



BELLWETHER
EDUCATION PARTNERS

Improving Our Schools in Virginia: The Need And The Opportunity

Andrew J. Rotherham, Bellwether Education Partners

Bellwether Education Partners - Introduction

BELLWETHER EDUCATION PARTNERS is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to accelerating the achievement of low-income students by cultivating, advising, and placing a robust community of innovative, effective, and sustainable change agents in public education reform and improving the policy climate for their work.

Recent clients include:



(Graduate School of Education)



Opportunities for Teachers,
Results for Urban Students



BILL & MELINDA
GATES foundation



NEW SCHOOLS
FOR NEW ORLEANS



BELLWETHER
EDUCATION PARTNERS



Then...

In 1995, Virginia led the nation with a forward-looking education plan. The Standards of Learning were created to improve educational outcomes and accountability. Virginia was hailed as a leader on standards.

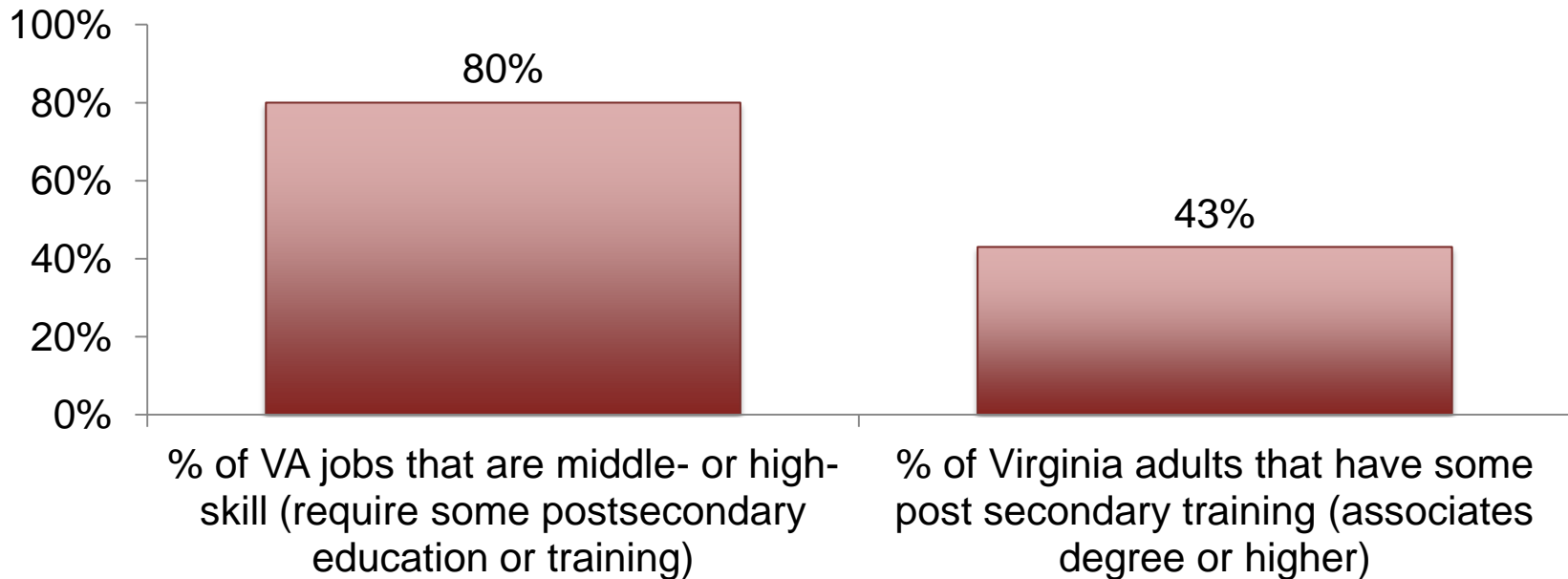


“...with the goal that all our schoolchildren, not just a lucky few, will be prepared to compete successfully in the global economy of the 21st century, whether they go to college or enter the workforce right out of high school.” – Mark Christie

Now...

The global economy of the 21st century is happening

Comparison of Virginia job market to available workforce



Too few Virginia students are graduating from high school and too few are prepared for college-level work

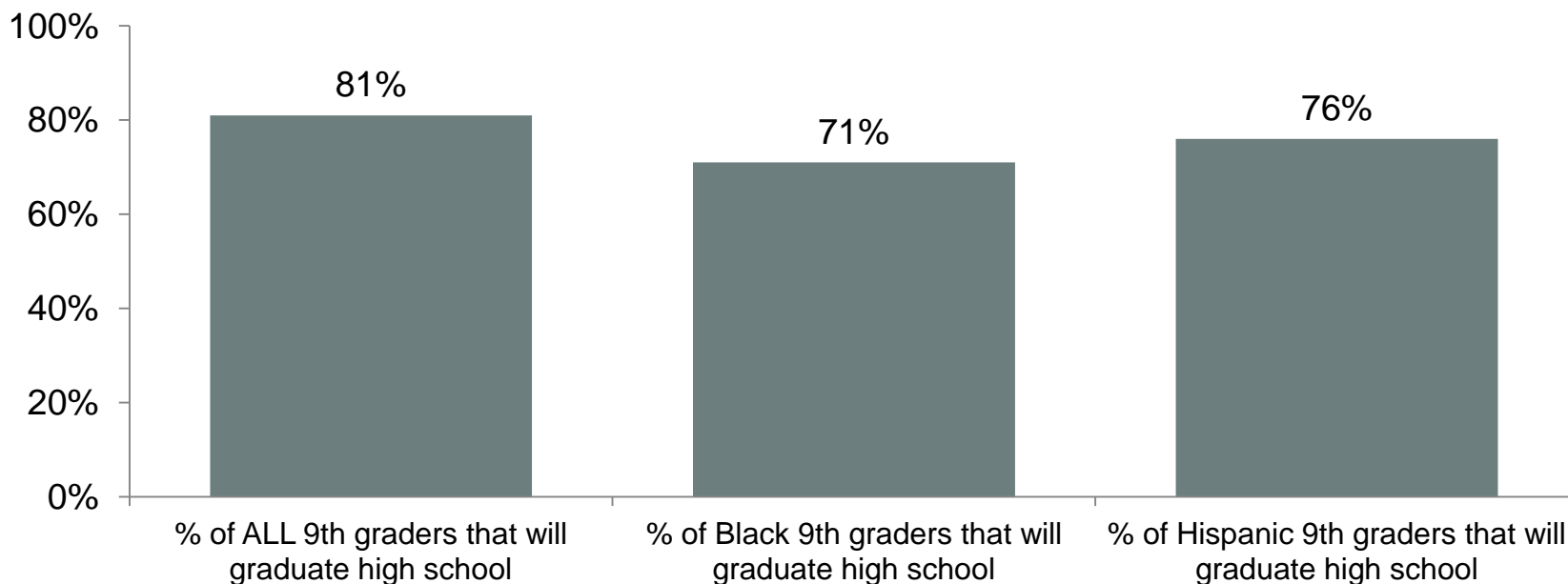
Source: The National Skills Coalition and National Association for Higher Education Management Systems

Two Ideas...Simultaneously

- Virginia has *many* dedicated hardworking teachers, school administrators, and school system leaders and is ahead of some other states.
- Virginia's educational *outcomes* are not good enough and we must do substantially better than we are now.

Far too many Virginia students dropout...

Virginia High School Graduation Statistics

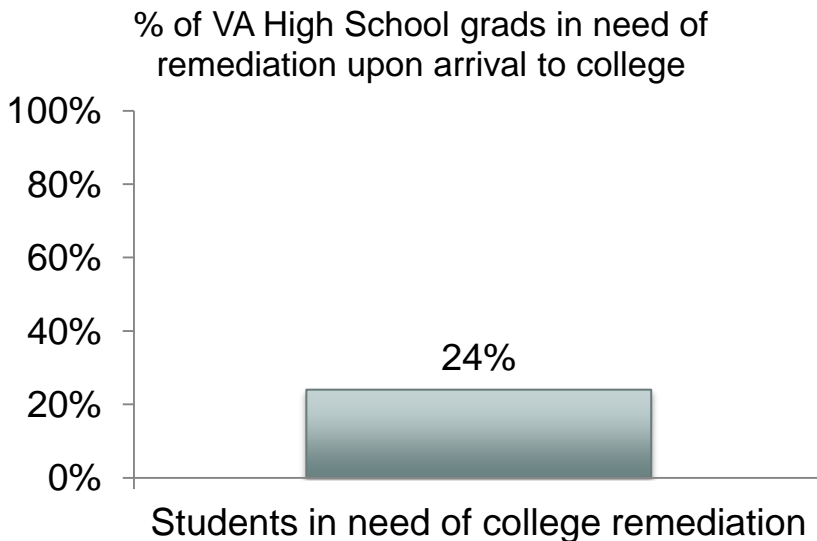


In today's economy this means that more than **one in five** Virginia students, and **one in four minority students**, are getting a ticket to nowhere from Virginia public schools.

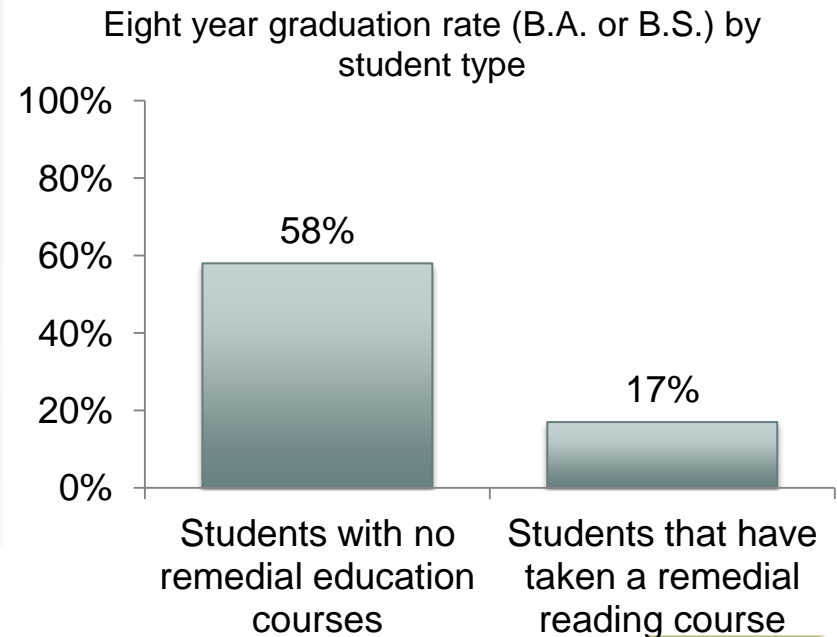
...or graduate unprepared

Of the students who do graduate from high school, many are not prepared for college-level work

24 percent of Virginia's high school graduates arrive to college needing remedial classes

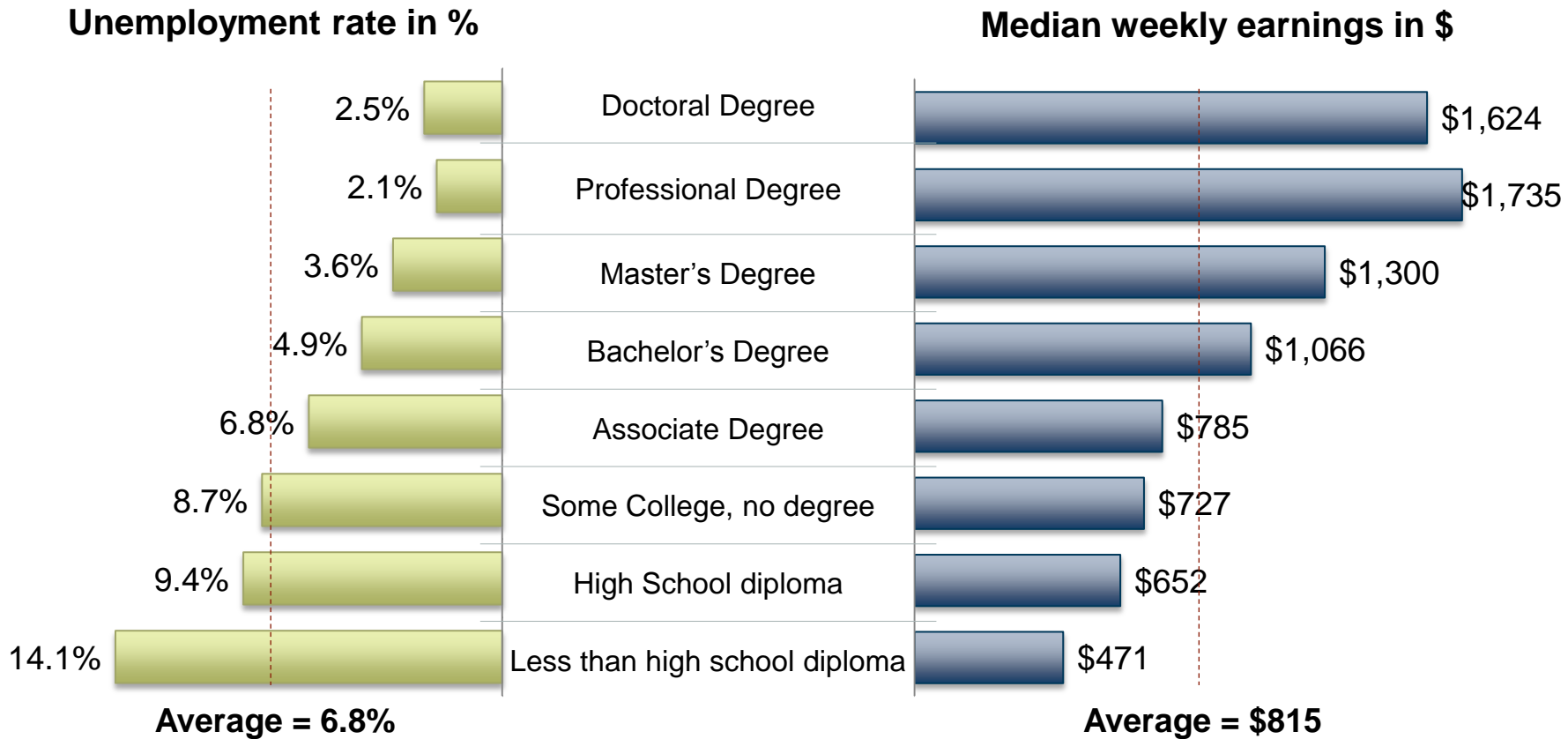


Research shows that the *leading predictor* that a student will drop out of college is the need for remedial reading



This has consequences for them...

2012 U.S. Unemployment rate and earnings by educational attainment



...and for all of us

If *each state* had a 90 percent high school graduation rate *nationally* we would see:

- \$5.3 billion in extra earnings for these 580,000 graduates;
- \$6.6 billion in additional GDP;
- \$1.8 billion in additional state tax revenue;
- \$19 billion in home sales by the midpoint of their careers; and
- \$669 million annually in vehicle purchases.



Not Keeping Pace

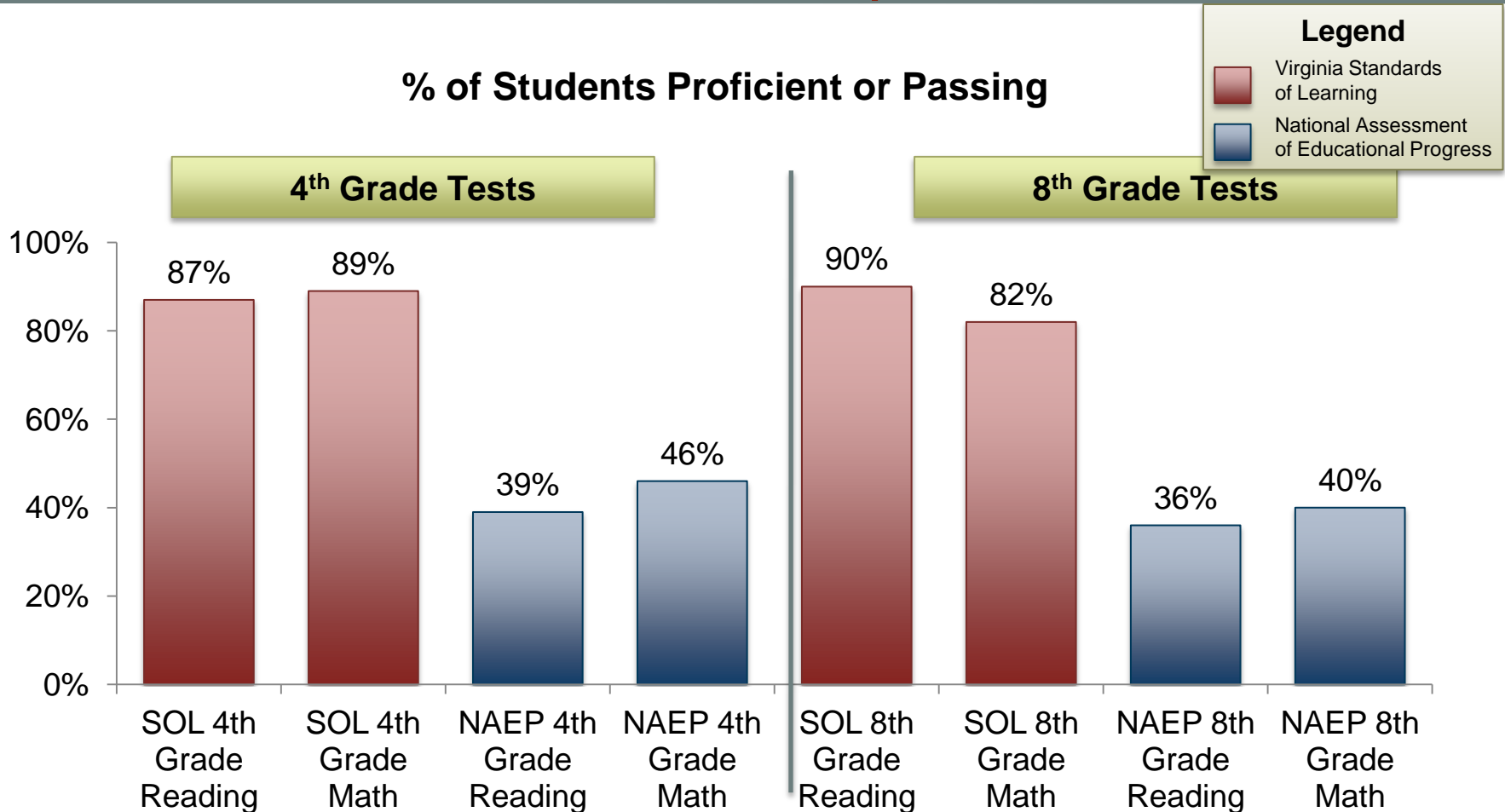
- Although Virginia is one of just a few states to include accountability for graduation rates in its school accreditation system experts say **the measure over-weights weak credentials like GEDs while underweighting actual high school completion.**
- ***A 2012 report from America's Promise found Virginia among states making "limited or no progress" in improving high school graduation rates.*** From 2002-2009 six states substantially increased their high school graduation rates, 18 saw modest or moderate progress, 10 states declined. 16 states, **including Virginia**, had only level progress. Tennessee, for instance, increased its graduation rate by 17.8 points during this period from 59.6 to 77.4 percent. Regionally, Kentucky, South Carolina, and Alabama are also among the leading states.



The issue is not what other countries are doing, more immediately **other states** are stepping up their educational game:

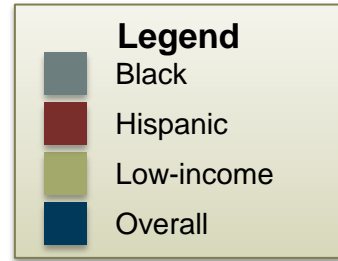
- 21 states and D.C. now require ALL students to meet college and career ready graduation requirements in English (4 years) and math (at least 3 years through Algebra 2 or the equivalent). **Virginia does not.** Only 46% of Virginia students (those who earn the Advanced Diploma) meet this standard.
- Respected national organizations, including the National Council on Teacher Quality and National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, give Virginia poor grades for its policies on **teacher effectiveness, charter schools, and other reform and school improvement initiatives.**
- As opposed to other states – including regional competitors - **Virginia was not competitive in the Race to the Top competition and its request for a waiver from No Child Left Behind was initially denied and subsequently embroiled in controversy about its rigor.**

Disconnect Between Virginia Expectations And World Class Expectations

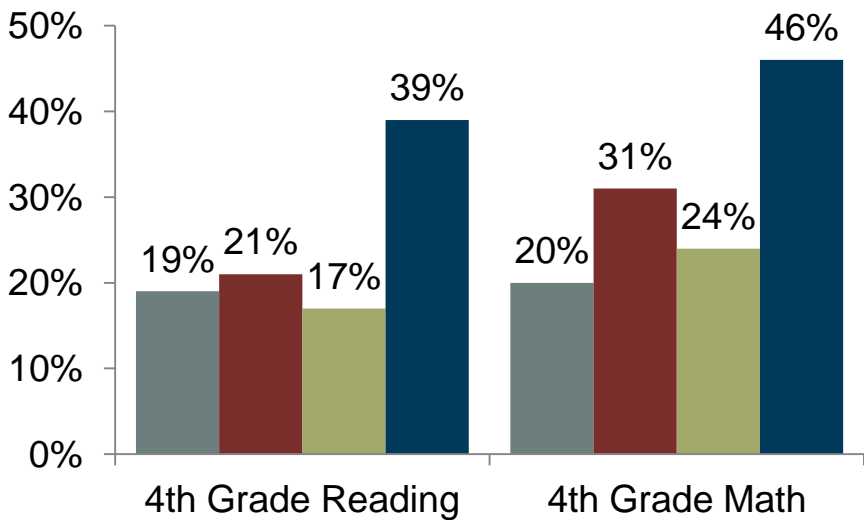


Large and persistent achievement gaps as well

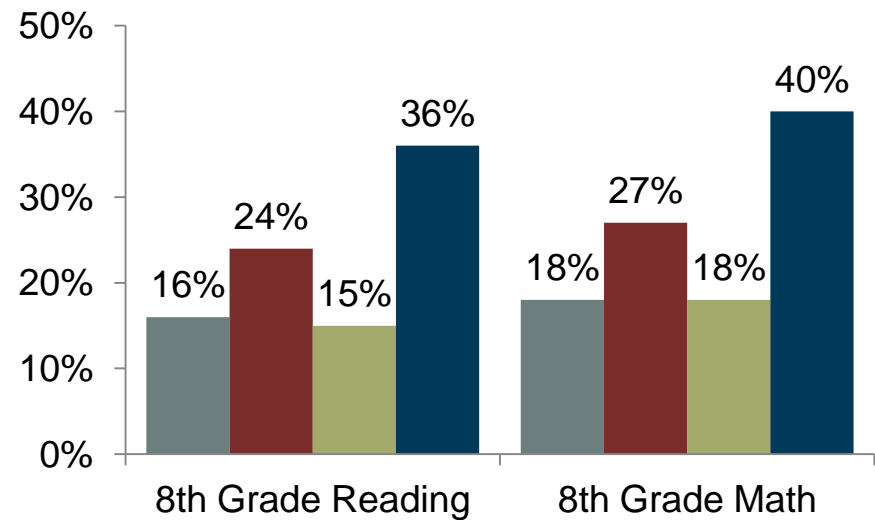
The picture *is far worse for low-income and minority students.* For instance, on the 2011 **National Assessment of Educational Progress**, a national no-stakes test given to a representative sample of students, only 15 percent of low-income 8th-graders and 16 percent of black 8th-graders were in reading:



4th Grade NAEP Test 2011
(% of students proficient or better)



8th Grade NAEP Test 2011
(% of students proficient or better)



Despite all this, under Virginia's current school accountability system how many schools are "fully accredited" right now?

93 %

The Public Increasingly Gets It

- The public recognizes that workplace **demands have changed** and that **greater preparation is required** for the current generation to succeed. And there is very strong, bipartisan support for education reforms (like higher standards for all students)
- 89% of the public (nationally) agree that to “get ahead in life” a person needs **at least some education beyond high school**
- Two-third of those surveyed supported **all states using the same English and math standards and the same tests** for those subjects at every grade level for all students
- 86% support **college and career ready graduation requirements** (3 or 4 years of math through Algebra II, 4 years or English, 3 or 4 years of English including biology and chemistry, 3 or 4 years of social studies and various electives)
- Parents are **voting with their feet** when given an opportunity to do so. Here, 61 percent of Virginians **support public charter** schools, only 24 percent are opposed.



“Leaders must wake people out of inertia. They must get people excited about something they've never seen before, something that does not yet exist.”

- Rosabeth Moss Kantor

The choice for Virginia's leaders is what kind of action to take?

While other states acknowledge that their current state accountability systems overstate student proficiency Virginia is too content with the status quo.

The fundamental question for Virginia leaders is not whether to adopt the Common Core State Standards or not – there are compelling arguments pro and con – **rather it's what steps Virginia will take to raise its expectations for students and the performance of its schools.**

Virginia can decide to work on the college and career ready agenda on its own (*and state leaders have recently begun raising standards in math and reading*) or it can work with other states. **But what the commonwealth cannot do is stand still on standards, accountability, and other improvements to the commonwealth's public schools.** In today's environment that's the same as moving backwards.



Contact Andy

Andrew J. Rotherham
Co-Founder & Partner
Bellwether Education Partners
<http://www.bellwethereducation.org>

Email: andy@bellwethereducation.org

 @arotherham