

## How to Provide Good Postsecondary Guidance to all Students

### Definition

- **What:** Providing good postsecondary guidance involves helping students identify their interests and aptitudes, learn about career and academic opportunities that match those interests, and select courses they need to take in preparation. It includes encouraging students to set ambitious-yet-attainable goals and identify the choices they can make to help them achieve their ambitions. It also includes the related task of helping them navigate the application and financial aid process.
- **Why:** Most students' awareness of career options, and practical steps to getting there, is limited. Some don't realize the impact on their career goals of the courses they choose in middle and high school--and their academic effort and performance. Many students only apply to one college--often the one that seems most accessible--without realizing that they are qualified to attend more selective institutions. Students who choose to enter the workforce more directly need guidance to become aware of the opportunities in skilled technical fields, the mechanisms (e.g. certifications and apprenticeships) for success in those fields, and the in-school choices they can make to be better prepared for those opportunities.
- **How:** The reality is that school guidance counselors are often thwarted in their effectiveness by the sheer number of students they are responsible for. However, states and districts can mitigate this challenge to some degree: in the short term, by developing appropriate systems, tools and training (see examples below); and in the long term, by allocating resources to improve the counselor-to-student ratio. Some practical recommendations:
  - Develop and implement appropriate state-wide guidance standards, tools, programs, and training
  - Have all students take the Holland Inventory or a similar career-interest survey in middle school or no later than freshman year of high school
  - Establish an expectation (and provide support) for all students to develop, and annually update, a career-focused, parent-approved personal learning plan by the end of 8th grade
  - Develop partnerships with regional public and private universities and colleges
  - Create a school or district team to develop career awareness, exploration, and immersion programs and activities
  - Develop and publicize systems to help students transition seamlessly into technical certification or apprenticeship programs

**Note:** In addition to the resources suggested below, you may wish to check out the extensive list available at <https://ncs.uchicago.edu/postsecondary-tools>.

### Resources:

- [PRESENTATION] Building Behavior, Beliefs, and Identity in College Counseling, UChicago Network for College Success, 2012. Excellent presentation advocates a developmental approach to help students be prepared to persist and succeed in their college pathway. [https://ncs.uchicago.edu/sites/ncs.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/tools/NCS\\_PS\\_Toolkit\\_URAD\\_Set\\_B\\_BuildingBehaviorsBeliefs.pdf](https://ncs.uchicago.edu/sites/ncs.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/tools/NCS_PS_Toolkit_URAD_Set_B_BuildingBehaviorsBeliefs.pdf)
- [GUIDE] Career Development Education: Activities Guide and Glossary, Massachusetts Department of Education. Extensive inventory of possible programs and activities to support career awareness, exploration, and immersion throughout middle and high school. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/connect/cde/guideglossary.pdf>
- [GUIDE] ACP in Wisconsin, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Wisconsin Academic and Career Planning implementation guide. <https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/acp/DPI%20Guide%202016%20FINAL%20web.pdf>
- [WEBSITE] National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT), U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), Jan 2015. Multiple resources for helping students with IEPs in transition planning. <https://www.transitionta.org/resources>

### Exemplars in Practice:

- Guidance:
  - [ARTICLE] Beyond College Readiness: College Awareness as a First Step, National Association of State Boards of Education, February 2016. Emphasizes state responsibility to set guidance standards; highlights Washington state High School and Beyond Plan and Idaho programs: personalized learning plan by 8th grade, Direct Admission to public colleges, Next Steps Idaho program. [http://www.nasbe.org/wp-content/uploads/Lorenzo\\_College-Awareness-final.pdf](http://www.nasbe.org/wp-content/uploads/Lorenzo_College-Awareness-final.pdf)
  - [GUIDE] Comprehensive Four-Year Postsecondary Plan. UChicago Network for College Success. Sample tool from Kelly HS outlining social-emotional, academic, and college/career skills for counselors to help students develop throughout the HS trajectory. [https://ncs.uchicago.edu/sites/ncs.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/tools/NCS\\_PS\\_Toolkit\\_BST\\_Set\\_D\\_ComprehensivePostsecondaryPlan.pdf](https://ncs.uchicago.edu/sites/ncs.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/tools/NCS_PS_Toolkit_BST_Set_D_ComprehensivePostsecondaryPlan.pdf)
  - [GUIDE] Counseling Department Retreat Facilitator's Guide. UChicago Network for College Success. Sample retreat schedule, activities, and guiding questions from Kelly HS guidance department end-of-year retreat; excellent resource for equipping and encouraging counselors. [https://ncs.uchicago.edu/sites/ncs.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/tools/NCS\\_PS\\_Toolkit\\_BST\\_Set\\_A\\_CounselingRetreatGuide.pdf](https://ncs.uchicago.edu/sites/ncs.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/tools/NCS_PS_Toolkit_BST_Set_A_CounselingRetreatGuide.pdf)
  - [WEBSITE] Academic and Career Planning, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Website includes engaging intro video. <http://dpi.wi.gov/acp>

- [ARTICLE] Fresno Unified increases applications to CSUs and UCs, EdSource, July 2017. Report on Fresno experience: schools increased students' awareness of options and breadth of college applications by providing information on public colleges and universities matching their academic profiles.  
<https://edsources.org/2017/fresno-unified-increases-applications-to-csus-and-ucs/584580> For detailed information, see policy brief: Exploring Improvement Science in Education: Promoting College Access in Fresno Unified School District, Policy Analysis for California's Education, June 2017  
<http://www.edpolicyinca.org/sites/default/files/FUSD-continuous-improvement.pdf>
- [BROCHURE] PSiHigh: Design Your Personal Learning Plan. Seminole County Public Schools, April 2018. Student guide to personal learning and postsecondary planning at Problem Solving Incubator High, an innovative Florida public high school.  
<https://www.scps.k12.fl.us/core/fileparse.php/1417/urlt/PSI-High-Curriculum-Guide-2018.pdf>
- Industry Certifications/ Apprenticeships
  - [REPORT] Connecting Secondary Career and Technical Education and Registered Apprenticeship: A Profile of Six State Systems, DOE: National Center for Innovation in Career and Technical Education, July 2016. Detailed overview of six states' approaches to aligning CTE with registered apprenticeship programs. See particularly the summary of best practices, pages 42-46.  
<https://sites.ed.gov/underservedyouth/files/2017/01/MS5-Connecting-Secondary-Career-and-technical-Education-and-Registered-Apprenticeship-A-profile-of-Six-State-Systems.pdf>

#### Research Foundations:

- [REPORT] Ramping up for college readiness in Minnesota high schools: Implementation of a schoolwide program, REL, June 2016. Randomized control evaluation of Minnesota program designed to improve students' college readiness in five areas (academic, admissions, career awareness, financial, and social/emotional) in twenty rural high schools.  
[https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/pdf/REL\\_2016146.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/pdf/REL_2016146.pdf)