

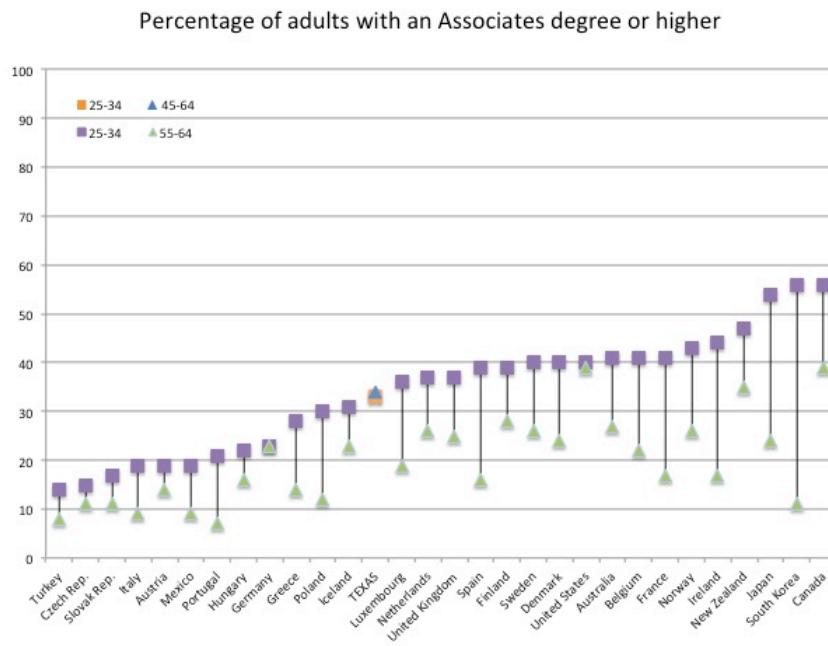
## Lesson 2.4 – Why is College and Career Readiness Important in Texas?

College and career readiness is hard to define—and that’s part of the reason it’s hard to help students achieve it. Using a common model—like this one created by education policy expert Dr. David Conley—can help educators have more productive conversations about improving college and career readiness in Texas. Dr. Conley identified four keys to college and career readiness and provides some language to help us remember them. They are:

1. Think
2. Know
3. Act, and
4. Go

“Think” refers to the cognitive strategies necessary to solve problems, gather and analyze data, and communicate ideas accurately. “Know” refers to important subject-area content knowledge in each of the core academic disciplines. “Act” refers to students’ self-monitoring abilities and study and organization habits. And “go” refers to specialized knowledge and skills necessary to navigate postsecondary life—from applications and financial aid to relating to instructors.

In Texas, we know it’s a critical time to focus on college and career readiness because we want our students and our state to be globally competitive. See this graph?



Sources: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development . (2010). American Community Survey. (2010).

The purple squares represent young people entering the international workforce and the green triangles represent older adults retiring. In almost every country, you can see that the entering workforce has achieved higher educational attainment than the people retiring. But look at Texas—in our state these numbers are almost equal, which means the education level of our workforce isn't growing like it is in other countries.

But don't panic! Texas is already taking steps to better prepare our young people for post-secondary learning so we can grow a more educated workforce. One way this is already happening is by partnering with business and industry leaders through the Governor's Career Clusters Initiative, a job-creation plan focused on six areas:

- advanced technologies and manufacturing;
- aerospace and defense;
- biotechnology and life sciences;
- information and computer technology;
- petroleum refining and chemical products; and
- energy.

These clusters are important for educators to know about so we can prepare our students with the skills they need to compete in markets that are predicted to grow in Texas. By helping *all* students prepare to learn after high school, we are keeping the doors open for our future workers and for the Texas economy.

So, how do we do that? That brings us to the Texas College and Career Readiness Standards—and back to the four keys. You see Texas has a set of college and career readiness standards that identify not only the key content knowledge students need to master by the time they graduate, but also many of the key cognitive strategies and study skills as well. Combine these standards with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, which break key content knowledge down by grade level, and you've got a pretty good blueprint for how to help students graduate ready for next steps.

But we know we also need resources to help our kids gain “college knowledge” and prepare for the contextual challenges of post-secondary life. That's where resources like this can help—by reminding us to partner with other educators and employers and to understand that college and career readiness isn't just about test scores and grades.