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College and Career Readiness Action Planning Template

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INTRODUCTION

The National High School Center scanned organizations that promote college and career readiness and identified trends in how organizations define and discuss it. The *College and Career Readiness Action-Planning Template* was developed from a synthesis of that scan. It includes ten overarching questions designed to help states start a discussion aimed at addressing these areas of college and career readiness. Each question has a series of more detailed subquestions that can be used to probe further into each college and career readiness topic area.

OVERARCHING QUESTIONS

1. Will your state focus on both college and career access and success, or will it focus primarily on one outcome? (p. 4)
2. How will your state incorporate communication strategies into its college and career readiness planning and initiatives? (p. 5)
3. How can your state build on its current career and technical education plan to ensure that all students become college and career ready? (p. 6)
4. How does dropout prevention relate and fit into your state's college and career readiness initiatives? (p. 7)
5. How will your state promote alignment between secondary and postsecondary expectations? (p. 8)
6. How does/will your state target student subgroups for college and career readiness initiatives? (p. 9)
7. How will your state encourage and leverage community and family engagement in planning and implementing its college and career readiness initiatives? (p. 10)
8. How will your state incorporate technology-based learning in its college and career readiness initiatives? (p. 11)
9. How will your state use data to plan, implement, monitor, and improve its college and career readiness initiatives? (p. 12)
10. How can your state help prepare school and district staff to plan and implement college and career readiness initiatives? (p. 13)

WHO SHOULD USE THIS TOOL?

This tool has been prepared for state administrators and personnel who are beginning to discuss what college and career readiness means for their state. It can be used to facilitate conversations and help state personnel define college and career readiness as well as generate next steps for a statewide plan.

This action-planning template also can guide discussions when determining how states will implement the Common Core State Standards and emphasizes the importance of addressing college and career readiness as part of this process. Similarly, it can help the state work with postsecondary institutions and the business community to align education standards for K–12 and institutions of higher education so that all students will be prepared to succeed in a wide array of postsecondary options.

Finally, states can adapt this tool to facilitate conversation at the local level with districts and schools to ensure alignment across the education system.

SUGGESTED PARTICIPANTS/PARTNERS

When using the *College and Career Readiness Action-Planning Template*, it is essential to have representatives from each stakeholder group involved in the discussion to provide their unique insight. Having each stakeholder's voice represented provides greater likelihood of buy-in when a plan or definition is developed and implemented. The National High School Center suggests that certain people be at the table for this discussion. At minimum, states should consider representation from the following various units in the state education department:

- Curriculum and instruction
- Career and technical education
- Categorical programs
- Data/assessment
- Special education
- Fiscal office
- Communications

In addition, it is important to include stakeholders from:

- Institutions of higher education, including two- and four-year institutions and teacher education
- Counseling office and/or school social worker
- Business community
- Family/community
- Department of labor/workforce development

SUGGESTIONS FOR USE

State education planning committees should review the National High School Center's *College and Career Readiness Action-Planning Template* prior to use and determine an appropriate process for addressing all of the questions. States might decide to use this template in the following ways:

- Plan a one- or two-day meeting dedicated to working through the template with a planning group (see Suggested Participants/Partners on p. 2).
- If a committee meets regularly, prioritize the questions according to state needs and address one question at each meeting session (or every other session).
- At a larger state meeting, hold breakout sessions during which each breakout group can address one or two different questions from the template.
- Break up the template and assign specific portions to subcommittees on a planning team to bring back to the larger group for decisions.

For further information and other resources developed by the National High School Center, please refer to *Defining College and Career Readiness: A Resource Guide*, which includes the following:

- **Organizational Focus on Outcomes**—A snapshot of how organizations are framing their college and career readiness discussion in terms of outcomes, where those outcomes overlap, and prevalence of these outcomes.
- **Word Cloud**—A graphic representation of the most commonly used terms by organizations to define college and career readiness.
- **Definitions**—A compilation of definitions from organizations that have developed explicit language to describe what college and career readiness means for their work.
- **Frameworks**—A sample of several different college and career readiness frameworks that can be used to seed conversations about essential components of college and career readiness.

The *Resource Guide* as well as a compilation of the top resources obtained through a landscape scan of more than 70 organizations focused on college and career readiness are available on the National High School Center's Web site at www.betterhighschools.org.

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS ACTION-PLANNING TEMPLATE

The National High School Center scanned organizations that promote college and career readiness and identified trends in how organizations talk about it. From these trends, we recognized that there are important elements that states should discuss while developing their definitions and plans for addressing college and career readiness. Read the following questions and determine how your state will address each area.

1. The scanned organizations have focused their efforts on three central outcomes: college access and success, career access and success, and dropout prevention. Forty-one percent of the organizations are focused on both college access and success and career access and success.

Will your state focus on both college and career access and success, or will it focus primarily on one outcome?

<p>Questions to Consider</p> <p>Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In what ways do college access and success overlap with career access and success? In what ways are the two outcomes similar?• In what ways do college access and success differ from career access and success? In what ways are the two outcomes distinct? <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What specific skills do students need for college access and success?• What specific skills do students need for career access and success?• In what ways are the two skill sets similar? In what ways are the two skill sets different? <p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What school-level strategies primarily prepare students for college?• What school-level strategies primarily prepare students for careers?• What school-level strategies prepare students for both college and careers?	<p>State Conversation: What is your state doing or planning to do to identify college and career readiness outcomes, skills, and strategies?</p>	<p>Individual Reflection: What have you heard or learned from your colleagues today that applies to this topic?</p>	<p>State Action Plan: Will your state focus on both college and career access and success, or will it focus primarily on one outcome?</p>
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2. An integral part of any initiative or plan is the ability to communicate effectively with partners and a variety of stakeholders. Communication plans can include initial invitations to partners who will provide input into college and career readiness plans, solicitations for feedback from a wider group on drafts of college and career readiness plans, and strategies for rolling out the plans after they are developed.

How will your state incorporate communication strategies into its college and career readiness planning and initiatives?

Questions to Consider

- Who should be invited to provide input into the planning stages of your state's college and career readiness plan (e.g., universities, district and school leaders, teachers, community and business leaders)?
- How is college and career readiness relevant to each partner's particular interests? How can this best be conveyed to motivate partners to engage in the process?
- What methods can your state employ to provide a collaborative experience among stakeholders? Who has been or might be an effective convener of diverse stakeholders regarding these issues?
- What methods can you use to share goals, plans, and next steps for the partners, stakeholders, and public?
- What stakeholders will you invite to provide feedback to draft plans?
- What important elements of your plan should be summarized for sharing with additional stakeholders? How can you tailor reports to the unique interests of various audiences (e.g., universities, district and school leaders, teachers, parents, students)?

State Conversation: What is your state doing or planning to do to support communication within the state and among its partners in your college and career readiness plan?

Individual Reflection: What have you heard or learned from your colleagues today that applies to this topic?

State Action Plan: How will your state incorporate communication strategies into its college and career readiness planning and initiatives?

3. Forty-eight percent of the organizations focused resources on career and technical education (CTE). Academic subject matter in CTE is taught with connection to real-world applications, and students develop workforce skills through vocational training, internships, and interaction with the business community.

How can your state build on its current CTE plan to ensure that all students become college and career ready?

Questions to Consider

- What data are available on student access to CTE programs? Is CTE available to all students in your state?
- To what extent do current CTE standards prepare students for college and careers? What revisions need to be made to current CTE standards to ensure that students are prepared for college and careers?
- Does your state have CTE standards aligned to the Common Core State Standards?
- In what ways could CTE be a strategy for college access and success?
- What barriers (e.g., graduation requirements, funding, and other areas) exist for schools and districts to incorporate CTE?
- In what ways could your state work to alleviate those barriers?
- How can your state develop and leverage partnerships with the business community to link learning?

State Conversation: What is your state doing or planning to do regarding the alignment of CTE with your state's college and career readiness initiatives?

Individual Reflection: What have you heard or learned from your colleagues today that applies to this topic?

State Action Plan: How can your state build on its current CTE plan to ensure that all students become college and career ready?

4. One and a half percent of the organizations are focused on both college access and success and dropout prevention. None of the organizations focused on both career access and success and dropout prevention.

How does dropout prevention relate and fit into your state's college and career readiness initiatives?

Questions to Consider

- Is dropout prevention a valid goal in itself or is it a means to college and career readiness? Are dropout prevention and college and career readiness the same or are they different?
- How can your state create alignment between its dropout prevention goals and college and career access and success goals, both internally and externally?
- What messages need to be communicated to link the initiatives of college and career access and success and dropout prevention?
- How can supports for students who wish to reengage with school be aligned with CCR initiatives?

State Conversation: What is your state doing or planning to do regarding dropout prevention? Can any of those initiatives be leverage points for college and career access and success initiatives?

Individual Reflection: What have you heard or learned from your colleagues today that applies to this topic?

State Action Plan: How does dropout prevention relate and fit into your state's college and career readiness initiatives?

5. Fifty-eight percent of the organizations cited the importance of creating alignment between secondary and postsecondary expectations. When strong secondary-postsecondary alignment is present, graduation requirements and curriculum standards prepare students for postsecondary education. Curriculum standards and graduation requirements reflect the expectations required for success in postsecondary institutions and eliminate the need for remedial coursework in postsecondary institutions.

How will your state promote alignment between secondary and postsecondary expectations?

Questions to Consider

- Do academic standards in all content areas and graduation requirements reflect the expectations required for success in postsecondary institutions?
- Do end-of-course assessments align with the expectations required for success in postsecondary institutions?
- What data are available on the percentage of students who require remedial coursework in postsecondary institutions? How are these data shared with school districts and states and addressed to help reduce the need for remedial coursework?
- What steps can your state take to improve alignment between secondary and postsecondary coursework?
- How can your state develop and leverage partnerships with postsecondary institutions to provide feedback on alignment? Are there any policy barriers to alignment that might be removed that would facilitate the development of partnerships? (e.g., Americans with Disabilities Act for dual credit options).

State Conversation: What is your state doing or planning to do to align secondary and postsecondary expectations?

Individual Reflection: What have you heard or learned from your colleagues today that applies to this topic?

State Action Plan: How will your state promote alignment between secondary and postsecondary expectations?

6. Several organizations stressed the importance of improving the college and career readiness of particular student groups, including low-income and minority students (52 percent), students with disabilities (32 percent), at-risk students (28 percent), and adult learners (15 percent).

How does/will your state target student subgroups for college and career readiness initiatives?

Questions to Consider

- What data does your state collect on the postsecondary outcomes of student subgroups?
- What aspects of the current initiatives need to change to target college and career readiness for all student subgroups?
- Who else in your state works to support these subgroups? How can your state collaborate with these individuals or organizations to support student subgroups?

State Conversation: What is your state doing or planning to do to target improved outcomes for student subgroups?

Individual Reflection: What have you heard or learned from your colleagues today that applies to this topic?

State Action Plan: How does/will your state target student subgroups within college and career readiness initiatives?

7. Sixty-eight organizations highlighted the importance of facilitating community and family engagement, in which members of the business community, postsecondary institutions, families, and other stakeholders are engaged to prepare students for college and careers.

How will your state encourage and leverage community and family engagement in planning and implementing its college and career readiness initiatives?

Questions to Consider

- In what new ways will your state need to target community and family engagement to promote its college and career readiness initiatives?
- In what ways will your state engage stakeholders in the planning process for college and career readiness initiatives?
- What specific types of engagement will your state encourage from members of the business community, postsecondary institutions, families, and other stakeholders?
- What specific guidance will your state provide to members of the business community, postsecondary institutions, families, and other stakeholders to better align their support with state and local college and career readiness initiatives?

State Conversation: What is your state doing or planning to do to engage the business community, postsecondary institutions, families, and other stakeholders?

Individual Reflection: What have you heard or learned from your colleagues today that applies to this topic?

State Action Plan: How will your state encourage and leverage community and family engagement in planning and implementing its college and career readiness initiatives?

8. Fifteen percent of organizations cited technology-based learning as an integral strategy in promoting college and career readiness. With technology-based learning, the use of technology is promoted as a means to enhance instruction, engage students in learning, enable real-world interactions, facilitate credit recovery and remediation, and increase accessibility for all.

How will your state incorporate technology-based learning in its college and career readiness initiatives?

Questions to Consider

- To what extent do you think technology-based learning is a useful strategy to promote college and career readiness? What are the benefits? What are the drawbacks?
- Which aspects of your state's college and career readiness initiatives could be supported by technology-based learning?
- How could your state support technology-based learning?

State Conversation: What is your state doing or planning to do to support technology-based learning?

Individual Reflection: What have you heard or learned from your colleagues today that applies to this topic?

State Action Plan: How will your state incorporate technology-based learning in its college and career readiness initiatives?

9. Eighty-seven percent of the organizations focused resources on using data to make decisions at the school, district, and state levels.

How will your state use data to plan, implement, monitor, and improve its college and career readiness initiatives?

Questions to Consider

- What additional types of data are necessary for state decisions regarding college and career readiness?
- What mechanisms will your state need to put in place to collect, monitor, and use the data effectively?
- What partners will your state need to leverage to collect, monitor, and use these data?
- Do student assessments and measures align with your state's college and career readiness initiatives?
- What other types of data will school districts and schools need to collect? In what ways can your state support school districts and schools in collecting, monitoring, and using these data effectively?
- What types of data measure both college and career success? What types measure college success only? What types measure career success only?

State Conversation: What type of data is your state collecting or planning to collect that can inform the readiness level of students for college and careers?

Individual Reflection: What have you heard or learned from your colleagues today that applies to this topic?

State Action Plan: How will your state use data to plan, implement, monitor, and improve its college and career readiness initiatives?

10. Fifty percent of the organizations stressed the importance of training school and district staff on preparing students for college and careers.

How can your state help prepare school and district staff to plan and implement college and career readiness initiatives?

Questions to Consider

- What data does your state have on the most effective methods of professional development?
- What new skills will school and district staff members need to meet the new goals of your state's college and career readiness initiatives?
- What materials need to be developed to support professional development of district and school staff?
- How can your state support schools and school districts in accessing this professional development?

State Conversation: What is your state doing or planning to do to support school districts and schools in training their staff to implement the college and career readiness initiatives?

Individual Reflection: What have you heard or learned from your colleagues today that applies to this topic?

State Action Plan: How can your state help prepare school and district staff to plan and implement college and career readiness initiatives?



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