paper conclude that while increased flexibility allows states to tailor programs in ways that best suit them, it may obscure the U.S. Department of Education's (DOE) ability to get a handle on the success of state CTE programs. According to the study, states report their greatest challenge is collecting data on technical skill assessment and student placement measures. The differences in how states gather data may affect the DOE's ability to aggregate student outcomes and to make state-by-state comparisons of student outcomes. The paper makes no formal recommendations, but says that as states become more efficient at implementing the Perkins IV performance measures, they will be able to more rigorously evaluate their CTE programs.

<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d09683.pdf>

K-12 Education

High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 2007 Compendium Report, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), September 2009.

This report is based on prior NCES studies of high school dropout and completion rates beginning in 1988. The report defines various rates—the event dropout rate, the status dropout rate, the status completion rate, and the averaged freshman graduation rate—currently used to understand how students drop out of or complete high school. For example, the event dropout rate provides information enabling researchers to calculate the rate at which high school students drop out without earning a diploma or its equivalent. In 2007, three and a half out of every 100 students (3.5 percent) in public or private high school dropped out, which did not reflect much change from the 2006 event dropout rate of 3.8 percent. The paper states that since 6.1 percent in 1972, dropout rates have been trending downward. It includes data on dropout and completion trends over the last 35 years. The report provides information regarding rates in 2007 and also takes a look at characteristics of high school dropouts and graduates in 2007. Other examples of findings include the statistic that between 2006 and 2007, students from low-income families were ten times more likely to drop out of high school than their peers from high-income backgrounds.

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009064.pdf>

The Opportunity Equation: Transforming Mathematics and Science Education for Citizenship and the Global Economy, Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY), July 2009.

This paper calls for the U.S. to mobilize in an effort to achieve excellence in mathematics and science education for all students—not just the select few who are fortunate enough to attend particular schools. The CCNY and the Institute of Advanced Study have created a commission bringing together distinguished teachers, public officials, educators, scholars, mathematicians and scientists to study and advance this effort. The authors point out that in order for a young citizenry to build and sustain a productive America, all young people must be “STEM-capable,” that is, knowledgeable and skilled in math, technology, engineering and mathematics, no matter what part of the country they live in or what career path they pursue. In order to achieve this, the authors contend that math and science must be put at the fore of education. New school models must re-engage disconnected students and for those students who excel, these models must provide opportunities that go beyond the traditional high school curriculum. The commission proposes recommendations in four priority areas: higher levels of mathematics and science learning for all U.S. schools; common standards in math and science along with aligned assessments; better school management that engenders improved teaching and professional learning; and new designs in schools and educational systems that deliver math and science learning more efficiently.

<http://www.opportunityequation.org/TheOpportunityEquation.pdf>

The Second Derivative: International Benchmarks in Mathematics for U.S. States and School Districts, American Institutes for Research, June 2009.

In calculus, change is the first derivative, and according to this paper, the U.S. needs to accelerate its pace of change in educational ranking—hence, the “second derivative.” This report aims to provide a scientifically rigorous way of comparing performance in mathematics in the U.S. against international benchmarks. The authors take data from the 2007 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the 2007 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) and provide a “cross-walk” for policymakers in a grading system using A, B, C, D, or BD (below a D). The report assigns the grade of B as the international benchmark against which comparisons are made. Generally speaking in the U.S., children are learning basic mathematics as opposed to more complex mathematics, and this is reflected by the overall grade of C+ in Grade 4 and C in Grade 8. A small group of Asian countries and

a few states within the U.S. are doing well in mathematics and earning Bs. No country made an A. The U.S. has a definite trend of falling behind in mathematics by Grade 8, while the highest performing countries are able to maintain their levels of performance in later grades.

<http://www.air.org/news/documents/AIRInternationalBenchmarks2009.pdf>

Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools 2007-08, Texas Education Agency, July 2009.

Texas uses the National Center for Education Statistics definition of high school dropout: “a dropout is a student who is enrolled in public school in Grades 7-12, does not return to public school the following fall, is not expelled, and does not graduate, receive a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, continue school outside the public school system, begin college or die.” The annual dropout rate refers to the percentage of students who drop out during one school year. The longitudinal completion rate is the percentage of students from a class of beginning seventh or ninth graders who complete high school on time, while the longitudinal dropout rate is the percentage of students from the same class who drop out before their anticipated graduation date. The class of 2008 refers to students who began grade 9 in the 2004-05 school year and were expected to graduate in 2007-08. (Texas adopted the national dropout definition in 2005-2006, so different dropout definitions apply to students who left in 2004-05 and 2005-06.) The report states that out of 300,488 students in the class of 2008 population, 79.1 percent graduated, while 8.9 percent continued the following year. Another 1.5 percent of this class earned their GEDs. Among ethnic groups, the highest graduation rate belonged to Asian/Pacific Islanders at 91.2 percent, while the lowest graduation rate belonged to Hispanics at 70.8 percent.

http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/research/pdfs/dropcomp_2007-08.pdf

Texas: Measuring College and Career Readiness—the Class of 2009, ACT, August 2009.

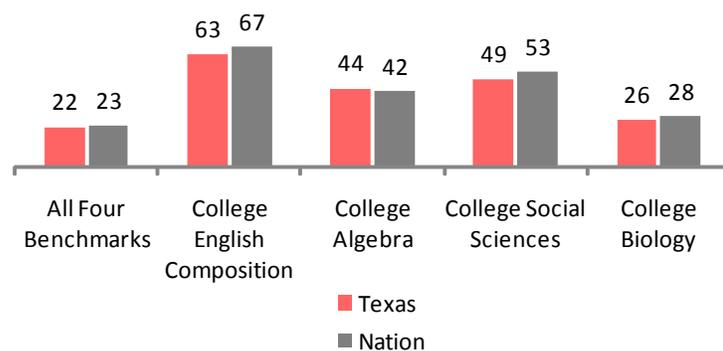
In an increasingly complex and technology-driven world, high school students must be capable of succeeding at the next level—whether that be attending college or starting a career. ACT has been measuring the academic achievement of high school students since 1959 and is the only organization that has collected this data for several decades. This report provides a snapshot of performance by ACT-tested students and focuses on college and career readiness by reporting data for Texas, including the following for the state’s class of 2009:

- 82,260 graduates or 30 percent of graduates, took the ACT
- The ACT Composite score for Texas rose for 2009, from 20.7 to 20.8, an all-time high
- Subscores in English, math and science also increased

http://www.act.org/news/data/09/pdf/output/ACT_Texas_Output.pdf

More students need to be ready for college-level courses

Percentage of 2009 ACT-tested graduates meeting College Readiness Benchmarks



A Time to Act: an Agenda for Advancing Adolescent Literacy for College and Career Success, Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY), September 2009.

Experts at the Carnegie Corporation say while the U.S. has made great strides in improving the reading and writing skills of young children from kindergarten to third grade, adolescent literacy rates have stagnated over the last 40 years. The ramifications are that too many young people drop out of high

school or graduate with minimal skills, leaving them essentially unprepared for college, the work place or even to function as informed citizens in society. The authors assert that current middle and high school standards are still based on a 20th century literacy vision, even though graduates now face the much higher expectations of the knowledge-based global economy. *A Time to Act* calls for a “systematic approach,” that would provide school teachers and districts with new instructional tools and assessments, encourage state leaders to align state standards to uniform models and revise teacher certification standards, and revise federal education policy to ensure more high school students actually graduate and are college-ready.

http://www.carnegie.org/literacy/tta/pdf/tta_Main.pdf

U.S. Performance Across International Assessments of Student Achievement: Special Supplement to the Condition of Education 2009, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), August 2009.

The referenced parent report—*The Condition of Education 2009*—was published earlier this year and speaks to significant trends and developments in education based on the latest data. The NCES is required by Congress to produce this indicator report each year, while this supplement takes a close look at the performance of U.S. students on several international assessments. They are: the PIRLS or Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, the PISA or Program for International Student Assessment, and TIMSS or Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study. The PIRLS takes a look at 4th grade reading performance every five years. The PISA analyzes the reading, mathematics and science literacy of 15-year-olds every three years. The TIMSS examines the mathematics and science performance of 4th and 8th graders every four years. All studies include both developing and developed countries, but not all countries have participated in all three of these studies or in all of the administrations of these studies. This special supplement focuses on how well U.S. students performed in reading, mathematics and science as compared with their peers in other countries participating in the same exams. For example, on the 2006 PIRLS, the average literacy score for U.S. 4th graders was 540, above the test average of 500. However, the U.S. average score was below those of ten of 45 participating countries, including several Canadian provinces, the Russian Federation, Hong Kong, Singapore, Hungary, Italy and Sweden. In math, on the 2007 TIMSS, U.S. 4th graders averaged 529 and 8th graders averaged 508, both above the test average of 500. However, 4th graders scored higher than Americans did in eight of 35 participating countries, including Hong Kong, Singapore, and the Russian Federation. In the 2006 PISA, U.S. 15-year-olds scored 474, lower than the OECD average on the test of 498, putting them in the bottom quarter of participating countries.

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009083.pdf>

Literacy and Adult Basic Education

English Language Learning: Diverse Federal and State Efforts to Support Adult English Language Could Benefit from More Coordination, U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report to Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Children and Families, Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, U.S. Senate, July 2009.

According to this paper, many millions of adults in the U.S. speak limited English. It is generally understood that limited ability to speak English impacts the way people participate in civic life and the workforce, and in turn, their mobility in society. The GAO looked at four indicators for this research: trends in the need and enrollment for federally funded adult English language programs, federal support for English language learning, how state and local public providers support adult English language programs, and plans federal agencies have in place to recognize effective approaches to English language learning. The study found that between 2000 and 2007, the limited English speaking population in the U.S. grew by 21.8 percent to 22 million. Federal support for English language learning programs is spread across the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services and Labor and there is no real ongoing

method of sharing information regarding resources or plans to expand and build upon agencies' efforts. The GAO recommends that the agencies collaborate to develop coordinated strategies for information sharing and future plans for research into the best ways to optimize resources for English language learning.

<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d09575.pdf>

Skills, Training and Employment

Aging Worker Initiative: Strategies for Regional Talent Development, U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration, July 2009.

At present, more than 22 percent of the U.S. population is over the age of 55, and between 2006 and 2016, this percentage is expected to pass 36.5 percent. According to the U.S. DOL, the local workforce investment system is the main provider of publicly-funded training and employment services to both businesses and workers. The Aging Worker Initiative (AWI) is a program designed to ascertain the best means of serving the older worker population. It is also charged with developing models and best practices to share with local workforce investment areas. The grants awarded under the AWI are directed at providing training services for employment and advancement opportunities of older workers in high-growth sectors. Ten states received grants of \$1 million, including Goodwill Industries, Inc. in Houston, Texas.

http://www.doleta.gov/pdf/AWI_One_Pagers_Fact_Sheet.pdf

2009 Guide to Bold New Ideas for Making Work Work, Families and Work Institute, July 2009.

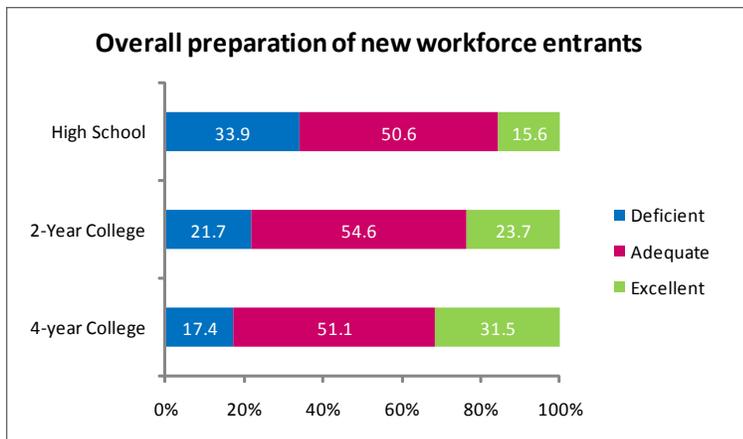
This year's installment of the national "When Work Works" initiative features recent winners of the Alfred P. Sloan Awards for Excellence in Workplace Flexibility. These profiled companies have used innovative and compelling techniques to recruit and retain qualified employees as they strive to remain relevant within the context of global competitiveness. The Families and Work Institute finds that 75 percent of American employees report they do not have enough time for their children, an increase from 66 percent in 1992. Furthermore, 61 percent of Americans report not having enough time for their spouses, a figure which is up from 50 percent in 1992. Researchers for *2009 Guide to Bold New Ideas for Making Work Work* conducted a poll in the spring of 2009 asking employers whether they have reduced, maintained or increased flexibility during the recession. Six percent had reduced flexibility, but 81 percent had maintained flexibility and 13 percent had added it. With 94 percent of employers increasing or maintaining workforce flexibility, it is clearly an important and effective tool in managing the current recession. The *2009 Guide to Bold New Ideas for Making Work Work* profiles 260 employers and describes various uses of flexibility such as:

- Offering employees reduced hours or additional unpaid days off to avoid lay offs
- Encouraging employees to phase into retirement
- Allowing employees to work at home one or two days a week to save on commuting costs in response to fluctuating gas prices

<http://www.familiesandwork.org/site/research/reports/2009boldideas.pdf>

The Ill-Prepared U.S. Workforce: Exploring the Challenges of Employer-Provided Workforce Readiness Training, The Conference Board, July 2009.

This paper reports the findings of a survey conducted in mid-2008 of over 200 employers looking at their training approaches to new-hires. A consortium of the American Society for Training and Development, the Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, and the Society for Human Resource Management crafted the survey to check employers' training practices for new hires entering employment at three educational levels: high school, two-year and four-year college level. Findings show employers



are working hard to compensate for what they consider to be an ill-prepared workforce. For instance, more than half of those surveyed offer remedial training for the newly employed, but the most of these employers rate their programs as only “moderately” or “somewhat” successful. The study shows that often programs offered do not correspond to company needs. For example, they may teach leadership, teamwork skills and information technology, but not the basic math or writing skills employers need most.

Furthermore, 40 percent of employers are indicating a high need for applied skills such as problem solving and critical thinking, but they are not offering remedial programs in these areas. The authors indicate that as a whole, the survey raises important questions, such as, “Do workforce readiness training programs represent the best use of business resources, particularly during these tough economic times?” This paper also makes suggestions for improving workforce readiness. Businesses need to make it publicly known that they expect new workers to be competent in both basic and applied skills. These same companies can work with educators on workforce readiness development through mentoring and internship arrangements. Companies can also choose to direct corporate philanthropic spending toward workforce readiness.

http://www.shrm.org/Research/SurveyFindings/Articles/Documents/BED-09Workforce_RR.pdf

Improving Transition Outcomes of Youth with Disabilities by Increasing Access to Apprenticeship Opportunities, U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), released by DOL September, 2009.

This white paper offers an excellent overview of the nation’s apprenticeship system, with an emphasis on apprenticeship that is directed toward youth and in particular, toward youth with disabilities. The transition from adolescence to adulthood generally occurs between the ages of 14 and 25 and for youth with disabilities, the challenges are often quite considerable. Disabled youth are 50 percent less likely than their non-disabled peers to pursue postsecondary education. The 2007 American Community Survey indicated that 79 percent of non-disabled working aged individuals were employed as opposed to 36.9 percent of those with disabilities. The paper identifies obstacles and opportunities for youth with disabilities in apprenticeship and outlines strategies for establishing apprenticeship programs. For example, most apprenticeship opportunities exist within the construction trades, an area typically perceived as inaccessible and/or inappropriate for youth with disabilities. However, the paper points out that for all these obstacles, there exist opportunities to address them. It suggests that DOL and other federal agencies such as ODEP collaborate in developing a strategy promoting apprenticeship for disabled youth. ODEP could provide technical assistance to federal agencies. Another suggestion was that ODEP and the Office of Apprenticeship work together to identify emerging, in-demand occupations that offer opportunities for youth with disabilities, such as the culinary arts, pharmacy and medical fields.

<http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEN/ten2009/TEN10-09a1.pdf>

Preparing the Workers of Today for the Jobs of Tomorrow, Executive Office of the President, Council of Economic Advisors, July 2000.

The President’s Council of Economic Advisors (CEA) writes about which areas of the U.S. economy it anticipates the greatest economic growth in the next decade. For example, health care will continue to

grow: there will be more demand for health care as the population ages and there will be new health care jobs as innovation and technology progress. The CEA expects the decline in manufacturing to slow and predicts that construction will recover and begin to add more jobs over the next ten years. The ability of employees to think critically and solve problems will be essential as worker flexibility emerges to be the cornerstone of a dynamic labor force functioning in an economy of technological change. Therefore, postsecondary training will play a pivotal role in preparing the 21st century workforce, ranging from certificates and apprenticeships, to two-year technical degrees, to four-year baccalaureate degrees. http://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/Jobs_of_the_Future.pdf?tr=y&auid=5067542

Vulnerable Youth and the Transition to Adulthood: Multiple Pathways to Connecting School and Work, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) Research Brief, July 2009.

This research brief takes a close look at the crucial transition from youth to adulthood and successful connection to the labor market. Most youth do successfully make this connection, but there are subgroups that often tread tumultuous pathways to employment. This report classifies four categories of youth transition between the ages of 18 and 24 based on a trajectory analysis of the estimated probability of being connected to school or work in a particular week. For example, consistently-connected youth, about 60 percent of the population, were connected to school or work over 90 percent of the time during most weeks of the project study. Later-connected youth (about 15 percent of youth) were disconnected at age 18, but over the ensuing six years rose to 90 percent connected. The other two categories were initially-connected youth (15 percent of youth) and never-connected youth (about 10 percent of youth). Policymakers have an interest in crafting programs and strategies that encompass a broad array of approaches to connecting youth with the labor market, by virtue of the simple fact that there is no “typical youth experience” for this transition. In recent years, workforce policy has emphasized dislocated worker programs over youth programs, but this paper emphasizes the latter’s importance in ensuring that young people entering the workforce receive the requisite skills in order to connect strongly with their jobs. Another policy suggestion lies in the observation that family poverty during adolescence appears to be a strong predictor in never-connected youth, but is not statistically associated with later- or initially-connected youth. The brief’s authors suggest that antipoverty programs might help lower the number of never-connected youth.

<http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/09/VulnerableYouth/1/rb.pdf>

Vulnerable Youth and the Transition to Adulthood: Second-Generation Latinos Connecting to School and Work, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) Research Brief, July 2009.

Over the last 25 years, the foreign-born population in the United States (U.S.) has grown to over 35 million, a 150 percent increase. Latinos represent most of the growth with about 53 percent of this foreign-born population emigrated from Latin America. Second-generation Latino youth comprise a larger portion of our population than ever, and it behooves policymakers to understand how this demographic fares in young adulthood, since their educational and labor market successes will certainly impact the country’s economic future. According to the brief, second-generation Latino youth are just as likely to be consistently-connected to school or work as whites and have earnings that are similar to other consistently-connected youth. However, they are more likely to hold high school diplomas as their highest degree, and less likely than white youth to pursue four-year degrees. The authors argue that in the interest of furthering the formation of human capital and encouraging youth to complete education and training programs, policies designed to attract Latino youth are in order. Specifically, since community colleges are one of the most important hubs of postsecondary education and job training, encouraging them to target Latino youth may be appropriate.

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