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Texas Coalition for a Competitive Workforce calls for tougher school standards

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AUSTIN – A coalition of business and research groups announced Thursday that it will push for more emphasis on career and college readiness in public schools, including tougher performance standards for schools.

The Texas Coalition for a Competitive Workforce – headed by the Texas Association of Business and Governor's Business Council – said it is time for the Legislature and education officials to address the inadequate skills of so many high school graduates.

"Today, 65 percent of new jobs created in the U.S. require some college or equivalent skills," said Jim Windham, chairman of the Texas Institute for Education Reform. "However, research shows that the vast majority of Texas students – more than 80 percent in some cases – fail to meet college readiness benchmarks."

Bill Hammond, president of the Texas Association of Business, said the Legislature moved in the right direction last year by creating a series of end-of-course tests for students in lieu of the current graduation exam that many educators think is too easy.

"Now it's time to take the next step by aligning our curricula, standards and assessment with the goal to ensure students are gaining the knowledge they need to be career- or college-ready upon graduation," he said.

The coalition said several steps should be taken, including:

- Districts and schools that don't meet accountability standards or experience a decline in their ratings must improve or face serious consequences.
- Curriculum standards must be raised immediately to reflect the knowledge and skills students need to be ready for college. Minimum passing rates on state tests as well as performance standards should be raised over the next three years.
- School performance ratings should be based on the percentage of students who are on track for college or career readiness, or who are making progress and will be on track for college readiness in three years.

