

# Scaling Education Pathways in Illinois (SEPI)

## Initial Analysis, Promising Practices, and Lessons Learned

August 2021





**Education Systems Center** (EdSystems) shapes and strengthens education and workforce systems to advance racial equity and prepare more young people for productive careers and lives in a global economy. EdSystems is a mission-driven policy development and program implementation center based within Northern Illinois University's Division of Outreach, Engagement, and Regional Development. Our primary focus is Illinois, while also working with national and international partners. Through our State university home, we are able to forge longstanding leadership roles with state agencies and intergovernmental bodies such as the Illinois P-20 Council. We strategically work at the State and local levels to ensure policies are created and implemented in meaningful ways. We focus on three substantive priority areas: College and Career Pathways, Bridges to Postsecondary, and Data Impact and Leadership. Learn more at [edsystemsniu.org](https://edsystemsniu.org).

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## About This Document

Education Systems Center developed this analysis of the initial implementation of the Scaling Education Pathways in Illinois (SEPI) initiative with input from the first cohort of education pathway collaboratives. It was undertaken to understand how the components of the education pathway were being executed in practice and to collect promising practices and lessons learned. It includes a preliminary inquiry into education pathway student motivation and experiences which will be expanded in the coming year with the assistance of researchers at Northern Illinois University's College of Education. The analysis also sought insight into how intermediary organizations such as Education Systems Center can best assist collaborative partnerships in building engaging and robust education pathways. It is based on a review of available documents and results from focus groups and interviews undertaken over the course of the 2020–2021 school year.

This analysis can be helpful to a variety of audiences for a range of purposes including:

- **Collaboratives implementing education pathways** for insights into how established collaboratives are building pathways and how collaboratives have overcome common barriers.
- **High school counselors** for promising practices for recruiting a diversity of students into the education pathway.
- **Education pathway course instructors** for ideas and innovations to enhance the student experience.
- **Postsecondary partners** for suggestions for facilitating pathway implementation and assisting pathway students.
- **Intermediary organizations** for emerging promising practices for supporting education pathway collaboratives.

### Download these stand-alone sections:



**Implications and Takeaways** for high schools, postsecondary partners, and intermediary organizations  
(p. 2 | [download stand-alone section](#))



**Key Findings** regarding pathway implementation, student recruitment, dual credit, career experiences, student voice, and intermediary support  
(p. 3 | [download stand-alone section](#))



**By the Numbers** for numbers and percentages of students in the education pathway in the collaboratives involved in this analysis  
(p. 4 | [download stand-alone section](#))



**Promising Practices Spotlights**, a compilation of the innovative practices highlighted throughout the document  
(p. 28 | [download stand-alone section](#))

The document is organized into four main sections:

1. **Summaries** including Implications and Takeaways and Key Findings ([pp. 2–3](#))
2. **Introductory information** including History and Background, Analysis Questions and Methods, Data at a Glance, and Student Voices ([pp. 4–7](#))
3. **Collaborative reviews** of each of the seven collaboratives which were a part of this analysis, many including spotlights on innovative practices ([pp. 8–27](#))
4. **Concluding material** including Promising Practices for Intermediary Organizations and Opportunities for Future Analysis ([pp. 28–29](#))

# Implications and Takeaways

## For High School Education Pathway Implementers

- **Build Robust Pathways:** Schools with childcare pathways should consider shifting to a more robust program aimed at a professional educator license to prepare students for careers with higher earning potential.
- **Target Recruitment:** To inform students about the education pathway, high schools should include it in their existing course information structures and incorporate one-on-one teacher and counselor outreach, particularly to students without familiarity with childcare or teaching.
- **Prioritize Underrepresented Students:** To recruit and support underrepresented students, high schools should prioritize targeted one-on-one outreach, structured interactions with teachers from underrepresented populations, and assignments that showcase how educators can celebrate diversity.
- **Publicize Currency:** All recruitment discussions and materials should include up-to-date information about the currency available to students who complete the College and Career Pathway Endorsement in education.
- **Offer In-Building Dual Credit:** Schools should offer dual credit courses in the building during school hours to allow students easier and cheaper access, if possible.
- **Work Together:** Collaboratives of small, distanced high schools that struggle to fill onsite dual credit courses should consider combining students from several high schools to fill an online course.
- **Exploit Virtual Opportunities:** High schools should capitalize on innovations from the shift to remote learning and incorporate experiences such as virtual observations and internships, online alumni guest speakers, and short pop-in virtual observations followed by class discussion.
- **Find Talented Cooperating Teachers:** High schools should prioritize the careful selection of cooperating teachers to ensure positive student experiences.

## For Postsecondary Partners

- **Offer Online Courses:** Postsecondary institutions should consider offering virtual dual credit courses to accommodate students with transportation and scheduling difficulties.
- **Provide Benefits:** To encourage and validate participation in the pathway, postsecondary institutions should consider offering benefits and selective opportunities such as priority for scholarships to students with the College and Career Pathway Endorsement.
- **Consider Transition Assistance:** To ease the transition from high school to college-level curriculum, postsecondary partners should offer study skills supports, explicitly teach new vocabulary, and navigate curriculum alignment.
- **Embed Work-Based Learning:** To accommodate student schedules, work-based learning should be embedded in dual credit courses when possible.

## For Intermediary Organizations

- **Build Currency:** Intermediary organizations should prioritize building currency for pathway endorsements.
- **Provide Sharing Opportunities:** It is important to provide structured opportunities for educators to meet with peers from other districts to share pathways experiences, challenges, and successes.
- **Leverage Grants:** Using small grants, intermediaries can help collaboratives launch programs that can secure more significant stakeholder buy in and position them for additional funding.
- **Support All Schools:** There are no schools, regardless of their previous pathway experience, that cannot begin to implement a robust education pathway aimed at a professional educator license.

# Key Findings

## Pathway Implementation

- Education pathway implementation varies widely within and across the seven SEPI collaboratives. Some are enhancing long-standing models, many have worked quickly to launch or adjust new coursework, and a few are at the beginning stages. The process is driven by a variety of organizations including high schools, postsecondary institutions, and Regional Offices of Education.
- Some high schools are shifting from an early childhood pathway geared toward childcare to a more robust education pathway aimed at a professional educator license.
- Several programs are looking to combine students' passion for specific subjects with teaching experiences so students can explore teaching the subjects they love.

## Student Recruitment

- Recruitment practices vary widely, with some schools using extensive outreach including videos and social media, some prioritizing identification from teachers and counselors, and others relying on career fairs and student word-of-mouth.
- Some schools are having success recruiting underrepresented populations to the pathway through targeted one-on-one outreach and supporting them through practices such as structured interactions with Black male teachers and assignments involving celebrating diversity.
- Currency for obtaining an education pathway endorsement such as a scholarship from a postsecondary partner is a strong recruitment tool, particularly for low-income families.
- Many programs help students understand the variety of non-teaching education-related careers to attract students not interested in teaching.

## Dual Credit

- Larger schools are more able to offer dual credit courses in the building during school hours since they are more likely to have enough students to fill a class and to have more teachers/administrators with qualifying credentials to teach the courses.
- Experiences with online learning during the pandemic introduced the possibility of sharing dual credit courses among several communities.

- The pandemic disruption forced community colleges to deliver courses online, which eased the burden of time and transportation for many dual credit students.
- There is a tension between making dual credit courses accessible to high school students and ensuring students have sufficient support to engage with college-level content.

## Career Experiences

- Schools without proximity to observation and internship classrooms struggle with transportation and finding time in student schedules. Some schools found innovative ways to overcome these difficulties using the pandemic's virtual school format.
- The pandemic disruption spurred some programs to create new experiences, including short, pop-in virtual observations followed by class discussion and online alumni guest speakers, which were so successful that teachers plan to continue to implement them.
- Educators involved in pathway implementation emphasize that it is important to recruit high-quality, invested cooperating teachers for student career development experiences because "that partnership has a profound impact on students."

## Student Voice

- Students appreciate the ability to investigate education as a career before enrolling and investing in a program of study in college.
- Teachers say the most impactful experience for students is spending classroom time as teachers.
- Students value the opportunity to build relationships with younger students.

## Intermediary Support

- Building currency for a pathway endorsement is an important and appreciated function of an intermediary organization.
- Educators value the opportunity to meet with peers at other districts to share their pathway experiences, challenges, and successes.
- Intermediaries can help collaboratives build the structure and dynamics to leverage more and larger funding streams.

# SEPI By the Numbers

2,124

Total education pathway students in SEPI Cohort 1 schools

70

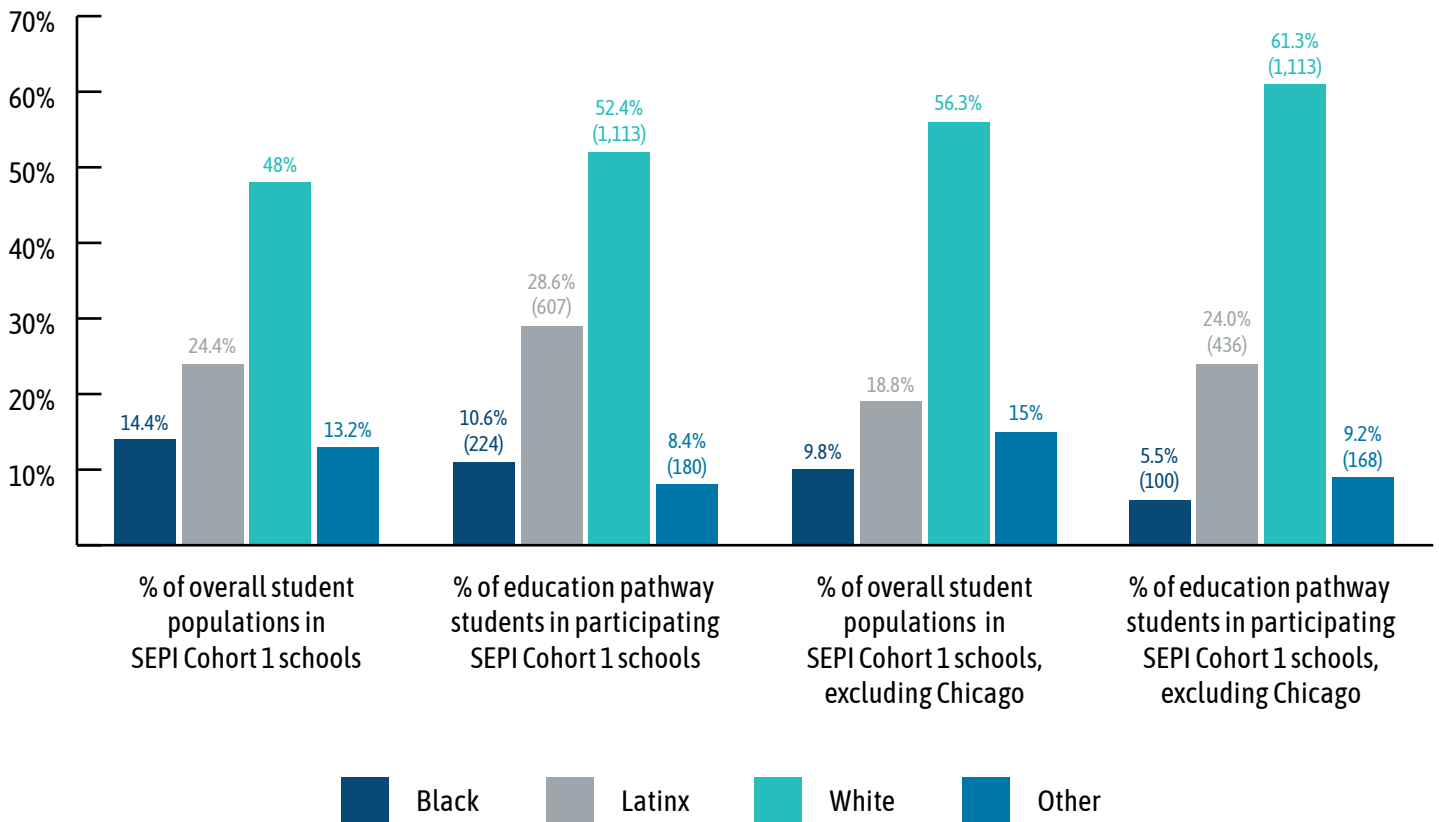
Total participating high schools in SEPI Cohorts 1 & 2

45

Total participating districts in SEPI Cohorts 1 & 2

14

Total participating postsecondary partners in SEPI Cohorts 1 & 2



# SEPI History and Background

The 2016 [Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act](#) (PWR) was intended to assist Illinois students in preparing for and selecting the right postsecondary option for eventual meaningful employment. It includes a voluntary process for school districts to award [College and Career Pathway Endorsements](#) to high school graduates who have completed specific career-focused requirements. College and career pathway systems in education provide a structure for ensuring students interested in a career in education participate in career development activities preparing them for entry into a teacher preparation program.

Illinois, like many other states, faces a teacher shortage that is particularly acute in rural and urban classrooms. The state's teaching ranks also lack needed diversity, as the teacher workforce is 85-percent white even as mounting research shows students of all backgrounds benefit from having teachers of color. To help address these challenges, Education Systems Center (EdSystems) partnered with the Illinois P-20 Council and the Joyce Foundation to launch [Scaling Education Pathways in Illinois](#) (SEPI). In School Year 2019–2020, SEPI began supporting nine collaboratives—each comprising at least one district, one community college, and one teacher preparation institution committed to providing recognition of the College and Career Pathway Endorsement (CCPE) in Education in its application, advising, or placement processes—to build streamlined education pathways that align to the PWR Act's Endorsement requirements. SEPI has a special focus on helping students from diverse backgrounds become educators.

EdSystems' support of the collaboratives included awarding small grants to support the launch of the collaboratives, providing access to best practices, convening communities of practice which included annual summits, and guiding participants through the process of securing approval to award the CCPE in Education. EdSystems also collaborated with other state agencies to develop several online resources to support the education pathway including a [Career Pathways Dictionary](#), [Career Development Experience Toolkit](#), a [Statewide Team-Based Challenge Resource Bank](#), [Recommended Technical and Essential Employability Competencies](#), and the [Model Programs of Study Guide for Education](#). In January 2021, a second cohort of six collaboratives was added to the SEPI project and plans are underway

to add a third cohort, though these additional collaboratives were not a part of this analysis. A significant challenge to convincing districts to offer, and students to earn, a CCPE in Education was a perceived lack of tangible benefit. In response, EdSystems worked to build currency around the state. To date, the following advantages are offered to students:

- **Golden Apple Scholars of Illinois** will automatically advance any applicants who have earned or are on track to earn a CCPE to the final stage of its application process. Golden Apple Scholars receive up to \$23,000 tuition assistance at any of the 48 Illinois partner universities as well as paid summer professional development that includes courses and extensive classroom/work experience, academic and social-emotional support, job placement assistance, and mentoring. The opportunity to become a finalist and move straight to the interview stage is significant as it moves CCPE students to the top 20% of the applicant pool.
- **Chicago State University** students who earn the CCPE in Education and apply for the Diverse Scholars in Education Scholarship or Call Me Mister Program are automatically advanced as finalists.
- **Sauk Valley Community College** is offering every student entering the college with a CCPE a \$100 credit.
- **Northern Illinois University's College of Education** will automatically advance admitted students with the CCPE in Education as finalists to receive select scholarships and to participate in the college's Educate and Engage program.
- **Minority Teachers of Illinois (MTI) Scholarship Program** is now open to students graduating with any pathway endorsement and is available before students declare a major in a university's College of Education.





## Analysis Questions and Methods

This analysis was undertaken to better understand the components of the education pathways in the first cohort of Scaling Education Pathways in Illinois (SEPI) collaboratives. It also aimed to collect best practices and lessons learned for use by other collaboratives implementing education pathways, and to determine how intermediary organizations such as Education Systems Center can best assist. It is based on a review of available documents and results from focus groups and interviews.

Practitioner focus groups were organized by the collaboratives and were held virtually through the winter of the 2020–2021 school year. They included a total of 56 teachers and administrators from seven collaboratives and 29 high schools across the state and were intended to identify general lessons learned and best practice. Guiding questions referenced:

- Adjustments, best practices, and lessons learned as a result of COVID-19 disruptions;
- Equitable access to pathway information, opportunity, and support;
- Best practices and lessons learned with respect to career activities and experiences; and
- Dual credit successes and challenges.

Sixteen interviews were conducted virtually in the winter and spring of the 2020–2021 school year. Initial interviewees were chosen based on practices identified in focus group conversations and were intended to document select promising practices in greater detail. Additional interviews were held for clarification and updating purposes.

A virtual student roundtable was held in the spring of 2021 to capture student experiences and insights with regard to education pathways. Guiding questions referenced:

- Reasons for participating in the education pathway;
- Perceptions of the education pathway;
- Learning highlights;
- Likelihood of entering a career in education; and
- What instructors and fellow students should know about the education pathway experience.

A more robust inquiry into student experiences and insights will take place in the 2021–2022 school year with the assistance of researchers from Northern Illinois University's College of Education.

# Student Voices

A virtual student roundtable was held with a small number of education pathway students in the spring of 2021. In general, all student participants were pleased with their education pathway experiences, though many mentioned frustrations with the disruptions caused by the pandemic. All said they plan to pursue a career in education, and all would recommend the education pathway to other students. As one participant said, “I would tell them that it is a great experience and it is really fun. It is a great way to see if being a teacher is right for you.” To more fully center equity and student voice in SEPI, EdSystems will partner with Northern Illinois University’s College of Education in the 2021–2022 school year to undertake a robust inquiry into which and why students enter an education pathway and what supports are most effective.

*“I kind of feel like we are getting a little bit of a head start compared to other people going into teaching in college, because we already know some of the stuff and we already know beforehand that yes, this is something I want to do.”*

– Education Pathway Student

## Recruitment

All the student roundtable participants mentioned prior experiences with teaching or childcare in response to a question about what drew them to an education pathway. One said, “My mom is a teacher, so I’ve been around it my whole life. Around my freshman year, I really decided that an elementary teacher was the path for me.” Another said, “I have always loved kids, baby-sitting, and helping people so I thought I should explore education.” Students said they learned about their schools’ pathways programs through other students, course listings, the school website, and career fairs.

## Career Experiences

In response to a question about the most interesting education pathway experience, all student participants described events in physical or virtual observation or internship classrooms. One student mentioned seeing the variability in how different grades function. Another mentioned how little teacher diversity she saw. “In the club I am in at my school called Educators Rising, we got to go to schools in our district and help teach classes for a

day and seeing the diversity in all the students was great but the fact that there was little to no diversity in the teachers was very interesting to me.” Another student said that it was “interesting to see how each teacher does remote learning differently.”

In response to a question regarding what they wish they could learn more about or have more experience with, several students noted that they would prefer to be in the classroom for more of the day to understand better what teachers do. One student said, “I wish I could be in the classroom for longer periods of time because for most of the classes I have been with, they have had music, art, or a study hall going on while I am in there.” Another said, “I wish I could stay throughout the entire day and learn more about what a teacher does throughout the day...I kind of wish that I would get more of a teacher’s point of view, I guess, like seeing lesson planning from them and the meetings and stuff that students really don’t see sometimes.”

The importance of building relationships with younger students was a common theme. One student said it was surprising that “if you take the time to just to talk to a student and be in relationship how it can help a student.” When asked about what they wish teachers knew about their education pathway experiences, one student noted, “How it sometimes can be hard jumping from class to class, because once you build relationships with the students, you have to switch classrooms.” Another said, “It’s kind of seemed like once I start to get to know the kids more it’s already time to move, though I’m glad that we do get [to visit several classrooms] because it’s a nice way to see what grade level you like the best.”

Regarding what the education pathway experience provides, students said they appreciated the ability to investigate education as a career before enrolling in college. One said, “I kind of feel like we are getting a little bit of a head start compared to other people going into teaching in college, because we already know some of the stuff and we already know beforehand that yes, this is something I want to do.” Another said, “I think it definitely shows you all of the work that goes into being a teacher, so even if you’re just a little bit interested this class can really make or break. It’s shown me what I’m going to have to do. If you’re not really sure if you want to do that, then this class can be instead of wasting money in college.”

# Collaborative: Chicago Public Schools

The education pathway in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is through the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Teaching Academy which is in place in six high schools.<sup>1</sup> In school year 2019–2020, CPS changed the Teaching Academy focus from childcare to teaching and training. It hopes to encourage all its students, including those interested in early childhood, to get a 4-year degree and a Professional Educator License. CPS plans to pursue a CCPE in Education in the coming years.

## Recruitment

To enter the education pathway, interested students apply to their preferred high school through a [common application](#) in 8th grade. Each school has its own process for assigning Teaching Academy seats once students are admitted, and generally students must stay in the Teaching Academy through high school. Once Teaching Academy seats are assigned new students are not commonly accepted, though if there is attrition schools can recruit internally to fill the seats. Some focus group participants from schools with CTE education pathways noted that it would be helpful if students could join the pathway in high school rather than through the 8th grade application process. They believe more students are interested than are being served and it would help the program to allow access to the pathway in high school. “I feel like we always have someone coming to us who wants to join and we don’t have the flexibility to let them join because in eighth grade they kind of get set on their career path.”

“More students should have the opportunity to be in the program. Many students at our school want to join but cannot because it is decided in 8th grade.”

– CPS Educator

## Dual Credit

The components of the pathway vary at each school, though all schools offer dual credit courses in partnership with National Louis University, and all dual credit courses are taught in building by CPS Teaching Academy teachers. Some teacher focus group participants noted that the paperwork and “adult interaction side” of dual credit is not working as well as it should. They mentioned

that students who complete applications don’t always appear on rosters, some students who have graduated and shouldn’t appear on rosters do, and college contacts don’t always respond to emails. Participants also noted that the resources the partner university provides are not as robust as they could be, and it is difficult to plan because the courses that are offered vary from year to year.

“Every year we’re trying to figure out what’s going to be taught, who’s going to teach it, who’s going to take this class, who’s going to do what. And even when we’re recruiting our kids and trying to get them to be in our pathway, it’s hard to say we’re offering college credit when we can’t really consistently say what it’s going to be and how the program works, because it changes all the time.”

– CPS Educator

## Career Experiences

The Office of Early College and Career Education (ECCE) coordinates several aspects of the education pathway for schools with CTE education programs including job shadow opportunities, summer internships, and a capstone experience. Teachers help determine which students are best suited for the job shadows and summer internships.

- **Job shadows** usually happen twice per year. Students are paired with educators from across the system, including Janice Jackson, the current CPS CEO, and other high-level central office and school-level staff. Focus group participants noted that it is a “win-win” because job shadow students can experience executive-level meetings, school visits, and press conferences, and Central Office can get pictures and footage for promotional material.
- **The summer internship program** in the education pathway includes, for example, placements with the park district or in a childcare center. Focus group participants expressed appreciation that Central Office was able to overcome COVID-19 restrictions in Summer 2020 by transitioning the internship to a virtual experience. Some focus group participants suggested that it would

<sup>1</sup> The Teaching Academy is in place at six high schools: Curie Metropolitan High School, Farragut Career Academy, Lindblom Math and Science Academy, Simeon Career Academy, Theodore Roosevelt High School, and Uplift Community High School. In previous years Simpson Academy also participated in the pathway, though this year it did not.



be helpful if students could access similar opportunities—at feeder elementary schools or the park district—after school during the school year. “While some students are busy with after school activities or jobs, there are others who are ready and anxious to work and could benefit from experiences related to their pathway.”

- **The capstone** component of the pathway, a city-wide team-based challenge, was not offered in school years 2020 or 2021 because of disruptions caused by COVID-19. One previous capstone challenge was designing a lesson for students to make a toy from recycled materials. Students gathered to display their products and judges graded them. Moving forward

CPS plans to modify the capstone to include an electronic portfolio of student work.

Focus group participants offered several suggestions for improving the pathway including more inter-school opportunities for students to interact and experience other schools’ programs, a cohort model to help with retention, a college fair to learn about professional education programs around the state, multiple opportunities for students to enter the pathway during high school, and the opportunity for pathway students to attend professional education conferences.

## Curie Metropolitan High School

CPS Central Office handles student enrollment at Curie High School. All students are welcome to attend open houses to learn about the various options at Curie and all can apply for seats in a specific CTE program. Once students are accepted into the CTE education pathway it is not easy to change to a different pathway. In school year 2021 there were approximately 60 sophomores, 50 juniors, and 45 seniors in the program. Each cohort begins with 60 students (30 students with each of two teachers) and because of attrition decreases over time, though attrition was higher than normal in school year 2021 because of the disruptions caused by COVID-19. Since the program builds on learning that begins sophomore year, new students generally are not accepted into existing cohorts.

### Pathway Essentials

An early childhood education program has been in place at Curie for nearly 30 years. It started as a childcare pathway and expanded into the CTE Teaching Academy around 2012. In school year 2021 Curie ended its childcare program; all education pathway students now are in the Teaching Academy which is aimed at a professional educator credential. Curie's career exploration starts sophomore year with a child development course that includes guest speakers. Juniors chose either an Early Childhood path or a Teaching as a Profession path. Career exploration continues in Junior and Senior years through a partnership with Junior Achievement called [High School Heroes](#) which sends students to an elementary school for the day twice per year (in the fall and the spring) where they teach a lesson. Junior Achievement organizes the school visits and provides the resources students need to teach. Since the remainder of Curie's career development happens at the on-sight preschool, this experience allows students exposure to other schools and experience with additional grades. Career exploration activities also include a job shadow supported and arranged by Central Office. In recent years a Curie student has been invited to job shadow Janice Jackson, the CEO of the district. The event is a highlight for students and afterward teachers invite them to share their experiences with other students in the education pathway.

*“For the last two or three years Curie had a student shadow [CEO] Janice Jackson for a day and that's always been a really incredible experience and something any district could replicate if the upper people are willing to do that. It's just really cool. The kids get*

*dressed up and get on the train. It's a big deal for them. I think it's very special.”*

*– Curie Administrator*

### Career Development

In normal years, juniors and seniors at Curie engage in career development by teaching one day per week, from October through May, at an on-sight preschool. There have been several attempts over the years to partner with elementary schools as well, though no partnerships have been sustained through various administration changes. While the on-sight preschool provides students with exposure only to early childhood, Curie finds that it provides the best benefit for its students because it is consistent and Curie teachers can design the learning experiences. Students in the junior year plan and execute lessons in creative music, art, and story time. They also handle preschool graduation. Seniors take on literacy, math, science, and computer learning stations along with all the logistics for planning field trips to places like local museums—everything from securing chaperones to collecting permission forms. Both juniors and seniors are involved in setting up the preschool for the year, bringing in parents for meet-and-greets, and establishing the classroom rules and norms. They have many opportunities for communication with preschoolers' parents including meeting the parents at pickup and sharing how the day went, which provides experience in learning to build relationships.

### COVID-19 Adjustments

This year, because students couldn't be in person at the preschool, they put together at-home learning kits with supplies such as finger paint and flashcards. They also created both synchronous and asynchronous virtual lessons. Teachers found that the asynchronous video lessons, which included things like the alphabet song and creating snowflakes from paper plates, were engaging for students to create and were useful assignments for observations and feedback. Teachers expect to continue offering work-based experiences that include both in-person and virtual components and might offer asynchronous video lessons to parents for extended at-home learning.

Other career development experiences for Curie students include the summer internship program, coordinated by Central Office. Rising seniors who are determined by their teachers to be “work-ready” can be placed in schools or childcare centers. Teachers say it has been helpful for many Curie students. It provides connections and networking



opportunities for students, and students share their experiences with their cohorts when they return to school in the fall. This year students will get a virtual visit from an educator from the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum's [Science on the Go](#) program who will teach a kindergarten science lesson from the perspective of a teacher, and then the students will take a virtual field trip to the museum.

### Dual Credit

For dual credit, Curie juniors take the year-long high school course Teaching as a Profession I, which is equivalent to two single-semester courses with NLU—one semester each of History and Philosophy of Education and Ethics. Training for

two certifications, CPR and First Aid and Early Childhood Education Gateways Level I, is embedded in the Teaching as a Profession I course. These certifications are important as students prepare to take on more responsibility at the preschool. Seniors take Teaching as a Profession II which is equivalent to one semester of Educational Psychology with NLU. Curie is in the process of finding an additional senior dual credit semester course. One of the difficulties they are encountering is finding a teacher with an appropriate credential to teach the additional course since all the potential courses require a master's degree in something other than education.

## Lindblom Math & Science Academy High School

The Lindblom education pathway is a part of CPS's CTE Teaching Academy program but it is different from the pathway at other schools in that it does not involve a set sequence of experiences and courses. Instead, it consists of the Lindblom Teacher Apprenticeship program (LTA) and one dual credit course, Introduction to Secondary Education, both of which students can access in any order as juniors or seniors.

### Pathway Essentials

The LTA program began eight years ago as a course called Honors Peer Mentorship in which junior and senior students are placed with a mentor teacher in the building for a year; similar to student teaching. LTA students engage with their mentors in the teaching process and eventually plan and teach full lessons and sometimes full units. It was started as an effort to boost opportunities for student leadership and autonomy, but also as a response to the lack of diversity in the teaching profession. Students apply to the LTA program in the spring for fall placement and are selected based on several criteria including interviews. The pathway teacher analyzed SY 2019–2020 enrollment data which revealed that male and Latinx students were underrepresented. She shared her findings with her teacher colleagues and asked them to be mindful of who they encourage to apply and to recognize that underrepresented students may need additional encouragement. In one year, enrollment of Latinx students increased 3% and students who identify as male increased 7%.

Three years ago, Lindblom added the dual credit CTE class Introduction to Secondary Education through NLU to help students learn more about pedagogy and policy. It consists of one semester of Educational Psychology and one semester of Philosophy of Education, though the Lindblom curriculum is particularly focused on secondary education since most students in the course have had experiences in high schools through the LTA program. The education pathway program has grown from eight students when it began 8 years ago to a current enrollment of 147. Looking to Fall 2021, Lindblom expects enrollment to shrink to 120 due to COVID-19 disruptions, but they anticipate around 30 of those 120 will be students returning for a second year in the program.

### Recruitment

While students are encouraged to be a part of the LTA program before or concurrent with the Introduction to Secondary Education course so they can reflect on their experiences, it is not

## Virtual Alumni Panels

One practice Lindblom found to deal with the restrictions imposed by the pandemic that it will continue to implement is enlisting alumni as virtual speakers. Teacher Katie Hollerbach filmed three panels of Lindblom alumni who are in the education field. One panel focused on pursuing a degree in education and included students currently in college, one focused on life in the classroom and included teachers teaching in St. Louis, Indianapolis, and at CPS, and one focused on careers in education beyond teaching. Ms. Hollerbach says it was a meaningful experience for students who afterward often mentioned what they heard from specific alumni in connection with specific class topics. For Ms. Hollerbach it is a reminder of how important it is to connect students with multiple people who have a broad range of perspectives on pursuing a degree in education.

*“Having such a broad range of experiences shared with them, I think, got a lot more of them to just think about the profession in a different way. It was SO impactful for them to hear such wide perspectives on the profession, in particular from alumni who share their identities and the experience of Lindblom.”*

– Katie Hollerbach, Lindblom Teacher

Since Ms. Hollerbach recorded the panels, she was able to share them with students who couldn't attend class and she plans to use them with future classes as well.

required. Rather than mandating that education pathway students enroll in specific courses before engaging in the teaching practice, Lindblom finds that the LTA experience itself drives students to want to learn more about teaching, which leads them to choose to enroll in the education dual credit course on their own. “The students continually say the most meaningful thing we do is to plan and teach lessons to each other. The act of actually having to teach always has the biggest impact on their understanding of what teaching is actually like!” In a recent Lindblom survey of LTA students, 94% said it increased their understanding of teaching and learning, and 33% agreed or strongly agreed that the experience increased their interest in the teaching profession.

## Simeon Career Academy

Students at Simeon indicate their interest in a CTE pathway in January of freshman year. They complete a survey specifying their preferences and are placed into a pathway based on a combination of interest, grade point average, and a lottery. Once students are in a pathway they usually stay in it since the courses and experiences build on each other. In SY 2020–2021, the education pathway had 21 sophomores, 28 juniors, and 22 seniors. Typically, there are about 75 total students each year.

## Pathway Essentials

The pathway at Simeon historically prepared students for jobs in childcare but is in the process of transitioning to focus on preparation for a 4-year degree and Professional Educators License, including more exposure to teaching English learners, more exposure to teaching literacy, and an expansion from working exclusively with preschool children to include Kindergarten, first grade, and a Simeon special education cluster program. In the coming years Simeon hopes to include student experiences with second graders and would like to offer a camp for elementary students over the summer. Simeon also hopes to engage education pathway students with Freshman Connection, a program to help incoming freshmen adjust to high school.

The pathway starts sophomore year with a single-period, year-long introduction course which covers basic child development, diverse family structures, pregnancy and childbirth, and infant to toddler development. Juniors take a double-period course where they train to earn an Early Childhood Educator Gateways Level 1 credential and observe and assist once or twice per quarter with the Head Start program at the elementary school across the street. Students coordinate Head Start activities such as fall and winter festivals, breakfast with Santa, and a celebration of Black history month. In normal years they also coordinate a field trip, a Trike-a-Thon to raise money for St. Jude's, and preschool graduation, though those events were not possible during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Dual Credit

Dual credit for juniors starts in the second semester with Educational Psychology and Ethics in cooperation with NLU. Seniors participate in internships at Westcott Elementary and a special education cluster program with both higher- and

## Engaging African-American Males

One of the benefits of teachers having relationships across schools is the opportunities they can create. Joy Dickson, a pathway teacher at Simeon, connected with a colleague at Lindblom who put her in touch with a former African-American education pathway student now enrolled at Loyola University. He visited Ms. Dickson's education class at Simeon and spent the whole day talking with students at every level about his university experience. Ms. Dickson says her students asked great questions and he was able to get them to turn on their cameras and really engage. It was an opportunity for students to hear from an African-American male teacher candidate, and the student reported to his former teacher that he really enjoyed the experience as well.

*"And the kids loved him. He got really comfortable and kind of forgot that he was there in a professional manner. He was so funny but they loved it. They loved it and those opportunities are really great. Thank you, thank you."*

– Joy Dickson, Simeon Teaching Pathway Teacher

lower-functioning students. Senior dual credit is a Philosophy of Education course. It is unclear if or how much of this sequence will change next year when Simeon begins its participation in the [Teach Chicago Tomorrow](#)<sup>2</sup> program with City Colleges of Chicago and Illinois State University.

## Simeon Distinction

All CTE students at Simeon wear uniforms reflecting their profession on Wednesdays. For education pathway students this means a polo short, khaki bottoms, and closed-toed shoes. The practice is intended to help students understand how to dress in preparation for the teaching profession.

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<sup>2</sup> Teach Chicago Tomorrow is a CPS strategy to bring additional talented and diverse teachers to classrooms by investing in its own high school graduates who are interested in teaching. Through intentional career pathway design, targeted outreach and counselor engagement, and academic and financial support, Teach Chicago Tomorrow hopes to ensure that more young Chicagoans who aspire to a teaching career will achieve their goal.





### **Theodore Roosevelt High School: A Principal Teaches**

This was to be the first year Roosevelt High School was to transition its exclusively early childhood program to a teacher academy model. Without anyone to teach the sophomores, Principal Dan Kramer stepped in. What he found was that he really enjoyed connecting with the students and the experience gave him great insight into what it's like for the teachers at his school to teach remotely.

*“This was to be our kickoff year, and we considered holding off due to threats to programming with different school opening models being discussed. In the end, I have personally stepped in to teach the class remotely, and I am having a delightful time.”*

*– Dan Kramer, Roosevelt Principal*

With the shift away from an exclusive focus on early childhood, he is hoping the program will attract more male students.

### **Uplift Community High School: Focus on Men of Color**

At Uplift Community High School, they have been very intentional about trying to contribute to the diversity of the teaching pipeline. The school

works with Truman College through an initiative called Men Of Color in Education which, among other benefits, allows students of color pursuing careers in the education field to work with mentor men of color in education across Chicago who provide guidance and lessons in career readiness. The Uplift principal also serves as a mentor.

*“Because a lot of our African American and Hispanic students don't see people that look like them in the field, that's very discouraging. Or they've never had a Black or Hispanic teacher. Ever. So connecting them with that group of people so they get mentorship from successful Black and Hispanic men who have been successful in the field is really important. We've gotten kids in the CTE pathway over the last couple of years that have gone on to pursue early childhood education as a career choice. I don't think they would have gone on if they didn't feel like that support was there, within the educational community, for people like them.”*

*– Tyrese Graham, Uplift Principal*

# Collaborative: Making Opportunities Real for Everyone (MORE) in the Mississippi and Rock River Regions

The Making Opportunities Real for Everyone (MORE) Collaborative in the Mississippi and Rock River Regions is a partnership between the Lee Ogle Whiteside Regional Office of Education and Sauk Valley Community College (SVCC) to facilitate the implementation of college and career pathway endorsements in area high schools.<sup>3</sup> In 2021 the SEPI collaborative was awarded a grant from the State to support education pathway development in additional locations. As a response to the work being done by the MORE partnership, SVCC will award every student with an endorsement entering the College a \$100 credit.

## Pathway Essentials

The MORE education pathway varies among partner schools. In Fall 2022, most schools will administer a career exploration survey in 8th grade and some schools may offer a middle school career exploration course. Some schools begin with a required career exploration course in 9th grade and others offer one in 10th grade. Dual credit begins for all schools in 11th grade, and MORE is in the process of reworking its offerings. At present students take either Speech or Introduction to Psychology as juniors and Technology for the Educator as seniors. By Spring 2022 they plan to encourage the sequence of an updated Preparing for Careers in Education course with observation hours, a new hybrid observation course, and an updated Clinical Experience in Elementary Education course which will include tutoring and classroom assistance experience for a total of four transferrable credits. These adjustments will allow observations and classroom experiences to be embedded in courses that will transfer to SVCC and WIU and will make it easier for districts to find qualified dual credit instructors.

## MORE Recruitment and Resources

The collaborative has created a [website](#) which includes requirements for the pathway endorsement, SVCC dual credit options, and other pathway resources. It also produced a [Pathway Implementation Handbook](#) which outlines steps for constructing, implementing, and evaluating an education pathway. The Handbook contains

possibilities for career exploration activities, rubrics, and assessment tools which may be useful for institutions implementing the pathway across the state. MORE developed [a list of diversity-focused team-based challenge examples](#) for use in coursework throughout high school, from art to science to P.E. In February the collaborative held a regional [College and Career Readiness Summit](#) entitled [Exploring Pathway Endorsements](#) with a keynote address focused on understanding the “why” of endorsements and breakout sessions featuring insights into the components of a pathway including career exploration and team-based challenges. A longitudinal data system dashboard for partners is [in development](#), as are teacher training videos which captured from [virtual sessions in summer 2021](#) to sustain the program when external funding expires. MORE anticipates 4 students will earn an endorsement in 2021 and hopes to grow the program to 12 students who earn the endorsement in SY 2023. Several focus group participants mentioned that it would be easier to recruit students into the pathway if additional postsecondary partners would provide scholarships and other currency opportunities to students with an education pathway endorsement. They believe the currency would provide a strong recruitment tool, especially for low-income families.

*“We’ve left building currency to the back burner. Some districts are guaranteeing interviews but with a shortage that doesn’t matter. Golden Apple is great but we need to continue to make it worth the investment for students who are super involved. We need to have conversations with 4-year institutions about adding currency.”*

– Community College Administrator

## Work-Based Learning

Since schools in this area can be distant from each other, transportation to observation sites can be a barrier. To support work-based learning opportunities for students without access to transportation, one school takes care to place

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<sup>3</sup> Original high schools were Fulton, Rock Falls, and Morrison. Northern Illinois University and Western Illinois University also were partners. Locations added in 2021 were Riverbend District 2, Morrison District 6, Dixon Public Schools 170, Rock Falls High School 301 and feeding districts, Amboy District 272, Ashton-Franklin Center District 275, Forrestville Valley CUSD 221, Center for Change, and Prophetstown-Lyndon-Tampico 3.

## Introduction to Education Careers

In her [Introduction to Education Careers](#) course, teacher Jennifer Stevenson capitalized on the virtual opportunities presented by the pandemic disruption by creating asynchronous video lessons for the education concepts her students were learning, which allowed them time to visit classrooms during their class period and put the learning into practice. You can [watch her lesson on assessment](#) and [view the corresponding assignment](#), in which students are asked to create their own assessment. She tries to keep the videos under 15 minutes and often includes slides in the presentations. To ensure good classroom experiences, she asks both students and placement teachers to [sign agreements](#) that outline their responsibilities. She also asks students to [complete a self-assessment](#) about their knowledge of teaching, based on the Danielson framework, three times per year and uses the results to guide the curriculum. For a team-based challenge, three students from Ms. Stevenson's class [presented at a regional college and career readiness summit](#) on the effects of remote learning on students, teachers, and families.

**“Rather than being able to meet with my students in person, for multiple reasons, I’ve been creating video lessons for the education concepts that they are learning throughout the class. I like this idea and will probably keep it in the future.”**

– Jennifer Stevenson, Teacher

students at the same school as other students with transportation so they can rideshare. Other schools place students in an onsite preschool at the career center so they can use the transportation provided by the district. Several teachers mentioned that it would be beneficial for students to visit schools in neighboring districts. “It would be a great addition to the program to allow students to travel to other districts to go into classrooms.” An additional barrier focus group participants mentioned is that very involved students can be overextended and have difficulty finding time for pathway activities outside of coursework. The revised dual credit offerings MORE plans for Spring 2022 with observations and classroom experiences built into courses will resolve this barrier.

## Dual Credit

Dual credit is challenging for this collaborative since there are not enough students in one school to fill a course. One focus group participant noted, “The strict guidelines for dual credit present limitations for students when schools are unable to offer the courses.” One administrator questioned the PWR Act requirement that six hours of early college credit must be in a career-focused course sequence, as opposed to allowing early college credit in any subject. However, the pandemic-related shift to online instruction provided an opportunity for students from multiple schools to attend the same course, and MORE schools are investigating the possibility of implementing online career-focused courses moving forward. Another dual credit barrier for low-income students in this region can be the expense of taking courses at the community college. In response, one district engaged a local service organization to offset costs. As MORE transitions to its new dual credit offerings with embedded clinical hours and courses that will make it easier for districts to find qualified instructors, these barriers will be addressed for most schools.

## COVID-19 Adjustments

The collaborative found ways to adjust to the COVID-19 pandemic disruption including publicizing the pathway via social media as opposed to using pamphlets or holding career fairs, holding virtual meetings and trainings, and moving resources online. They found virtual platforms allowed them to save travel time and they plan to continue using them when possible since there is significant distance between schools. One school also engaged potential education pathway students for tutoring as part of a team-based challenge.

While establishing quality education pathways in the area has not been easy, many educators are dedicated to making it work.

**“You need to be patient and persistent. Getting multiple organizations on the same page is tiring. Some are with you and some aren’t. Go with low-hanging fruit and go with who’s with you and hope the others see the momentum and value.”**

– District Administrator

# Collaborative: Springfield Public Schools District 186

The Springfield District 186 collaborative<sup>4</sup> began constructing its pathway in early spring of 2020 and accepted its first students in the 2020–2021 school year. Ten juniors entered the pathway and Springfield expects that all ten will continue next year as seniors along with ten additional juniors. District 186 hopes to continue to grow the program in the coming years.

## Pathway Essentials

The education pathway begins with dual credit in 11th grade, though the district offers an Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) course as an elective to all high schoolers which includes elements of career exploration. Juniors and seniors have the opportunity for career development experiences in courses which have been in place for several years including the TEACH course (Teaching Environment Awareness through Children) at Southeast High School, Introduction to Teaching at Lanphier High School, and Senators Teaching Senators at Springfield High School. At Lanphier High School students also have the opportunity to enroll in a service-learning course which includes the option of performing community service in a classroom. In School Year 2021, several students chose to tutor. Team-based challenges will be built into the pathway in the coming years.

*“Our kids that are in the SEPI program get that opportunity to shadow teachers and it gives them an outlook on what we do for a living and how hard this work can be. And they’re seeing our goal is to recruit them back to District 186 so hopefully they’re really getting to see a different lens, not looking at this as a student anymore, but looking through a teacher lens or future teacher lens.”*

– District 186 Administrator

## Recruitment

All students are given career surveys and postsecondary coaches help to identify students who might be interested in the education pathway. In the 2021 school year, the first year of the education

pathway, district administrators held meetings with potential students to select the cohort.

## Dual Credit

In partnership with Lincoln Land Community College (LLCC), District 186 offers dual credit courses beginning in the junior year. Students can earn up to 25 early college credits<sup>5</sup> as part of a two-plus-two partnership with the University of Illinois at Springfield. Two of the courses, Introduction to Teacher Education and Diversity of Schools and Society, involve observation and field experiences. Courses take place at LLCC and two are offered at 7 a.m. on the college campus, which makes transportation to the College and back to the high school a challenge. However, this year courses were online and the college may continue offering some courses virtually.

*“We have learned that teens often have a strong desire to pursue a career that ‘gets them out’ of where they are; often there is little consideration regarding ‘fit’ of a career vs. the getting out of town.”*

– Administrator

Teacher focus group participants mentioned that the dual credit courses in the pathway do not allow time in a student’s schedule for additional electives. One participant mentioned that scheduling dual credit is difficult during the school day because there often are only one or two students interested in a particular course. Teacher participants said they believe that the dual credit courses help students determine if they want to go into education, though the pathway is not as popular or showing as much student success as hoped. One participant said, “I think we have to see what we have set up our kids for in reality vs. what we believe we did. They do provide opportunities for students to earn credit which is HUGE for them. If nothing else, providing an opportunity to all to graduate college a semester early is beneficial.”

In the first focus group, several participants noted that there may be a need for a study skills course

<sup>4</sup> The Springfield District 186 collaborative comprises three high schools: Springfield High School, Lanphier High School, and Springfield Southeast High School, along with Lincoln Land Community College (LLCC).

<sup>5</sup> LLCC is offering seven courses (25 credit hours) for juniors and seniors: Introduction to Teacher Education, College Success Skills, Introduction to Psychology, Diversity of Schools & Society, Instructional Technology, Adolescent Psychology, Human Development, and Students with Disabilities.



before or in conjunction with the dual credit courses to help with equity for first-time college bound students to close “the opportunity knowledge gap.” However, one participant suggested that requiring students to take a non-credit-bearing course before they’re able to take a credit-bearing one might deter some students. He proposed offering a study skills course over the summer instead. Another participant proposed offering a study skills course in partnership with a dual credit course so students could apply the study skills they’re learning to the dual credit curriculum. In response, the district worked with LLCC to include College Success Skills as a requirement.

The district is using SEPI grant funds to pay students’ dual credit tuition and book fees, and administrators noted that the assistance has been key to getting students and parents engaged in the program.

### **COVID-19 Innovation**

One lesson learned by the District 186 collaborative involves building a stronger partnership with families. Since the COVID-19 pandemic disruption forced meetings with students and parents online, meetings regarding transitioning to college could involve all the key players including high school administrators, high school counselors, the community college human resource department, and the community college support person. “All the key players were at the table just trying to make sure that the student had every opportunity to find success.” The district intends to continue using a similar model moving forward. “It’s like an individualized plan. Something really good came out of that and it’s a model that I think could be utilized here on out.”

# Collaborative: College of DuPage / Indian Prairie School District 204

The College of DuPage / Indian Prairie School District 204 collaborative specifically focuses on promoting a Technology and Engineering Education (TEE) pathway and is guided by the College of DuPage (COD).<sup>6</sup> By Fall 2021 formal agreements will be in place so pathway students can earn a TEE degree with three years at COD and one at Valley City State University (VCSU). VCSU courses are online and student teaching is completed near a student's residence. Total cost for the 4-year VCSU degree is projected at less than \$25,000 which will make it an attractive option for students with residential or financial constraints. In school year 2021, the collaborative was awarded over \$50,000 in Perkins funding which enabled it to hire a program assistant to work specifically with the TEE pathway, building relationships and recruiting students. District 204 is on track to apply for the CCPE in Education in 2021.

Using what it has learned through the process of establishing the TEE pathway, the College of DuPage is hoping to build additional discipline-specific pathways including one for dual language education. COD finds that its position in between high schools and 4-year institutions, and its experience and established relationships navigating articulation agreements, makes the process of developing a pathway easier than it might be if it were driven from a high school.

## Recruitment and Outreach

All students in the College of DuPage / Indian Prairie School District 204 collaborative are able to enter the pathway and there are no prerequisites. The collaborative provides shirts and laptop stickers to current TEE teachers to help promote the profession. Without students in the building due to the COVID-19 pandemic disruption, faculty found recruitment into the pathway more difficult without students in the building. In previous years teachers were able to pull students aside or catch them in the hallway to suggest they consider the TEE pathway, and students already in the pathway would talk with their peers about their experiences. Because of the COVID-19 disruption there were fewer of these kinds of opportunities. As one teacher said when asked about

recruitment lessons learned, "Individual invitations work best." Moving forward the collaborative hopes to better target career guidance to connect students with opportunities related to their passions.

*"Just because it is available to all, doesn't mean that it is equitable."*

– Pathway Teacher

The College of DuPage developed a [presentation](#) for students explaining the pathway and [another](#) for outreach to educators encouraging participation in pathway professional development, advisory boards, and school and community organization networking. It continues to refine its outreach materials since the feedback from educators is that some students don't recognize or understand how dual credit courses can lead to a four-year degree. COD wants to make navigating the pathway from beginning through degree completion—including everything from choosing courses to applying for scholarships—as clear, easy, and seamless as possible, especially for first-generation college bound students who often are overwhelmed. As one participant noted, "Just because it is available to all, doesn't mean that it is equitable."

## Dual Credit

All high schools in the collaborative offer the same dual credit education classes, [Introduction to Education I](#) and [Education II](#), each a semester and with 15 and 40 hours of field experience, respectively. Dual credit is taught in high schools with high school instructors. COD also offers several dual credit technology and engineering classes including Architectural Drafting and Electronics Technology.

## Career Development Experiences

Career exploration and development are different at each high school in the collaborative. Neuqua Valley offers a two-credit [internship opportunity](#) in partnership with many local businesses and schools which combines an individualized,

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<sup>6</sup> Along with COD, there are four Indian Prairie High School District 204 high schools in the collaborative—Neuqua Valley, Waubonsie Valley, Metea Valley, and Indian Plains—and 4-year partners Illinois State University (ISU) and the online Valley City State University (VCSU). Naperville Community Unit District 203 joined the collaborative more recently, and the professional organizations Technology Education Association of Illinois and Illinois Association for Career and Technical Education serve as advising partners in the work.



tailored work experience along with classroom instruction. Students normally must provide their own transportation though in School Year 2021, due to COVID-19 restrictions, internships were virtual. While teachers say the virtual experience was not perfect, they did find that students appreciated being able to meet in one-on-one in breakout rooms and one class was able to host a former student, now a teacher living in California, as a guest speaker. Teachers plan to continue hosting guest alumni virtually after pandemic restrictions are eased.

### **Collaborative Contributions**

The Collaborative sends students and faculty to the Illinois Technology Education Conference at ISU and finds it advantageous for them to be exposed to curriculum from other schools and to see the ISU classroom and laboratory spaces. It also has been able to pay the fees for students to participate in team-based challenges through the Illinois Drafting Educators Association design competitions and SkillsUSA. In Spring 2021 it offered professional development sessions for any COD, ISU, VCSU, or high school faculty or student over 18 interested in learning more about [Technology and Engineering Education](#) and also held a Teach TEE Day. Next year the collaborative will put a Teacher Mentor Network in place which will offer a \$1,000 yearly stipend for mentors.

## **Discipline-Specific Pathways**

Several focus group participants mentioned that they would like to find a way to create and coordinate additional discipline-specific education pathways for students with an interest in a particular area. For example, it would be helpful to be able to leverage the math expertise of the math department with the instructional expertise of the business education teacher for a student interested in becoming a math teacher; to “combine forces” to create individualized learning experiences.

At present they find that course codes, scheduling constraints, and departmentalization keep teachers siloed and less able to target both areas at the same time. Participants think discipline-specific pathways also could assist with recruitment into the teaching profession since students with a passion in a specific discipline consider a career teaching in that field. Currently, if students who are passionate about, for example, art, have space in their schedules for an elective, it’s likely they will choose an art class rather a course exploring teaching.

“We know that kids want to be teachers, but we also know that they have a passion for subject matter. We need to allow them to explore those passions, but at the same time give them experiences from a teaching lens so we can get them into that pipeline.”

– Indian Prairie School District Administrator

# Collaborative: District 214

District 214's Education Pathway has three distinct strands: early childhood, primary, and secondary. It has had an education program for many years but recently transitioned from a focus on child growth and development to a focus on instructional practice. The education pathway has on-ramps and off-ramps, allowing students to enter the pathway at any point in high school and to change their career path if they determine that education is not for them. District 214 partners with National Louis University (NLU) and in school year 2022 will also partner with Eastern Illinois University (EIU). The district estimates 200 students will complete an education pathway by school year 2021–2022. Students who complete an education pathway and continue to study teaching at NLU or EIU are guaranteed a student teaching position at a high school in the district or at one of the district's partner schools. After college, graduates are guaranteed a job interview if the district has an opening in their area.

## Pathway Essentials

All pathways begin with a semester each of Foundations of Learning and Development and Introduction to Teaching Methods. The early childhood pathway continues with Practicums in Early Childhood Education and progresses to dual credit College Introduction to Early Childhood Education. To facilitate work-based learning, five district high schools offer morning and afternoon preschool programs where students complete weekly observations and prepare and teach lessons.

The primary and secondary pathways continue with dual credit College Introduction to Education and the Teacher Internship Program, a work-based learning option open to juniors and seniors which provides students the opportunity to perform a variety of tasks representative of the daily activities of a teacher. Interns work with a certified teacher at their high school or at a local elementary or middle school and provide support including assistance with attendance, help creating lesson plans, and one-on-one support for struggling students. Students are expected to provide their own transportation to off-campus locations, though the district assists if necessary. Beginning in school year 2022, the district will offer a dual credit course with EIU which has a 20-hour observation component that can be completed in the building. The district made this change to allow more students to participate than currently are

able to engage in the Teacher Internship Program, with its travel times to and from partner schools.

## Recruitment and Equity

Students can learn about the education pathway through the district's [2021–2022 Academic Programs and Pathways Guidebook](#) which is organized using Career Clusters and the framework of the Illinois College and Career Pathway Endorsements. It combines, and takes the place of, the district's previous Academic Handbook and Career Pathways Booklet and puts pathways at the forefront. The guidebook includes career-related electives and activities, curricular and dual credit options, 4-year university admission requirements, and certifications and potential future careers. Each pathway also spotlights a recent District 214 graduate who successfully participated in and completed that pathway.

The district continues to pursue recruiting a more diverse student population into the pathway. Teachers and administrators make an effort to have one-on-one conversations with students who might not naturally navigate to education and work to make sure students see themselves in the curriculum once they get there. The district has elevated the discussion of equity in education in the curriculum, focusing on it more than on the technical aspects of teaching, and they are working to better support students to consider non-teacher roles such as counselor and specialist. One English language teacher reaches out to her Heritage Spanish students to encourage them to consider EL/bilingual/dual language teaching and occupations such as school social work and school psychologist. She would like to find more ways to encourage Spanish speakers to pursue a career in education, including the possibility of promoting a combination College and Career Pathway Endorsement and Seal of Biliteracy for transcripts. An administrator noted that the district may need to revisit how students are recruited into the program, as student perspectives on education may have changed given their experiences during the COVID-19 shutdown and this may impact their desire to pursue a career in education.

To further promote recruitment and equity, the district has restructured its capstone Education Academy, which offers six hours of dual credit, to allow admission without an application process. Historically, to be eligible students must have taken



the prerequisite Human Growth and Development course, have a good attendance record, participate in an interview, and have their own transportation. Beginning in school year 2022, the program will no longer be selective. The district eliminated the selection process to encourage a diversity of participants in the pathway. Participants will be exposed to a variety of educational settings through work-based learning experiences and will complete two dual credit courses: College Educational Psychology through NLU and College Diversity in Education through EIU. While the district currently uses grant funding to pay dual credit fees for students who qualify for a waiver, and is able assist with transportation for students who need it, they recognize that these will become new expenses when external funding ends. In response, the district is fundraising to build a reserve to use in the future.

### D214 Insights

Focus group participants noted that it is important to have the right teachers teaching pathway classes; that teachers need to be comfortable not having all the answers when, for example, students return from visiting a Special Education classroom with questions about diverse learners that a non-Special Education teacher can't know. One pathway teacher would like to have teachers from different disciplines teach her pathway class in three- or four-week rotations so students could get a better understanding of what teaching is like in various areas. She noted that it would be a valuable experience for her as a teacher as well. An administrator noted that while they have been focused on teachers teaching classes in the pathway feeling ownership of it, the next iteration might be to get an entire building committed to the program.

*“If we’re looking at other areas, we’re leaning on the professionals in our manufacturing sector and our engineering sector and our culinary sector to give back to that next generation. And, you know, we walk down the hallway and all those professionals are right here. There’s an untapped goldmine of energy and opportunity in our own buildings.”*

*– High School Administrator*

## COVID-19-Driven Innovation

In school year 2021, teacher Timothy Kosiek wasn't able to connect with each of his student's cooperating teachers when he visited their classes as he had in the past, so this year he hosted Zoom meetings. He found that since the teachers were not in the midst of teaching, he had more opportunity to get to know them and to build a collective community. Through these connections he hopes to create partnerships not only with his students but with their cooperating teachers as well.

*“When I would show up to observe a student, that teacher was in the midst of classes and I didn't get an opportunity to get to know them. My vision is to not only partner with my students but partner with those teachers and to be a collective community. This year I hosted Zoom meetings with all the teachers and it was phenomenal.”*

*– Timothy Kosiek, Teacher*

He also asked his students to investigate different online computer applications so they might help, or even teach, their cooperating teachers. For example, he asked his students to create a stop motion video to learn how to use the technology. [Here is an example of what one student produced.](#) His hope is that these experiences taught his students that the way to really learn something and to be engaged is to have fun and be creative, and that they will remember this when they are teachers.



# Collaborative: Plainfield District 202

The Plainfield District 202 collaborative comprises four high schools,<sup>7</sup> the University of St. Francis in Joliet, and the Joliet area [YMCA Teen Achiever's Program](#). District 202 is a large, suburban district 40 miles southwest of Chicago with 29 pre-K to 12th grade schools. Each of the high schools has between 2000 and 2400 total students and between 10 and 20 students in the education pathway.

## Pathway Essentials

Plainfield has open enrollment for courses so any student can participate in the pathway, and the introductory course is available to sophomores, juniors, and seniors. [Course options](#) for pathway students include initial high school-level courses—one semester each of Child Development and Advanced Child Development—along with a selection of AP and dual credit opportunities and a capstone, dual credit, one semester course; Exploring the Teaching Profession with the University of St. Francis. The University of St. Francis provides a template for the course along with a variety of materials, assessment options, and resources for the high school instructors who teach it but allows each teacher to modify as necessary to meet the needs of current students. Pathway students learn about the teaching profession through activities such as interviewing teachers and building and district administrators, observing classrooms, creating and participating in interactive lessons, and engaging with real-life resources such as teacher contracts, salary schedules, and current curriculum.

## Recruitment

Plainfield recruits students into the education pathway through the engagement of two of its high schools with the YMCA Teen Achiever's Program, an after-school program that supports students academically, socially, and emotionally in high school and helps them prepare for the transition to college and careers. While the Teen Achiever's program isn't specifically for minority or low-income students, many of the students who participate are first time, first generation college bound and from diverse backgrounds. Plainfield also recruits by working with counselors and distributing promotional materials, including a [video](#), for students as they develop their course schedules for the following year. The video features students commenting on their experience in the capstone Exploring the Teaching Profession dual credit course.

Each Plainfield high school has a career week to expose students to different careers. Employers and professionals are available to speak to students during class. Schools also have Career Exploration Night when students can meet with teachers to discuss courses and career paths.

## Next Steps

Moving forward, Plainfield hopes to expand the Teen Achiever's program to all high schools, sponsor a future educators club, and continue to seek scholarship opportunities for students in the pathway. Plainfield also would like to add a second semester, follow up course to its capstone Exploring the Teaching Profession to help solidify the pathway. One key takeaway that several focus group members stressed is the importance of recruiting high-quality, invested cooperating teachers because "that partnership has a profound impact on students."

**"Be flexible and creative. Remind students that this is an amazing time to see how adaptable educational systems and educators can be to facilitate learning."**

– Associate Principal Dr. Phil Pakowski



<sup>7</sup> Plainfield Central, South, North, and East

Item	Quantity	Unit Price	Total
Item 1	10	\$1.50	\$15.00
Item 2	5	\$2.00	\$10.00
Item 3	2	\$3.00	\$6.00
Item 4	1	\$4.00	\$4.00
Item 5	3	\$1.00	\$3.00
Item 6	1	\$5.00	\$5.00
Item 7	2	\$2.50	\$5.00
Item 8	4	\$1.25	\$5.00
Item 9	1	\$6.00	\$6.00
Item 10	3	\$1.67	\$5.00
Item 11	1	\$7.00	\$7.00
Item 12	2	\$2.50	\$5.00
Item 13	1	\$8.00	\$8.00
Item 14	3	\$1.67	\$5.00
Item 15	1	\$9.00	\$9.00
Item 16	2	\$2.50	\$5.00
Item 17	1	\$10.00	\$10.00
Item 18	3	\$1.67	\$5.00
Item 19	1	\$11.00	\$11.00
Item 20	2	\$2.50	\$5.00
Item 21	1	\$12.00	\$12.00
Item 22	3	\$1.67	\$5.00
Item 23	1	\$13.00	\$13.00
Item 24	2	\$2.50	\$5.00
Item 25	1	\$14.00	\$14.00
Item 26	3	\$1.67	\$5.00
Item 27	1	\$15.00	\$15.00
Item 28	2	\$2.50	\$5.00
Item 29	1	\$16.00	\$16.00
Item 30	3	\$1.67	\$5.00
Item 31	1	\$17.00	\$17.00
Item 32	2	\$2.50	\$5.00
Item 33	1	\$18.00	\$18.00
Item 34	3	\$1.67	\$5.00
Item 35	1	\$19.00	\$19.00
Item 36	2	\$2.50	\$5.00
Item 37	1	\$20.00	\$20.00
Item 38	3	\$1.67	\$5.00
Item 39	1	\$21.00	\$21.00
Item 40	2	\$2.50	\$5.00
Item 41	1	\$22.00	\$22.00
Item 42	3	\$1.67	\$5.00
Item 43	1	\$23.00	\$23.00
Item 44	2	\$2.50	\$5.00
Item 45	1	\$24.00	\$24.00
Item 46	3	\$1.67	\$5.00
Item 47	1	\$25.00	\$25.00
Item 48	2	\$2.50	\$5.00
Item 49	1	\$26.00	\$26.00
Item 50	3	\$1.67	\$5.00
Item 51	1	\$27.00	\$27.00
Item 52	2	\$2.50	\$5.00
Item 53	1	\$28.00	\$28.00
Item 54	3	\$1.67	\$5.00
Item 55	1	\$29.00	\$29.00
Item 56	2	\$2.50	\$5.00
Item 57	1	\$30.00	\$30.00
Item 58	3	\$1.67	\$5.00
Item 59	1	\$31.00	\$31.00
Item 60	2	\$2.50	\$5.00
Item 61	1	\$32.00	\$32.00
Item 62	3	\$1.67	\$5.00
Item 63	1	\$33.00	\$33.00
Item 64	2	\$2.50	\$5.00
Item 65	1	\$34.00	\$34.00
Item 66	3	\$1.67	\$5.00
Item 67	1	\$35.00	\$35.00
Item 68	2	\$2.50	\$5.00
Item 69	1	\$36.00	\$36.00
Item 70	3	\$1.67	\$5.00
Item 71	1	\$37.00	\$37.00
Item 72	2	\$2.50	\$5.00
Item 73	1	\$38.00	\$38.00
Item 74	3	\$1.67	\$5.00
Item 75	1	\$39.00	\$39.00
Item 76	2	\$2.50	\$5.00
Item 77	1	\$40.00	\$40.00
Item 78	3	\$1.67	\$5.00
Item 79	1	\$41.00	\$41.00
Item 80	2	\$2.50	\$5.00
Item 81	1	\$42.00	\$42.00
Item 82	3	\$1.67	\$5.00
Item 83	1	\$43.00	\$43.00
Item 84	2	\$2.50	\$5.00
Item 85	1	\$44.00	\$44.00
Item 86	3	\$1.67	\$5.00
Item 87	1	\$45.00	\$45.00
Item 88	2	\$2.50	\$5.00
Item 89	1	\$46.00	\$46.00
Item 90	3	\$1.67	\$5.00
Item 91	1	\$47.00	\$47.00
Item 92	2	\$2.50	\$5.00
Item 93	1	\$48.00	\$48.00
Item 94	3	\$1.67	\$5.00
Item 95	1	\$49.00	\$49.00
Item 96	2	\$2.50	\$5.00
Item 97	1	\$50.00	\$50.00
Item 98	3	\$1.67	\$5.00
Item 99	1	\$51.00	\$51.00
Item 100	2	\$2.50	\$5.00



**STRONG COMMUNITIES  
START HERE**



## COVID-19-Driven Innovation

To adjust to the disruption caused by COVID-19, Plainfield Central Campus education pathway students observed elementary and middle school remote learning classrooms virtually. This removed some of the previous barriers to observation related to travel and scheduling, but more importantly teacher Steve Lamberti found that it allowed his [Exploration of the Teaching Profession](#) students to have more frequent and focused observations directly related to the specific curriculum topic they were studying. Mr. Lamberti centers his class on the “why” of teaching practice, and such short and focused observations allowed students time to reflect together on what they saw. Students were able to pop in and out of classrooms for a short time without the disturbance that physically entering and leaving a classroom can cause. They were able to watch classroom activities like ice breakers, transitions, or project-based learning and then discuss what they saw together as a class, reflecting on why the teachers did what they did. Students could observe a diverse variety of classrooms, learning how the structure and methods in, for example, a physical education class are different from those of a math class, and Mr. Lamberti could observe along with them. Afterward they could

discuss what they saw and unpack together why the structures and methods were different.

This practice also allowed students to get nearly instantaneous feedback from their cooperating teachers since they could email to ask questions such as why teachers chose particular lessons or chose to respond to particular situations as they did. The cooperating teachers told Mr. Lamberti that they enjoyed and benefited from the opportunity to reflect on and discuss their own practice as well. Mr. Lamberti plans to incorporate the use of virtual platforms for focused observations into his students’ regular observation schedules, even after remote learning is no longer necessary. He also is hoping to use recorded teaching sessions related to specific aspects of the curriculum as real-life examples. He finds that current, applicable, and real footage is more effective than externally produced video.

**“Observations have been critical to the program for my class. Making sure students have high quality cooperating teachers to observe and learn from is crucial.”**

– Steve Lamberti, Plainfield Teacher

# Collaborative: SI Network for Future Teachers

The SI Network for Future Teachers comprises seven high schools,<sup>8</sup> three postsecondary institutions,<sup>9</sup> and the Regional Office of Education which serves as the fiscal agent for the Network. Schools are at different stages of pathway development, from having only an Educator's Rising future teachers club and just beginning to facilitate a pathway to more established career exploration and development experiences including childcare courses and daily pre-K classroom visits. The Network struggled to meet regularly in person, even before the COVID-19 disruption, because of the distance between schools and a lack of resources. However, they find that working together and pooling resources allows them to do things like apply for grants that, because many of them are very small districts, they would not otherwise have the capacity to do. Several focus group participants noted that when they are able to get together they "have powerful meetings."

*"The rural setting of our high schools requires even more collaborative activities. We have to establish networks in order to build capacity. We have powerful meetings among HS and postsecondary but have limited resources to call folks together."*

*– Postsecondary Administrator*

Many SI Network schools use an Educators Rising club as a structure for incorporating career exploration, career development experiences, and team-based challenges. SI Network Educators Rising clubs host guest speakers, volunteer with their Parent Teacher Organizations, assist with after-school programs, and take field trips to area elementary schools to shadow a teacher for the day and to help with instructional activities. One school included student teachers in its guest speaker lineup so high school students could get a feel for what was ahead of them. To assist with career exploration, postsecondary partner Southern Illinois University (SIU) has visitation days when area high schools are invited to tour campus and speak with teacher candidates and university faculty, and many schools bring their Educators Rising members.

<sup>8</sup> Anna-Jonesboro, Carbondale Community, Carterville, Cobden, Du Quoin, Johnston City, and Vienna

<sup>9</sup> Southern Illinois University, John A. Logan College, and Shawnee Community College



Focus group participants noted that for schools that are able, holding Educators Rising meetings during school hours helps students who live far from the school building participate since they don't have to arrange alternative transportation. Due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, in 2020–2021 many schools pivoted away from visiting schools. As one Educators Rising club sponsor said, "We have been unable to participate in career exploration activities due to COVID-19. Last year, we visited 5 local grade schools where our students were teacher aides for the day. They had to design lessons, present lessons, and work one-on-one with students." Moving forward, focus group participants said it would be helpful for Educators Rising sponsors to meet with each other more often to share what they're doing and to find ways to collaborate to provide shared experiences for students.

**"Having the Educators Rising meetings during the day helps with access since all can access during school hours. Rural schools have particular challenges in distance from school and poverty."**

– Postsecondary Administrator

### Dual Credit

The Network offers two dual credit courses that are foundational for the SIU teacher education program and that count for core curriculum course credit even if students decide not to major in education: Diversity, Culture, and Education in a Pluralistic Society and Human Growth, Development, and Learning in a Digital Age. Focus group participants commented that the dual credit courses can be a difficult introduction to education for students. Since these are students' first college courses, extensive new terminology can discourage them and the specific nature of the content can make it hard for students to see the material's connection to a career in teaching. There is a tension between making dual credit courses accessible to high school students and ensuring students have sufficient support to engage with college-level content.

Several focus group participants commented that students might benefit from a different, more basic non-dual credit introductory course, especially since some high schools are considering opening the pathway to freshmen and sophomores.<sup>10</sup> Some also commented that additional core dual credit options would be helpful. One participant

suggested high school, community college, and university partner instructors meet to find ways to scaffold the vocabulary and assignments so students can master them more easily.

### Sustainability

In March 2021, schools in this area and Shawnee Community College were awarded nearly \$250,000 by the Illinois State Board of Education to support education career pathways. While these funds are a significant boost for expansion and sustainability, SI Network schools are mindful of the challenge to sustain their education pathway work in the long term. One strategy they hope to pursue is to increase the number of high school instructors who can teach dual credit classes. They hope to secure teachers in each of their buildings with the credentials to teach college-level courses to reduce the need for extensive student travel because some communities are quite isolated. This also would assist with issues of equity and access for their most rural and low-income students. A further benefit is that in-building teachers would be able to interact with students and hold them accountable on a daily basis. Focus group participants noted that since dual credit courses are usually a student's first encounter with postsecondary education coursework, it is useful for them to have an instructor with whom they already have a relationship to motivate and encourage them to continue to pursue education as a career.

Another SI Network strategy to address sustainability, equity, and access is to increase the availability of interactive television (ITV), though participants noted that taking a course using this kind of technology is not the same experience as having an in-person, qualified teacher, and so is a less-desirable solution. Still, since it may not be possible for very small, rural, low-income schools to get and keep qualified instructors, ITV may be a viable best solution.

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<sup>10</sup> The Statewide Model Programs of Study Guide recommends a non-dual credit introductory course, Foundations to Teaching.



## Carbondale Community High School

The education pathway at Carbondale Community High School (CCHS) began in SY 2019–2020. Through SEPI, the Director of Teacher Education at Southern Illinois University partnered with the high school Family and Consumer Sciences instructor to start an Educator’s Rising club. In Fall 2020 the high school offered its first dual-credit course—Human Growth and Development. In SY 2021/2022 it plans to offer one semester each of a methods and a diversity course.

Career exploration activities and career development experiences at Carbondale High School happen through the Educators Rising club. One career exploration activity that was particularly informative was taking students to a regional teacher professional development session, the Closing the Gap Conference. The club had a table in the commercial vendor area with a poster and buttons with teacher appreciation phrases to distribute to teachers. Students attended workshops in pairs and were able to experience, firsthand, teachers learning, strategizing together, and working to hone their craft.

Though the COVID-19 crisis disrupted students’ ability to visit schools to accumulate 60 hours of experience, in previous and future years students take monthly field trips to a childcare center, elementary school, or middle school where they spend the day. Each student is matched with one teacher in the morning and a different one in the afternoon. Students assist teachers by grading papers, working one-on-one with younger students, walking students to the office, and helping to teach

lessons. They also eat lunch with the students. When they return to the high school they share pizza and pop and discuss what went well, what didn’t, and what they need to do differently next time. They also write individual thank you cards to their cooperating teachers and they all sign a card for the principal and another card for staff. The Educators Rising sponsor takes pictures of her students working in schools and uses them to publicize the opportunity to other students. In the future CCHS is considering making the club a first- and second-hour class so students will not have to miss other classes to visit schools.

During the pandemic, the Educators Rising club met virtually and was joined by guest speaker teachers who discussed their experiences in the education profession and how they dealt with the COVID-19 disruption. The speakers helped to keep club discussions grounded in education issues but also relevant. To stay connected and to showcase their continual involvement in the changing system of education during the disruption, Educators Rising students created a monthly newsletter. The first issue, titled “Thankfulness,” aimed to help the community stay positive by highlighting five members and what they were thankful for. The second issue focused on students’ Christmas wish lists and statements of hope. The club sent holiday cards and a “Thank You for Everything” token to teachers and they sent a packet to each of their fellow high school students with a word of encouragement card, a mascot sticker, a pencil, a wristband, and a class-specific inspiring quote that they developed themselves.

# Promising Practices for Intermediary Organizations

Education Systems Center, as an intermediary organization, has played a crucial role in supporting the expansion of education pathways in Illinois high schools. Working with its initial nine collaboratives, it helped to pave the way for implementation of the College and Career Pathway Endorsement (CCPE) requirements through providing access to best practices, convening communities of practice, and guiding participants through the endorsement process. EdSystems also collaborated with other state agencies to develop several online resources. Through this initial work collaboratives were able to launch education pathways, and as a result of their success many secured significant additional Career and Technical Education funding from the Illinois State Board of Education for expansion and sustainability. Most recently, EdSystems is working with organizations and institutions around the state to encourage attaching currency to the CCPE in Education so students who demonstrate capacity and commitment to a career are recognized.

Focus group participants and interviewees were asked about EdSystems contributions. Several promising practices and lessons learned emerged which may be helpful for other intermediary organizations embarking on similar work.

- **Endorsement Currency:** The most widely appreciated assistance is the growing list of organizations attaching currency to the endorsement, particularly Golden Apple Scholars advancing students with endorsements to the final stage of its selection process.
- **Collaboration Opportunities:** Focus group participants noted that it has been valuable to have EdSystems convene districts to share their pathways work. “We need a backbone organization, somebody to help us share and carry out the work. Otherwise, it falls

to the free time that we have. We make time to share out, but that’s not a scalable, sustainable way.” Also, it is helpful to learn about “who is making what work” and “having the ability to meet and talk with other schools and share best practices and challenges.”

- **Thought Partner:** Participants said that EdSystems is a “great thought partner” and has “helped us find resources and research for problems we are trying to solve.”
- **Funding:** Intermediaries can help collaboratives build the structure and dynamics to leverage more and larger funding streams. One collaborative said the “pilot project funding has also been critical to developing our different pathways programs.”
- **Additional Assistance:** Some participants mentioned that they could use additional assistance fulfilling the endorsement requirements and the mechanics of securing the endorsement. To a question about how EdSystems could be more useful, one participant wrote, “Provide more structure and guidance on development.”
- **Pathway Mechanics:** A few participants expressed frustration about dual credit. They are looking for someone to “work to facilitate standards for all higher learning institutions to accept dual credit courses or these pathways for college credit if possible; more like AP perhaps.”
- **Data Systems and Coordination:** One collaborative mentioned that there is a “need to get the data systems talking to each other and all the education pathway initiatives working together.” This has implications for continued state-level work to connect K–12 and postsecondary data systems to evaluate pathway progressions and outcomes.





## Opportunities for Future Analysis

Building from this analysis to more fully center equity and student voice in SEPI, EdSystems will partner with Northern Illinois University's College of Education in the 2021–2022 school year to undertake a robust inquiry into which students enter an education pathway, why students enter or do not, and what supports are most effective in engaging them. The research will use results from an [Expectancy Value Theory](#) student survey, student focus groups, and individual interviews with students to produce a report for publication. The report also will be used as the basis for presentations to scholarly and policy audiences.

In the coming years, as educator pathways mature and produce students with an education pathway endorsement, it will be important to collect and analyze student-level data to determine the outcomes of the program. We will want to gather information regarding pathway enrollment and

progression, and if pathways lead to an increase in teacher candidates in Illinois; as disaggregated by grade level, gender, race/ethnicity, and low/lower income. This will require the development of definitions and business rules, district- and State-level data system modifications, and methods for integrating data across disparate systems. We are working in partnership with the Illinois State Board of Education to lay the groundwork for this data collection, including collaborating to problem solve technical difficulties in tracking students longitudinally. To understand the context for successful education pathways, consideration should be given to analyzing key school characteristics in connection with student data (e.g., per-student expenditure, student body demographics, accountability status). For analysis by external parties including EdSystems, access to student-level data will require legal authorization through data sharing agreements.





**Education Systems Center**

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

# Scaling Education Pathways in Illinois (SEPI) Analysis

## Implications and Takeaways | August 2021

### For High School Education Pathway Implementers

- **Build Robust Pathways:** Schools with childcare pathways should consider shifting to a more robust program aimed at a professional educator license to prepare students for careers with higher earning potential.
- **Target Recruitment:** To inform students about the education pathway, high schools should include it in their existing course information structures and incorporate one-on-one teacher and counselor outreach, particularly to students without familiarity with childcare or teaching.
- **Prioritize Underrepresented Students:** To recruit and support underrepresented students, high schools should prioritize targeted one-on-one outreach, structured interactions with teachers from underrepresented populations, and assignments that showcase how educators can celebrate diversity.
- **Publicize Currency:** All recruitment discussions and materials should include up-to-date information about the currency available to students who complete the College and Career Pathway Endorsement in education.
- **Offer In-Building Dual Credit:** Schools should offer dual credit courses in the building during school hours to allow students easier and cheaper access, if possible.
- **Work Together:** Collaboratives of small, distanced high schools that struggle to fill onsite dual credit courses should consider combining students from several high schools to fill an online course.
- **Exploit Virtual Opportunities:** High schools should capitalize on innovations from the shift to remote learning and incorporate experiences such as virtual observations and internships, online alumni guest speakers, and short pop-in virtual observations followed by class discussion.
- **Find Talented Cooperating Teachers:** High schools should prioritize the careful selection of cooperating teachers to ensure positive student experiences.

### For Postsecondary Partners

- **Offer Online Courses:** Postsecondary institutions should consider offering virtual dual credit courses to accommodate students with transportation and scheduling difficulties.
- **Provide Benefits:** To encourage and validate participation in the pathway, postsecondary institutions should consider offering benefits and selective opportunities such as priority for scholarships to students with the College and Career Pathway Endorsement.
- **Consider Transition Assistance:** To ease the transition from high school to college-level curriculum, postsecondary partners should offer study skills supports, explicitly teach new vocabulary, and navigate curriculum alignment.
- **Embed Work-Based Learning:** To accommodate student schedules, work-based learning should be embedded in dual credit courses when possible.

### For Intermediary Organizations

- **Build Currency:** Intermediary organizations should prioritize building currency for pathway endorsements.
- **Provide Sharing Opportunities:** It is important to provide structured opportunities for educators to meet with peers from other districts to share pathways experiences, challenges, and successes.
- **Leverage Grants:** Using small grants, intermediaries can help collaboratives launch programs that can secure more significant stakeholder buy in and position them for additional funding.
- **Support All Schools:** There are no schools, regardless of their previous pathway experience, that cannot begin to implement a robust education pathway aimed at a professional educator license.



# Scaling Education Pathways in Illinois (SEPI) Analysis

## Key Findings | August 2021

### Pathway Implementation

- Education pathway implementation varies widely within and across the seven SEPI collaboratives. Some are enhancing long-standing models, many have worked quickly to launch or adjust new coursework, and a few are at the beginning stages. The process is driven by a variety of organizations including high schools, postsecondary institutions, and Regional Offices of Education.
- Some high schools are shifting from an early childhood pathway geared toward childcare to a more robust education pathway aimed at a professional educator license.
- Several programs are looking to combine students' passion for specific subjects with teaching experiences so students can explore teaching the subjects they love.

### Student Recruitment

- Recruitment practices vary widely, with some schools using extensive outreach including videos and social media, some prioritizing identification from teachers and counselors, and others relying on career fairs and student word-of-mouth.
- Some schools are having success recruiting underrepresented populations to the pathway through targeted one-on-one outreach and supporting them through practices such as structured interactions with Black male teachers and assignments involving celebrating diversity.
- Currency for obtaining an education pathway endorsement such as a scholarship from a postsecondary partner is a strong recruitment tool, particularly for low-income families.
- Many programs help students understand the variety of non-teaching education-related careers to attract students not interested in teaching.

### Dual Credit

- Larger schools are more able to offer dual credit courses in the building during school hours since they are more likely to have enough students to fill a class and to have more teachers/administrators with qualifying credentials to teach the courses.
- Experiences with online learning during the pandemic introduced the possibility of sharing dual credit courses among several communities.

- The pandemic disruption forced community colleges to deliver courses online, which eased the burden of time and transportation for many dual credit students.
- There is a tension between making dual credit courses accessible to high school students and ensuring students have sufficient support to engage with college-level content.

### Career Experiences

- Schools without proximity to observation and internship classrooms struggle with transportation and finding time in student schedules. Some schools found innovative ways to overcome these difficulties using the pandemic's virtual school format.
- The pandemic disruption spurred some programs to create new experiences, including short, pop-in virtual observations followed by class discussion and online alumni guest speakers, which were so successful that teachers plan to continue to implement them.
- Educators involved in pathway implementation emphasize that it is important to recruit high-quality, invested cooperating teachers for student career development experiences because "that partnership has a profound impact on students."

### Student Voice

- Students appreciate the ability to investigate education as a career before enrolling and investing in a program of study in college.
- Teachers say the most impactful experience for students is spending classroom time as teachers.
- Students value the opportunity to build relationships with younger students.

### Intermediary Support

- Building currency for a pathway endorsement is an important and appreciated function of an intermediary organization.
- Educators value the opportunity to meet with peers at other districts to share their pathway experiences, challenges, and successes.
- Intermediaries can help collaboratives build the structure and dynamics to leverage more and larger funding streams.



# Scaling Education Pathways in Illinois (SEPI) Analysis

## By the Numbers | August 2021

2,124

Total education pathway students in SEPI Cohort 1 schools

70

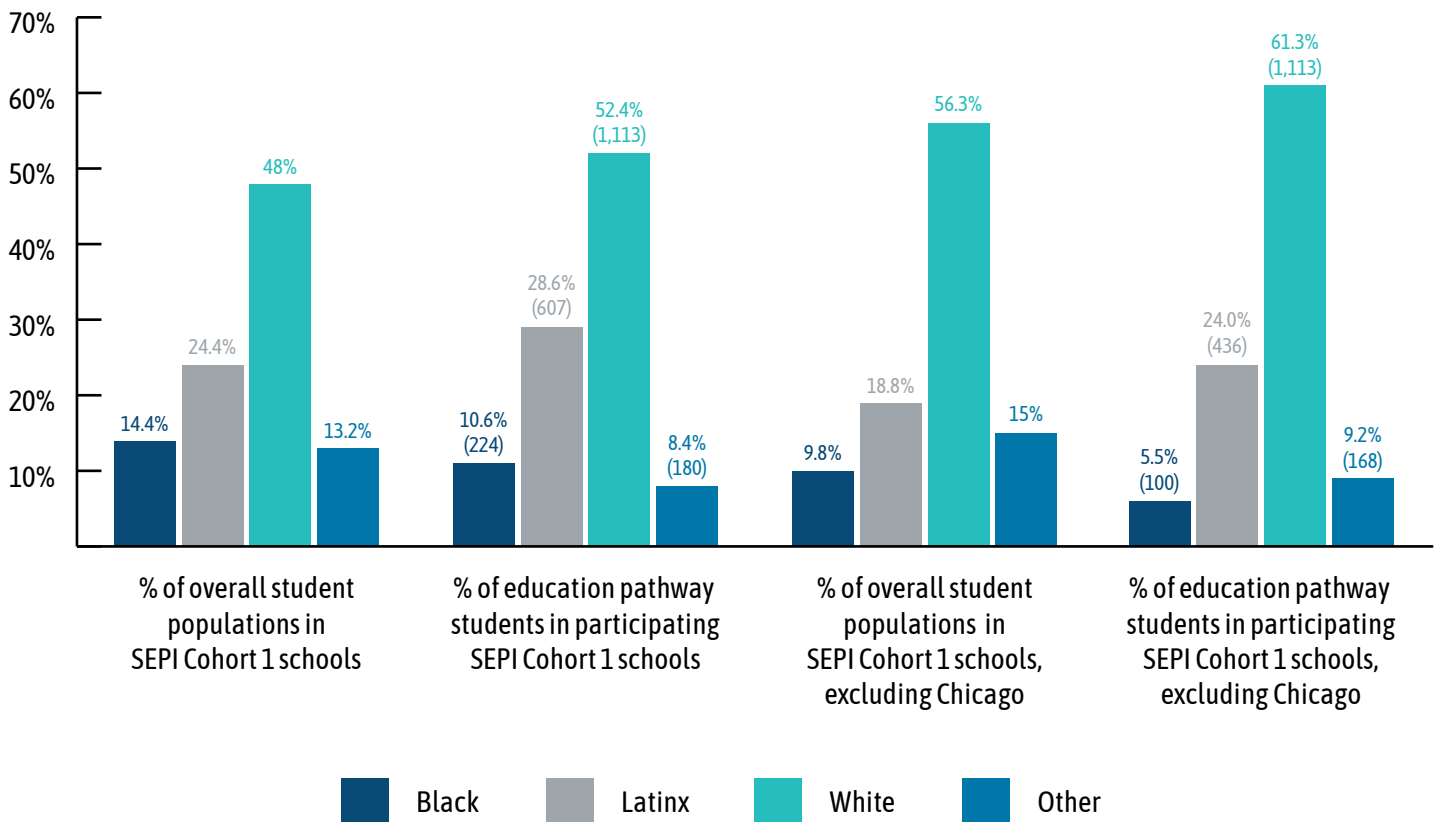
Total participating high schools in SEPI Cohorts 1 & 2

45

Total participating districts in SEPI Cohorts 1 & 2

14

Total participating postsecondary partners in SEPI Cohorts 1 & 2



# Scaling Education Pathways in Illinois (SEPI) Analysis

## Promising Practices for Intermediary Organizations | August 2021

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Focus group participants and interviewees were asked about EdSystems contributions. Several promising practices and lessons learned emerged which may be helpful for other intermediary organizations embarking on similar work.

- **Funding:** Intermediaries can help collaboratives build the structure and dynamics to leverage more and larger funding streams. One collaborative said the “pilot project funding has also been critical to developing our different pathways programs.”
  - **Additional Assistance:** Some participants mentioned that they could use additional assistance fulfilling the endorsement requirements and the mechanics of securing the endorsement. To a question about how EdSystems could be more useful, one participant wrote, “Provide more structure and guidance on development.”
  - **Pathway Mechanics:** A few participants expressed frustration about dual credit. They are looking for someone to “work to facilitate standards for all higher learning institutions to accept dual credit courses or these pathways for college credit if possible; more like AP perhaps.”
  - **Data Systems and Coordination:** One collaborative mentioned that there is a “need to get the data systems talking to each other and all the education pathway initiatives working together.” This has implications for continued state-level work to connect K–12 and postsecondary data systems to evaluate pathway progressions and outcomes.
- **Endorsement Currency:** The most widely appreciated assistance is the growing list of organizations attaching currency to the endorsement, particularly Golden Apple Scholars advancing students with endorsements to the final stage of its selection process.
  - **Collaboration Opportunities:** Focus group participants noted that it has been valuable to have EdSystems convene districts to share their pathways work. “We need a backbone organization, somebody to help us share and carry out the work. Otherwise, it falls to the free time that we have. We make time to share out, but that’s not a scalable, sustainable way.” Also, it is helpful to learn about “who is making what work” and “having the ability to meet and talk with other schools and share best practices and challenges.”
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