

# YouthTruth

— STUDENT SURVEY —

A NATIONAL NONPROFIT

Learning from Student Voice:

## Most High Schoolers Feel Unprepared for College and Careers

How prepared do high school students feel for college and their future careers?

At a time when more and more high school graduates are enrolling in college and looking for work, YouthTruth explored what we can learn about college and career readiness directly from the source — the students themselves.

We analyzed data collected from some 165,000 high school students between the 2010-11 and 2014-15 school years, and found a number of interesting results.

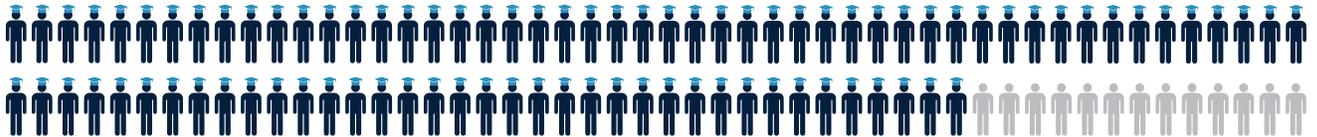
- 1 While the vast majority of high school students want to go to college, **most feel unprepared to do so.**
- 2 Students tend to feel **less prepared for future careers** than they do for college.
- 3 Students are by and large **not taking advantage of support services** to prepare them for future goals

# 1

## While the vast majority of high school students want to go to college, **most feel unprepared to do so.**

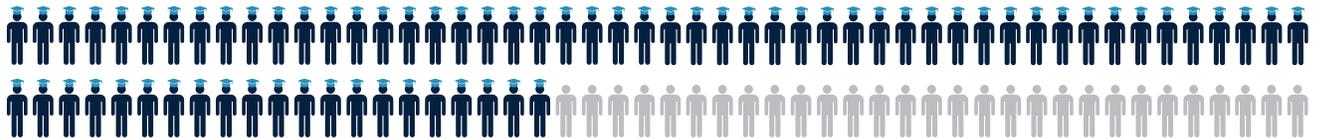
Eighty-seven percent of students surveyed said they want to go to college, while only 2.8 percent do not, and ten percent aren't sure. When asked to think about their *expectations* rather than their *aspirations*, the numbers start dropping: 71 percent of students said they expect to go to a two- or four-year college. But here's the sobering reality – less than half of students, only 45 percent, felt positively about their college and career readiness.

### Do you want to go to college?



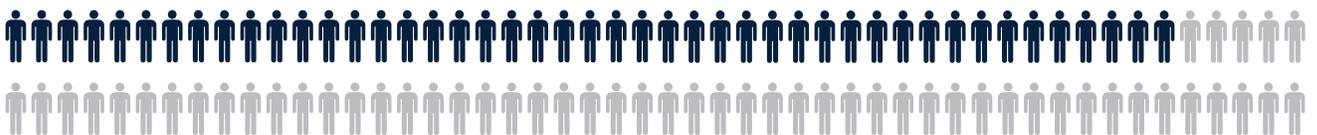
**87%** yes      10% I'm not sure      3% No

### After you finish high school, what do you expect to do next?\*



**59%** Attend a 4-year college      **12%** Attend a 2-year college      5% Work a full-time job      11% I'm not sure  
6% Join the military      8% other

### Percent of students who feel positively about their college and career readiness\*\*



**45%**      **55%**

\*Percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.

\*\*This represents a composite of several questions asked about students' college and career readiness. Students whose average rating across the related questions was at least a 3.5 out of 5 were categorized as feeling positively about their college and career readiness.

# 2

Students tend to feel **less prepared** for future careers than they do for college.

Students' sense of college readiness is lukewarm at best. But even fewer students feel prepared for career.

While this may seem intuitive since careers are further out on the horizon than college, it has important implications for high schools seeking to make learning relevant and prepare students for 21st century jobs.

## College

My school has helped me develop the skills and knowledge I will need for college-level classes

60%



My school has helped me understand the steps I need to take in order to apply to college

56%



## Career

My school has helped me figure out which careers match my interests and abilities

46%



My school has helped me understand the steps I need to take in order to have the career I want

49%



# 3 Students are by and large **not taking advantage of support services** to prepare them for future goals.

When asked about a variety of support services, on average only a third of surveyed students, and only about half of seniors, reported using these services.

## Students were asked whether they participated in support services for future goals, and if so, how helpful they were.



Counseling about how to pay for college was least utilized, with less than a quarter of students reporting they had used this service, including 23 percent of juniors and 44 percent of seniors.

While it may be tempting to isolate only the proportion of seniors utilizing these services, administrators, teachers, parents, and students themselves know that preparing for a future beyond high school is a process that begins well before 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

This data raises some sobering flags. And like most data, it also raises more questions. Schools across the country are already hard at work trying to better prepare students for a successful future — and, based on this data, students clearly recognize there is work to be done.

We believe that this data provides an important **comparative context for understanding the student perspective when it comes to college and career readiness**, and we hope it sparks conversations and ideas in schools across the country about effectively preparing students for life after high school.

