



# Postsecondary & Workforce Readiness Act

## Local Advisory Panels for Transitional Instruction Processes, Promising Practices, and Lessons Learned

*June 2021*

# INTRODUCTION

The Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR) Act establishes a statewide system for high school transitional instruction courses which provide students with the knowledge and skills to be successful in college-level math and English courses, while aligning with the Illinois Learning Standards. Students receive guaranteed placement at any Illinois community college and accepting universities after successful completion of a transitional course that has been approved for statewide portability, a formal process that requires demonstration that the course addresses the relevant [math](#) or [English](#) competencies and policies.

## Process

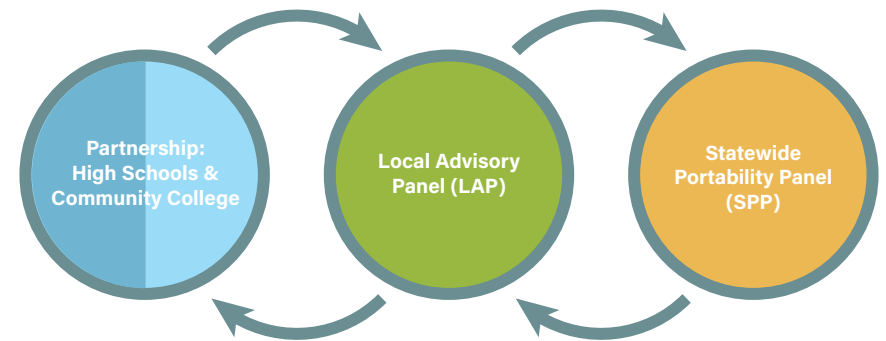
In the development of transitional courses, high schools and community colleges are equal partners and establish expectations for collaboration through a Local Partnership Agreement.

The Local Partnership Agreement should address:

- participating high schools,
- course grading and assessment policies,
- college agreement to enroll students in applicable outcome college courses,
- joint agreement to pursue and maintain portability,
- dispute resolution processes, and
- contacts for administration.

Statewide Portability Panels (SPPs), composed of secondary and postsecondary faculty, recognize the statewide portability of transitional courses. A community college submits the required documentation for a transitional course created in partnership with one or more school districts serving grades 9 through 12 to the SPP. A transitional course that meets the portability criteria receives a portability designation from the State which guarantees that students who achieve successful completion are placed into an appropriate college-level course at any Illinois community college. Public and private universities may voluntarily agree to provide guaranteed placement into the outcome course(s) of the transitional pathway.

Due to the importance of the role of local course review, each partnership must create a Local Advisory Panel (LAP) with equal representation



from high school and college constituents. The LAP is the central vehicle for meeting the expectations and achieving the goals in the Local Partnership Agreement. The primary responsibilities of the LAP are to:

- collect syllabi and competency spreadsheets from high schools,
- approve the partnership's courses,
- choose representative courses for statewide portability submission(s), and
- communicate to constituents (including school principals) information from the Statewide Portability Panel.

This document has been created by Education Systems Center at Northern Illinois University, which is helping to facilitate interagency efforts to implement transitional instruction. It is intended to provide guidance at all phases of establishing and running a Local Advisory Panel and is the result of conversations with members of five established Transitional Math Local Advisory Panels across Illinois. This document is not intended to be exhaustive; instead it is a gathering of promising practices and lessons learned from conversations with communities doing intentional and thoughtful work across the State of Illinois. For additional insights on how communities coordinate their LAPs, please see [the session recording](#) from the 2021 60 by 25 Network Conference of a panelist discussion with representatives from Sauk Valley Community College and Illinois Central College. We hope communities will apply, repurpose, and utilize these resources to establish Local Advisory Panels that advance the work of transitional instruction and prepare more young people for success in college-level coursework.






## PROMISING PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED



### LAP Membership

The Local Advisory Panel (LAP) should have equal representation from high school and college constituents. The size and composition of the LAP is at the discretion of the local partnership; however, a recommended structure for an LAP includes at least one administrator and one content area teacher to represent the high schools in the partnership as well as at least one administrator and one content area faculty member to represent the community college.

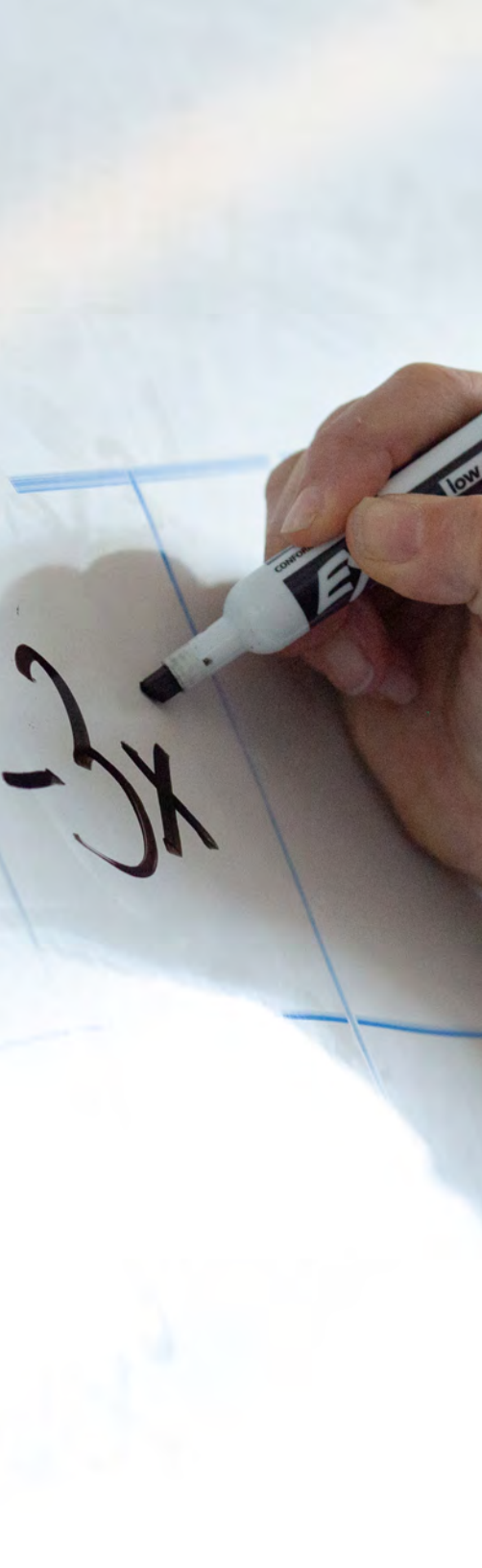
### LAP Partnerships Interviewed

-  **College of Lake County**
  - Established 2019
  - QL/Stats
-  **Elgin Community College**
  - Established 2019
  - STEM, QL/Stats & Technical
-  **Illinois Central College**
  - Established February 2020
  - STEM & QL/Stats
-  **Kankakee Community College**
  - Established 2019
  - STEM & QL/Stats
-  **Sauk Valley Community College**
  - Established 2019
  - QL/Stats & Technical

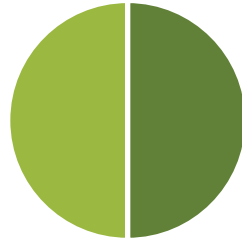
### By the Numbers

As of the 2020–2021 school year there are a total of **311 Illinois high schools offering a Transitional Math course** that has been approved for statewide portability representing **77 STEM courses, 261 QL/Stats courses, and 17 Technical Math courses.**

*The following sections refer to component parts and supports of the LAP. While these sections do not necessarily need to be read in any order, they do flow from establishing an LAP to submission to the Statewide Portability Panel. Each section contains relevant insights from communities and LAP members.*



## How four community colleges constructed their Local Advisory Panels for Transitional Math:

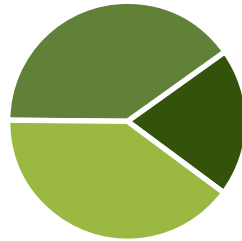


### ILLINOIS CENTRAL COLLEGE

**College:** One administrator & two math faculty

**High Schools:** One administrator, one math teacher from a large high school, one math teacher from a small high school

*"It was important for ICC to include representatives from both large and small high schools since it has over 30 feeder high schools with a wide range of student populations."*



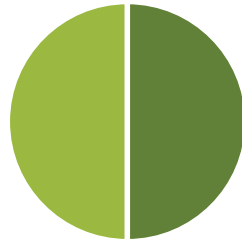
### SAUK VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**College:** Pathways Facilitator & Math Department Chair

**High Schools:** One math teacher from each of two high schools

**ROE:** Director of Professional Learning

*"The inclusion of the ROE Professional Learning Director was especially useful since they had established relationships with both the College and the high schools."*

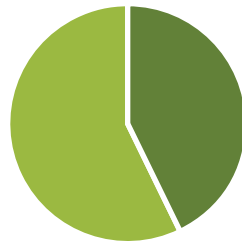


### KANKAKEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**College:** Associate Dean & Faculty Liaison

**High Schools:** One math teacher from one high school & one principal from a different high school.

*"Since KCC has 13 feeder districts, fewer than some other community colleges, it decided to limit its Transitional Math LAP to four members."*



### COLLEGE OF LAKE COUNTY

**College:** Math High School Liaison, Director of College and Career Readiness and Dual Credit, & Math Department Co-Chair

**High Schools:** Three administrators from three high schools & one math Teacher from a fourth high school

*"High school representatives on the LAP are from the four high schools who were a part of the original pilot. The LAP has more high school than college representation since CLC prioritized high school buy-in to the program."*





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**“We have a Transitional Math/Math Literacy teacher on our LAP and it has been super helpful to have a practitioner involved at that level.”**

– Community College Administrator

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**“Start with the willing participants. When we convened our TM LAP, it was really just the community college and three high schools (out of 15+). We were able to move nimbly without waiting for those who weren’t ready. More schools have joined since that initial work, but it was great to get the ball rolling.”**

– High School Administrator

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**“Part of our success has been the partnership and relationships between the community college and districts.”**

– Community College Administrator

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**“We felt like we wanted more high school people than us because we have tried really hard to have a great relationship with our high schools. We wanted everything we sent to be coming from the panel and not just from the college.”**

– Community College Faculty

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# MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING AND DOCUMENTATION FOR PORTABILITY

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The school districts and the community college in the partnership agree to a Transitional Instruction Partnership Agreement (referred to in this document as a Memorandum of Understanding, or MOU) that satisfies the required state policies. Partnerships are encouraged to use the [statewide MOU template](#), adding details specific to their agreement as applicable. While the contents of the MOU should be identical for each high school in the partnership, high schools each have their own copy of the MOU to simplify the process of gaining

the required signatures from the high school district and community college. In addition to the MOU for each transitional course, the college and partnering high schools create a transitional course syllabus and corresponding content competencies spreadsheet to demonstrate how a course addresses the Statewide course parameters, policies and competencies. Download templates at [ltransitionalmath.org/portability-documents](http://ltransitionalmath.org/portability-documents).

## Developing the MOU

- Illinois Central College brought all high schools to the College to hash out the Transitional Math MOU together, providing lunch, free resources from publishers, and goody bags as incentives.
- To develop the MOU, College of Lake County's Transitional Math LAP surveyed high schools about grading policies. This was the most difficult thing to negotiate. They sent a sample policy and the responses to the survey back to high schools so everyone could see that compromises were necessary. After adjusting based on feedback, they settled on a policy that was as flexible as possible. The LAP requires each high school to submit a signed MOU before or with each course submission.

## Keeping Things Consistent

The Sauk Valley Community College Transitional Math LAP shares [its MOU](#) with high school advisors and college registrars. It has found that keeping things as consistent as possible among high schools is helpful for new districts entering the process for the first time.

## Concurrently Writing the MOU, Assessments, and Curriculum

At the same time the MOU was being developed, faculty from Elgin Community College and high school teachers from each of the four feeder districts came together to write common assessments and curriculum based on the [Statewide Transitional Math competencies](#).

**“We realized early on that we didn’t understand each other. It took time for us to learn how it flows up to postsecondary. We needed college faculty to see the progression through high school to college and also what was needed of us to prepare students for the college level. This conversation came into the MOU to make sure students had the academic skills and behaviors to be successful in college.”**

– Community College Faculty

**“The biggest contention of the MOU is reassessment. If reassessment is done in the correct way then it’s a really good pedagogical technique, and so we needed to communicate how we support reassessment at the college level to align with high school practices.”**

– Community College Administrator





### Spotlight on Illinois Central College (ICC)

- **Including Private Schools:** ICC invited its feeder private high schools to participate in the transitional math process so private school students, who are its constituents along with public school students, could benefit.
- **Syllabus Template:** ICC provides a [syllabus template](#) to high schools with guidance for completing each section.
- **Scheduling:** The bulk of the ICC feeder high schools offer transitional math in the fall and dual credit in the spring. ICC uses transitional math grade rosters to predict and prepare for dual credit spring enrollment.

“We started with some of our longest running partnerships. We first asked schools who had originally been part of our Transitional Math pilot.”

– Community College Faculty

## SUBMISSION OF REPRESENTATIVE COURSE

The LAP collects course and curricular documentation - including transitional course syllabi and content competencies spreadsheets - from all high schools in the partnership seeking portability and reviews the courses according to the Statewide Portability Panel's established course approval criteria. The LAP submits a course along with curricular documentation and the MOU, to the SPP according to the portability panel timeline for course review.



### Spotlight on Process

- College of Lake County partnered with the high schools who had been part of their Transitional Math pilot to develop materials together to submit to the state. Then they developed a sample syllabus and spreadsheet for partner high schools to use when presenting to new high schools.
- The Vice-President of Sauk Valley Community College sends an email to each feeder high school asking which transitional courses it plans to implement. Based on those responses, the Pathways Facilitator sends all portability documents — sample syllabi, competency worksheets, and the MOU — to high schools to complete and return.
- Kankakee Community College's Transitional Math LAP uses the Portability Processes and Documentation for Partnerships ([available on the Transitional Math website](#)) to determine if a course can be approved. When safety and health restrictions due to COVID-19 didn't allow the LAP to meet in person, deliberations occurred through email.
- Illinois Central College created a [spreadsheet](#) for its transitional math LAP to use in reviewing and providing comments on high school documentation. This allows for easy sorting and information consolidation prior to the LAP meeting to determine if members are in agreement and/or which submissions need to be discussed.

“It’s about an equal partnership between high schools and colleges. It’s the complete opposite of dual credit.”

– Community College Faculty

“It’s up to the LAP to make sure that all regional course competencies and topical outlines are mapped correctly and aligned to the representative syllabus approved by the state. This is why the LAP is the most important component to transitional courses.”

– Community College Faculty



## COMMUNICATING PANEL DECISIONS

For courses not submitted to the Statewide Portability Panel (SPP), the LAP provides feedback and recommendations for improvement to high school principals. Courses submitted to the SPP are reviewed at a scheduled panel meeting and are granted confirmation of approval, conditional approval, not enough information, or returned with comments for changes necessary to gain statewide portability. Each course granted approval by the SPP ensures statewide portability for all high schools in the partnership offering that course. A student who successfully completes an approved transitional course will receive guaranteed placement at any Illinois community college into the appropriate outcome course(s).



### Submission Responses

- Illinois Central College's Transitional Math LAP responds to each submission with a decision and feedback using a [standard cover sheet](#) with standard feedback language to address the most common errors. It uses three decision categories: approved, conditional approval, and returned. While it has an instructor serving as Coordinator, all responses come from the LAP to protect the Coordinator/high school relationship.
- College of Lake County responds to each submission with outright approval, that a few corrections are needed, or that significant changes are necessary and the LAP will help to rewrite. This communication comes from the transitional math liaison at the college but is developed in conjunction with the Director of College and Career Readiness. If significant edits are required, the transitional math liaison works one-on-one with schools. LAP members also meet with high schools to provide clarification and supports.

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**“We didn’t ever flat out deny a submission. We would always work with schools on rewriting and say that we are here as a resource for you.”**

– Community College Faculty

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**“When I reach out to partner high school districts I do that solely as the college liaison. I am also on the LAP but keep this separate role to see how schools are doing and support them in the process of course approval and submission.”**

– Community College Liaison

## STUDENT PLACEMENT

Transitional courses are intended for students who are projected not ready for college-level math and/or English as of the end of their junior year. Multiple measures criteria for determining projected readiness must be used for placement into transitional courses. School districts implementing transitional courses should include supports in their advising systems to inform students and families of the availability of transitional coursework and the benefits in terms of college and career readiness and college placement.

### Student Placement

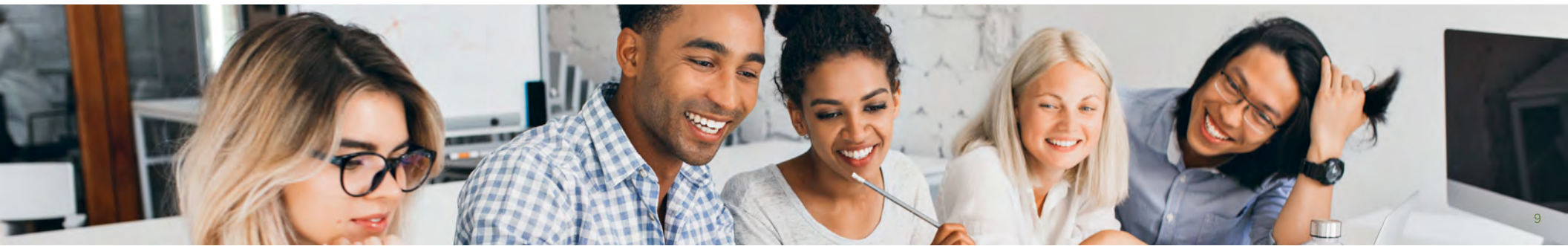
- Illinois Central College engages high school administrators, counselors, students, and families in the placement process so everyone understands which transitional math course is most appropriate for each student. It developed flow charts for counselors and explains to families that each degree requires specific math courses. ICC has found that families often want as much rigor and college credit as possible for their students, but they don't always understand that an incorrect course will count as an elective rather than direct credit toward a degree.
- Elgin Community College's partner District 300 uses scores on the PSAT/NMSQT to place students into transitional math. Students have to score at least 530 to be placed into an early college credit course. All students receive a presentation called "Life after Algebra II" explaining Transitional Math and the importance of picking the correct course for the degree they want to pursue. Divisionals meet with students individually to ensure they are placed in appropriate courses.

**"We want to make sure that we're helping people understand what the benefit of this is. Math is not math in college. In high school you can take any math class you want and it counts as math credit towards high school graduation. This process has helped to bring light to those conversations and help schools and students understand that there are pathways important for them to get their degree."**

- Community College Administrator

**"It's a big conversation. You're up against schools dealing with parents who want more rigor and sometimes want to be able to say they offer a certain amount of dual credit. We've really tried to take on the angle with credits with a recent purpose. It's a battle helping the high schools to understand more is not always better!"**

- Community College Administrator



## DOCUMENTATION AND RECORD KEEPING OF COURSE COMPLETION

Courses with approval from the Statewide Portability Panel should indicate the appropriate transitional portability code on each senior's high school transcript in which the senior earned a C or better in the transitional course. In addition to the grade and portability code, high schools should include the date that the course was completed to allow colleges to calculate an expiration date of placement. The college should maintain a document with the portability codes for each high school in its partnership for ease of reference over time. The [Portability Course Submission Worksheet](#) and [Portability Modification Form](#) serve to support acquisition of the needed information.

Colleges receiving information on a student's portability code grant the student the appropriate placement based on the course pathway. The placement exempts a student from taking a placement test at the community college. However, students may voluntarily take a placement test if they wish to place higher than the transitional course placement would allow.



**"We've tried to look at our midterms and finals data to know where our students' deficits are going into those college level courses to backtrack and vertically align across high school math courses. We want fewer students in developmental math in college but eventually I would like to have fewer students enrolled in a transitional course."**

– High School Math Director

### Spotlight on Data

- Districts that feed into Elgin Community College set up and lock teacher electronic grade books so they correspond to the transitional course weighting and grading in the MOU, and they use the grade book information to place the appropriate code on students' transcripts. Districts sent samples of their transcripts to the College so that they could identify codes for portability from each district.
- Elgin Community College analyzes student success each June when leaders meet with districts to examine transitional math performance data, trying to determine if students' difficulties can be attributed to assessment construction, instructional practices, or other factors. They also collect and consider anecdotal data about where students are struggling. They meet a second time to revise the commonly developed mid-term and final assessments and rubrics. Their intention is to make this an annual process.
- Illinois Central College requires all students in its region who take transitional math to apply to ICC - a free process that takes only a few minutes. The process creates a student identification code which notifies the College that the student has taken transitional math. The code flags students as eligible for college-level math at ICC and also allows the LAP to track the college math success of transitional math students from each feeder high school to promote continuous transitional course improvements.



**"We've developed an enrollment portal outside of our main system so that high schools have access and can submit information any time they're ready and that's started to really increase our efficiency."**

– Community College Faculty

\* The guaranteed placement will expire no less than 18-months for Transitional Math and no less than 3 years for Transitional English from the date of the student's high school graduation.



## ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TEACHER SUPPORTS

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High school teachers must receive relevant and applicable professional development prior to teaching a transitional course. Training should address content and pedagogical issues corresponding to the transitional course parameters and competencies. A process should be established whereby high school teachers can receive ongoing support from college faculty. Mentoring and liaison models are encouraged to provide support, but not to evaluate high school teachers.

### Professional Support

- Illinois Central College bought a portion of one of its math instructor's time to serve as a coordinator. They attend LAP meetings, reach out to high schools often, observe courses, and provide resources. They developed a website for instructors which houses locally developed resources, copies of the MOUs, portability documents, drafts of transitional math courses, and other materials shared with them from high schools and outside organizations.
- Sauk Valley Community College held professional development sessions to orient teachers to transitional English which included a Creating the Vision document ([view sample agendas & vision](#)).
- Elgin Community College realized that its math instructors and its feeder high school math teachers didn't understand enough about each other's context and processes, so it arranged for its math instructors and other representatives to visit feeder elementary, middle, and high schools to see what math looks like through the grades. Then it held professional development sessions for district teachers to help them understand how math works at the College. The process was useful for both sides as they negotiated difficult aspects of the MOU such as assessment.

**“We emphasize that they’re not your students, they’re not my students, they’re our students. We’re trying to work together to get them from point A to point B and make that transition as smooth as possible. We need to support teachers to expect college level work from their students and it’s okay if they’re failing. I’d rather have a student fail in a Transitional Math course than at a college course they’re paying for.”**

– Community College Administrator

**“We divided and conquered, delivering professional development by representatives from the high schools and community college. We needed to explain why finals are in these courses - because they are a common college practice and we are supporting students to transition to the college level.”**

– High School Administrator

**“It is a new way for teachers to teach. I’m not used to teaching that way as a math instructor. Many of us teach the way we were taught and it’s hard to take risks.”**

– High School Math Teacher

### Kicking off the Work of the LAP

- In working for approval for transitional courses, it is important to leverage the engagement processes that already exist between college career readiness and dual credit coordinators and coordinators at the high schools.
- High schools should be an integral part of the MOU development process so they understand that the purpose of each piece of the MOU is to ensure students are able to transition to college-level courses.

### Collaboration Between Districts and Colleges

- As high school and college representatives develop the MOU together they can use the opportunity to better understand how each functions and how they can adapt their courses to ease the transition for students.
- Agreeing on assessment practices can be the most difficult component of MOU development.
- The need and value in the MOU evolves as the course is implemented, so processes may need to be revisited to support teacher preparation and student success.

### Communication and Feedback

- It is important that the LAP provide detailed feedback if it rejects a course so the school can understand what changes are necessary and it is useful for the feedback to come from the LAP as a group to preserve the college/high school relationship.
- High school counselors need concrete criteria and resources to help them help students choose appropriate courses, and it is important to include families in the course selection process since they often are unaware of the importance of appropriate courses.

### Capturing Student Completion

- It is critical that high schools use the correct ISBE course and portability codes since high school course names aren't always recognizable, and is useful for LAPs to work with each high school's registrar directly.
- Colleges should consider configuring their data systems to flag students who exceed the 18-month (Transitional Math) or 3-year (Transitional English) placement expiration