

How Do We Define “Ready” for College, Careers, and Life? A Portrait of a Graduate

Public education is one of America’s greatest masterpieces. Getting students to graduation is not enough. Educators and communities are committed to ensuring students are “ready” for future learning, work, and civic engagement *after* high school. But what does “ready” mean?

Unfortunately, standardized test scores have been predominantly used as the way to determine if someone is “ready” to graduate, and those alone do not provide an accurate or comprehensive picture of our students’ potential. Students (or educators) should never be defined by a single test score.

Our students are more than a score!

Dr. David Schuler - Superintendent of Township High School District 214, past AASA President, and current National Superintendent of the Year - led an effort to identify multiple measures based on research to more appropriately assess that students are college-ready, career-ready, and life-ready. This work has become AASA’s national initiative called **Redefining Ready!** Using these indicators, we can paint a more realistic portrait of a graduate so that students and families can see what it looks like to be “ready” for future success.

College Ready Indicators

Students are College Ready if they meet either the academic indicators or standardized testing benchmarks listed below.

GPA 2.8 out of 4.0 and one or more of the following academic indicators:

- *Advanced Placement Exam (3+)*
- *Advanced Placement Course (A, B or C)*
- *Dual Credit College English and/or Math (A, B or C)*
- *College Developmental/Remedial English and/or Math (A, B or C)*
- *Algebra II (A, B or C)*
- *International Baccalaureate Exam (4+)*
- *Standardized Testing Benchmarks (minimum score)*
SAT Exam: Math (530) | Reading and Writing (480)
ACT Exam: English (18) | Reading (22) | Science (23) | Math (22)
College Readiness Placement Assessment

Additional Factors that Contribute to College Success

Earning As, Bs, Cs; FAFSA completion; enrollment in career pathway course sequence; college academic advising; participation in college bound bridge programs; senior year math class; completion of a math class after Algebra II.

Career Ready Indicators

Students are Career Ready if they have identified a career interest and meet two of the behavioral and experiential benchmarks listed below. In addition, students entering the military upon graduation must meet the passing scores on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) for each branch of the military.

Career Cluster Identified and two or more of the following benchmarks:

- *90% Attendance*

- 25 hours of Community Service
- Workplace Learning Experience
- Industry Credential
- Dual Credit Career Pathway Course
- Two or more organized Co-Curricular Activities

Life Ready

Being Life Ready means students leave high school with the grit and perseverance to tackle and achieve their goals. Students who are Life Ready possess the growth mindset that empowers them to approach their future with confidence, to dream big and to achieve big. Our nation's schools provide social and emotional support and experiences to equip students with the life skills they will need for success in their future.

While little research exists in the Life Ready realm, AASA and the Redefining Ready! campaign are currently studying how to best measure these life ready skills.

Meanwhile, some school districts have worked with their staff and community to identify Life Ready indicators that represent their local values and aspirations for students. For example, the Orting School District's Life Ready menu includes 25 hours of community service, character education focusing on servant leadership, and digital citizenship and technology literacy.

Once the Orting School District defined what "ready" for college, careers, and life meant for students, the system was poised to support it in intentional ways. This was not yet another initiative; it became the anchor that connected the district's work. It brought system focus and coherence. Course planning and catalogs were connected to college, career, and life readiness. Every school's annual improvement plan goals were explicitly connected to it, and resources were aligned to support it. For example, they redefined multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) to remove barriers to being college-ready (academics), career-ready (attendance), and life-ready (behavior). Having set this clear direction for the system, the School Board could more accurately and comprehensively monitor progress around readiness using data. Board meeting time focused on the core mission of all students "ready." Meeting agenda items and reports were coded to it, and academic and operational plans were anchored to it. "When I see Orting graduates walking across the stage with their College, Careers, and Life honor cord," said Superintendent Shepard, "I know they have the skills, dispositions, and tangible plans to dream and achieve big."

Dr. Schuler said, "If students can't see it, they can't dream it."

Now that our students, families, staff, and community can have a clear picture of what "ready" for college, careers, and life looks like, we can help make dreams come true!

For more information, visit www.RedefiningReady.org.

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