

The Missouri Education Reform Plan establishes an overarching goal for Missouri public education to rank in the top 10 on national and international measures of performance by the year 2020.

What follows are frequently asked questions about the “Top 10 by 20” goals and the manner in which it will be accomplished. Visit the Department’s website at dese.mo.gov/top10by20 for additional support material and other documents about the plan.

1. Why is this important?

The educational requirements for occupations are increasing, particularly for new and emerging occupations, high-technical, high-skilled, and high-wage jobs. In addition, changes to the economy, job requirements and society now demand that every high school student graduate prepared to continue to postsecondary education and the workforce.

The relationship between the health of a community and state and the quality of education is well-documented. Our state, and the communities in our state, cannot be successful without high-quality education. Nowhere is this more apparent than with respect to employment and economic development. Consider the following statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau:

- In 2009, the unemployment was nearly twice as high for Missourians who did not complete high school than for those with a high school diploma or GED® credential. The unemployment rate for Missouri high school dropouts was 17 percent. In contrast, rates for those with a high school diploma were 9.5 and 7.6 percent for those with some college or an associate degree. The unemployment rate for Missourians with a bachelor’s degree or higher was 3.4 percent.
- In 2009, Missouri adults without a high school diploma had weekly median incomes of \$356 (\$18,519 annually). Those with a high school diploma had weekly median incomes of \$496 (\$25,838 annually), and those with some college or an associate degree earned \$599 (\$31,181 annually). For Missourians with a bachelor’s degree or higher, the median weekly figure was \$885 a week (\$46,055 annually).
- By 2018, 63 percent of all jobs in the United States will require at least some kind of postsecondary diploma. Most rapid employment growth will be among jobs that require, at minimum, a master’s degree.

Without a well-trained workforce, Missouri will face a future of high unemployment, low-paying jobs and economic failure. Low wages and high unemployment lead to low state revenue—low state revenue leads to inadequately funded state

programs—and inadequately funded state programs lead to poor performance in key areas including public education. This is the formula for a state spiraling downwards in terms of quality of life for its citizens.

2. When is this goal to be reached?

The year 2020 is the target date for this goal. Annual benchmarks will be established and monitored to track progress toward meeting the goal.

3. What goals and strategies will be used to achieve this important goal?

The Department's key goals are:

1. All Missouri students will graduate college and career ready.
2. All Missouri children will enter kindergarten prepared to be successful in school.
3. Missouri will prepare, develop and support effective educators.

The Missouri Education Reform Plan outlines the critical strategies that will be used to become a top 10 performing state. This includes:

- 1) Implementing higher and clearer academic and performance standards and a rigorous and internationally benchmarked assessment system.
- 2) Expanding opportunities for quality voluntary early childhood education.
- 2) Developing a comprehensive system for the preparation, selection, support and evaluation of effective educators.
- 4) Developing and using the longitudinal data system to improve instruction.

4. What are the top 10 performing states right now and what are their characteristics?

There are many studies and reports that compare educational performance. According to the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the top 10 performing states right now are Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, Maine, Minnesota, Virginia, Montana, Wisconsin and New York.

A recent report by Dr. Douglas B. Reeves of The Leadership and Learning Center identified the key characteristics of the top 10 performing states. They are an emphasis on nonfiction or informational writing, quality early childhood education programs, quality standards and assessments, an appointed (not elected) chief state school officer, and effective use of scarce resources.

5. How does Missouri compare to the top 10 states on key educational performance measures?

Missouri ranks in the middle of the 50 states in terms of educational performance. Here are some key performance statistics:

- On the 2009 NAEP assessment, Missouri saw increased proficiency scores in mathematics and reading from the previous test (2007). Nationally, Missouri students compared favorably in reading with fourth and eighth grade

students ranking 12th and 16th, respectively; math scores are found to be at 21nd and 24th, respectively. Science proficiency scores for fourth and eighth grade students ranked 11th and 12th, respectively.

- In 2010, only one in 13 Missouri graduates scored a 3 or higher on an AP exam to earn college credit while in high school, compared to about one in five in a top 10 state.
- Missouri ranks 11th nationally in the U.S. Department of Education’s most recent “Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate of Public High School Students,” or AFGR.
- Missouri ranks 27th nationally in the 2010 composite ACT test scores and ranks 26th to 33rd in five ACT college-ready benchmarks.
- In 2009, Missouri ranked 23rd in the percentage of students (62 percent) who completed a bachelor’s degree in six years or less and ranked 15th in terms of students (44 percent) who completed an associate degree in three years or less.
- Overall, the percentage of Missouri college students returning for the second fall semester was 71 percent, coming in 28th out of 50 states.

6. Are there other educational performance measures that emphasize the need for improvement in Missouri?

While historically Missouri has made significant progress, the data clearly show there is a need for greater improvement.

- The number of Missouri high school dropouts last year was nearly 10,000 students.
- Only 35 percent of Missouri adults 18-24 are enrolled in college.
- Approximately 38 percent of Missouri college students need non-college credit-bearing remedial courses.
- Four of five Missouri high school graduates do not earn a college degree by their early 20s.
- Just over one-third of Missourians 25-34 hold an associate degree or higher.

7. Why the emphasis on early childhood education?

The research is clear that children who enter school ready to meet its academic, social and emotional demands are more likely to achieve success in academics and in life. States that want to increase college readiness and success must be strategic and coordinated in their investments in these early years. These include programs to ensure access to quality child care, preschool, family supports (including economic and parenting support), child health services, and early identification and intervention for infants and toddlers with disabilities.

The Center for Family Policy & Research recently made a comparison about the cost of incarceration and the cost of early childhood programs. Researchers agree that the long-term and enduring benefits of high-quality early childhood education programs include an increased rate of high school graduation and a decrease in the rate of criminal activity.

8. What happens if we don't succeed?

Complacency and failure to improve will mean that we fall further behind other states and other countries. In a world that is constantly reinventing itself, the challenge to excel is ongoing and the demand to change and improve never abates.

If Missouri's students are not among top performers nationally and internationally, they simply will not be able to compete. If our workforce is not top-performing, Missouri as a state won't compete either. This means that the vast majority of our high school graduates will not be employable in high-skills/high-knowledge jobs that pay decent wages. It means fewer good employers will want to locate in Missouri. It means our young adults will not be job-ready or life-ready.

9. What happens if we do succeed?

At the turn of the century, economic visionary Peter Drucker wrote an article for *The Economist* titled "The Next Society." In this article he said, "The next society will be a knowledge society. Knowledge will be its key resources, and knowledge workers will be the dominant group in its workforce."

As Drucker pointed out, this goes far beyond the traditional definition of "knowledge workers"—doctors, lawyers, teachers, accountants and chemical engineers, for example. This group also includes what he called "knowledge technologists"—computer technicians, software designers, analysts in clinical labs, manufacturing technologists and paralegals. Drucker describes these jobs as follows:

These people are as much manual workers as they are knowledge workers; in fact, they usually spend far more time working with their hands than with their brains. But their manual work is based on a substantial amount of theoretical knowledge which can be acquired only through formal education, not through an apprenticeship. They are not, as a rule, much better paid than traditional skilled workers, but they see themselves as "professionals." Just as unskilled manual workers in manufacturing were the dominant social and political force in the 20th century, knowledge technologists are likely to become the dominant social—and perhaps also political—force over the next decades.

If Missouri succeeds, it will become an international destination for businesses needing knowledge workers. This means good jobs and the resulting good wages. Good wages translate into a high demand for goods and services including high-quality public services. It means our state is taking the lead in providing successful, vibrant communities for its residents. It means a bright future for Missouri.

It all begins with education.