



Helping Students Navigate Pathways to Adult Success Toolkit

RECOMMENDATION 1: THE FOUNDATION

Ensures that all students receive a foundation of sufficient academic rigor to enable them to pursue a variety of challenging and engaging postsecondary preparation opportunities.

THE FOUNDATION — COURSE PREPARATION AND GUIDANCE

Getting ready for the future is what school is all about. Whether youth are bound for college or career, school and district educators must ensure that a few short-term and long-term basics are firmly in place.

- Require courses and course sequences that maintain options for college and career goals starting in middle school, accessible to all students, without participation barriers.
- Construct clear pathways for:
 - core academic courses, particularly STEM
 - foreign language and arts electives
 - career tech courses and certifications
- Consider course sequence when assigning students into courses. Revise the master schedule if necessary to enable equity-driven access; review and modify entry requirements for courses required for future success. Provide a school-level, stigma-free parallel system of support for students in challenging classes; require their participation when indicators show their need for it, so all students can succeed in these rigorous courses.
- Teach all students in middle and high school the course names, sequences, and minimum grades they need for college and career access. College access requirements vary by state and type of college; career access varies by regional workforce needs and availability of structured internships and apprenticeships. Work with local and regional employers to provide informal experiential learning and career exposure; for example, career days, job shadows, speakers, etc.



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- Emphasize that minimum grades are floors, not ceilings. To succeed in higher education and the workplace, students should aim for grades and skill development far beyond the minimum. Stress that while D is usually a passing grade, a D average is not enough to get into and succeed at college or a good job. Help students develop motivation, interest, commitment, knowledge, skills, and lifelong learning habits so they can enjoy success in a chosen field.
- Monitor student progress with frequent grade and transcript analysis. Assign mentoring or tutoring as needed to get students who are behind back on track. Use report card conferencing and/or student-facing on-track reports to help students take responsibility for their own progress. The college model of co-requisite assistance is one option, building extra time and credits into essential courses for tutoring on concepts taught that day or week.
- Require students to develop a plan for their future in late middle school, reviewed in annual one-on-one update meetings and occasional group check-ins during the school year. To supplement counselor capacity, train volunteers from partner organizations to understand district and state graduation requirements and post-secondary preparation needs. This “distributed counseling” pool of adults should work closely with counselors, learning from them while bringing fresh perspectives and awareness.
- Teach parents the same information on courses, sequences, goals for grades, and regional career opportunities, in comfortable, peer-facilitated conversational gatherings. Use parent, neighborhood, community, and faith-based networks to offer parents and families the knowledge they need to guide their children wisely.

THE FOUNDATION — HOW TO PROVIDE ACADEMIC SUPPORT

“Providing academic supports to increase postsecondary readiness” means providing students with genuinely challenging academic instruction so that they are prepared for success at the college level; providing extra help and acceleration to those who enter middle or high school already behind grade level in key academic areas, particularly English and math; and supporting less well-prepared students to succeed in “advanced” college prep classes beginning in the middle grades. [Read More](#)