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The College and Career Development Organizer

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INTRODUCTION

College and career readiness has become a key priority for the PK–20 education community and the nation at large. And although college and career readiness is a PK–20 issue, much of the attention has focused on secondary education, fueled by economic projections and secondary reform efforts. Recent projections indicate that within the next decade, 63 percent of all jobs in the United States will require some postsecondary education, and 90 percent of new jobs in growing industries with high wages will require some postsecondary training; however, institutes of higher education and the business community have long expressed concern over the inadequacy of a traditional high school education in preparing students for postsecondary education or training necessary to succeed in these careers (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009; Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010; U.S. Department of Labor, 2008).

High schools face many challenges in ensuring that all students are college and career ready. Not only must high schools raise their expectations and help students set more ambitious postsecondary goals, but they must also provide a wider array of supports to help students meet their individual goals. Furthermore, the growing consensus on the importance of all students mastering a broad range of knowledge and skills—like the English language arts and mathematics standards within the Common Core State Standards; key learning skills such as social and emotional and academic success skills; and knowledge of and exposure to a diverse range of postsecondary pathways—is made even more challenging in that there is also subset of college and career readiness skills that are directly tied to individual postsecondary goals. As each student identifies postsecondary aspirations, he or she will require specific knowledge and skills to prepare for the identified pathway (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009; Educational Policy Improvement Center, 2009; ACT, 2006).

The increased focus on college and career readiness, combined with the complexity of the challenges associated with the topic, has led to a rapidly expanding college and career readiness community that is rich with resources yet replete with confusion. The National High School Center recently conducted a scan of organizations that address college and career readiness and identified more than 70 such organizations, including those focused on policy, practice, advocacy, access, and research. Through this scan, the College and Career Development Organizer was created to help make sense of this increasingly complicated topic. It also identified three major strands of work:

- *Goals and Expectations for College and Career Readiness: What Should Students Know and Be Able to Do?*
- *Pathways and Supports for College and Career Preparation: What Policies, Programs, and Structures Will Help High School Graduates Meet Expectations?*
- *Outcomes and Measures for College and Career Success: How Do We Know When High School Graduates Meet Expectations?*

The organizer is intended to help users traverse the vast college and career readiness landscape, spurring conversations on each of the three strands and serving to support the development of strategies and initiatives to better prepare all students for college and careers.

In the remainder of this brief, the National High School Center provides an overview of the College and Career Development Organizer. First, this brief describes the organizer and its intended use, providing specific examples of what it is and is not designed to do. Then, it walks potential users through the organizer to familiarize them with its content. Three other briefs within this series, based on the three strands of work identified through the scan, offer more in-depth information on each contributing component; they are available at <http://www.betterhighschools.org/CCR/resources.asp>. As a preview of these three pieces, this brief concludes by exploring key considerations in each

strand, highlighting challenges that will likely arise as users begin to discuss and plan strategies and initiatives to address all three strands.

THE NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL CENTER'S COLLEGE AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZER

The Organizer can be used as:

- A sense-making tool to map existing definitions, resources, and organizations to the college and career readiness terrain.
- A conversation starter to help SEAs, LEAs, schools, and other organizations consider the vast landscape of college and career readiness beyond the Common Core State Standards.
- A set of building blocks to help SEAs, LEAs, and schools construct contextually appropriate frameworks that ensure college and career readiness initiatives address the diverse range of knowledge, skills, and supports that students need to be ready for college and careers after graduating from high school.

The Organizer should not be used as:

- A universal framework to be adopted as a de facto definition of college and career readiness.
- A checklist for which SEAs, LEAs, and schools must develop one strategy or program to address each component.
- A "how to" or process guide that advises SEAs, LEAs, and schools on the course of action for implementing college and career readiness strategies and initiatives.

The National High School Center created the College and Career Development Organizer to synthesize and organize an increasingly complicated and crowded field of college and career readiness initiatives. The organizer can be used to map the efforts of state education agencies (SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs) as well as the many organizations devoted to researching and providing support for college and career readiness. Mapping these diverse initiatives against an organizer illustrates how the many components of college and career readiness fit together and how organizations and other entities can be leveraged to establish meaningful collaborations in helping high school students actualize their goals.

The organizer can also be used as a set of building blocks to help SEAs, LEAs, schools, and other organizations develop college and career readiness strategies and initiatives to address student needs. Stakeholders can use the components of the organizer to ensure that they are designing comprehensive college and career readiness definitions and strategies that address all aspects of the field that are essential to their contexts. Schools and organizations may choose to limit the organizer components they plan to address because some of the components may not apply to their local context. Similarly, components can be prioritized to allow schools or organizations to harness limited resources to effectively address their most pressing college and career readiness needs. The mapping aspect of the organizer also can be referenced to identify organizations and relationships that can be leveraged after schools have identified areas in which they require additional assistance.

As with any building blocks, identifying the components that will be used to structure ongoing efforts is only part of the planning process. It is also essential to consider the relationships between these components and how they fit together to create a coherent and cohesive college and career readiness effort and to align concurrent strands of work. Although the organizer is intended to serve as a planning tool to help frame these efforts, planning, alignment, and implementation of college and career readiness initiatives are and should be driven by local contextual factors, stakeholder

needs and interests, resources, policies, and priorities. Therefore, the organizer intentionally does not provide a universal framework or model for addressing the selected components.

The organizer is broken down into four increasingly specific segments: strands, threads, components, and examples. The remainder of this brief will explain each segment in greater detail.

Exhibit 1: College and Career Development Organizer

STRAND 1: Goals and Expectations for College and Career Readiness <i>What should high school graduates know and be able to do?</i>		
THREADS	COMPONENTS	EXAMPLES
Core Content	Common Core State Standards	English/language arts, literacy, and mathematics content standards
	Individual State Standards	English/language arts, mathematics, science, foreign language, and technical standards
Pathways Content	College and Career Knowledge and Access	College and work trajectories, environments, and eligibility requirements
	College and Career Goals	Student-declared educational and career aspirations
	Pathway Content Standards	Programs of study standards (e.g., science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; health; business) ▶ Career and technical education standards
Lifelong Learning Skills	Social and Emotional Skills	Self-management ▶ Responsible decision making ▶ Self-awareness ▶ Social awareness ▶ Relationship skills
	Higher-Order Thinking Skills	Problem solving, critical thinking, and reasoning ▶ Synthesis and precision
	Academic Success and Employability Skills	Inquisitiveness and intellectual openness ▶ Organization, study, and research skills ▶ Attendance and engagement ▶ Teamwork and collaboration ▶ Effective communication
	Civic/Consumer/Life Skills	Civic engagement ▶ Financial literacy and management ▶ Information technology and social media skills

STRAND 2: Pathways and Supports for College and Career Preparation <i>What policies, programs, and structures will help high school graduates meet expectations?</i>		
THREADS	COMPONENTS	EXAMPLES
Personalized Learning Supports	Individualized Learning Strategies	Individual learning plans ▶ Flexible grouping and differentiated instruction ▶ Mentoring and counseling
	Targeted Interventions	Content/credit recovery and tutoring ▶ Health and wraparound family services ▶ Tiered interventions/positive behavioral interventions and supports ▶ Student, family, and community engagement
Rigorous Programs of Study	Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	Middle school preparation and pathway selection (career exploration, academic preparation) ▶ Accelerated learning programs ▶ Blended learning
	Well-Defined Pathways With Postsecondary Alignment	PK–20 initiatives ▶ Multidisciplinary programs of study ▶ Alternative pathways and Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED) Pathway
	Postsecondary Experiences and Preparations	College visits and career fairs ▶ Dual enrollment, internships, and work experience ▶ Enrollment and financial aid applications and enrollment preparation
Aligned Resources, Structures, and Supports	Physical and Organizational Structures	Block scheduling, increased learning time, and advisories ▶ Career academies and smaller learning communities
	Human Capital	Recruitment and hiring ▶ Professional development and support ▶ Supervision and evaluation
	Community Partnerships and Resources	Tutoring/mentoring programs and service learning ▶ Internships
	Fiscal Resources	Funding, facilities, and equipment

STRAND 3: Outcomes and Measures for College and Career Success <i>How do we know when high school graduates meet expectations?</i>		
THREADS	COMPONENTS	EXAMPLES
On-Track Indicators	Academic/Technical Performance and Engagement	Credit accumulation and recovery ▶ Attendance, grade point average, and suspensions ▶ Participation in accelerated learning programs and/or college- and career-ready courses of study ▶ Performance on aligned assessments of high school core content (e.g., Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers and Smarter Balance assessments, high school end-of-course and exit examinations) ▶ Performance on career and portfolio assessments
	Postsecondary Access and Enrollment	Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and postsecondary applications completed ▶ Postsecondary program enrollment ▶ Employment applications completion
Attainment and Authentication	Secondary Certification	High school diploma (standard, alternative, college and career readiness) or GED ▶ College credits in dual enrollment, Advanced Placement, or International Baccalaureate courses ▶ Postsecondary degree(s) ▶ Awarded industry-recognized credential or certificate
	Postsecondary Success	Postsecondary education graduation certificate ▶ Postsecondary training certification ▶ Earning wage in "middle-skills" (e.g., jobs that require an associate's degree, a vocational certificate, on-the-job training, or some college) or higher skills job ▶ Postsecondary remediation not needed
Accountability and Improvement Feedback	Accountability Reporting Systems	High school and district report cards, reporting college and career readiness measures ▶ Performance-based assessments
	Data-Informed Improvement Cycles	High school and district diagnostic assessments ▶ State and district improvement plans ▶ Early warning systems for dropout and college and career readiness ▶ National High School Senior Survey and school climate surveys

STRANDS

The organizer contains three strands:

- Goals and Expectations for College and Career Readiness
- Pathways and Supports for College and Career Preparation
- Outcomes and Measures for College and Career Success

These strands can be viewed as the overarching categories under which the National High School Center has organized all college and career readiness work. As Exhibit 2 illustrates, strands are located in the left-hand column of the organizer. The Goals and Expectations strand encompasses the work traditionally thought of as college and career readiness standards but goes beyond academic expectations, asking: What should high school graduates know and be able to do to be considered college and career ready? The Pathways and Supports strand includes the bulk of the work done by SEAs, LEAs, schools, and other supporting organizations to help prepare all students for postsecondary success and explores the question: What policies, programs, and structures will help high school graduates meet expectations? Finally, the Outcomes and Measures strand focuses on the use of data and other indicators to assess and certify student progress and mastery and evaluate program effectiveness, asking: How do we know when high school graduates are meeting expectations, and how do we evaluate the contributions made by schools to ensure that they are?

Exhibit 2: Organizer Strands

STRAND 1: Goals and Expectations for College and Career Readiness		
<i>What should high school graduates know and be able to do?</i>		
THREADS	COMPONENTS	EXAMPLES
Core Content	Common Core State Standards	English/language arts, literacy, and mathematics content standards
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Pathways Content	Social and Emotional Skills	Self-management ▶ Responsible decision making ▶ Self-awareness ▶ Social awareness ▶ Relationship skills
	Higher-Order Thinking Skills	Problem solving, critical thinking, and reasoning ▶ Synthesis and precision
	Academic Success and Employability Skills	Inquisitiveness and intellectual openness ▶ Organization, study, and research skills ▶ Attendance and engagement ▶ Teamwork and collaboration ▶ Effective communication
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THREADS

As shown in Exhibit 3, the threads further expand upon each strand. Threads within the Goals and Expectations strand provide structure for the knowledge and skills that students should master to be ready for college and career by the time they graduate:

- **Core Content** focuses on the academic knowledge that all students should learn in high school. It includes standards in English language arts, mathematics, and other content areas as mandated by state-specific graduation requirements.
- **Pathways Content** refers to both the academic- and career-specific skills that students must master to achieve individually defined college and career goals as well as the process-specific knowledge and skills that allow students to navigate the complicated pathways to college or career.
- **Lifelong Learning Skills** are those required for continuous learning beyond academic- and career-oriented knowledge. They include social and emotional, higher-order thinking, employability, and civic and consumer skills.

Threads within the Pathways and Supports strand organize the policies, programs, and structures that SEAs, LEAs, schools, and other organizations can use to support college and career preparation:

- **Personalized Learning Supports** provide students with individualized and targeted interventions to ensure that they are on-track to meeting postsecondary goals.
- **Rigorous Programs of Study** are pathways of coursework that align with postsecondary expectations, hold all students to high standards, and facilitate the learning of both core content and individualized content necessary to meet postsecondary goals.
- **Aligned Resources, Structures, and Supports** include assets that can be leveraged to implement cohesive and comprehensive strategies and initiatives for helping all students maximize attainment.

Threads within the Outcomes and Measures strand reflect the essential categories of outcomes and measures that should be used to help gauge student preparedness for and success in college and careers and to establish systems of feedback:

- **On-Track Indicators** include benchmarks used to assess whether high school students are gaining the necessary knowledge and skill sets and completing the application process at a pace to ensure postsecondary success.
- **Attainment and Authentication** measures are ex post facto measures that assess whether students have achieved success via high school graduation and postsecondary achievement.
- **Accountability and Improvement Feedback** focuses on systems of feedback that incorporate measures of on-track and postsecondary performance to evaluate success at the institutional level.

Exhibit 3: Organizer Threads

STRAND 2: Pathways and Supports for College and Career Preparation		
<i>What policies, programs, and structures will help high school graduates meet expectations?</i>		
THREADS	COMPONENTS	EXAMPLES
Personalized Learning Supports	Individualized Learning Strategies	Individual learning plans ▶ Flexible grouping and differentiated instruction ▶ Mentoring and counseling
	Targeted Interventions	Content/credit recovery and tutoring ▶ Health and wraparound family services ▶ Tiered interventions/positive behavioral interventions and supports ▶ Student, family, and community engagement
Rigorous Programs of Study	Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	Middle school preparation and pathway selection (career exploration, academic preparation) ▶ Accelerated learning programs ▶ Blended learning
	Well-Defined Pathways With Postsecondary Alignment	PK–20 initiatives ▶ Multidisciplinary programs of study ▶ Alternative pathways and Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED) Pathway
	Postsecondary Experiences and Preparations	College visits and career fairs ▶ Dual enrollment, internships, and work experience ▶ Enrollment and financial aid applications and enrollment preparation
Aligned Resources, Structures, and Supports	Physical and Organizational Structures	Block scheduling, increased learning time, and advisories ▶ Career academies and smaller learning communities
	Human Capital	Recruitment and hiring ▶ Professional development and support ▶ Supervision and evaluation
	Community Partnerships and Resources	Tutoring/mentoring programs and service learning ▶ Internships
	Fiscal Resources	Funding, facilities, and equipment

COMPONENTS

The components provide a narrower lens through which to view the threads, breaking the essential elements into smaller building blocks, as shown in Exhibit 4. As noted previously, these components can be used by SEAs, LEAs, schools, and other organizations to develop their college and career readiness definitions, frameworks, strategies, and measures. Many college and career readiness organizations address one or more of these components or, in some cases, all components in a thread. The organizer can be used to help map organizations onto the components that they address in an effort to capture how the diverse efforts of different players in the field relate to one another and how they can be best utilized to develop a cohesive system. Individual components are displayed in the organizer and are addressed in more detail in the three other briefs in this series, which are available at <http://www.betterhighschools.org/CCR/resources.asp>:

- *Goals and Expectations for College and Career Readiness: What Should Students Know and Be Able to Do?*
- *Pathways and Supports for College and Career Preparation: What Policies, Programs, and Structures Will Help High School Graduates Meet Expectations?*
- *Outcomes and Measures for College and Career Success: How Do We Know When High School Graduates Meet Expectations?*

Exhibit 4: Organizer Components

THREADS	COMPONENTS	EXAMPLES
Attainment and Authentication	Secondary Certification	High school diploma (standard, alternative, college and career readiness) or GED ▶ College credits in dual enrollment, Advanced Placement, or International Baccalaureate courses ▶ Postsecondary degree(s) ▶ Awarded industry-recognized credential or certificate
	Postsecondary Success	Postsecondary education graduation certificate ▶ Postsecondary training certification ▶ Earning wage in "middle-skills" (e.g., jobs that require an associate's degree, a vocational certificate, on-the-job training, or some college) or higher skills job ▶ Postsecondary remediation not needed

EXAMPLES

Examples are provided in the right-hand column of the organizer, as shown in Exhibit 5. These examples provide further clarity on the types of strategies and initiatives encompassed by each component. The items listed in this column are included as examples. They do not represent all possible strategies and initiatives within a given component, nor do they represent facets of the component that must be implemented to ensure a successful college and career readiness program. Instead, they are simply possible skills, programs, or measures that could be integrated into an SEA, LEA, or school college and career development program depending on local priorities and context. Similarly, some examples may have implications for multiple components. As Exhibit 5 illustrates, earning college credits in dual enrollment is an example of an attainment and authentication measure (thread) of secondary certification (component); however, signing up for a dual enrollment course could also be an on-track indicator (thread) of academic performance (component).

Exhibit 5: Organizer Examples

THREADS	COMPONENTS	EXAMPLES
Attainment and Authentication	Secondary Certification	High school diploma (standard, alternative, college and career readiness) or GED ▶ College credits in dual enrollment, Advanced Placement, or International Baccalaureate courses ▶ Postsecondary degree(s) ▶ Awarded industry-recognized credential or certificate
	Postsecondary Success	Postsecondary education graduation certificate ▶ Postsecondary training certification ▶ Earning wage in "middle-skills" (e.g., jobs that require an associate's degree, a vocational certificate, on-the-job training, or some college) or higher skills job ▶ Postsecondary remediation not needed

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The three remaining briefs in this series discuss each of the strands represented in the organizer. This section highlights key considerations and challenges likely to arise when addressing each thread. The other briefs in the series provide further detail about the following key considerations:

- Goals and Expectations for College and Career Readiness
 - Goals and expectations for college and career readiness are not explicit, comprehensive, or shared among organizations, states, and districts.
 - To be college and career ready, students must master a wide range of knowledge and a diverse set of skills that extend beyond academic content knowledge.
 - Goals and expectations for college and career readiness should be driven by state and national economic and workforce needs as well as individual career interest and aspirations; they should also be anchored in expectations outlined by college and industry standards.
- Pathways and Supports for College and Career Preparation
 - Student pathways and supports must provide students with opportunities to master common skills while still allowing them to tailor individualized learning programs to pathway-specific goals and expectations based on their postsecondary aspirations.
 - Though student pathways will vary greatly based on postsecondary goals, all students must be provided the supports necessary to meet similarly rigorous standards. Pathways must be determined by student aspirations and capabilities rather than existing performance.
 - Pathways and supports must be flexible, allowing students to alter programs of study to align with changing postsecondary goals.
 - Student supports must be aligned with and based on comprehensive and coherent plans for school improvement and maximizing each student's attainment rather than piecemeal and disjointed programmatic additions designed to address each new policy or priority.
- Outcomes and Measures for College and Career Success
 - College and career readiness and attainment should be measured with multiple types of data from different sources.
 - Outcomes and measures for college and career success should be continuously validated, with the actual intended outcomes (college and career success) included in analyses.
 - Measures and outcomes should be part of a system of assessment that measures the progress of individual students, schools, LEAs, and SEAs toward college and career readiness and success.

A final key consideration at any stage of college and career readiness work is that all three strands represented by the National High School Center's College and Career Development Organizer are inextricably linked. As users address key challenges in one strand, the implications for the other two should also be considered. Decisions about goals and expectations for college and career readiness must be aligned with those in the other two strands of work. Pathways and supports must be individualized, rigorous, and aligned to help students meet their goals and expectations for college and career readiness. Similarly, outcomes and measures must be explicitly driven by and aligned with goals and expectations for college and career readiness and integrated into a system of assessments to help gauge the effectiveness of interventions and pathways designed to provide supports. As a result, the National High School Center recommends using the organizer in its entirety to frame the conversation and develop college and career readiness priorities to ensure alignment and cohesion.

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