

## What Can Parents Do?

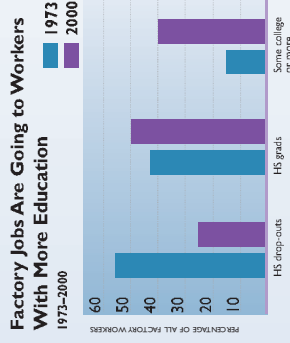
You have the highest expectations for your children and believe they can learn at the highest levels when taught at the highest levels. Make sure your child's teachers, administrators and counselors do too. Every child learns differently, but they can learn. They should have the A-G curriculum available to them so they can take advantage of all opportunities to enrich and fulfill their own lives. Here are the things you can do as a parent:

- 1. You have the right to request that the A-G courses be adopted.** Be knowledgeable about the requirements so you know what to request. Request a college handbook from your child's guidance counselor. Middle school is not too early to start planning.
- 2. Find out if the courses your child is taking are classified as A-G.** Do this by requesting a list of all the school's courses to see if they fulfill the A-G requirements. Then meet with your child's teachers and counselor on a quarterly basis to make sure you and your children have chosen the correct courses. YOU choose the courses; don't let others choose for you. To find out just what courses your child should be taking go to these websites [www.csumathsuccess.org](http://www.csumathsuccess.org) and [www.eapop.org](http://www.eapop.org) for more information.
- 3. Do background research on your child's school so you know how it is performing.** You can check school performance at several websites such as the Education Trust—West's "Raising the Roof" educational tool at [www.edtrustwest.org](http://www.edtrustwest.org), the California Department of Education's site at [www.eddata.k12.ca.us](http://www.eddata.k12.ca.us), or [www.GreatSchools.net](http://www.GreatSchools.net).
- 4. Identify and become active in a local parent's organization that is working to adopt the A-G curriculum in your child's school or school district.** There is power in numbers. Being seen and heard in large numbers at the school level and beyond is a good way to make an impact. Check to see if your child's school has a parent advisory council by visiting or calling the school or check the school district's website. Some of the community organizations in the area that are working on behalf of children and which you can become a part of are the Parent Leadership Engagement Academy (PLEA), Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE), ACORN, the Urban League and Californians for Justice.
- 5. Persuade other parents to get involved in their school.** The more parents who get involved, the more you can impact what happens with your child's education.
- 6. Get involved in school site council meetings where decisions about your child's education are being made.** Find out how the school is spending your money. This is where important decisions are made, including budget decisions and course offerings. This is where students, administrators and parents can make their voices heard about the A-G curriculum.
- 7. Participate in school board meetings.** You can show solidarity and strength to get things done through your parent organization. Attend meetings and write letters to the school board demanding that more A-G courses be offered or that the entire school be focused on A-G.
- 8. Make politicians and legislators who have been elected from your community hear you.** Either individually, or as a parent group, you can call the offices of local politicians and legislators. Begin a letter-writing campaign to their offices demanding that your school provide A-G courses.
- 9. Become visible to policymakers.** Organize your parent group to travel to the state capitol or local board meetings for key education and A-G related legislation. Make your voice heard that you want the A-G curriculum in your child's school.
- 10. Read and understand the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB).** This sweeping education act reauthorized the government's 1965 K-12 program with specific steps that the states must implement. A summary of this document is available at the Education Trust—West's office or on our website at [www.edtrustwest.org](http://www.edtrustwest.org).



# Understanding and Implementing the A-G Rigorous Curriculum In Oakland High Schools

Our economy has evolved. Over the past two decades, the technological age has brought about a fundamental shift in the workplace that has wiped out decades-old ideas about entry-level skills. **In 1950, 20% of jobs were classified as skilled. Now, about 85% of jobs are.** Expectations for college and career are merging. Indeed, the skill readiness required to succeed in college and the workforce are on in the same. In other words, ready for work and ready for college mean the same thing—being ready or life. This means implementing "rigor" into the core high school curriculum through the A-G sequence so that all high school graduates are empowered to make meaningful choices after high school.



## Why Do All Students Need the A-G Curriculum?

Research shows that preparing young people for work and for college in today's high-level economy demands exactly the same preparation. The same skills, the same courses, taught with the same rigor. In California that means the A-G curriculum—a series of 15 high school courses.

## Colleges and Universities As Well As Most Employers Want the Same Skills

Recent research by the American Diploma Project found that employers require the same high-level skills that college-bound students need, which include:

- Strong reading and comprehension ability, so employees can understand informational and technical texts.
- Strong literature background so employees can better understand other cultures and interact with diverse customers and co-workers.
- Strong writing and research skills and being competent problem solvers.
- Proficiency in Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II (college-prep math), data analysis, probability and statistics.

## Technical Careers and Many Blue Collar Jobs Require Rigorous Coursework

Jobs that in the past did not require college-level skills have tougher entrance requirements today. For example:

- Sheet Metal Workers: must complete a four or five year apprenticeship requiring geometry, trigonometry and technical reading.
- Automotive Technicians: must have a solid grounding in physics to understand force, hydraulics, friction and electrical circuits.
- Avionics Technicians: must know physics, chemistry, advanced mathematics, computers and electronics.
- Tool and Die Makers: must complete a four or five year apprenticeship and/or postsecondary training requiring algebra, geometry, trigonometry and statistics.
- Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Technicians: must complete a five year apprenticeship including electrical theory, computer literacy, thermodynamics, pneumatics and even customer relations.



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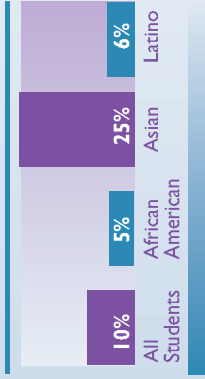
### Not Enough A-G Courses Are Offered For All Students

Only one in six (17%) of California's school districts provides the opportunity for all of their students to take the full sequence of courses in A-G curriculum. It is worse in the state's poorest schools. Districts that serve the highest concentrations of "disadvantaged" students, according to California's School Characteristics Index (SCI), are only one fourth as likely to offer enough A-G classes for everyone, which takes into account factors such as poverty level, parent education level and English language proficiency.

### ...and Most 9th Graders Fall Woefully Short Of A-G Completion

Even though more than 8 out of 10 California high school students plan to go on to college, only about 2 in 10 (23%) complete the curriculum that will most likely help prepare them to succeed if they get there. These numbers are even worse for some groups of students. **While 56% of Asian and 39% of White graduates successfully complete A-G, only 24% of African American and 22% of Latino graduates do the same.** These numbers actually overstate our students' readiness, because they only look at California's 12th grade population, and don't look at the 9th graders that never make it to their senior year. **Looking at entering 9th graders as a whole, only 12% of Latino and 14% of African American graduates successfully complete the A-G courses and graduate from high school in California.** The Oakland Unified School District's completion rates fall far below even these low levels.

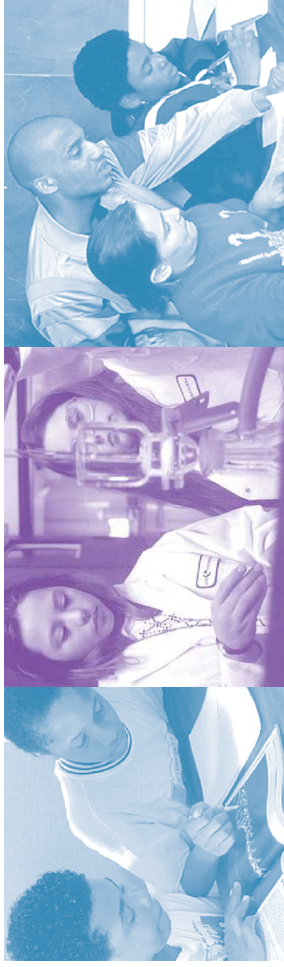
#### Oakland Unified School District 9th Graders Who Graduate With A-G Mastery, Class of 2003



A-G mastery indicates that students have completed the full A-G course sequence with a "C" or better in each class.

### What's the Bottom Line?

We have an obligation to prepare our children to make their own choices in life from among the full array of post-secondary options—not to limit their options and take away their choices. A-G is not perfect, but it is the best vehicle we have for ensuring all students have opportunities after high school. A-G is the best bet for the futures of our young people, our city and our state. It is an economic imperative. It is a moral imperative. The bottom line is, A-G is an imperative for all students in all schools in Oakland.



### What Does "Rigor" Mean and What Is "A-G?"

Rigor in the high school curriculum means requiring students take higher-level math and advanced science (courses above the minimum low level expectations that California currently requires for graduation). Sometimes it also means taking a four-year sequence of English (literature, etc.) and a foreign language.

The A-G curriculum is a sequence of 15 required (and 3 more recommended) high school courses. Any student wishing to study at a four-year public college in California must complete these courses. But, it is clear that A-G is necessary for all students, regardless of whether they are going to a four year college or not. The A-G curriculum includes:

<b>A History/Social Science</b>	2 Years (1 year of world history, 1 year of U.S. history or half year of U.S. history and a half year of Civics)
<b>B English</b>	4 Years
<b>C Math</b>	3 Years required, 4 years recommended (Algebra, Geometry, Algebra II required)
<b>D Science</b>	2 Years required, 3 years recommended (2 of the courses must be Biology, Chemistry or Physics)
<b>E Foreign Language</b>	2 Years (same language), 3 years recommended
<b>F Visual/Performing Arts</b>	1 Year
<b>G College Prep Elective</b>	1 Year

To understand more about what is taught in each of these classes, you can read the standards on the California Department of Education website at: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/standards/>.

### Is the A-G Curriculum Too Difficult for Our Students?

No! Research shows that students rise to the challenge. When the San Jose Unified School District implemented a mandatory A-G curriculum, high school reading and math achievement scores improved, achievement gaps decreased and, despite more demanding course requirements for graduation, San Jose's graduation rate has held steady. For more information see [www.edtrustwest.org](http://www.edtrustwest.org) and click on the data presentations tab.