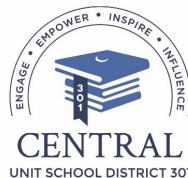


Alliance for College and Career Student Success

College & Career Pathway Development Guidelines

July 2020



— In Collaboration With —



Northern Kane County
REGION 110
EDUCATION THAT WORKS



Elgin
Community
College



Introduction

This document outlines best practices for the collaborative development of educational pathways spanning grades 9 through 14. These pathways require partnership between secondary and postsecondary institutions to ensure programs align and promote student transition. The implementation of college and career pathways is one of the key strategies noted in the state's education legislation, the [Illinois Postsecondary & Workforce Readiness Act](#).

With resources provided by JPMorgan Chase, the Alliance for College and Career Student Success has partnered with the Education Systems Center at Northern Illinois University (EdSystems) team to provide expert guidance and facilitation to ensure cross-sector collaboration. The following guidelines outline recommended practices that emerged during our work with the EdSystems team.

Guiding Tenets

The State of Illinois has adopted the following definition for career pathways (see [Career Pathways Dictionary](#)): "A combination of rigorous and high-quality education, training, and other services that aligns both vertically and horizontally across Secondary Education, Adult Education, Workforce Training and Development, Career and Technical Education, and Postsecondary Education systems, pathways, and programs. Collaborative partnerships with these entities and business and industry, along with human service agencies, corrections, and other community stakeholders, serve as the foundational structure for high-quality and sustainable career pathways. A career pathway also includes multiple entry and exit points to facilitate individuals to build their skills as they progress along a continuum of education and training and advance in sector-specific employment."

Critical elements include (see the Dictionary link above for more detailed explanations):

- A. Aligns with the skill needs of industries in the economy of the State or regional economy involved.

- B. Prepares an individual to be successful in any of a full range of secondary or postsecondary education options, including apprenticeships registered under the National Apprenticeship Act.
- C. Includes counseling to support an individual in achieving the individual's education and career goals.
- D. Includes, as appropriate, education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster.
- E. Organizes education, training, and other services to meet the particular needs of an individual in a manner that accelerates the educational and career advancement of the individual to the extent practicable.
- F. Enables an individual to attain a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and at least 1 recognized postsecondary credential.
- G. Helps an individual enter or advance within a specific occupation or occupational cluster.

Different approaches have been used to develop pathways. One approach starts with secondary course offerings at local school districts then builds towards postsecondary programs. An alternative, and recommended approach, is to utilize a "backward design" approach that begins with identifying a set of "high priority occupations" for a region. Using the Department of Labor data and the MIT Living Wage Calculator as a reference, "high priority occupations" are those jobs with a "bright" or positive growth outlook and whose median salaries are near or greater than the "living wage" for 1 adult and 1 child. From there it is important to identify the "promising credentials" in the region, which are the university degrees, and community college degrees/certifications that immediately prepare individuals for entry into a high-priority occupation or, alternatively, are a clear precursor or a stackable credential to the that role. ("Near" a living wage is defined as 85% of the living wage calculation, to allow for a broader range of occupations within the pathways analysis that can meet the living wage threshold through short-term on-the-job advancement.)

Designing a pathway that includes transfer and career-technical education focused sequence of courses at a local community college will enable the secondary level to create curricula that introduces students to career sectors broadly and provides widely applicable coursework that can be used as the student makes decisions for specializations at postsecondary levels. More importantly, building pathways based on community college programs of study is inclusive of students in a region who attend a community college soon after high school graduation (Illinois Report Card data: U-46: 58%; D303: 25%; D301: 48%; D300: 48%).

Recommended Design Process

The following steps outline the recommended process for regional college and career pathway development:

1. Identify “high-priority occupations” in a specific industry sector that are high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand based on federal Department of Labor data for the Chicago-Naperville-Elgin region¹.
2. Review community college programs of study that can be labeled as “promising credentials”. This will include degree and certificate programs, as well as university transfer opportunities, that lead high priority occupations.
3. Collaborate with community college partners to identify foundational or strategic courses common across the promising credentials. These courses provide a broad foundation of knowledge important to that industry sector and are feasible for dual credit delivery. This includes listing the courses needed to complete related AA/AS and AAS or certificate programs and selecting the courses that are most beneficial for students to complete at the secondary level (e.g. meet multiple program requirements, have IAI designation or transferability to partner universities, do not have restrictive student prerequisites, and allow for secondary teachers to be certified as instructors).
4. Map an ideal sequence of secondary coursework for the college and career pathway.
 - a. Pathway can include general education courses, not just CTE courses, as necessary for foundational preparation to pursue a career.
 - b. Recommend a standard regional sequence of courses for grades 9-12 using the Pathway Template (see page 4).
 - c. Using the regional template, create a district-specific template that specifies the courses for grades 9-12 and WBL experiences by grade-level².
 - d. College and Career Pathway Endorsement (CCPE) model requires at least two years coursework in specialized career-focused courses, with some of that coursework leading to 6 hours or more of early college credit².
 - e. Districts need to consider when developing pathways both what HS courses already exist and the academic readiness of students.
- f. It may be necessary to create stackable credentials, which are clear precursor to the promising credentials needed for a high priority occupation.
- g. Determine the WBL experiences that align with and enhance a student’s career pathway.
 - i. To qualify for a College and Career Pathway Endorsement the following WBL must be incorporated in a Career Pathway:
 1. Career Exploration – 2 activities
 2. Team-based Challenge – 2 activities
 3. Career Development Experience – 60 hours
 - ii. Consider the role of post secondary and regional external/community partners to support WBL, especially in the design and implementation of Career Exploration and Team-based Challenge activities.
 1. Embed these activities in dual credit coursework.
 2. Participate in WBL activities already hosted by the postsecondary partners.
5. Identify gaps for implementation of ideal sequence of courses. This typically requires long-term planning such as addressing teacher qualifications, building student academic skills, etc.
6. Define action plan for implementation in collaboration with community college partners.



¹ [MIT Living Wage Calculator](#): In 2020, approximately \$49K/year provided for an adult and child for Chicago-Naperville-Elgin region.

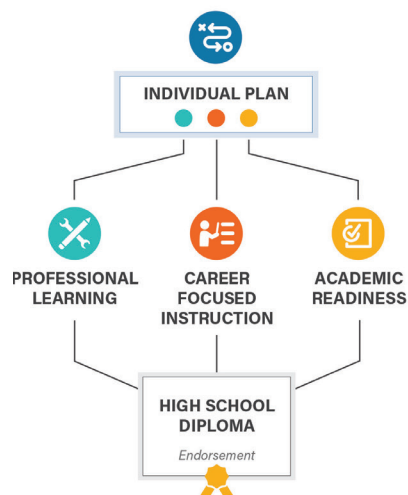
² See the College and Career Pathway Endorsement Framework on page 4

Pathway Template

Courses	Orientation (Grades 9/10)	Skill Development (Grades 10-12)	Capstone/Advanced (Grade 12)
Career Focused			
Science			
Social Science			
Math			
English			
Work-Based Learning	Career Exploration (2) Team-Based Challenge	Team-Based Challenge Career Development Experience	



College and Career Pathway Endorsement Framework



INDIVIDUAL PLAN

Each student completing an endorsement must have an individualized plan, which includes college planning linked to early understanding of career goals, financial aid, resume, and personal statement.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Awareness, exploration, and preparation activities that provide opportunities for students to interact with adults in their workplace

9th	10th	11th	12th
At least 2 career exploration activities or 1 intensive experience		60 cumulative hours of paid or credit supervised career development experience with a professional skills assessment	
At least 2 team-based challenges with adult mentoring			

↑
Through these experiences, a student gains essential employability and technical competencies in their identified sector.
↓

CAREER-FOCUSED INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE

Two years of secondary coursework, or equivalent competencies, that articulate to a postsecondary credential with labor market value. Must include at least 6 hours of early college credit.

9th	10th	11th	12th
Orientation / Introduction			
		Skill Development	
		Capstone / Advanced Courses	

ACADEMIC READINESS

Ready for non-remedial coursework in reading and math by high school graduation through criteria defined by district and local community college