



# College & Career Pathways as an Economic Engine: Strengthening Student Pathways through Education & Beyond

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In partnership with: **All4Ed**



# What we mean by pathways

Education-to-career pathways multiply options for young people and help them advance from high school, through postsecondary education, and into meaningful careers.

State and regional leaders from across systems and sectors collaborate to design pathways that are aligned to labor-market demand. Enabling policies and intermediary organizations support the development of pathways ecosystems.



# WE NEED SYSTEMS, NOT PROGRAMS





**WHY PATHWAYS**

**WHY NOW**

# Youth unemployment is ticking up

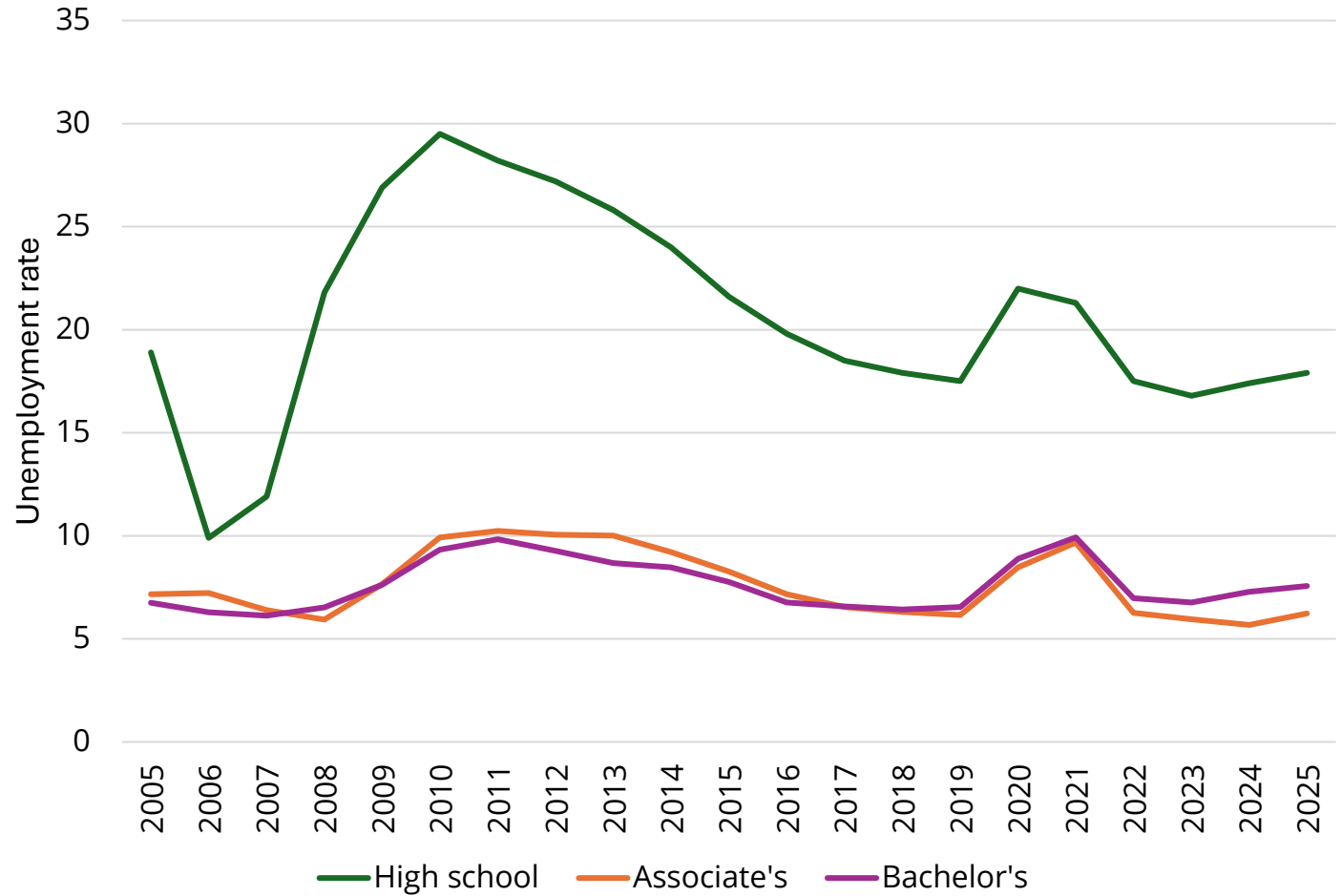
August 2025 unemployment rates for those aged 20-24:

**17.9%** for those with only a **high school diploma**

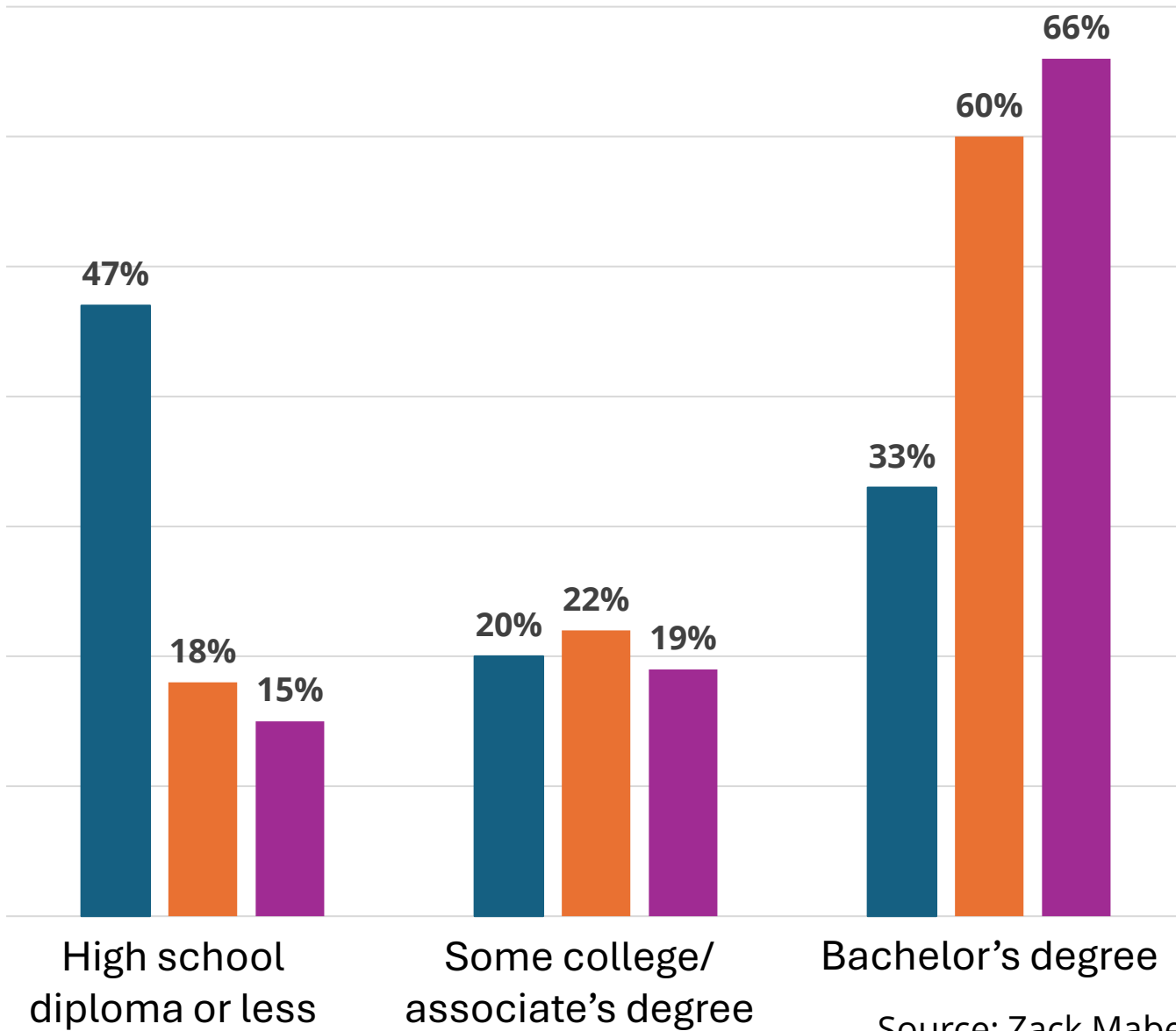
**6.2%** for those with **associate's degrees**

**7.6%** for those with **bachelor's degrees**

Unemployment rate for 20- to 24-year-olds by educational attainment, 2005-2025



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

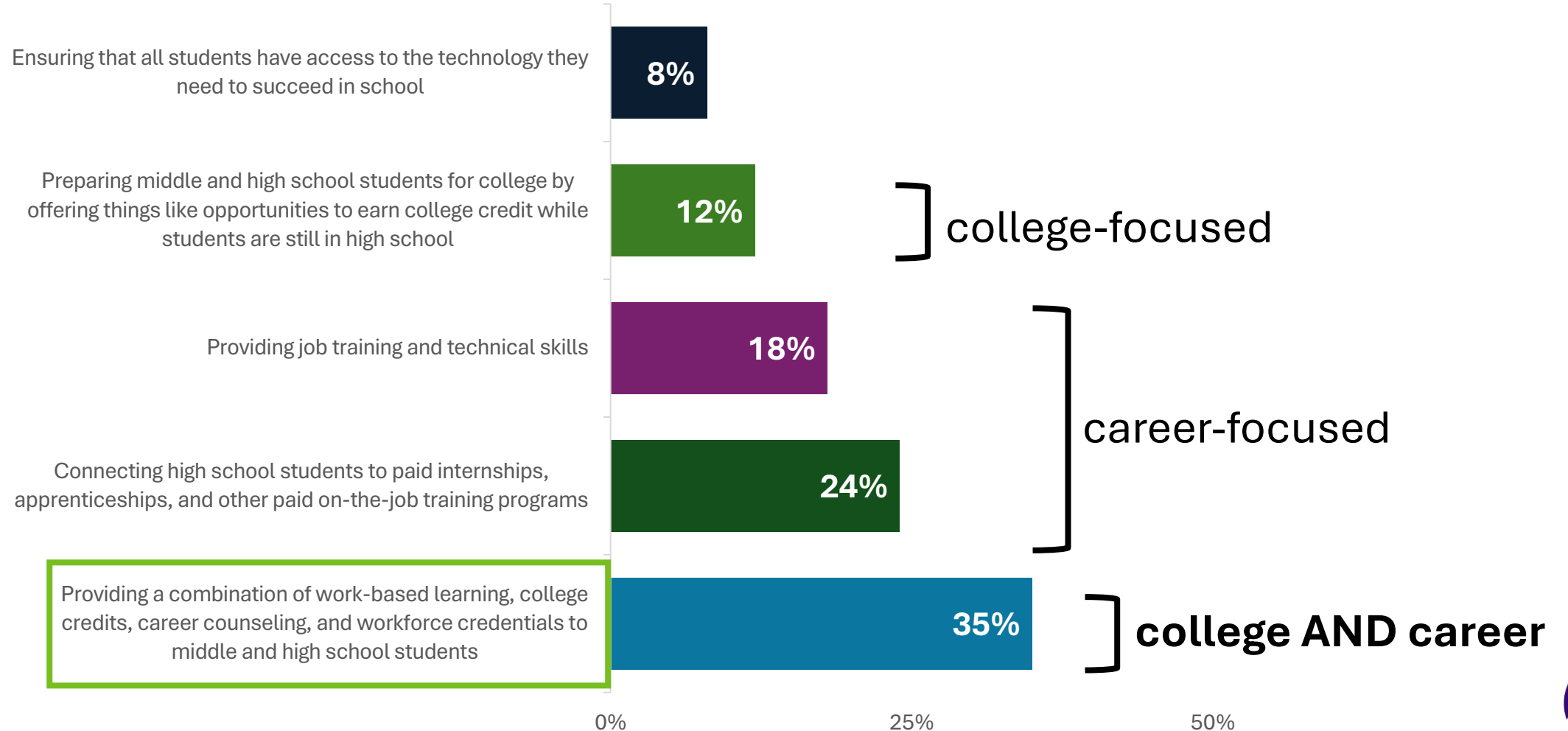


The educational attainment distribution of workers with good jobs is changing

Source: Zack Mabel, Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, "What Works: Education, Training, and Work-Based Pathway Changes that Lead to Good Jobs" presentation at Pathways to Prosperity National Institute, October 23, 2023

When asked to choose what would best help students after high school, **voters choose a combination of options to prepare for college and careers, over one or the other.** This option is especially appealing to young voters.

Which of the following do you think would help students the most after high school?



# Most K-12 students aren't earning the right credentials

**18%** of credentials earned by high school students are in demand among employers

**8 of the top 10** IT credentials earned by high school students are aligned to jobs that pay less than \$15/hour

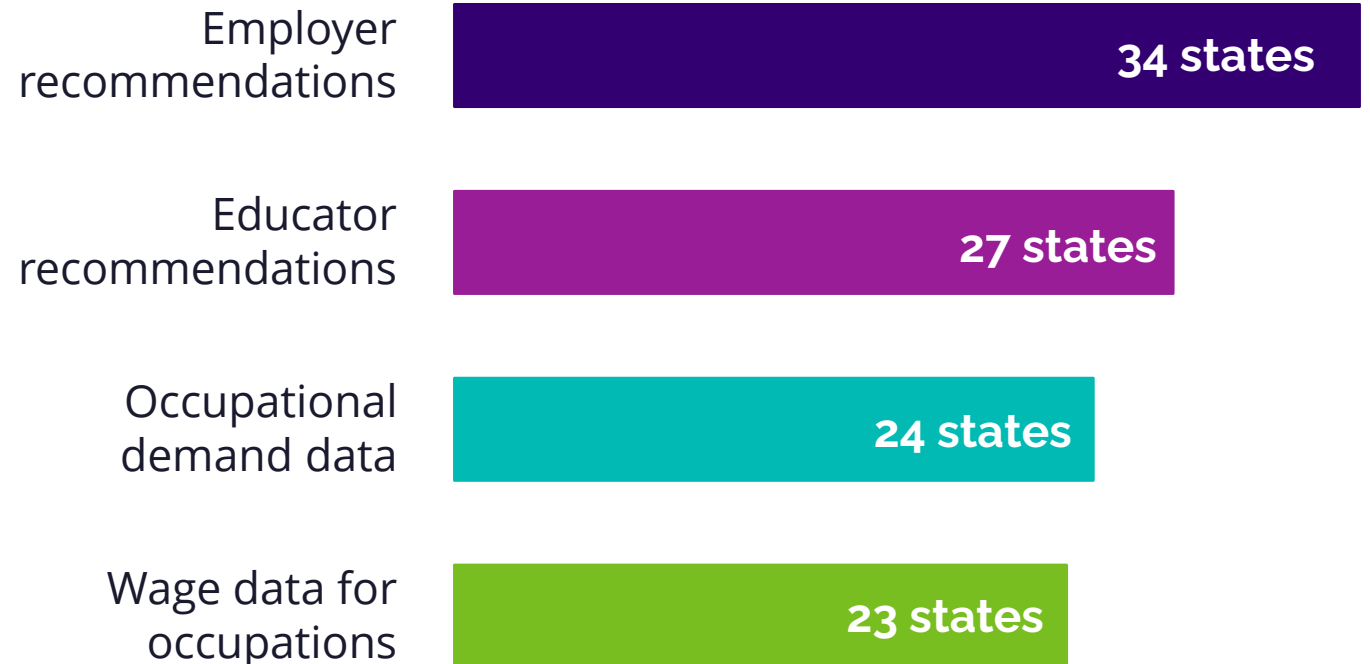
**75%** of high school students who attain IRCs and then go directly into the workforce earn less than **\$15,300** in their first year after high school graduation

Sources: [ExcelinEd/Burning Glass](#); [Fordham Institute](#)



**Not a single state makes credential approval decisions based on student outcomes.**

## Inputs used by states in credential approval processes

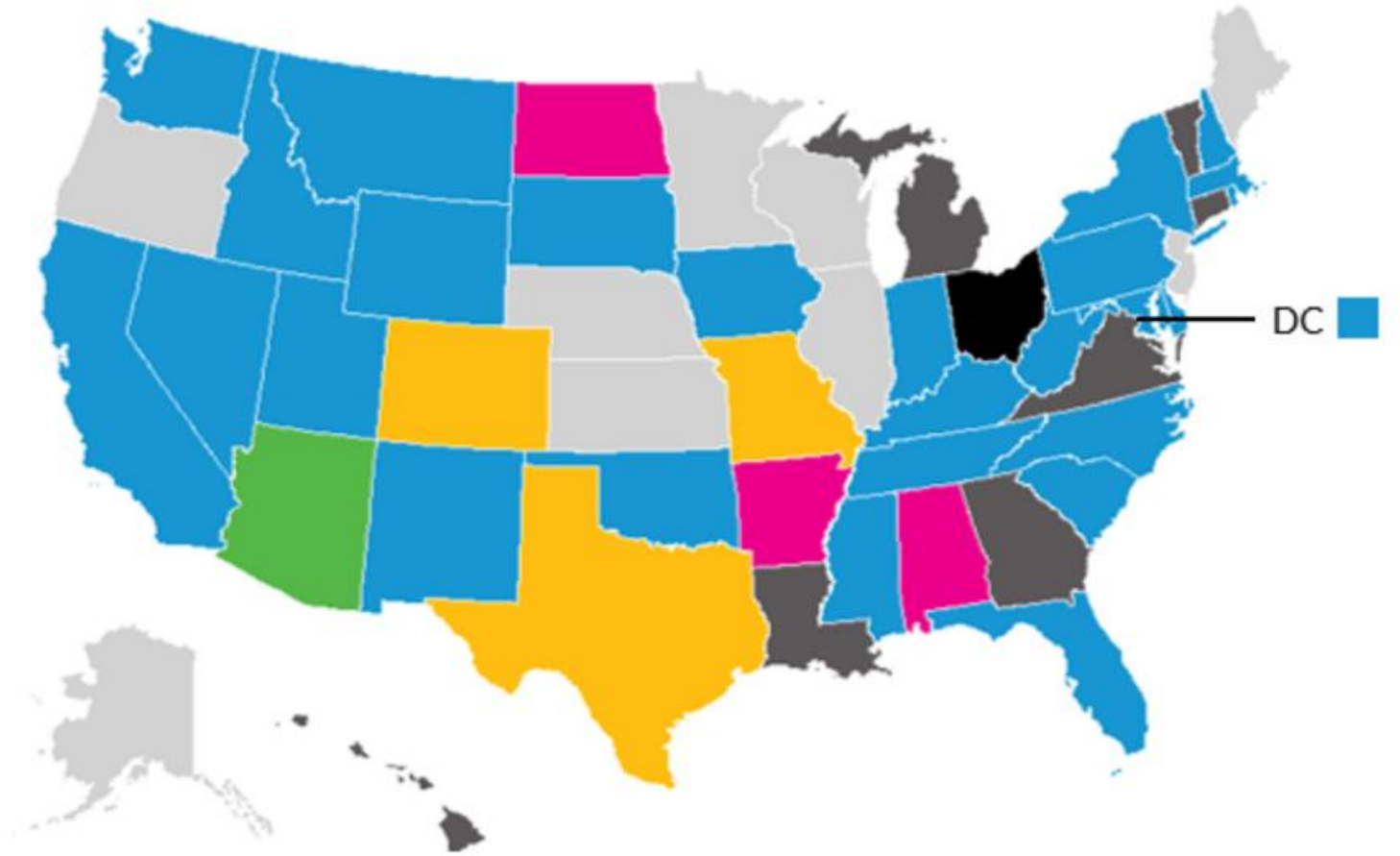









Source: [Advance CTE](#)

# Most states aren't measuring the right things

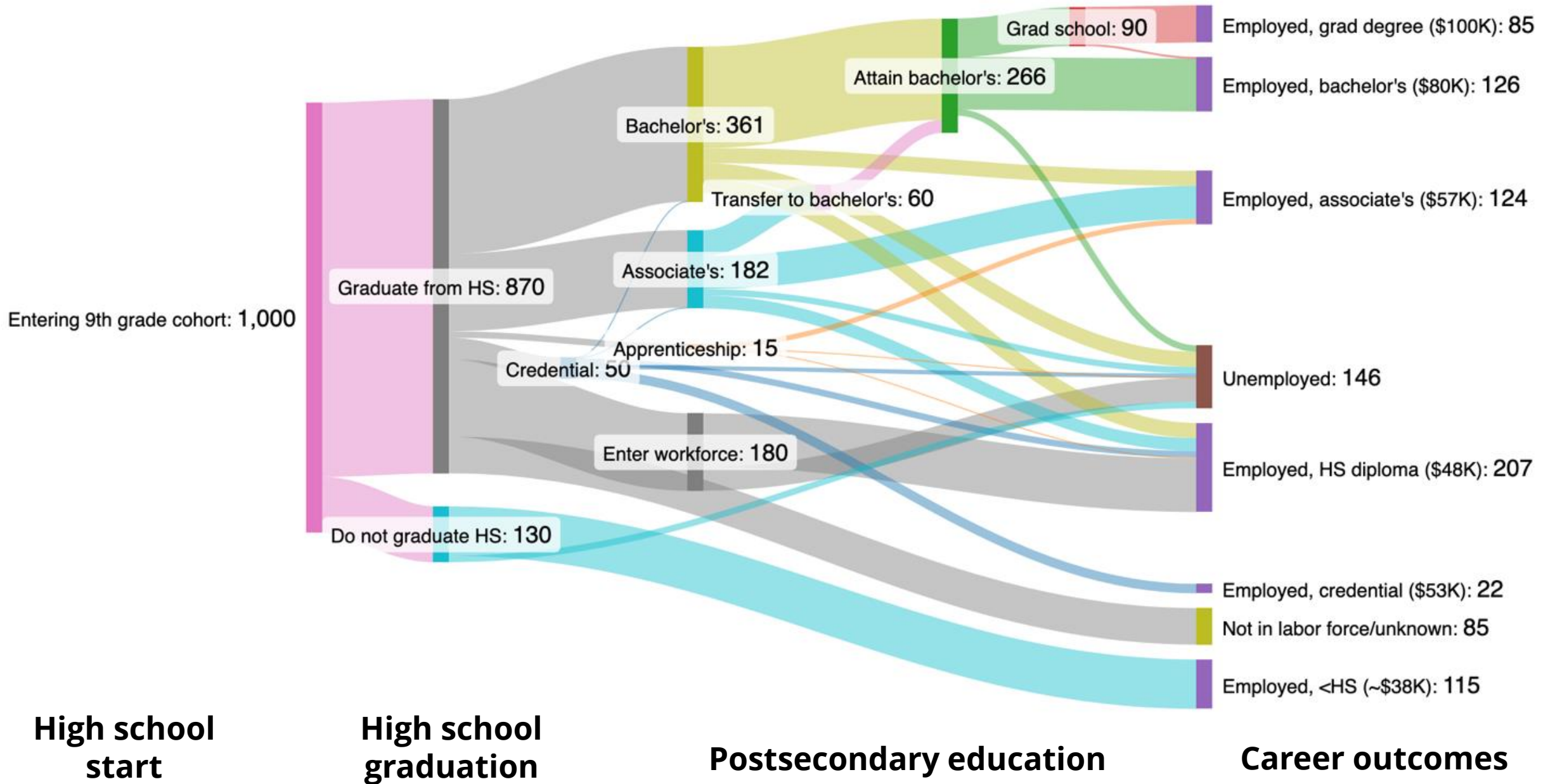
Only 15 states measure outcomes instead of inputs

Just three measure college AND career outcomes



- |   |   |
|---|---|
|  College, career, and military or civic outcomes |  College outcomes only |
|  College and military or civic outcomes          |  Inputs only           |
|  Career and military or civic outcomes           |  N/A                   |
|  Military or civic outcomes only                 |   |

# A not-so-hypothetical scenario





**This is the wrong message.**

# Governor Playbook

## Future Ready Pathways



This playbook provides concrete actions Governors can take to strengthen how their states prepare all young people for good jobs and the careers of the future. Through aligning and integrating high school, postsecondary education, and careers, Governors play a significant role in setting a clear, shared vision and agenda for college and career readiness. By developing a cohesive education-to-workforce system, Governors ensure the holistic needs of students, employers, and the economy are met. This playbook is intended to provide options that Governors can fit to the specific policy context of their states as they build innovative policies and partnerships that advance career-connected learning that ensures each student can navigate to a future that meets their potential, provides students flexibility for life-long learning, and ultimately serves the needs of the state's unique economy and vision for growth.

All of the models/examples in this playbook are intended to serve as a companion to the Let's Get Ready Roadmap developed by Governor Jared Polis of Colorado while serving as Chairman of the National Governors Association.



Step 1  
Establish a  
Unified Vision

Step 2  
Create a  
Management  
Structure

Step 3  
Link Goals  
to Performance

Step 4  
Align Policy  
and Practice



# All4Ed State Policy Center

**Model Policy 3: Ensuring credit transfer to meet the promise of early college opportunities** ✓

**Model Policy 4: Increasing the accessibility of dual enrollment courses by providing no-cost options, in priority course areas, for high school students** ✓

**Model Policy 5: State Policy Center: Increasing the Number of Dual Enrollment Educators by Covering the Cost of Needed Education and Credentials, in Exchange for Teaching Service** ✓



**43% of credits are lost upon transfer.**

*Source:  
Government Accountability  
Office*

# THANK YOU!

Have a question?  
Want to chat?

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For more information and additional resources, visit:



All4Ed's State  
Policy Center



Pathways at  
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