



## MEMORANDUM

To: Interested Parties

From: Matthew Shelter  
Kiley & Company

Date: September 24, 2018

RE: Key Findings from Online Survey of Recent  
High School Graduates in New York State

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### Introduction

*This memo summarizes key findings from a survey of 1,002 recent graduates of public high schools in New York State. Interviews were conducted online between Aug. 3-21, 2018. All respondents were between the ages of 17 and 24, and graduated from high school in New York between 2013 and 2017. The sample has been weighted slightly to conform to the known population of public high school graduates in the state by region, race and ethnicity. The margin of error for the survey is plus or minus 3 percentage points.*

### Key Findings

- 1. Only one-third of recent public high school graduates in New York State report being ‘significantly challenged’ academically in high school, and close to half of those who went to college report having had to take at least one remedial course to get up to speed academically.**
  - The majority of recent graduates (52%) say the academic expectations at their high school were “moderate” and they were “somewhat challenged.”

- Only one-in-three (34%) characterized expectations at their high school as “high” and say they were “significantly challenged.” The remaining 14% report that expectations were “low” and they weren’t really challenged at all.
- Graduates from New York City (40%) and Long Island and Westchester high schools (39%) are more apt to say that academic expectations were high than are Upstate grads (28%).
- Nearly half (47%) of all high school grads who went on to college report that they were asked to take a remedial or developmental course in at least one subject when they got to college; 27% say they were required to take a remedial course in math, 18% in English, 14% in science, 12% in writing, and 6% in other subjects.
  - *Among recent grads who enrolled in a 2-year or community college, fully two-thirds (67%) report having to take a remedial course, most notably in math (40%) and English (27%).*
  - *More than two-thirds of Latino (67%) and African-American (70%) students report having to take a remedial course in college, compared to one-third (34%) of white students.*

**2. First-generation college students – those whose parents did not attend college – are more likely to wish they had received better preparation than are those with college-educated parents.**

- Overall, 59% of recent grads who enrolled in college say the education they received in high school made them well-prepared for the academic work they’ve been expected to do in college, but that percentage was lower for first-generation college students (those whose parents did not attend college) than for grads whose parents had at least some college experience. Among first-generation students, only 53% felt well-prepared for college, compared to 64% of grads whose parents had college experience.
- Similarly, 67% of college-bound grads say their high school teachers and guidance counselors did a “very good” or “fairly good” job preparing them for college “in terms of recommending colleges for you to attend or telling you the kind of courses to take in high school to prepare for college,” but that number is lower among first-generation students (60%) than among those with college-educated parents (71%).

- Only 46% of recent grads feel their high school did a very or fairly good job preparing them to enter the work force or seek employment after high school or college. This percentage, too, is slightly lower among first-generation students (42%) than among grads whose parents attended college (47%).
- Fewer than half (47%) of first-generation college students say that a high school teacher or guidance counselor explained what courses they would need to take to be ready for college or a career, compared to 62% of grads with a college-educated parent.
- 40% of first-generation students say they wished they had received more information about what courses to take to prepare for college, compared to 34% of grads with a college-educated parent.
- Only 30% of first-generation students report being “significantly challenged” in high school, compared to 37% of those with college-educated parents.

**3. The one subject recent high school grads are most likely to wish they’d had more preparation in is math.**

- Most college-bound grads feel they were well-prepared in reading (70%), writing (61%), and computer skills (56%). Fewer than half, by comparison, believe they were well-prepared in science (48%), math (45%), and civics and government (39%).
- Similar to their college-bound peers, most grads who did not attend college feel they were well-prepared in reading (71%), writing (59%), computer skills (58%), and math (50%), but less so in science (44%) and civics and government (33%).
- The top subject grads say they wish they’d had more preparation in is *math*. Overall, 45% of recent grads say they wish their high school had done a better job preparing them in math. It’s the top subject on this measure among both college-bound grads (46% wish they’d been better prepared) and non-college bound students (42%).
- By comparison, 31% of all grads say they wish they’d had more preparation in science, 28% in computer skills, 26% in civics and government, 23% in writing, and 9% in reading.

**4. Most recent grads support a range of proposals aimed at encouraging high schools to better prepare students for life after high school.**

- Recent grads were presented with a list of nine proposals that have been made to encourage high schools to better prepare their students for college or the work force. A majority of grads thought each proposal would improve things “a great deal” or “somewhat.”

	Would improve things <u>great deal/somewhat</u>
— <i>Providing opportunities for more real-world learning through internships and service-learning projects.</i>	88%
— <i>Creating a set group of courses that, if completed by high school students, would ensure they are ready for college and/or good-paying jobs.</i>	79
— <i>Allowing all students to take the SAT or ACT exam for free during the school day to enable more students to be able to apply to college.</i>	78
— <i>Increasing the availability of after-school tutoring, Saturday school, summer school and extra time with teachers after class for students who need extra help mastering class material.</i>	78
— <i>Providing opportunities to take more challenging courses, such as honors, AP, International Baccalaureate, or college-level courses for free, while still in high school.</i>	76
— <i>Having teachers and guidance counselors start communicating with students early in middle school about the courses they need to take to be well-prepared for college and/or the careers they want.</i>	72
— <i>Holding high schools accountable for how well their graduates do in college.</i>	61
— <i>Requiring all students to take four years of math to graduate.</i>	56
— <i>Requiring all students to take four years of science to graduate.</i>	54