



The Research Behind Ramp-Up

Ramp-Up to Readiness™ was designed between 2008 and 2012 through extensive review of scholarly research and intensive engagement in Minnesota secondary schools. Following the implementation of the fully-developed version of Ramp-Up to Readiness™ in secondary schools across Minnesota in the fall of 2012, an experimental design study conducted by the [American Institutes of Research](#) will be launched to evaluate the impact that participation in Ramp-Up to Readiness™ has on postsecondary aspirations, readiness, enrollment and other educational outcomes.

Some of the key studies and other evidence that were used to develop Ramp-Up to Readiness™ are listed below.

Why Students, Schools and our State Need Ramp-Up to Readiness™

- In the 21st-century economy, completion of a postsecondary credential or degree is the best—and in many cases the only—path to a middle- or upper-class income and standard of living.¹
- By 2018, 63 percent of all jobs in the United States and 70 percent in Minnesota will require postsecondary education and training.²
- The rest of the world is investing in postsecondary success while college completion rates in the United States have been relatively flat. As a result, although the United States ranked 3rd in college graduation rates among the developed countries of the world in 1998, in 2001 we ranked 5th and in 2006 we ranked 10th.³
- The demographic groups that are growing fastest within our preK–12 schools are those that have the least experience preparing for and making the transition to higher education: students of color and low- income students. Given that gap, those students and families will need enhanced and ongoing support from schools and community organizations.⁴

Findings that Influenced the Design of Ramp-Up to Readiness™

- The vast majority of teenagers today aspire to obtain high-paying jobs and to attain high-levels of status within society as adults. One major study found that more than 90 percent of high school seniors expect to attend college and more than 70 percent expect to work in professional jobs. Those students often, however, do not understand what they need to do to reach those objectives.⁵
- American students receive highly confusing and contradictory information about what it takes to gain access to and succeed in college. Consequently, many make decisions and put forward levels of effort that undermine their chances of succeeding in higher education.⁶
- The content of many high school courses is misaligned with what students need to know and be able to do in college, which leads many students to believe that they are much readier for postsecondary success than, in fact, they actually are.⁷
- Many students believe that how hard they work in high school has little relevance to their future careers.⁸
- When students believe that intelligence is not fixed and adopt a growth mindset, they choose more challenging tasks and work harder at them.⁹
- Career guidance can have its largest impact in the middle grades.¹⁰
- Students who develop formal plans for college and a career are much more likely to take the high school classes that will prepare them for success in higher education and the workforce.¹¹
- Nonacademic factors such as motivation, self-discipline, and self-confidence have a significant impact on academic performance in college.¹²
- High-skill jobs that do not require a college degree but that pay well and offer opportunities for advancement require levels of knowledge and skill in mathematics and reading that are similar to the levels required for success in credit-bearing first-year courses.¹³
- Many high school students choose colleges for which they are academically overqualified or underqualified.¹⁴

An expert panel convened by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute for Education Sciences identified the following strategies as recommendations for helping more students successfully navigate the path from high school to college.

Ramp-Up helps schools implement each of these strategies in powerful, yet practical, ways:

1. Through courses and curricula that prepare students for college- level work, and ensure that students understand what constitutes a college-ready curriculum by 9th grade
2. With assessment measures throughout high school so that students are aware of how prepared they are for college, and assist them in overcoming deficiencies as they are identified
3. By surrounding students with adults and peers who build and support their college going aspirations
4. Through engaging and assist students in completing the critical steps for college entry
5. By increasing families' financial awareness, and helping students apply for financial aid.¹⁵

Too many college readiness programs overlook the importance of developmental readiness for success in higher education, including personal motivation, habits of persistence, and self-regulation.¹⁶

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