

## Identifying Academic Drivers of Student Success

Young adults are our country's talent reservoir, but we are in a dilemma. International comparisons show that on average our youth rank in the middle of the pack. Some commentators are concerned that this is a drag on economic competitiveness. Yet, we know that individuals stand out. Some predict that America's free-wheeling, tough inventiveness will continue to sustain us.

To contribute to our nation's future, we ask this critical question: **What do adults need to know about our youth on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis to better help them achieve their potential and contribute more substantially to our country's future?**

We don't have national curriculum, nor assessments; we depend on state and local ingenuity and will. At the absolute base of the PAS philosophy is that we are not in the business of labelling youth. Instead, we are about eliminating labels, figuring out each student's needs, and moving each one forward into a pathway for adult success.

With these considerations in mind, we propose a checklist for grades 6 to 12 "academic intensity" that PAS teams should consider as they undertake actions to increase and deepen students' preparation for post-secondary occupations. When sufficient evidence becomes available related to the longitudinal interactions of checklist factors, we recommend that a composite indicator be developed.

### Academic Intensity

Key academic intensity factors include the following:

- Success in rigorous and thought-provoking mathematics courses whose content is vertically aligned with 11<sup>th</sup> grade course content required for university and college admissions, on either a statistics or algebra/calculus pathway, or both, designed for different specializations
- Success in English/language arts and all other middle and high school academic core courses of performance-based requirements for demonstrations of analytic, writing, and communication skills
- Participation and high performance in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses in high school
- Participation and high performance in dual-enrollment programs starting in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, resulting in college credit, such as:
  - Early college high schools
  - At least three years of career-technical courses in one pathway leading to an industry-certified credential, taken in a comprehensive high school, career-technical high school, or a community college/technical institute
- Participation and proficiency in at least two years of global language courses
- Demonstrations of excellence in elective courses and activities that are not traditionally thought of as "academic," but positively support youth development and growth
- Accelerating English-language learning to rapidly rise into proficiency