



NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS PANEL

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High School Completion Rates Stay Level Despite Rising Academic Standards

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Despite rising academic standards, the percentage of students, between the ages of 18 and 24 completing high school has remained steady. Recent data provided by the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) show that between 1990 and 1999, the percentage of young adults receiving either a high school diploma or an alternative credential has remained about 85 percent.

“It is reassuring to know that high academic standards and a tougher curriculum for high school completion have not resulted in an increased drop out rate,” says Gov. Frank O’Bannon, chair of the National Education Goals Panel. “The National Education Goals Panel will continue to monitor these figures and will consider exploring the impact of the rise in students graduating from alternative programs over traditional high schools.”

The second of the nation’s Education Goals is to raise high school graduation rate to 90 percent. While in 1999 17 out of 50 states had met this goal, the national average has remained at 85 percent. The Panel’s source of information on high school completion is Census data from the October Current Population Survey, prepared by the National Center for Education Statistics. These recent findings are significant because they dispel the notion that graduation rates would decline with the advent of more rigorous standards and a strengthening of graduation requirements.

“We need to closely monitor high school completion rates during the next several years as new federal legislation requires more state testing of all students and research whether the rise in alternative credentials is related to rigorous accountability standards or other factors,” says Rafael Valdivieso, Executive Director of the National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board.

About the National Education Goals Panel

Created in July 1990, the National Education Goals Panel is a bipartisan body consisting of an equal number of Republicans and Democrats from the federal and state levels of government. The Panel is made up of eight governors, four members of Congress, four state legislators and two members appointed by the President. The eight National Education Goals call for greater levels of: student achievement; high school completion; teacher education and professional development; parental participation in the schools; adult literacy and lifelong learning; and safe, disciplined, and alcohol-and-drug-free schools. The Goals also call for all children to be ready to learn by the time they start school and for US students to be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement.

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