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The Platte Institute

# PLATTE CHAT

## **The True Cost of Remedial Education in Nebraska**

By Rubria Jessica Hintz

Platte Institute

Remedial classes are taken by students who are not prepared for entrance level courses taken by most college students. These young scholars and their parents fully expect that successful graduation from an accredited high school has prepared them for success; however, 21% of all post secondary students were enrolled in at least one remedial class in 2003-04.<sup>1</sup> Although this is an alarming statistic, a significant number of these students may be older adults returning to college. “Nearly four out of five students who undergo remediation in college graduated from high school with grade-point averages of 3.0 or

strongly believes in the importance of citizens participating in the public dialogue on issues important to Nebraska. Writing a letter to the editor is an outstanding way to partake in the discussion and have your voice heard by thousands of people. To make the process easier, the Platte Institute has assembled a list of links which allow you to submit a letter to the editor to nearly all Nebraska newspapers. Simply [CLICK HERE](#) for a listing of the newspapers and follow the appropriate link to submit your letter.

## Contact Us

If you would like to contact someone at the Platte Institute, you are always welcome to give us a call, drop us an email or stop by the office. Our telephone number is 402.452.3737. We are located at 10050 Regency Circle – Suite 120 – in Omaha. Below is a list of staff email address:

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higher,” which suggests they met their high school graduation requirements, but did not meet college performance standards.<sup>2</sup> The bottom line is our public schools are not adequately preparing some college bound students for the rigors of higher education.

Remedial students are educationally behind their peers and taking classes that do not count towards their degree, which prolongs the amount of time spent in college. In addition, “remedial reading students are more likely to drop out of college without a degree.”<sup>3</sup> In the 2008 census report those in Nebraska with “some college” made over \$10,000 less than those with a Bachelor’s degree.<sup>4</sup> The state would see about \$13,831,625 in additional annual earnings if all those with “some college” had a Bachelor’s degree.<sup>5</sup>

As parents financially plan for their child’s education, they usually do not anticipate having to pay the cost for remedial courses. When parents don’t assume the economic burden of paying their child’s education, the student is. However, “students and their families directly pay only one-fifth of the overall cost of remediation”<sup>6</sup> through tuition. Taxpayers provide around a billion dollars a year to cover the costs of remedial courses and in effect pay twice for what should be taught in high

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school.<sup>7</sup>

The nation sacrifices more than \$3.7 billion a year lost in productivity and remedial education costs.<sup>8</sup> If there was a reduced need for remediation, the state of Nebraska would save \$8,947,788 annually and the total benefit to the state economy would be \$22,779,413.<sup>9</sup> The country as a whole has begun to take steps in order to improve the education system and increase the graduation rate from college which is connected to remedial education. “The stimulus law that Mr. Obama signed in February requires states receiving stabilization money to work to improve courses and tests so that high school graduates can succeed in college without remedial classes.”<sup>10</sup>

Nebraska currently does not have a system to keep track of how well their high school students are prepared for either college or a career. Eighteen states already publicly report college remediation rates and many offer college and career-readiness testing.<sup>11</sup> Information that is available shows that in 2008 Nebraska students scored higher than the National Average.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately out of the 72% (16,573) of Nebraska graduates tested, only 27% of them met all four (English Composition, Algebra, Social Science and Biology) ACT College Readiness Benchmark Scores.<sup>13</sup> This means that only 27% have a 75% chance of getting a “C” or better in these college

courses.<sup>14</sup>

If greater responsibility was placed on secondary schools, it is more likely they would take action to better prepare students. The curriculum standards across the state should be raised to a level that would leave students fully prepared for college. Many high schools in Nebraska offer college preparatory courses, but they are not required for college-bound students. This indicates many schools have the capability of adequately preparing students, but do not have a system to ensure it. Better assessing the high school graduation standards and making certain that students meet requirements needed by college freshmen would help reduce the number of students taking remedial courses.

The high schools should be keeping track of students after graduation; tracking the number of students who required remedial education and those who completed college to indicate the school's success in preparing their students. Secondary schools should be penalized by paying a significant portion of the costs that go into remedial education.

Students at all grade levels represent the economic future in Nebraska. To that end, school districts should send

their high school students into the world properly prepared to continue their education. If secondary schools were held financially responsible for students that required remedial education, they would have an incentive to change standards.

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[1] "Percentage of beginning postsecondary students who reported taking remedial courses in their first year, by control and type of institution: 2003–04." 2003/04. National Center for Education Statistics. 17 February 2010 .

[2] Schmidt, Peter. "Most Students in Remedial Classes in College Had Solid Grades in High School, Survey Finds." 15 September 2008. The Chronical of Higher Education. 22 February 2010 .

[3] Alliance for Excellent Education. "Paying Double: Inadequate High Schools and Community College Remediation." August 2006. Alliance for Excellent Education. 10 February 2010 .

[4] U.S. Census Bureau. American Fact Finder:Nebraska

Educational Attainment . 2006-2008. 24 February 2010 .

[5] Alliance for Excellent Education. "Paying Double: Inadequate High Schools and Community College Remediation." August 2006. Alliance for Excellent Education. 10 February 2010 .

[6] Ibid

[7] Ibid

[8] The Associated Press. "Obama Wants students Prepared for College, Careers." 21 February 2010. The New York Times. 22 February 2010 .

[9] Alliance for Excellent Education. "Paying Double: Inadequate High Schools and Community College Remediation." August 2006. Alliance for Excellent Education. 10 February 2010 .

[10] The Associated Press. "Obama Wants students Prepared for College, Careers." 21 February 2010. The New York Times. 22 February 2010 .

[11] "Closing the Expectations Gap 2009." February 2009. Achieve. February 2010 .

[12] "ACT High School Profile Report: The Graduating Class of 2008, Nebraska." 2008. ACT News. 22 February 2010 .

[13] Ibid

[14] Ibid

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