

# Illinois State-Led Topical Conversation

**Topic:** College and Career Readiness Curriculum

**Speakers:** LaMetric Lane, Illinois State Board of Education

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## Overview

Developed by The Ohio State University, [EnvisionIT](#) is a free college and career readiness curriculum that is implemented in schools across Connecticut, Illinois, New York, Ohio, and Wisconsin. The curriculum is standards aligned, including college and career readiness, English language arts, career and technical education, financial literacy, and information technology literacy standards.

Teachers and school leaders can customize the curriculum and use any implementation models to meet the individual needs of a classroom, program, school, or district. The curriculum is aligned with legislation, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act, and the Every Student Succeeds Act. It supports students with disabilities and individualized education programs, Individual Service Plans, Student Services Plans, and Individualized Plans for Employment. The curriculum is accessible for students with Grades 6–12 reading levels and can be used in inclusion, special education, and general education classrooms.

Users can follow the instructions on the [EnvisionIT Handout](#), which describes how to access the curriculum through [Schoology](#) and [Google Classroom](#).

## Curriculum

The curriculum promotes and prepares students for two pathways to employment: college and training. In other words, students will be prepared either (a) to continue their education by attending college or (b) to directly enter employment or join the military.

The EnvisionIT curriculum has 12 customizable units:

- Unit 0: Introduction to Curriculum
- Unit 1: Transition Portfolio Introduction—A Map to Your Future
- Unit 2: Self-Assessments to Identify Interests
- Unit 3: Research Careers
- Unit 4: Set Career Goals (Plan A and Plan B)

- Unit 5: Research Career Training and Education
- Unit 6: Further Develop Goals (i.e., financial aid)
- Unit 7: Build a Résumé
- Unit 8: Draft a Cover Letter
- Unit 9: Fill out an Application
- Unit 10: Practice Interview Skills
- Unit 11: Present Career Research
- Unit 12: Write a Career Essay

The units can be implemented based on the users' specific priorities and objectives. The units can be customized based on time restrictions, settings in which the curriculum will be implemented, whether the curriculum will be core or supplemental, and target student populations.

Through completion of the curriculum, students develop a transition portfolio, which serves as a tangible resource that students may use and reference as they transition into college and/or the workplace. The transition portfolio houses self-assessment results of student interests, a list of career choices that match the student's interests, student-articulated career goals, a student-developed career essay, sample job and college applications, the student's high school transcript, the student's résumé and cover letter, and a digital presentation of the student's career research.

## **The Illinois EnvisionIT Pilot**

Illinois is currently piloting the EnvisionIT curriculum across three districts. The pilot involves five high schools and a total of 212 students ranging from Grades 9–12.

The first pilot site is a single high school in a rural district. Educators in the pilot implement the curriculum for 30 minutes every day for students in need of credit recovery. In early feedback conversations, teachers reported that students are engaged and interested in the curriculum.

The second pilot site is a single high school in a suburban district. In this district, educators access the curriculum two times a week for 30 minutes as a supplemental curriculum for special education students. Early reports from teachers indicate that they support the curriculum and that it encourages students to begin thinking about their next steps after high school.

The third pilot site includes three high schools in a suburban district. Educators use the EnvisionIT curriculum as a supplemental curriculum for general education students in Secondary Transition Employment Programs,

and students access this curriculum two times a week for 30 minutes. In working with teachers implementing the curriculum, these teachers report that an advantage of EnvisionIT is that the curriculum is fully developed, and therefore they do not feel overburdened when having to implement it.

## Q&A With LaMetric Lane

**QUESTION:** Is the EnvisionIT curriculum integrated into students' core instruction? Or is the curriculum part of advisory?

**ANSWER:** It can be both. The EnvisionIT curriculum is not prescriptive, so you may use it in a variety of ways. One should really think about what time they have available and work with teachers to decide on which units would be most effective to teach.

**QUESTION:** Do teachers receive professional training on the curriculum?

**ANSWER:** The Ohio State University, Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), and the districts created a learning community around EnvisionIT that meets every month. During the meeting, we discuss how implementation is going, what supports are needed, and what supports can be provided. We originally planned to provide face-to-face training, but teachers reported that they felt the virtual meetings and webinars provided sufficient preparation to implement the curriculum. The pilot grant ends in November 2019; however, virtual support will continue after the grant period ends, with ISBE.

**QUESTION:** What led to the implementation of EnvisionIT in Illinois?

**ANSWER:** I met a professor from The Ohio State University who discussed how EnvisionIT helped in the development of transition skills. This professor from The Ohio State University sent me more materials, and I approached ISBE management with the curriculum. They were very supportive of the idea of implementing the EnvisionIT as a pilot.

**QUESTION:** How have you been able to measure impact? Is it built into the curriculum?

**ANSWER:** We are collecting qualitative data, including surveys of teachers and students on the impact. We will also collect student attendance rate data because we want to know if the curriculum increases student attendance rates. It's too early to tell, but by the end of the year we should see more from these data.

**QUESTION:** Have you collaborated with the rest of ISBE while using this curriculum?

**ANSWER:** We have just begun to collaborate with other units. Everyone is very excited, but we are still in the infancy stage. Everyone in ISBE is aware of the EnvisionIT curriculum, and we have sat down to start discussing collaboration opportunities.

**QUESTION:** What are the lessons learned so far? What are the best practices, especially as you start to expand?

**ANSWER:** The impact on students has been the biggest takeaway. We performed visits to all the pilots and sites, and hearing how EnvisionIT impacts them is so important. One student shared that the program has helped to relieve stress about college and transition. Some students believed they wanted to go on one career path but then changed their minds. Hearing student feedback has been very helpful in shaping the pilot and learning about the direct impact that the EnvisionIT curriculum is having.

**QUESTION:** Is there any implementation step that you wouldn't take again?

**ANSWER:** No. The process was much simpler than expected. We were so surprised that teachers felt prepared without the face-to-face training. When we were starting off, we did not want resistance from the pilots. We only took pilot districts that were serious about implementing the program and who were prepared to collect data.

**QUESTION:** What readiness standards did you tell districts they needed to implement?

**ANSWER:** Districts needed the appropriate Internet connection to access the technology. We also need teachers who are willing to learn the curriculum and willing to put in extra time. Administrators also need to be involved.

**QUESTION:** What is one piece of advice you would give to participants on this call that are interested in programs and curriculum that increase work-based learning and career and technical education opportunities for all students?

**ANSWER:** My advice is to remember that special education students are general education students first. We tend to think that only specialized supports can help students with disabilities, but general education resources can be used with diverse learners, they may just need to be modified. Look at the resources that you already have.

**QUESTION:** Are there plans to expand to additional schools? If so, when and how?

**ANSWER:** Yes, there will be a scale-up in the spring. We hope to include a middle school and a school with a special education population, such as a school for the blind or a school specializing in students with cognitive disabilities.