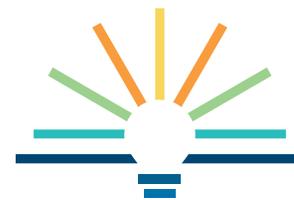


Quality Criteria for College and Career Pathways Implementation

July 2024



EdSystems

EDUCATION SYSTEMS CENTER *at*
NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY



Education Systems Center (EdSystems) is a policy development and program implementation center within Northern Illinois University. Together with our strategic partners, we advance a shared vision for equitable educational and career success through our three focus areas: College and Career Pathways, Bridges to Postsecondary, and Data Impact and Leadership. We focus geographically on Illinois, where we collaborate at the state level to create ecosystem and policy change while simultaneously partnering at the local level to create organizational change. This unique bi-directional approach allows EdSystems to align local efforts to state policy while elevating local experiences and learnings to state tables. Learn more at edsystemsniu.org.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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MISSION

EdSystems fosters collaborative partnerships to design, implement, and evaluate policies and practices that ensure successful transitions to and through postsecondary and career opportunities for students, with a particular emphasis on historically marginalized populations.

VISION

EdSystems helps create a world where students have clear, unambiguous paths to college and career opportunities that equip them for meaningful participation in the global economy.

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Background

In Illinois, college and career pathways were jump-started with the 2016 passage of the [Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act](#), which defines the required components of College and Career Pathway Endorsements. The goal of the endorsement is to enhance the readiness of Illinois high school graduates for postsecondary education and careers. Students must fulfill specific requirements to receive an endorsement on their high school diploma or transcript, which include completing an individualized learning plan, participating in a career-focused instructional sequence (with early college credit), engaging in work-based learning experiences, and demonstrating proficiency in college-level reading and math. Engaging in work-based learning experiences includes career awareness, exploration, team-based challenges, and career development experiences. Districts across Illinois are implementing the College and Career Pathway Endorsements framework, and legislation passed in 2022 ([Public Act 102-0917](#)) will foster significant scaling in the coming years.

To support regional scaling, practitioners have been asking for resources and guidance on how to implement high-quality college and career pathways with an eye toward equity and continuous improvement. While the state has put forth resources like the first-of-its-kind [Illinois Career Pathways Dictionary](#), Education Systems Center (EdSystems) at Northern Illinois University recognized a desire for more detailed criteria, exemplars, and resources that can guide practitioners as they develop, implement, and enhance their programmatic and system design.

From October 2023 to April 2024, EdSystems convened a representative advisory committee of diverse leaders across secondary, postsecondary, education, and workforce to explore research into best practices, discuss how to articulate quality criteria for the component parts of college and career pathway implementation, and elevate innovative local practice from leaders across Illinois. This document is the result of that deeply collaborative work. It seeks to capture best practices, community models, and resources related to the quality criteria to build a robust toolkit that will ultimately provide both the quality criteria and how they are being lived out in communities across Illinois and nationally. While the criteria use the College and Career Pathway Endorsements framework as a baseline, the practices can apply anywhere practitioners are developing pathways beginning in high school.

Overview

How Is the Quality Criteria Organized?

Framework Components and Criteria Subcomponents

The quality criteria are organized across six thematic components, each containing two to three subcomponents that categorize the quality criteria. Given the overlapping principles of the College and Career Pathway Endorsement system and Career and Technical Education frameworks, the thematic areas align with the components outlined in the CTE Program Approval: Size, Scope, and Quality section of the [Illinois State Plan for the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act](#) (Perkins V).

The six framework components cover the breadth of pathways development and implementation:

1. Development and Engagement
2. Employer-Informed Competencies and Skills
3. Academic Instruction and Supports
4. Recruitment and Access
5. Instructional Sequence
6. Instructors

Continuum of Practice, Equitable Practices, and Continuous Improvement

The quality criteria are organized along a continuum of practice that begins with the baseline requirements to implement college and career pathways in high schools and articulates practices that will deepen the quality and equity in implementation.



Implementing Required or aligned to support College and Career Pathway Endorsements authorization

These practices include both the components that ISBE requires and assesses in authorizing College and Career Pathway Endorsements for districts, as well as core baseline enabling factors to support implementation of pathways.



Refining Processes for regular revision and equitable improvement

In addition to the implementing criteria, these practices help practitioners enhance and deepen their implementation.



Advancing Model practices

In addition to implementing and refining criteria, these practices will guide practitioners to continue building their pathways as they grow in implementation capacity and skills.

In addition to the continuum of criteria described, the tables include two cross-cutting categories: equitable practices and continuous improvement. These are practices that are recommended for practitioners to implement regardless of where they find themselves in the continuum of practice.

- **Equitable practices:** For each framework subcomponent, equitable practices highlight thoughtful approaches to preventing access and outcomes disparities across different groups of students.
- **Continuous improvement:** For each framework component, the criteria include a set of specific continuous improvement practices that promote thoughtful utilization of both quantitative and qualitative data to drive programmatic decision-making.

Who Are the Quality Criteria For?

These resources have been designed to support pathways practitioners at all stages of implementation of college and career pathways beginning in high school. While it is framed in relation to the College and Career Pathway Endorsements system, the practices included are derived from a range of contexts and can benefit practitioners nationally.

Practitioners embarking on new pathways programs can utilize these criteria to embed equitable and continuous improvement practices from the first stages of a pathway design, as well as to develop a clear understanding of how baseline practices can be enhanced over time. Practitioners in communities with established pathway systems can use these tools to deepen their partnerships and implementation, with a particular focus on how to use continuous improvement to drive equitable access and outcomes for their students.

In addition to improving local practice through direct guidance, this document brings together national tools and resources that can further enhance practices. Further, this document includes exemplars from across Illinois that demonstrate what some of these criteria look like in practice in a range of communities.

What About Work-Based Learning?

Work-based learning is an essential component to a college and career pathway design. Because of its importance, a parallel working group developed a set of quality criteria for components along the Illinois work-based learning continuum, which should be taken into consideration alongside this guide. The work-based learning criteria can be found at edsystemsniu.org/resources.

Framework Components

Development and Engagement Criteria

Development and engagement focus on collaboration between K-12 and postsecondary institutions, responses to analyses and findings of local needs, and engaging external stakeholders to design programs aligned with the College and Career Pathway Endorsements, specifically by implementing career-focused instruction and career exploration activities. To align with the endorsement, college and career pathway teams should consistently review labor market information; identify high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand occupations and related competencies within the region; consider long-term industry trends and the future of work; and participate in continuous improvement processes.

	 Implementing <i>Required or otherwise aligned to support endorsement authorization</i>	 Refining <i>Processes for regular revision and equitable improvement</i>	 Advancing <i>Model practices</i>
Stakeholder Collaboration and Engagement	<p>Pathway includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identification of employer partners for work-based learning aligned with labor market trends. ○ Identification of postsecondary partners for dual credit and pathway continuation. 	<p>Pathway includes implementing criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Frequent employer engagement and industry alignment to maintain relationships and align with emerging labor market opportunities. ○ Engaging existing employer advisory committees in pathway design and continuous improvement processes. ○ Frequent meetings with postsecondary partners and targeted programs to compare research on industry trends and impacts on pathways. ○ Identification of stakeholder partners beyond postsecondary institutions and employers (parent groups, local community organizations) that may be targeted for feedback. 	<p>Pathway includes implementing and refining criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dynamic, responsive collaboration between employer partners, postsecondary partners, and other external partners. ○ New industry trends addressed through pilot programs. ○ Postsecondary institutions that collaborate deeply and establish formal transition plans for endorsement earners (e.g., offering “currency”). ○ Employer partners that have committed jobs to endorsement earners.
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div> <p>Equitable Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cultivating partnerships with community organizations representing underrepresented groups. ○ Ensuring diverse voices in employer advisory committees. ○ Fostering initiatives that prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion in program development and job commitments. ○ Creating diverse, intersectional mentorship opportunities within partnerships. </div> </div>			

Development and Engagement Criteria, Continued

	 Implementing <i>Required or otherwise aligned to support endorsement authorization</i>	 Refining <i>Processes for regular revision and equitable improvement</i>	 Advancing <i>Model practices</i>
Labor Market Information	<p>Pathway includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alignment to an occupation that has a proven growth trajectory or vacancies statewide or within the local region. ○ Identification of specific occupations that would be accessible immediately after high school or after completing a targeted postsecondary program. 	<p>Pathway includes implementing criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Targeted occupations with high relative volume or importance within the state (not just net positive growth) based on employment data and projections. ○ Targeted occupations with a high median wage that meets a living wage benchmark for the region or state and labor market data that indicates growth over the next ten years. ○ Identification and incorporation (as appropriate) of stackable credentials that lead to upward mobility within an industry. 	<p>Pathway includes implementing and refining criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Targeted occupations that are resilient to recession and have low probability of automation. ○ Engagement of employers with a proven commitment to diversity. ○ Targeted entry-level occupations that provide a living wage and present the opportunity of increased wages with clear and sustainable milestones.
<div data-bbox="409 990 598 1177" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>Equitable Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Targeting careers that springboard economic mobility for and are of interest to historically marginalized communities, taking into account input from community members. ○ Collaborating with employers dedicated to equitable hiring and leveraging employer relationships to address inequitable hiring practices proactively. ○ Researching and considering occupational segregation (when a demographic group is overrepresented or underrepresented among different kinds of work/jobs) to inform the selection and development of pathways. ○ Cultivating partnerships with community organizations representing historically marginalized groups. ○ Ensuring diverse voices in advisory committees. ○ Fostering initiatives that prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion in program development and job commitments. ○ Establishing mentor programs that incorporate a variety of perspectives and experiences, bridging different professional and cultural backgrounds within partnerships. 			

Development and Engagement Criteria, Continued

	 Implementing <i>Required or otherwise aligned to support endorsement authorization</i>	 Refining <i>Processes for regular revision and equitable improvement</i>	 Advancing <i>Model practices</i>
 Continuous Improvement	<p>Process includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Iterating on the pathway annually for College and Career Pathway Endorsements submission. ○ Bi-annually updating labor market data to reflect current trends. ○ A process to obtain and demonstrate proven student interest and feedback in the pathway (enrolled classes, extra-curriculars, etc.). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Establishing diverse, accessible student feedback systems (e.g. virtual/asynchronous, in-person, etc.). ○ Actively seeking and incorporating feedback from underrepresented student groups to foster inclusivity and equity in program enhancements. ○ Identifying and implementing professional development and teacher credentialing in shortage areas. ○ Emphasizing inclusive pedagogy in instructor development. ○ Developing and refining strategies to ensure all students benefit from improvements. 		

Development and Engagement Resources

- [“Aligning Postsecondary Institutions to External Standards With Relational Databases”](#): This article from The Journal of Competency-Based Education discusses the importance of managing these alignments effectively to ensure institutional compliance and the enhancement of curriculum quality through a structured, database-driven approach.
- [“Equitable Collaboration Framework – Organizing Engagement”](#): This guide from the University of Washington’s College of Education supports school systems in fostering equitable partnerships with students, families, and community members.
- [“Illinois Employment Projections”](#): This resource from the Illinois Department of Employment Security outlines short-term and long-term employment projections in Illinois.
- [“Striving for Relationship-Centered Schools: Insights From a Community-Based Transformation Campaign”](#): This report from the Learning Policy Institute shares insights from the Relationship Centered Schools campaign, which seeks to transform schools by creating opportunities for relationship-building, valuing student voice, and investing in staff. The experiences of two sites in California shed light on factors that enable or hinder relationship-centered practices, as well as implications for practice and policy.

Employer-Informed Competencies and Skills Criteria

College and career pathways administrators must align their curricula and experiences with the evolving demands of the labor market to integrate employer-informed competencies and skills. Alignment is crucial in preparing students for high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand occupations, as identified through active engagement with industry partners. The criteria underscore the importance of integrating employer-informed technical competencies and essential employability skills into the educational journey, from secondary education to post-secondary pathways and beyond.

	 Implementing <i>Required or otherwise aligned to support endorsement authorization</i>	 Refining <i>Processes for regular revision and equitable improvement</i>	 Advancing <i>Model practices</i>
Alignment with Industry Standards	<p>Pathway includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Curriculum alignment to and integration of specific technical competencies identified by employers for entry-level positions. ○ Integration of essential employability skills, such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving into the curriculum and work-based learning opportunities, as defined in the Illinois’ “Recommended Technical and Essential Employability Competencies for College and Career Pathway Endorsements.” 	<p>Pathway includes implementing criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Annual curriculum updates to consider and incorporate emerging industry technologies and practices, preferably with employer partner participation or facilitation. 	<p>Pathway includes implementing and refining criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Collaboration with industry experts in the development of specialized content and methods of delivery at least twice a year. ○ Regular on-site learning experiences for teachers (i.e., externships) at employer partner locations.
	<div data-bbox="409 1112 604 1307" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>Equitable Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Developing inclusive curriculum materials representing diverse perspectives within and contributions to the industry. ○ Engaging with various employers to ensure a broad representation of industry need. ○ Implementing mentor programs connecting students with professionals from historically marginalized groups in the industry. ○ Offering workshops on unconscious bias and cultural competency to industry partners. ○ Establishing scholarships and support programs, with the help of employers, for students from historically marginalized backgrounds to pursue advanced specializations and industry certifications. 		

Employer-Informed Competencies and Skills Criteria, Continued

	 Implementing <i>Required or otherwise aligned to support endorsement authorization</i>	 Refining <i>Processes for regular revision and equitable improvement</i>	 Advancing <i>Model practices</i>
Engagement with Employers	<p>Pathway includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An initial engagement with a broad network of employers to understand industry needs and trends. ○ Collaboratively defining a plan for with employers on participation in pathways activities, which may include discussing site tours, shadow days, mentorships, and work-based learning opportunities. 	<p>Pathway includes implementing criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Staff-led industry panels and employer feedback sessions to refine program offerings. ○ Teacher facilitation of career exploration activities, part of the work-based learning continuum as defined in the Illinois Career Pathways Dictionary. ○ Regular (bi-annual or annual) curriculum revisions to align educational content with employer expectations and workforce demands. ○ A dedicated staff role for managing employer partnerships. 	<p>Pathway includes implementing and refining criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Processes to empower employer partners to take an active part in recruiting, teaching, and placing students through workshops, recruitment events, and guest lectures that expose students to real-world applications and emerging industry challenges. ○ Strategic partnerships for specialized program tracks and capstone projects.
<div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="margin-right: 20px;">  </div> <div> <p>Equitable Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Developing guidelines for employer engagement that emphasize the importance of diversity and inclusivity in the workplace, including district-initiated diversity training sessions for employer partners to prepare them for engaging with a diverse student population. ○ Establishing a feedback loop with employer partners to assess and improve the inclusivity of work-based learning environments. ○ Encouraging employer partners to share best practices for creating inclusive workplaces. ○ Collaborating with employer partners to develop specialized programs or tracks that support the advancement of students from historically marginalized groups in high-demand industry sectors. </div> </div>			

Employer-Informed Competencies and Skills Criteria, Continued

	 Implementing <i>Required or otherwise aligned to support endorsement authorization</i>	 Refining <i>Processes for regular revision and equitable improvement</i>	 Advancing <i>Model practices</i>
Assessment of Student Competencies and Skills	<p>Pathway includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Utilizing a combination of formative and summative assessments to evaluate students' mastery of both technical competencies and essential employability skills, such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving. 	<p>Pathway includes implementing criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Incorporation of development rubrics to track and support student progress over time. ○ Semi-annual reviews of assessment tools and rubrics in collaboration with industry partners to ensure they remain aligned with industry trends. 	<p>Pathway includes implementing and refining criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Engagement in at least two collaborations per year with industry experts to develop and refine assessments for specialized content areas. ○ Instructor facilitation of frequent on-site learning and assessment opportunities such as project-based work.
	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div> <p>Equitable Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensuring that assessment strategies and rubrics are inclusive, representing diverse perspectives within and contributions to the industry. ○ Including guidelines for equitable assessment practices. ○ Engagement with various employers to review and provide feedback on assessment tools to reduce bias. </div> </div>		
 Continuous Improvement	<p>Process includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Establishing regular feedback loops with industry partners to inform curriculum updates and work-based learning experiences. ○ Using student outcome data and employer feedback to drive continuous program enhancements. ○ Offering professional development for educators on emerging industry trends and teaching methodologies, including externships and opportunities to integrate their hands-on learning into curricular planning. ○ Creating channels for student and employer input to directly influence program improvements. 		

Employer-Informed Competencies and Skills Resources

- [“Advisory Committee Guidebook: Partnerships for Postsecondary Education”](#): This comprehensive resource from the Illinois Community College Board aims to enhance the effectiveness of advisory committees for Career and Technical Education programs in Illinois, ensuring close alignment with industry needs and standards.
- [“Course-Level Competency Validation Rubric”](#): This resource from the New Hampshire Department of Education provides a structured framework to evaluate the strength of competency statements within educational courses, ranging from strong (rated 4) to weaker (rated 1). It assesses competencies based on their relevance to the content area, alignment with enduring concepts, cognitive demand, and the extent to which they promote opportunities for students to demonstrate evidence of learning. This rubric ensures that competencies are not only aligned with national, state, or local standards but also encourage deep understanding, critical thinking, and real-world application, providing clear and descriptive measures for what is to be learned and assessed.
- [“Lessons in Collaboration: Principles in the Governance of an Industry Advisory Board”](#): This resource from the Association of Career and Technical Education (ACTE) provides both research insights and practical guidance for developing effective industry advisory board structures.
- [“Recommended Technical and Essential Employability Competencies for College and Career Pathway Endorsements”](#): Developed to support implementation of the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act, this document outlines cross-cutting essential employability competencies and the recommended technical employability competencies for each endorsement area within Illinois’ College and Career Pathway Endorsements system. The competency recommendations were developed through robust engagement with industry and education leaders. Illinois high school districts implementing the endorsement system are required to support student acquisition of these core competencies.
- [“Rubrics for Assessment”](#): This resource from Northern Illinois University’s Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning offers comprehensive guidance on developing, using, and evaluating rubrics for educational assessment, emphasizing their role in achieving more objective, consistent, and detailed feedback for student work across various disciplines.
- **EXEMPLAR:** [Greater Peoria Essential Abilities and Knowledge \(GPEAK\)](#): The GPEAK platform prepares individuals for fulfilling careers and meaningful employment by developing and validating the achievement of cross-cutting essential employability skills. Individuals who demonstrate mastery of the key performance indicators can earn badges to communicate this achievement to education and industry partners.

Academic Instruction and Support Criteria

Academic instruction and support for the College and Career Pathway Endorsements system must integrate core academic instruction, individualized planning, and student support and interventions. That integration facilitates successful student progressions into and through required coursework and avoid college remediation to the extent possible. Ultimately, quality college and career pathways both accelerate student placement into more advanced secondary coursework and prepare students for non-remedial coursework at the postsecondary level.

	 Implementing <i>Required or otherwise aligned to support endorsement authorization</i>	 Refining <i>Processes for regular revision and equitable improvement</i>	 Advancing <i>Model practices</i>
Academic Readiness	<p>Pathway includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Core course sequences through which students prepare for non-remedial coursework in reading and math by high school graduation through criteria defined by the school district and its partner community college. ○ Advanced course enrollment (i.e., Advanced Placement, dual credit, etc.) that is aligned with the school district’s accelerated placement policy. 	<p>Pathway includes implementing criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Core academic coursework that integrates essential employability skills and technical competencies (e.g., the Geometry in Construction course). 	<p>Pathway includes implementing and refining criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Student enrollment in math coursework aligned with their career interests and potential postsecondary program of study.
<div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;">  <div> <p>Equitable Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Designing and adapting core academic curriculum to address the needs of special populations such as English language learners, students with Individualized Education Programs, etc. ○ Transitional math and English courses as the default placement options for students not enrolled in early college credit courses. </div> </div>			

Academic Instruction and Support Criteria, Continued

	 Implementing <i>Required or otherwise aligned to support endorsement authorization</i>	 Refining <i>Processes for regular revision and equitable improvement</i>	 Advancing <i>Model practices</i>
Individualized Planning	<p>Pathway includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Each student developing and periodically updating an individualized plan for postsecondary education or training, careers, and financial aid. ○ Each student identifying a career area of interest by the end of 10th grade. ○ A method to collect and store student information regarding their individualized plans. ○ Program of study standards that are publicly available and accessible to students, parents/guardians, partners, and the public, as appropriate. ○ The opportunity for a multidisciplinary endorsement for students who change career pathways or have multiple areas of interest. 	<p>Pathway includes implementing criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A process for student review of their individualized plans, coursework, and postsecondary/career plans with the support of an advisor or teacher on an annual or semester basis, in relation to Illinois State Board of Education’s College and Career Readiness Indicator. ○ Utilization of existing student-facing platforms both as a means to collect individualized plan data and for students to monitor their own progress. ○ Student completion of a portfolio of key documents (i.e., resume, cover letter, extracurricular participation, etc.) to support students in postsecondary and career planning and application processes. 	<p>Pathway includes implementing and refining criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Incorporation of community service, extracurricular activities, and consistent employment into students’ individualized plans. ○ Demonstration of interest in the student’s whole person and perspective by including their challenges, talents, skills, strengths, interests, and aspirations in the development of the individualized plan.
<div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="margin-right: 20px;">  </div> <div> <p>Equitable Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Supporting students to understand labor market information, living wage benchmarks, and the potential for economic mobility of careers in their areas of interest. ○ Designated adults identifying and tracking the postsecondary plan of each graduating student. ○ Developing systems to deepen support for those students whose postsecondary plans are unclear or undermatching student potential. </div> </div>			

Academic Instruction and Support Criteria, Continued

	 Implementing <i>Required or otherwise aligned to support endorsement authorization</i>	 Refining <i>Processes for regular revision and equitable improvement</i>	 Advancing <i>Model practices</i>
Student Support	<p>Pathway includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Comprehensive postsecondary and career planning. ○ Processes to determine readiness for college-level coursework and accelerate or provide additional support as needed. 	<p>Pathway includes implementing criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Targeted support, including intervention, acceleration, barrier reduction, and credit recovery for students with demonstrated needs. ○ Coordinated advising with the feeder middle school(s) that aligns with local implementation of the Postsecondary and Career Expectations (PaCE) framework. 	<p>Pathway includes implementing and refining criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A clearly defined process that identifies individual students' academic, personal, and social-emotional needs and provides appropriate scaffolds that include individualized support and cohort-based models as appropriate.
	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div> <p>Equitable Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Outreach and support strategies that are informed by disaggregated participation and outcomes data, particularly for historically marginalized students. ○ Plans and steps to identify and address gaps and barriers to improve student success in pathway programs of study, particularly for historically marginalized students. </div> </div>		
 Continuous Improvement	<p>Continuous improvement practices for academic instruction and support should be completed annually, at minimum. However, structured opportunities for student feedback and input may be more effective if done on a more frequent (e.g., each quarter or semester).</p> <p>Process includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Analysis of quantitative data reflecting supportive services and advising accessed by students, disaggregated by student demography and endorsement area. ○ Use of insights generated through data analysis to identify and provide strategic and systematic support and marshal additional resources to ensure equitable access to high-quality, pathway-aligned coursework for all students. ○ Review of disaggregated student outcomes based on types of support received (e.g., individual advising, classroom-based support, etc.). ○ Processes to obtain and integrate qualitative student feedback in individualized planning processes and student support. 		

Academic Instruction and Support Resources

- **“College and Career Ready Indicators”**: As a part of the [Illinois’ Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) plan](#), the College and Career Ready Indicators developed by the Illinois State Board of Education offer multiple measures to determine a student’s college and career readiness to inform advising and individualized planning.
- **Illinois PaCE: Customized Framework Examples**: The Illinois Postsecondary and Career Expectations (PaCE) framework is an organizing tool to help acknowledge and connect areas of success and identify those that may need additional attention or resources. The Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) has compiled this list of customized frameworks implemented in various communities around the state.
- **“PaCE, CCPE, CCRI Crosswalk”**: This resource from EdSystems outlines the ways in which the Postsecondary and Career Expectations, College and Career Readiness Indicator, and College and Career Pathway Endorsements frameworks are interrelated and can be aligned at the school district level in implementation.
- **Transitional Math** and **Transitional English** Resources: These webpages from EdSystems host a variety of resources to guide the various stages of development and implementation of transitional math and English courses.
- **EXEMPLAR: [Evanston High School Individualized Career and Academic Plan](#)**: Evanston Township High School District 202 serves as an exemplar in adapting the PaCE Framework and integrating it into their approach to individualized planning. This webpage includes the district’s checklist which is systematized in its student-facing college and career planning technology platform, enabling students to track their own progress.

Recruitment and Access Criteria

Recruitment and access strategies aim to bridge equity gaps, focusing on access participation, retention, persistence, and completion across diverse student demographics. The criteria outlined herein emphasize a holistic approach, encompassing many outreach strategies, targeted partnerships, and continuous improvement processes. This approach ensures all students have equitable opportunities to thrive and succeed in college and career pathways.

	 Implementing <i>Required or otherwise aligned to support endorsement authorization</i>	 Refining <i>Processes for regular revision and equitable improvement</i>	 Advancing <i>Model practices</i>
Outreach Strategies, Partnership, and Coordination	<p>Pathway includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Information about pathways made available in multiple formats tailored for students, such as on the school website, teacher recommendation forms, family-oriented interest forms, and informational sessions. 	<p>Pathway includes implementing criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Outreach includes targeted invitations to students and their families (e.g., email campaigns, social media outreach, informational sessions, community partnership events, etc.). 	<p>Pathway includes implementing and refining criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Middle school outreach strategies that provide early exposure to pathways opportunities (e.g., bridge programs, career awareness workshops, online platforms, open houses, etc.). ○ Integration of orientation courses within middle school curricula to offer students an early introduction to pathway programs, outlining progression and opportunities.
<div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;">  <div> <p>Equitable Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Outreach information about pathways is refined to ensure communications, including messaging and images, are inclusive of historically marginalized groups. ○ Targeted invitations specifically invite historically marginalized students and their families. ○ Targeted invitations specifically invite students who, through multiple measures of academic performance, are considered nearly or barely eligible for college and career pathway opportunities. </div> </div>			

Recruitment and Access Criteria, Continued

	 Implementing <i>Required or otherwise aligned to support endorsement authorization</i>	 Refining <i>Processes for regular revision and equitable improvement</i>	 Advancing <i>Model practices</i>
Retention and Persistence	<p>Pathway includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Orientation courses and presentations on pathway progression, with follow-ups and readily available information to support and ensure students understand the available opportunities. 	<p>Pathway includes implementing criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Enhanced strategies to support student persistence, focusing on specific student needs and aspirations (e.g., personalized learning plans, robust academic and emotional supports, etc.). 	<p>Pathway includes implementing and refining criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Comprehensive support systems for students that include mentoring, connections to individualized planning processes, and academic supports as part of postsecondary planning and preparation. ○ Programs that bridge middle school to high school transitions, with a focus on career exploration.
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div> <p>Equitable Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Culturally responsive instruction training for instructors to engage better and support diverse student populations. ○ A self-contained buddy system where upperclassmen and alumni mentor incoming students, focusing on historically marginalized groups to facilitate a sense of belonging and community. </div> </div>			

Recruitment and Access Criteria, Continued

	 Implementing <i>Required or otherwise aligned to support endorsement authorization</i>	 Refining <i>Processes for regular revision and equitable improvement</i>	 Advancing <i>Model practices</i>
Career Advising	<p>Pathway includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Student completion of a robust individual career plan summary, aligned to the Postsecondary and Career Expectations framework. 	<p>Pathway includes implementing criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Student support to review connections between their identified career area of interest and their individualized plan. ○ Enhanced interactive advising and school-based opportunities to further student career interests and awareness based on student expectations and queries (i.e., job shadows, industry professional guest speakers, ongoing career exploration tools, etc.). 	<p>Pathway includes implementing and refining criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Advanced career advising systems that resonate with and support student career development, including connections to mentors and work-based learning. ○ Augmentation of school resources from third party partners (e.g., community college advising staff, community-based organizations focused on advising and access, etc.).
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div> <p>Equitable Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conducting annual community feedback sessions, inviting parents, employer partners, and local community members to discuss program improvements and inclusive strategies. ○ Embedding a student-centered initiative that invites students from diverse backgrounds to participate in curriculum design, implementation, and evaluation discussions. </div> </div>			
 Continuous Improvement	<p>Process includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conducting student and parent surveys, organizing focus group discussions, and analyzing student performance data to inform improvements in the pathway structure and content. ○ Collaboration with middle school administrators and teachers for curriculum integration, feedback systems, and adapting programs based on evolving educational and career standards for student needs. ○ Regularly engaging with diverse community stakeholders, including parents, local leaders, and alumni, to gather feedback and insights for program improvements. 		

Recruitment and Access Resources

- [ACTE Quality CTE Program of Study Framework](#): The Association for Career & Technical Education (ACTE) created an evidence-based framework outlining essential elements and criteria for the development and evaluation of high-quality Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs and a companion self-evaluation instrument.
- **EXEMPLAR:** [Career Pathways in ROE 47](#): The Region Office of Education 47 website hosts information on regional pathways and participating schools.
- **EXEMPLAR:** [Career Pathways at Vienna High School](#): Vienna High School, a rural school district in southern Illinois, posted on its website videos introducing each of the pathways together with pathway-specific resources and potential course sequences for students and their families to access at any time.

Instructional Sequence Criteria

The instructional sequence for the College and Career Pathway Endorsements must consist of strategically selected and non-duplicative coursework that integrates technical and essential employability competencies. Ultimately, quality college and career pathways will build knowledge and skills that complement core academics to prepare learners for college.

	 Implementing <i>Required or otherwise aligned to support endorsement authorization</i>	 Refining <i>Processes for regular revision and equitable improvement</i>	 Advancing <i>Model practices</i>
Program of Study	<p>Pathway includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Two years of industry-focused secondary coursework or equivalent competencies, including at least six hours of early college credit. ○ Progression in the depth and detail of technical knowledge and skills acquired by students. ○ Multiple entry and exit points for students. ○ Progress toward the attainment of a recognized postsecondary credential. 	<p>Pathway includes implementing criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Curricular and technical competencies that are developed with employer input to prepare students for both furthering their education and entering into in-demand and emerging careers. ○ Ability to earn in-demand industry credentials that are aligned with local and regional labor market needs/analyses. ○ Analyzing course sequences of high-value postsecondary programs of study to identify strategic early college credit opportunities and inform secondary course sequences. ○ Equal access and weight in grade point average calculations between Advanced Placement and dual credit coursework. 	<p>Pathway includes implementing and refining criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ability to earn high-value industry credentials that carry sufficient currency with employers and lead to entry-level job offers. ○ In-person, hybrid, or virtual access to dual enrollment for courses that are essential to a robust pathway but which school districts are not able to be offer as dual credit.
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div> <p>Equitable Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clear and intentional scheduling of course sequences that allow for work-based learning opportunities and/or coursework at the local career center. ○ Eligibility for the pathway’s early college courses are designed for maximum access (e.g., limiting or removing age restrictions and reasonable and attainable placement practices). </div> </div>			

Instructional Sequence Criteria, Continued

	 Implementing <i>Required or otherwise aligned to support endorsement authorization</i>	 Refining <i>Processes for regular revision and equitable improvement</i>	 Advancing <i>Model practices</i>
Teaching and Learning	<p>Pathway includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Integration of academic studies, technical content, and essential employability skills (e.g., leadership, teamwork, communication, problem-solving, work ethic, initiative, adaptability, etc.) within and outside of the classroom. 	<p>Pathway includes implementing criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Learning experiences are co-designed by education and industry partners across the secondary-to-postsecondary continuum (beyond the requisite team-based challenges). ○ Instruction incorporates relevant equipment, technology, and materials to support learning. 	<p>Pathway includes implementing and refining criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Project-based learning and related instructional approaches, such as problem-based, inquiry-based and challenge-based learning, are fully integrated into the program of study. ○ Learning experiences are delivered in partnership or fully by employers as a contextualized learning experience.
	<div data-bbox="409 828 604 1023" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>Equitable Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensuring rigor and opportunity equal to or greater than that of non-pathway programs of study. ○ Flexible, differentiated, and personalized instruction to meet the needs of a diverse student population. ○ Incorporating social and emotional learning standards and culturally responsive teaching to guide lesson plan and assessment development. 		

Instructional Sequence Criteria, Continued

	 Implementing <i>Required or otherwise aligned to support endorsement authorization</i>	 Refining <i>Processes for regular revision and equitable improvement</i>	 Advancing <i>Model practices</i>
Postsecondary Articulation and Workforce Transition	<p>Pathway includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alignment of content between secondary and postsecondary coursework and curricula, maximizing opportunities for dual credit or articulated credit in applicable academic and technical areas. ○ Specificity as to how the program is structured or articulated to provide educational opportunities for students. 	<p>Pathway includes implementing criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A secondary-to-postsecondary education transition that is seamlessly connected through curriculum alignment and cross-institutional collaboration. ○ Courses with flexibility and preparation for more than one postsecondary program or career within an industry sector, (e.g., courses such as Medical Terminology that prepare for nursing, radiology technician, or other health science postsecondary programs). ○ Learning experiences that engage students in authentic, industry-aligned projects supported by instructional strategies that are student-centered, developmentally appropriate, and research-based. 	<p>Pathway includes implementing and refining criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clear and efficient pathway maps and transfer agreements that are developed collaboratively by secondary and postsecondary partners, which articulate how pathways extend from secondary into two-year and four-year credentials. ○ Co-developed, consistent messaging and branding of pathway maps and materials from both secondary and postsecondary partners.
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div> <p>Equitable Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Developing postsecondary currency opportunities that incentivize students to complete the rigorous College and Career Pathway Endorsements requirements and increase the number of students matriculating into postsecondary programs aligned to their secondary pathways. ○ Collaborating with third-party partners who offer additional support to historically marginalized students through the transition from secondary to postsecondary to degree completion (e.g., affinity groups serving historically marginalized groups in a particular industry). </div> </div>			

Instructional Sequence Criteria, Continued

	 Implementing <i>Required or otherwise aligned to support endorsement authorization</i>	 Refining <i>Processes for regular revision and equitable improvement</i>	 Advancing <i>Model practices</i>
 Continuous Improvement	<p>Process includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review of disaggregated student data to assess progression through accelerated coursework and identify potential barriers to access or success. ○ Authentic assessments to evaluate the quality of student learning and experience, work products and performances, and the application of knowledge and skills toward pathway learning outcomes. ○ Robust processes to engage students and gather feedback on their personal learning experiences and transitions into postsecondary and the workforce. ○ The use of formative and summative assessments to inform and improve curricular and instructional design and delivery. ○ Regular data-sharing and review by all relevant stakeholders. ○ Curricular revisions as necessary to reflect the latest advances in the industry, evidence-based program models, and evaluations of student performance. 		

Instructional Sequence Resources

- [College and Career Pathway Endorsements: Currency and Resources](#): This page on the EdSystems website includes information on the current landscape of the endorsement system and the currency offered to endorsement earners by community colleges, universities, and scholarship organizations.
- [“High School District 214 Academic Programs and Pathways Guidebook”](#): District 214 is delineating and elevating pathways in alignment with the endorsement in this guidebook for students and their families.
- [“Recommended Technical and Essential Employability Competencies for College and Career Pathway Endorsements”](#): Developed to support implementation of the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act, this document outlines cross-cutting essential employability competencies and the recommended technical employability competencies for each endorsement area within Illinois’ College and Career Pathway Endorsements system. The competency recommendations were developed through robust engagement with industry and education leaders. Illinois high school districts implementing the endorsement system are required to support student acquisition of these core competencies.
- [State of Illinois Model Programs of Study Guides](#): From the Illinois Community College Board and EdSystems, the ten guides provide guidance and exemplars for local programs to adopt or customize as they develop programs of study as part of the Perkins V plan, identify priority dual credit courses that are foundational to the industry area and well-situated for the College and Career Pathway Endorsements, and define the competencies that should be sequenced to prepare students for the future of work in each industry area.
- **EXEMPLAR:** [Ridgewood High School: College and Career Pathway Endorsements](#): On its website, Ridgewood High School outlines the components of earning an endorsement, current postsecondary currency available for endorsement earners, and recognition for alumni who graduated with an endorsement.

Instructors Criteria

Instructors for the College and Career Pathway Endorsements must be prepared and supported to serve a diverse range of students through both individual and collaborative practices.

	 Implementing <i>Required or otherwise aligned to support endorsement authorization</i>	 Refining <i>Processes for regular revision and equitable improvement</i>	 Advancing <i>Model practices</i>
Recruitment and Preparation	<p>Pathway includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Instructors who meet appropriate state, district, and/or institutional certification and licensing requirements (e.g., CTE endorsement). ○ Dual credit instructors who hold either a qualified master’s degree or a master’s degree with requisite coursework hours or relevant experience in the desired discipline. ○ Ongoing, rigorous professional development on a wide range of topics covering all elements of a high-quality program of study. 	<p>Pathway includes implementing criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Intentional and active recruitment of instructors with relevant experience and a process to aid them in gaining the necessary qualifications (i.e., professional development plans). ○ Instructors with relevant industry experience or who are in the process of obtaining additional experience through an externship or similar model. ○ Professional development for new teachers, including lesson planning, classroom management, and delivery of instruction. ○ District training in multiple methods of course delivery (i.e., in-person, virtual, hybrid). 	<p>Pathway includes implementing and refining criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Industry-aligned professional development opportunities (e.g., attending a manufacturing conference). ○ A policy that allows for unique earned experience and industry credentials to qualify instructors to teach dual credit coursework.
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div> <p>Equitable Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recruitment of a diverse body of instructors that reflect local demographics and the student body. ○ Professional development that supports the needs of diverse instructors. ○ Providing regular training and professional development in college and career advising, social and emotional learning (SEL) standards, and culturally responsive teaching. </div> </div>			

Instructors Criteria, Continued

	 Implementing <i>Required or otherwise aligned to support endorsement authorization</i>	 Refining <i>Processes for regular revision and equitable improvement</i>	 Advancing <i>Model practices</i>
Individual and Collaborative Practices	<p>Pathway includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Modified learning activities to align with students' interests. ○ Instructor access to and experience with pathway industry professionals (i.e., externships, field study visits, etc.). ○ Instructors who maintain up-to-date knowledge and skills across all aspects of the industry of focus. 	<p>Pathway includes implementing criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Systematic expectations for instructor collaboration across academic and technical courses (i.e., common preparation period, professional development, etc.) to align and integrate curriculum and coordinate personalized student supports. ○ Authentic instructor collaboration with industry, community, and postsecondary partners to support and plan student work. ○ Collaboration with employers on the creation, design, and delivery of high-quality experiences along the work-based learning continuum. 	<p>Pathway includes implementing and refining criteria, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Incentives for instructors to obtain training to teach pathways dual credit courses as a part of district policy or embedded within the collective bargaining agreement. ○ Instructors equipped with pathway-specific, evidence-based pedagogical knowledge and skills. ○ Formalized processes and tools that support the management of relationships between instructors and employers. ○ Engagement with other instructors in a community of practice that offers regular reflection and opportunities to share practice with others.
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div> <p>Equitable Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Developing instructional knowledge and skills that support full inclusion of English language learners, special education students, and other special populations. ○ Clear expectations and resourcing for collaboration across relevant departments such as special education and pathways instructors. </div> </div>			

Instructors Criteria, Continued

	 Implementing <i>Required or otherwise aligned to support endorsement authorization</i>	 Refining <i>Processes for regular revision and equitable improvement</i>	 Advancing <i>Model practices</i>
 Continuous Improvement	<p>Process includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Educator use of valid and reliable data disaggregated by gender, race and ethnicity, and special population status, to analyze access and performance among subpopulations, identify equity gaps, and identify actions to address those gaps. ○ Instructor use of data from student work, employer feedback, and other sources to inform their practice. 		

Instructors Criteria Resources

- [Course-Level Credentialing Help Guide for CPS](#): This document from City Colleges of Chicago is an example of transparent collaboration between a community college and high school district to implement dual credit. The guide and the college’s [credential guidelines](#) provides Chicago Public Schools with the information needed to intentionally and actively recruit instructors with relevant experience and to support instructors in gaining the necessary qualifications for dual credit in the career pathway courses.
- [“State and Local Strategies for Diversifying the CTE Educator Workforce”](#): This report from the Association for Career & Technical Education (ACTE) and its companion resource, [Recruiting Diverse Educators: A Database of Organizations Representing Underserved Populations](#), present common challenges to diversifying the educator workforce, identify promising practices in the field to overcome these challenges, and provide actionable strategies and recommendations to assist state and local leaders in strategically planning and developing policies and practices to increase diversity in the workforce.

Appendices

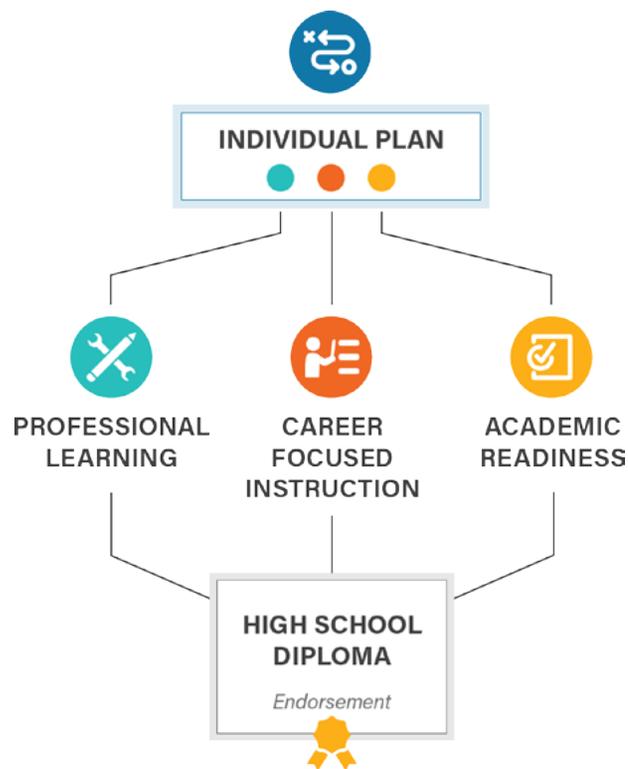
Sources Used in Quality Criteria Development

The following resources were reviewed as part of the initial desk research to define quality criteria across the framework components.

- Alliance for Quality Career Pathways. "Shared Vision, Strong Systems: Alliance for Quality Career Pathways Framework." Retrieved April 18, 2024, from clasp.org/resources-and-publications/files/aqcp-framework-version-1-0/AQCP-Framework.pdf.
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- Education Systems Center at Northern Illinois University and Illinois Community College Board. State of Illinois Model Programs of Study Guides. Retrieved April 18, 2024, from <https://edsystemsniu.org/model-programs-of-study-guides/>.
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- Illinois State Board of Education. "Illinois' Perkins V State Plan, State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2021-2024 CTE Program Size, Scope, and Quality." Retrieved April 18, 2024, from isbe.net/Documents/Perkins-V-FY21-24-Size-Scope-Quality.pdf.
- Imperatore, C., & Hyslop, A. (2018). "ACTE Quality CTE Program of Study Framework." Retrieved April 18, 2024, from acteonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/HighQualityCTEFramework2018.pdf.

College and Career Pathways Endorsements System

The following framework is outlined in the [Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act](#), signed into law in 2016 to improve Illinois students' postsecondary and career readiness.



INDIVIDUAL PLAN

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

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Awareness, exploration, and preparation activities that provide opportunities for students to interact with adults in their workplace and gain essential employability and technical competencies.

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

CAREER-FOCUSED INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE

2 years of secondary coursework or equivalent that include essential employability and technical competencies, at least 6 hours of early college credit, and articulation to a postsecondary credential with labor market value.

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

ACADEMIC READINESS

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

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