



On PaCE to Thrive

Guide to Cultivating Community Action for College and Career Readiness

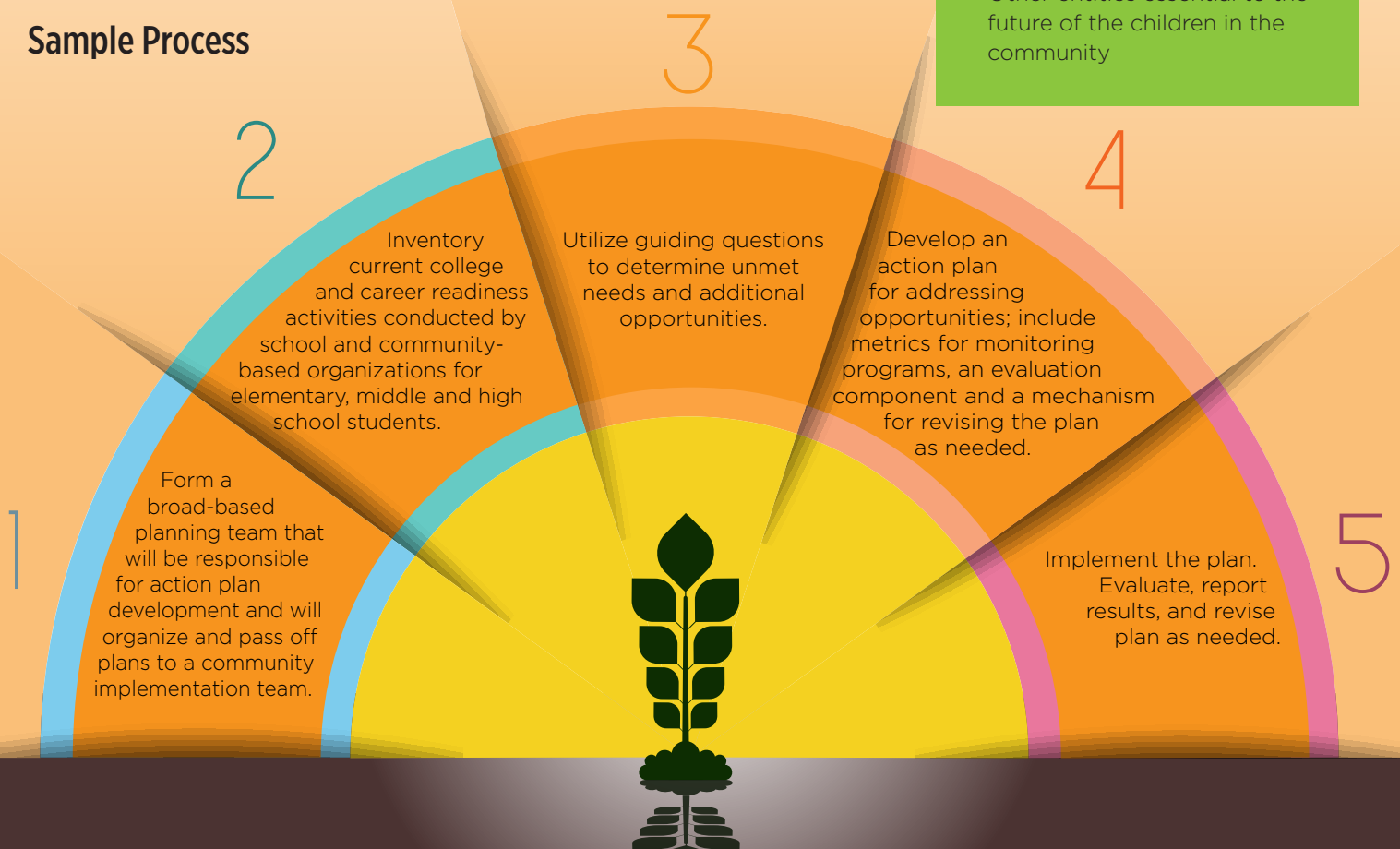
A local community can change its future through collective action on essential components of economic and social success. One of those essentials is readiness for college and for living-wage careers. Built on the **Postsecondary and Careers Expectations** (PaCE) Framework, this guide provides support for teams that represent all sectors – businesses, community organizations, schools, and families. Teams may already exist within collective impact organizations, or they may need to be pulled together. Some of the many activities listed in the guide will be operating but may need more support. Others will present new opportunities. The activities are organized around three key areas for student success, which are directly linked to the community's future.

- Career exploration and development
- College exploration, preparation and selection
- Financial aid and literacy

Potential Members of the College and Career Readiness Community Team

- Elementary school
- Middle school
- High school
- Community college
- Two-year college
- Four-year college
- Postsecondary representatives from career services offices
- Library
- Chamber of Commerce
- Other business representatives
- Religious organization leader
- Local service organizations
- Community-based organizations
- Afterschool programs
- YMCA or YWCA
- Local governmental agencies
- United Way
- Other entities essential to the future of the children in the community

Sample Process



Guiding Questions—Career Exploration and Development

Use these questions to identify unmet needs and additional opportunities.

Late High School Students (11-12)

What supports are in place in school and the community for students and families preparing for life after high school?

- Resume/personal statement/goals and steps to attain those goals
- Interviews for internships/jobs/scholarships
- Job/internship searches and applications in their career pathway
- Earning and receiving industry-based certifications

What opportunities help students to strengthen their preparation for postsecondary institutions and careers in these areas?

- Early college credit programs (Advanced Placement, Dual Credit, Articulated Credit)
- Professional certifications or credentials
- Team-based challenges related to career pathways
- Capstone projects
- Community service related to career options

How are families of English Language Learners (ELL), first-generation, low-income and special-needs students supported in making postsecondary decisions related to careers?

What classes integrate a career focus through real-world, problem-based learning?

In what ways are students encouraged to reflect on their interests and skills in order to improve preparation for a wide range of careers?

Early High School Students (9-10)

How are students transitioned from thinking about career clusters to identifying careers of interest and making plans for the future in school and in the community? What opportunities are there to do the following?

- Hear from alumni and community leaders
- Visit businesses
- Learn about credentials required for various jobs
- Identify summer or other out of school activities aligned with career interests

How are students' career interests used to create a schedule of courses for school?

How is career planning a part of school coursework and extracurricular activities?

What opportunities are there for leadership roles for all students within various clubs and activities?

What opportunities exist for community service work?

How are families of ELL, first-generation, low-income and special-needs students included and supported in more in-depth career planning with their students?

What opportunities do students have to participate in problem based learning that integrates a career focus in classes?

Middle School Students

What is needed for students to learn about the 16 career clusters as they begin identifying career options?

- Introduction to all of the career clusters
- Mechanisms to learn more about individual careers
- Opportunities to identify their interests
- Career exploration events
- Connections to career professionals

- Integration of career activities into classroom work
- Development of soft skills (e.g., communication, teamwork, problem solving, curiosity, etc.)

How are students' plans for high school aligned with their interests and career pathways?

How are learning opportunities in the classroom contextualized with real world situations and careers?

How are families of ELL or first-generation students included and supported in making career exploration plans with their students?

How are families of students with special needs supported in exploring careers with their students?

Elementary School Students

What opportunities do students have in school and the community to learn about different careers?

How are student interests connected to the 16 career clusters in school and outside of school?

What supports are in place for identifying and communicating with families of ELL or first-generation students about career exploration and development?

How are community leaders involved in connecting student interests to work skills?

How are students exposed to pathways other than those modeled at home?



Sample Calendar of Activities for Students—Career Exploration and Development

Late High School Students (11-12)

Fall (August–December)

Create a resume and personal statement
Participate in mock job interviews
Attend workshops to find and apply for internships
Serve as a leader in your extracurricular activities
Register for appropriate dual credit, AP, or IB courses aligned with a career pathway
Consult with the local community college about any articulated credit earned as part of a career tech course
Volunteer at nonprofit organizations in your interest area (e.g., animal shelter, homeless center, food bank, hospital)

Spring (January–May)

Participate in career-oriented team challenges
Participate in assessments for industry credentials
Participate in mock job interviews
Participate in projects and presentations involving industry volunteers
Receive recognition for attainment of industry credentials as part of the school honors banquet/assembly

Summer (June–August)

Participate in an internship or other work-based learning opportunity connected to career interests
Become a regular volunteer at organizations connected to career interests and/or personal values

Early High School Students (9-10)

Fall (August–December)

Participate in a workshop series on careers in the community and hear from professionals about careers of interest; follow up with a professional by phone, email, or letter and ask for advice on preparing for your own career
Participate in a career fair with specific local institutional information about the amount and type of education required¹
Enroll in classes that will build as part of a career pathway

Participate in school/community activities that build relationships with career professionals (e.g., Rotary Youth Leadership, Kiwanis Key Club, Leo Club)
Volunteer at local nonprofit organizations in your interest area (e.g. animal shelter, homeless center, food bank, hospital)²
Participate in a small group workshop on postsecondary options for undocumented students³
Develop individualized plans for special needs students to transition to postsecondary life⁴

Spring (January–May)

Participate in career pathway-oriented visit days (e.g., manufacturing day)
Participate in assessments for industry credentials
Connect with mentors for STEM career pathways projects⁵

Summer (June–August)

Volunteer at organizations connected to career interests and/or personal values⁶
Job shadow career professionals during summer months⁷

Middle School Students

Fall (August–December)

Complete a career cluster survey
Complete a module that explores careers connected to career clusters of interest and write a reflection about which careers are most interesting or appealing and why
Choose a career cluster of interest and develop a plan for high school which supports that area of interest
Participate in community group activities that emphasize students' interests and careers⁸

Spring (January–May)

Participate in a career exploration day with a parent or family member
Visit workplaces aligned with career interests
Participate in career pathway-oriented visit days (e.g., manufacturing day)

Summer (June–August)

Participate in career exploration activities offered by community organizations
Participate in community service activities that build relationships with career professionals (e.g., Rotaract, Kiwanis Kids, Leo Club)
Participate in summer reading programs and camps that emphasize different student interests and their connections to careers and STEM content

Elementary School Students

Fall (August–December)

Participate in career highlights days and ask questions of professionals in eight of the 16 different career clusters⁹
Engage with professionals who work with the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, 4-H, and other student groups and ask about activities to explore careers
Attend community programs with business leaders to build relationships with career professionals

Spring (January–May)

Host visit days with high school seniors wearing their caps and gowns at the elementary school
Participate in career highlights days and ask questions of professionals in eight of the 16 different career clusters
Participate in a group service project for the local community (e.g., food drives, soup kitchen)

Summer (June–August)

Participate with family members in workshops that introduce the 16 career clusters with professionals from the community
Participate in summer reading programs and camps that emphasize different student interests and their connections to careers



Guiding Questions—College Exploration, Preparation and Selection

Consider these questions to identify unmet needs and additional opportunities.

Late High School Students (11-12)

In what ways can students catch up or speed up (e.g., AP or dual credit) in preparation for their postsecondary goals?

How are students encouraged toward rigorous 12th grade experiences in the school and the community?

In what ways are students assisted in the school and the community as they select and enroll in postsecondary institutions aligned with their career plans?

- Participate in college fairs
- Visit colleges
- Track entrance requirements
- Choose schools to apply to (3-5 match, one safety and one reach)

- Apply to postsecondary institutions
- Select the best fit postsecondary institution
- Complete the admissions and enrollment process
- Enlist in the military

What supports are in place in the school and the community to help students and families, including English Language Learners (ELL) and first-generation, to understand and prepare for the complete college experience?

- Pre-college
 - Educational requirements
 - Cost
 - Entrance exams
 - Applications
 - Financial aid applications and assessments

- During college
 - Pay bills
 - Stay on top of coursework/time management
 - Navigate college support systems
- After college
 - Expected starting salary
 - Repaying student loan debt
 - Mid-career salary

How does the community celebrate the career paths of special needs students as a part of the celebrations for the accomplishments of traditional students?

What supports help undocumented students to navigate the college application and selection process?

Early High School Students (9-10)

How are educators and community members empowered in schools and in the community to support students in determining their postsecondary plans?

- School counselors
- Teachers, librarians and other school staff
- Public librarians and other informal educators
- Religious leaders
- Business leaders in all 16 career clusters
- Community leaders
- Military

In what ways are all students including ELL and first-generation students prepared for their postsecondary goals?

- Academic preparation
 - attendance
 - grades
 - rigorous courses
- Extracurricular activities
- Community service and activities
- Leadership opportunities
- Mentoring programs

- Campus visits
- Development of soft skills

What opportunities are there for students to apply learning to existing problems and situations?

How are families of special needs students provided with resources for understanding and making choices among postsecondary options for their students?

What opportunities help undocumented students to receive support and direction in considering postsecondary options?

Middle School Students

How are students encouraged to build an on-going relationship between community service, student interests, extracurricular activities and postsecondary studies?

How are cultural expectations respected and addressed when introducing families to the importance of a postsecondary education?

What opportunities are there for students in the school and the community to attend classes or activities or challenges/events held on local college campuses (i.e., tours, concerts, summer camps, Saturday Fair)?

How are students' high school course plans aligned with their postsecondary goals?

How are families of ELL or first-generation students included and supported in making high school plans with their students?

How are families of special needs students connected to supports and resources to assist their students in the transition to and success in high school?

Elementary School Students

How are students introduced to the idea of going to college in school and in the community?

In what ways do the schools and the community communicate with students and families about postsecondary expectations? What efforts are made to ensure that all families are included?

What opportunities are there for students to go to local college campuses for Saturday events or summer camps?

How are these opportunities shared with all students?



Sample Calendar of Activities for Students—College Explorations, Preparation and Selection

Late High School Students (11-12)

Fall (August–December)

Participate in a college fair¹⁰

Participate in school activities supporting a postsecondary orientation

- College T-Shirt Dress-Up Day
- Hang pennants for destination schools in a public place
- Display teachers' degrees and alma maters
- Present college reps in the school building

Take SAT, ACT, and AP exams¹¹

Participate in College Application Month activities, including workshops focused on choosing colleges to apply to and how to complete and submit college applications

Become a leader in student activities, clubs and/or sports. Keep a record of your activities to use for scholarship applications¹²

Visit the Disabilities Resource Centers on the campuses of postsecondary schools of choice

Encourage families to participate in a parent university
Take any required assessments for enrollment into post secondary programs (e.g., placement tests, CLEP tests, language tests)

Spring (January–May)

Participate in a college application party to kick off choosing and completing college applications

Complete a profile in the College Scholarship Service System for access to scholarships

Participate in National College/Signing/Decision Day

Take prom pictures with each student indicating a postsecondary destination

Add activities to graduation celebrations

- Recognition for college acceptance/military enlistment
- Wear emblem of chosen college
- Pair up with K graduates for Kindergarten ceremony

Encourage families to participate in a parent university

Announce student's postsecondary destination at end of year banquets and senior nights

Summer (June–August)

Visit colleges of interest¹³

Encourage students to make sure they have completed the "Nine steps to making your college plans a reality!"¹⁴

Mentors meet with students and families to make sure they understand these details¹⁵

- The Academic Side
 - Registering for and attend orientation
 - Taking placement tests
 - Registering for classes
- The Other Details
 - Receiving required immunizations
 - Completing housing forms
 - Arranging transportation
 - Navigating online portals
 - Using college support systems

Early High School Students (9-10)

Fall (August - December)

Participate in a college fair

Participate in school activities supporting a postsecondary orientation

- Host College T-Shirt Day
- Hang pennants for destination schools in a public place
- Place placards outside classroom doors with teacher degrees and alma maters
- Meet with visiting college representatives

Register and take the PSAT or other college entrance practice exams

Invite high school alumni to serve as mentors to freshman/sophomore students

Increase responsibility within student activities, clubs and sports. Keep a record of your activities to use for scholarship applications

Visit the campuses of postsecondary institutions

Encourage families to participate in a parent university
Engage undocumented families in conversations about postsecondary options and overcoming barriers

Connect families of students with special needs to one another to discuss college plans¹⁶

Spring (January–May)

Course catalogue prominently features

- Information about dual credit courses
- Information about AP courses and test scores
- Articulated Credit options

Enroll in classes for next year according to requirements for your postsecondary plans

Enroll in classes for next year that earn early college credits (AP, Dual Credit, Articulated Credit)

Summer (June–August)

Participate in group college visits to local institutions

Summer camp or Saturday classes at a local college

Summer school for remediation or acceleration opportunities

Middle School Students

Fall (August–December)

Hear from community leaders about attending college and how attending may be necessary to acquire livable wage jobs

Spring (January–May)

Participate in a career exploration day with a parent or family member

Visit workplaces aligned with career interests

Participate in career pathway-oriented visit days (e.g., manufacturing day)

Summer (June–August)

Attend summer or Saturday program at a local college

Attend summer school for remediation or acceleration opportunities

Elementary School Students

Fall (August–December)

Participate in discussions about why people go to college
Hear from alumni about the college experience in different career clusters

Participate in school activities to promote college-going (e.g., faculty alma maters, local sports heroes)

Spring (January–May)

Attend activities in which college representatives talk about the difference college can make in your life and how to prepare

Hear from upperclassmen about the connection between student interests and high school activities

Hold meetings with families of special needs students and high school support staff to discuss individual plans

Summer (June–August)

Attend summer or Saturday programs at a local college

Attend summer school for acceleration or remediation



Guiding Questions—Financial Aid and Literacy

Consider these questions to identify unmet needs and additional opportunities.

Late High School Students (11-12)

What opportunities do students have in the school and the community to develop adult financial literacy?

How are students and families, including English Language Learners (ELL), low-income, and first-generation supported to complete their financial planning for the chosen postsecondary option?

- Estimate costs of postsecondary attendance
- Determine the financial return on investment of specific postsecondary options
- Understand financial aid options
- Apply for financial aid/scholarships/grants
- Evaluate financial aid offers

- Determine the role of debt in their postsecondary goal attainment

What supports are there for undocumented students to navigate the financial aid application and decision making process?

Early High School Students (9-10)

What opportunities do students have in the school and the community to develop age-appropriate financial literacy?

How are students and families assisted in completing a financial aid assessment?

How are students and families informed about the general cost ranges of various postsecondary options and completing return on investment analyses?

In what ways are families who are unfamiliar with postsecondary financial aid options, expectations, and outcomes supported to think through and fully understand their options?

- Estimate costs of postsecondary attendance
- Determine the financial return on investment of specific postsecondary options
- Determine the role of debt in their postsecondary goal attainment.

Middle School Students

What opportunities do students have in the school and the community to develop age-appropriate financial literacy?

How can families of ELL or first-generation students receive support in planning for their child's postsecondary goals?

Where can families go for assistance to better understand the financial return on investment of different postsecondary options?

How are students and families informed about the general cost ranges of various postsecondary options and to understand that each options provided a return on investment?

Elementary School Students

What opportunities do families have in the community to learn about planning for and financing a child's postsecondary goals?

What additional supports are in place for the families of ELL, low-income or first-generation students?

What opportunities do families of special needs students have to discuss and prepare for the financial future of their children?

Additional Possible Activities

- Sponsor Parent University for parents of ELL/first generation students to orient them to the process and experience of attending a postsecondary institution.
- Host recent alumni visit days for current students to talk with alumni at each level about what the next level is like.
- Distribute “class of” onesies to local hospitals to be given to babies born during the year.

Resources

Achieve <http://achieve.org/postsecondary-readiness>

Career Cruising <https://public.careercruising.com/en/>

Complete College America <http://completecollege.org/>

Econ Illinois <http://www.econillinois.org>

Illinois Pathways <https://www2.illinoisworknet.com/ilpathways/Pages/default.aspx>

Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) <https://www.isac.org/>

Illinois PaCE: Postsecondary and Career Expectations - http://niu.edu/p20network/_pdfs/HR477-PaCE-Final-232016.pdf

Illinois Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (ILASFAA) <http://www.ilasfaa.org/>

LEAP Liberal Education & America's Promise (AAC&U) <https://www.aacu.org/leap>

National Financial Educators Council <https://www.financialeducatorsCouncil.org/family-savings-challenge/>

Navigate <http://www.dallasfed.org/educate/navigate/>

O*Net <https://www.onetonline.org>

Reality Stone <http://www.ilasfaa.org/docs/news/realitystore2015.html>



Sample Calendar of Activities for Students—Financial Aid and Literacy

Late High School Students (11-12)

Fall (August–December)

Participate in FAFSA Completion Month (October) activities¹⁷

- FAFSA Completion Workshops (stand alone or during school open house/parent-teacher conferences)¹⁸
- Affording College/Financial Aid Workshops
- Determine the Cost of Attendance Workshops
 - At the high school during a football or basketball games
 - At a local eatery with computers, a support person, and activities for younger children and receive a free burger or scoop of ice cream for completing the FAFSA

Receive and read communications on why completing the FAFSA is important

Participate in Scholarship Application Month activities including workshops on how to find, apply for, and evaluate scholarships and other types of financial aid

Participate in College Changes Everything activities including workshops on how to find, apply for, and evaluate scholarships and other types of financial aid

Participate in The Stock Market Game™ for high school students

Spring (January–May)

Complete paperwork for assistance with fees for applications.

Participate in workshops for tax filing assistance for families

Participate in Award Letter Comparison Month (March) activities

- Make sense of financial aid award letters

Participate in the Personal Finance Challenge for high school students

Summer (June–August)

Meet with mentor to review the financial aspects of postsecondary choices

- Tuition bills and required deposits
- Identifying and budgeting for non-tuition expenses

Early High School Students (9-10)

Fall (August–December)

Complete a financial aid assessment with a family member

Attend a workshop about financial planning for various postsecondary options with a family member including a section on return on investment

Participate in The Stock Market Game™ for high school students

Participate in *Gen i Revolution* online personal finance program

Spring (January–May)

Participate in the Personal Finance Challenge for high school students

Summer (June–August)

Participate in a family-based community challenge that requires the demonstration of financial literacy competencies like the Utility Bill Challenge

Participate in *Navigate* or other transition to college programs

Middle School Students

Fall (August–December)

Participate in a parent-to-parent session on affording college; college financial aid staff may be on hand as a resource¹⁹

Engage in activities to develop competencies in financial literacy related to earning income, buying

goods and services, saving, using credit, financial investing, and protecting and insuring assets

Participate in the Stock Market Game™ for middle school students

Participate in the Illinois Economics Concepts Poster Contest

Spring (January–May)

Participate in the Personal Finance Challenge for middle school students

Summer (June–August)

Participate in a family-based community challenge that requires the demonstration of financial literacy competencies like the Family Savings Challenge

Elementary School Students

Fall (August–December)

Learn about the importance of earning an income

Understand how money is required to buy goods and services and practice making choices about how to spend your money by participating in the Reality Store event offered by ILASFAA

Learn about why people save and some guidelines for determining how much to save for future goals^{20,21}

Open community supported college savings accounts for each student²²

Participate in the Stock Market Game™ for late elementary school students

Spring (January–May)

Learn about using credit

Participate in the Illinois Economics Concepts Poster Contest

Summer (June–August)

Attend a financial literacy workshop for families

Identify one or more financial goals for your family together



Action Plan Template

Plan to take action on unmet needs or newfound opportunities.

Community Partner(s)/Champion _____

Goal (What are you trying to accomplish?) _____

Rationale (Why are you trying to accomplish this goal?): _____

Objectives What are you trying to accomplish?	How? Relationships, Methods, Activities	Who? Person/s Responsible	When? Implementation Timeline	Cost? What would we need in order to be able to afford it?	Status Where are we in the process?



Illinois PACE: Postsecondary and Career Expectations

Each student should have an individualized learning plan to help them make career and college decisions, plan a course of study, and make financial aid assessments with family members.

By the end of 12th grade

By the end of 11th grade

By the end of 10th grade

By the end of 9th grade

By the end of 8th grade

By 12/31 of 12th grade

A student should have:

- completed 3 or more admission applications to PS institutions
- met with a school counselor to ensure all steps in the PS admission process are completed on time
- attended a FAFSA completion workshop

By the end of 12th grade a student should be supported to:

- completed the FAFSA
- address any remedial needs in Math/ELA
- obtain an internship opportunity relating to CP
- if applicable, receive industry-based certification(s) relating to CP
- complete one or more team-based challenges or projects relating to CP
- attend a financial aid award letter workshop

A student should know:

- how CP courses and experiences articulate to degree programs at PS options
- estimated cost of each PS option
- affordability of PS options in relation to expected entry-level career salary and anticipated debt
- terms and conditions of any scholarship or loan

A student should be supported to:

- revisit the career survey
- participate in a mock job interview
- create a resume and personal statement
- identify an internship opportunity related to CP
- determine readiness for college-level coursework in Math/ELA and enrolled in either "catch up" or "speed up" course
- complete or enroll in at least one early college credit opportunity
- attend a college fair
- visit at least 3 PS institutions
- take at least one college entrance exam

A student should know:

- app deadlines, test timing, cost, and prep for industry-based certification for CP
- career attributes related to career interests
- entrance requirements, including app deadlines, for expected PS program of study
- 3-5 match schools, one safety, and one reach school for PS program of study
- negative impact of remediation on PS goals
- financial aid deadlines for chosen PS options

A student should be supported to:

- visit at least one workplace aligned to career interests
- complete an orientation course to a particular career cluster or cluster grouping within a career pathway (CP) of interest
- begin determining eligibility for AP courses
- identify 2-3 adults to support him/her through the college and career selection process
- attend a college affordability workshop with adult family member

A student should know:

- educational requirements, cost, expected entry level, and midpoint salary for occupations in selected CP
- different types of PS credentials and institutions
- general timing of college entrance exams and apps
- benefit of early college credit opportunities to PS access and completion

A student should be supported to:

- revisit career cluster survey and take a career interest survey
- complete an orientation to career clusters
- attend a postsecondary (PS) options workshop
- meet with a counselor to discuss coursework and postsecondary/career plans
- begin determining eligibility for AP courses
- outline a plan for community service/ extracurricular activities related to PS plans
- complete a financial aid assessment with a family member

A student should know:

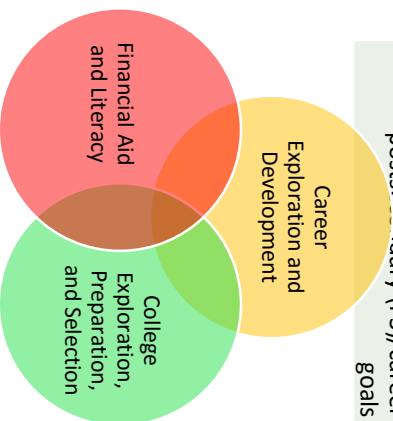
- one or two career clusters for further exploration and development
- the relationship between HS coursework, attendance, and grades to PS plans
- importance of community service and extracurricular activities to PS and career plans
- general cost ranges of various PS options

A student should be supported to:

- complete a career cluster survey
- attend a career exploration day
- complete a unit on education planning
- be exposed to a finance literacy unit in a course or workshop

A student should know:

- the concept of career clusters for further exploration
- possible career clusters of interest
- relationship between community service/ extracurricular activities and postsecondary (PS)/career goals



Endnotes

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Questions?

Debbie Pixton
Assistant Director, Center for P-20 Engagement
Northern Illinois University
dpixton@niu.edu | 815.753.1898



On PaCE to Thrive

Guide to Cultivating Community Action for College and Career Readiness



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