connect **ED**

The National Center for College & Career
Make Potential Exponential

District Framework

September 2021

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D1.2   Communication and Messaging

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District Framework

What is the District Framework?

In recent years, educational research, theory, practice, and policy have converged to signal a necessary shift in approach if we are going to improve and sustain efforts to prepare our youth for the demands of the future economy and a sustainable world. The challenge seems daunting, but educators at all levels are making positive strides to design and implement the kinds of changes necessary to improve outcomes. college and career readiness has been demonstrated as one impactful strategy for transforming learning, teaching, and leading.

This Framework is designed to aid district leaders in being thoughtful and strategic as they lead and support efforts to implement a district-wide system of college and career readiness pathways. By design, the Framework recognizes that transformational shifts in the educational approach require associated shifts in organizational culture and leadership practice, along with new forms of shared accountability. By using a collaborative, inclusive approach that promotes transparency and values partnerships, district leaders will model the practices that create the conditions necessary for transformation of learning, teaching, and leading.

Who should use this resource?

This tool is intended for use by cross-functional district leadership teams, working with stakeholders across the district (teachers, counselors, site administrators, parents, students) and key partners (business and industry, postsecondary, civic, community, labor, and others).

How will we use the District Framework?

The District Framework is designed to be used as an introduction to the work at this level and as a diagnostic tool. It can support cross-functional teams of district leaders and their partners to self-assess the current status of district-wide efforts to implement a system of pathways designed to prepare students for success in college, career, and civic life. As a starting point, teams can determine an agreed upon challenge area and then select the related domain(s) to assess current practice in and identify next steps for further development. The District Framework has a companion online District Toolkit that provides the support resources, tools, and examples needed to help district leadership teams build their capacity in each of the focus areas. For additional support, ConnectED provides professional development to help communities and districts implement the practices outlined in this document.

Find this document along with other key resources at www.connectednational.org
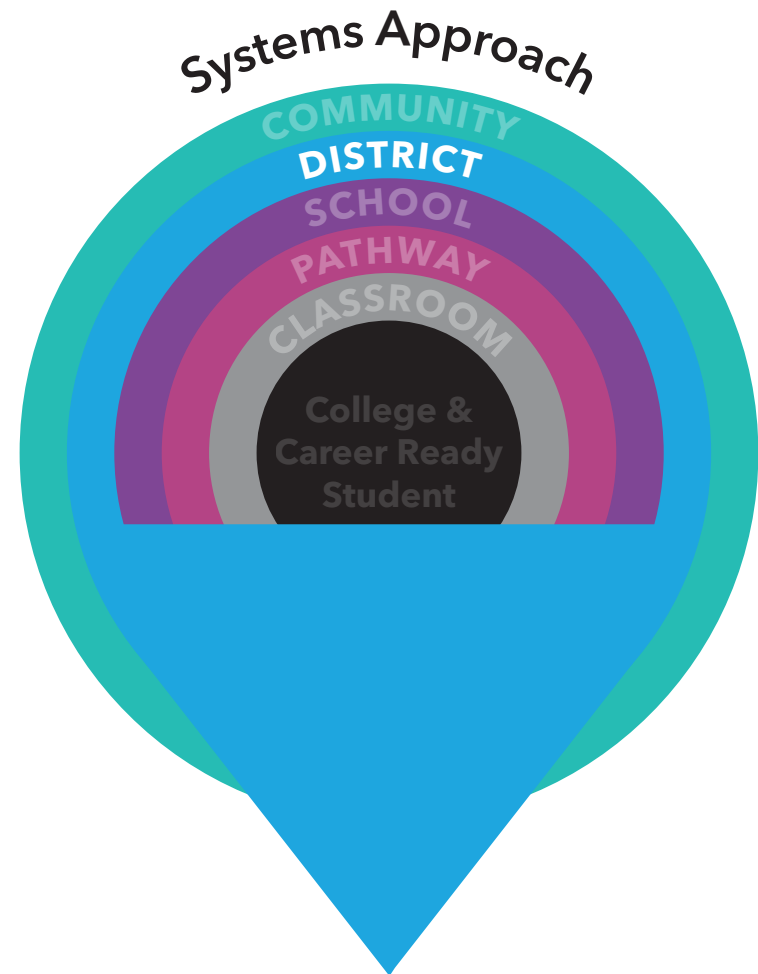
System-Wide Support

Linked Learning is an approach to college and career readiness education that transforms the traditional high school experience by bringing together rigorous academics, a demanding technical education, and real-world experience to help ALL students gain an advantage in high school, post-secondary education, and careers.

ConnectED helps communities develop college and career readiness pathways by recognizing the interdependence inherent in districts and aligning and supporting all levels of the system, from the student and classroom, to the pathway and school, to the district and community.

ConnectED and partner organizations have created a set of tools and resources for each level of the system to help school districts and communities plan, implement, and sustain high-quality pathways. This includes a digital platform, ConnectED Studios, at www.ConnectedStudios.org

This is a DISTRICT resource.

The role of the district in the system is to ensure that the work of college and career readiness is elevated above the level of a programmatic or even a department offering to the level of a cross-district approach. This requires that the district aligns the work with other initiatives, designates collaborators in all relevant departments, and incorporates the work into all supportive infrastructures and development plans in the district. It is up to the district to keep the work maintained at such a level that the school board, community, and entire district are regularly engaged in and informed about college and career readiness activities and impact.

Systems Approach

COMMUNITY
DISTRICT
SCHOOL
PATHWAY
CLASSROOM

College & Career Ready Student

Overview

Linked Learning is:	District teams can be seen:
Leadership, Commitment & Accountability	▪ Aligning all district initiatives and priorities with the vision and graduate profile. ▪ Dedicating the necessary resources and support to schools and pathways. ▪ Communicating and providing clear messaging to the community. ▪ Establishing K–12 benchmarks and common rubrics to assess progress toward meeting graduate profile outcomes.
Equity, Access & Choice	▪ Monitoring pathway equity and access and using data to make improvements. ▪ Establishing policies and procedures that support access and choice. ▪ Working with elementary and middle school teachers to develop a sequenced series of career exploration activities.
High Quality Learning & Teaching	▪ Promoting teacher leadership and collaboration. ▪ Providing the time and support to create the structural conditions for instructional improvement. ▪ Adopting, adapting, or designing curriculum to provide students opportunities to demonstrate their progress. ▪ Establishing policies and procedures that support master schedule development for the unique needs of pathways.
Sustained Partnerships	▪ Drafting formal agreements among institutions that focus on removing barriers to post-secondary education. ▪ Systemically expanding student access to dual enrollment opportunities. ▪ Establishing a system to scale and support work-based learning. ▪ Engaging students, parents, faith-based, and community-based organizations to solicit regular input on the work.
Operational Alignment	▪ Adjusting recruitment and hiring practices to address the knowledge and skills required for pathway settings. ▪ Aligning teacher support programs with pathway teacher retention and professional development needs. ▪ Integrating the facility and equipment needs of pathways into short- and long-term facilities planning processes. ▪ Exercising flexibility in the use of funding to combine and align resources to support pathways.

Purpose of District Involvement

Many school districts and high schools provide well-designed pathways that combine rigorous academic instruction with technical education and real-world experience into a career-themed program of study. This approach helps districts and high schools prepare all students for successful college, career, and community engagement, not just one objective or the other. With their focus on collaboration and student learning outcomes, pathways provide an effective structure and strategy for implementing state and local academic and technical standards as well as nurturing social and emotional learning and the development of 21st century skills.

Experiences across the country have proven that a pathway approach to high school improvement can more effectively engage students, reduce high school dropout rates, raise student achievement, increase rates of on-time high school completion and transition to post-secondary education, and boost students' earning power after high school. Despite that track record, pathways are seldom central to district-driven high school improvement strategies. In fact, historically pathways have been developed by a motivated teacher or a visionary principal in spite of the system, rather than with support from it. If pathways are merely the initiative of a dedicated individual, that person's departure can cause the pathways to falter or fail. Such an isolated or special program approach is not scalable and rarely sustainable. A programmatic approach also frequently creates inequities in choice and access; only some district students gain access to pathway options, and the range of those options may be limited to one or two industry sectors – for example, a health academy or a pre-engineering program.

With limited resources and constant pressure to meet the varied needs of multiple constituents, districts cannot afford to create pathways as add-on or special programs. Instead, implementing a robust system of pathways that ultimately serves the *vast majority* of high school students in the district can effectively leverage and maximize existing district and community resources to provide equitable student access to a range of pathway options. Unless and until a district establishes and advances toward a clear goal in which the majority of its students participate in pathways, there will be little impetus to shift policies, structures, and culture in a way that adequately supports them. Ultimately, robust systems do more than improve high schools; they also strengthen the communities they serve.

Value of a District-Wide System

ConnectED's pilot project, the *California Linked Learning District Initiative*, was established in 2009 to produce comprehensive, districtwide systems of quality pathways designed to boost college, career, and community readiness. The term "districtwide system" means that districts use strategies to ensure that any student can choose among many quality pathways throughout the district. Ideally, any student would have access to pathways in at least six and perhaps as many as 12 different industry sectors. That does not necessarily mean, however, that every high school in the district must offer pathways. Nor does it mean that pathways must fully replace traditional programs of study.

Such a system may take several forms – for example, four to five "wall-to-wall" pathways offered at one or more large high schools; two or three different academies offered at each of several high schools; a number of small career-themed schools; or some combination thereof. Pathways may be designed from scratch or may instead use different existing delivery models – for example, career academies and career-themed small learning communities (SLCs), STEM academies, small schools, charter schools, or magnet schools and programs. Most importantly, no matter what the delivery model, pathways need to be a central focus of district policy and structured institutional support.

Shifting the district's vision and processes to support the significantly different needs and aspirations of pathway students, their teachers, and the schools that house them is a major undertaking – touching every major aspect of district life. As demonstrated throughout this Framework, developing a system of pathways requires thoughtful planning and coordinated implementation by a team of stakeholders that represent school and district leaders, the business community, unions, postsecondary partners, city government, community groups, parents, and students.

In some cases, districts may form a community system (see Community Framework), often referred to as a broad-based coalition, to provide a broader array of pathway and work-based learning opportunities for students working in partnership with local and regional business, community, and postsecondary partners. Such a system may be led and coordinated by one or more intermediary organizations in partnership with the school district. ConnectED has created a Community Framework and toolkit to support community work. This Framework reflects the necessary in-district work that must occur in each participating district.

Pathway Industry Sectors

Major industry sectors may vary by region or state.
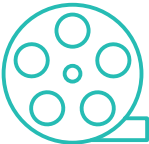
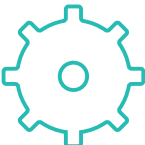|				
Agriculture	Arts & Media	Building & Environmental Design	Education	Energy
Engineering	Fashion Design & Manufacturing	Finance & Business	Health Science	Hospitality & Torism
Information Technology	Manufacturing	Marketing & Sales	Public Services	Transportion
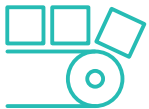
Leadership Commitment and Accountability

To plan and adopt a system of quality pathways, district and school leaders, the business community, local postsecondary institutions, labor unions, and community and parent groups commit to a shared vision and dedicate the necessary resources to put the vision into practice and sustain it.

Leaders commit to regular examination of pathway quality (see Pathway Framework), with the objective of moving each pathway to a high level of quality. Pathway improvement is directly aligned with and measured by student outcomes related to a set of college, career, and community readiness indicators. Leaders also commit to supporting ongoing pathway improvement.

Reflect on Your Practice

- How have departments represented on the district leadership team divided leadership on a shared effort in the past?
- What kinds of agreements and strategies have been the most helpful for sharing and distributing leadership?

Foundational Steps

- Gaining leadership team agreement on which departments should support which focus areas.
- Developing a process for collecting, storing, and reviewing district leadership team agreements and action plans.

D1. Leadership Commitment and Accountability

	1 **Emerging**	**2** **Developing**	**3** **Advancing**	**4** **Transforming**
Leadership				
D1.1 Shared Vision and Commitment	Superintendent and board assert a **clear vision** of preparing all students for college and career success. Business, postsecondary, community **leaders, and cabinet members embrace this vision**. The superintendent appoints a district **College and Career Readiness (CCR) Director** to lead and support these efforts,	District executive leadership collaborates with stakeholders to create and adopt a working draft of a college and career-ready **graduate profile**. Principal supervisor(s), site leaders, cabinet, **publicly endorse** the profile and serve as **champions**. The **CCR Director** supports pathway development as a **primary strategy** for implementing the profile and improving outcomes.	The CCR Director identifies, trains, certifies, and deploys a cadre of **pathway coaches and/or staff** who support pathway teams to implement the graduate profile and operate as communities of practice.	District leaders **align all district initiatives and priorities** with the vision and graduate profile. Cabinet members draft and approve **investments, processes, and procedures** that support pathway expansion. At least one cabinet member sits on a leadership team that supports the CCR Director and their team to implement pathways.
D1.2 Communication and Messaging	The district communication officer, along with district and school site leaders and community partners, establishes a comprehensive communication plan that begins with the vision and includes key messages for and strategies to engage a range of stakeholders.	Guided by the communication plan, the superintendent, school board members, the executive cabinet, school principals, and community leaders use consistent language to articulate to their constituents the vision and purpose for college and career readiness and how it aligns with other district priorities and initiatives.	Guided by the communication plan, the superintendent, school board members, the executive cabinet, school principals, and community leaders use consistent processes to elicit input on offerings and feedback on practice to ensure stakeholder support and effective implementation.	The plan places priority on the early engagement of teachers and site administrators, recognizing that the majority of the implementation of quality pathways falls squarely on their shoulders. It attends to the need for teachers and site administrators to have a deep understanding of pathway quality.
D1.3 Distributed Leadership	District leaders: ■ Allocate resources to form **pathway communities of practice** that commit to cross-sharing and learning to improve pathway quality. ■ Carve out time for pathway and school **site leader communities of practice** to support the successful implementation of pathways.	A **cross-district leadership team** that includes representative site and pathway leaders: ■ **Develops a work plan** designating specific responsibilities to departments. ■ Meets regularly to **address implementation challenges**, establishes supporting structures and processes, aligns resources, ensures two-way site-district communication, gathers and analyzes data.	The cross-district leadership team builds relational trust, interrogates data, and openly acknowledges and **addresses institutionalized challenges** that serve as barriers to effective and equitable pathway expansion. **Invites outside partners** to offer alternative and valued perspectives, suggest creative solutions, provide necessary support, and help resolve issues.	The superintendent, school board, and cross-district leadership team partner with a **formalized broad-based community coalition** that guides cross-sector strategy, helps to build community-wide alignment, leverages and influences policy.

	1 **Emerging**	**2** **Developing**	**3** **Advancing**	**4** **Transforming**
D1.4 Board Support and Strategic Alignment	The school board **proposes major goals** for all students to be ready for college, career, and community success. The school board introduces **resolutions**, policies, and investments that support a system of pathways.	The school board adopts the **graduate profile, related goals**, and approves resolutions, **policies, and investments** that support a system of pathways, balanced accountability aligned with the graduate profile, and increased equitable student access to quality pathways.	The board ensures that the adoption of pathways is **aligned with other district priorities, strategies, and plans**; addresses conflicting or contradictory practices and policies; and strives to create an internal **confluence of efforts** organized around a single plan.	The board supports and receives reports about collaboration with community leaders to **leverage resources**, reduce duplication of efforts, **maximize capacity**, and **coordinate respective organizational plans**.

Pathway Formation and Quality

	1 **Emerging**	**2** **Developing**	**3** **Advancing**	**4** **Transforming**
D1.5 Pathway Development/ Expansion	The CCR Director creates or **adopts a formalized process** for planning, developing, and supporting new pathways.	District executive leadership identifies a **target percentage** of students to be served by pathways by a particular year. In consultation with site and pathway leaders, the CCR Director creates a **projection chart** to plan for annual growth in schools, pathways, and grade levels.	District leaders, along with business, industry, workforce and economic development partners, ensure that the plan for expanding pathways focuses on **industry themes** that **align** with student interests and **regional workforce needs**.	Executive cabinet, district directors, and site principals continue to **dedicate the necessary resources and support** to ensure all pathways grow in enrollment and improve in quality to meet the target percentage by the target date.
D1.6 Pathway Quality and Continuous Improvement	District directors for curriculum, instruction, and secondary education support teacher leaders, site administrators, and pathways to commit to **continuous improvement** and assess current level of quality, set goals, and create action plans for improvement.	District executive leaders support pathway communities of practice to collaboratively **follow their action plans** for ongoing improvement of pathway quality.	District directors for curriculum, instruction, and secondary education monitor progress and dedicate resources to support pathway certification and sustain pathway **quality,**	District leaders establish interventions to provide **intensive support** to pathways that do not reach quality certification expectations within a reasonable number of years, as well as **alternative actions** if they persistently fail to do so.

Accountability

	1 **Emerging**	**2** **Developing**	**3** **Advancing**	**4** **Transforming**
D1.7 Data and Accountability	The assessment and accountability officer and IT director manage **data collection systems** that allow site leaders and pathway teachers to **disaggregate** student data by pathway.	The district's assessment and accountability officer and IT director establish mechanisms by which school and district administrators and pathway teachers **can access aggregated and disaggregated student data** for effective decision making and **continuous improvement.**	The district's assessment and accountability officer supports communities of practice to explore multiple measures to demonstrate student progress pursue continuous improvement, and embrace reciprocal accountability for student outcomes.	The district's assessment and accountability officer facilitates a process to establish K–12 benchmarks and common rubrics to routinize the practice of reviewing data and assessing student progress toward meeting graduate profile outcomes.
D1.8 Success Indicators	In lieu of adopted goals, site, district, and community **leaders discuss** educational, social/emotional, economic, and other indicators they would **expect to impact** as a result of implementing a system of career pathways, as well as the roles each leader and organization might play in supporting progress toward the indicators.	The cross-district leadership team **establishes an initial set of success indicators** to measure goal achievement and pathway impact. They facilitate a process to gather and record data for each of the indicators.	Community coalition confirms the indicators selected by the district, **adds indicators of community social and economic wellbeing** (e.g., incidents of juvenile crime, youth unemployment rates, youth voter registration rates), and creates cross-organizational **data sharing agreements** to populate a **data dashboard**.	The community coalition formalizes the format and use of a **data dashboard**, data collection and reporting processes, and communication strategies, and then **publicly shares progress** on the indicators to demonstrate mutual accountability and commitment to sharing responsibility for results.

Equity, Access, and Choice

The superintendent and board set the expectation that pathways will appeal to be used to engage and successfully serve any student regardless of his or her prior academic achievement, language proficiency, or postsecondary aspirations. No matter what pathway areas of focus and delivery models are established; students in the district have equal access to any pathway *based on interest alone*.

District leaders expect middle grade administrators and teachers to support students in making an informed pathway choice at the end of their 8th-grade year by ensuring that students are exposed to career opportunities in a variety of industry sectors and know their high school pathway options. As important, students are academically prepared to succeed in rigorous pathway programs of study and are assisted in making the transition from middle school to high school pathways.

Reflect on Your Practice

- What supports and services has the district leadership team or individual departments on the team provided to promote equitable access and opportunity before?
- What checks and balances have been utilized to flag places where additional attention is needed to achieve equitable opportunity and achievement?

Foundational Steps

- Reviewing the racial, gender, and socio-economic demographics in the district compared to the city.
- Reviewing and responding to the distribution of racial, gender, socio-economic, and ability demographics at schools across the district.
- Developing an agreed-upon process for regularly reviewing leadership team support and impact data across demographics and school sites.

D2. Equity, Access, and Choice

	1 Emerging	**2** Developing	**3** Advancing	**4** Transforming
Policies and Practices that Ensure Equity, Access, and Choice				
D2.1 Practices that Promote Equity and Rigor	The superintendent and cabinet members articulate that **equity and access are priorities**.	The director for secondary education, high school principals, and pathway teachers co-construct and agree upon a **set of district equity and access expectations** director of curriculum and instruction, to which they will all hold themselves mutually **accountable**. Proposed new pathways must ensure adherence to expectations before being approved.	The district curriculum and instruction director, director of secondary education, high school principals, and pathway teachers **assess** achievement of equity and access expectations by pathways, such as **proportionate representation** of students by gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic, geographical, ability and English language learner status.	The director of secondary education, high school principals, and pathway teachers collaboratively establish **data-driven mechanisms** to monitor issues of pathway equity and access and use data to make improvements, as necessary.
D2.2 Policies that Ensure Access and Choice	The superintendent and school board establish policies and procedures that support **school or pathway choice**.	The superintendent and school board establish policies and practices ensuring that all student populations, including English language learners, special education students, GATE students, and others, have **equitable access** to and receive the support they need to be successful in pathways.	The superintendent and school board establish policies and procedures that support issues related to student access and choice, including equitable participation in work-based learning (WBL) and transportation to/from pathway of choice and WBL opportunities.	In addition to items in previous columns, the superintendent and cabinet ensure that systems are in place to guarantee that the policies related to pathway access and student choice will be sustained over time.
Middle School Preparation				
D2.3 Student Recruitment and Pathway Selection	The directors of secondary education and communication work with middle school principals to establish and implement a set of multi-lingual, multimedia strategies for **marketing all pathway options to middle school students** and their families. Outreach strategies are implemented to emphasize the potential value that pathways have for every student.	The director of secondary education establishes equitable, randomized procedures to ensure that most, if not all, students can enroll in their **first or second choice** of pathways. The director devises procedures that allow students to **change pathways** at least once if they discover that their initial selection is not a good match.	The district Career Technical Education (CTE) and Curriculum and Instruction (C&I) directors, along with counselors and community partners, work with elementary and middle school teachers to develop a coordinated, sequenced series of **career exploration activities** that may include career speakers, videos, career investigations, and/or ways for middle school students to "experience" pathways.	In addition to items in previous columns, through the use of portfolios, multi-year **college and career success plans**, or other tools, the director of curriculum and instruction, middle school administrators, counselors, and teachers support students to reflect upon career exploration activities, interests, and career assessments to inform their pathway selection process and post-secondary plans.

	1 **Emerging**	**2** **Developing**	**3** **Advancing**	**4** **Transforming**
D2.4 Academic Preparation in Middle School	The director of secondary education and director of curriculum and instruction establish structures to promote **collaboration among middle and high school teachers and principals** to vertically map curriculum and ensure that middle school students are academically ready to enter high school pathways.	Middle and high school teacher collaboration extends beyond vertically mapping curriculum to include mapping academic readiness as defined by grade-level proficiency in math and English language arts, engagement in single- and multi-disciplinary **project-based learning**, and meeting benchmarked levels of graduate profile competencies.	The director of curriculum and instruction collaborates with middle school teachers and principals to identify and/or create an **academic support curriculum** that aligns with the vertical map and selected academic readiness indicators.	In addition to work in previous column, the director of curriculum and instruction works with middle school administrators and teachers to **systematize the process** to identify, assess, support, and monitor the progress of each middle grade student who needs or requests academic support.

High-Quality Learning and Teaching

The district articulates a clear description of powerful student learning and the instructional practices that support that learning to ensure that every student attains the outcomes described in the graduate profile. The district organizes and aligns support systems for curriculum, assessment, instruction, and professional development based upon an assessment of both students' and teachers' strengths and needs in relation to outcomes, regularly solicits input and feedback from students and teachers, and examines evidence of student learning to continuously improve effectiveness.

Understanding that pathway quality depends upon teachers' ability to work effectively as a Community of Practice and opportunities for students to collaborate regularly on multi-disciplinary projects; the district's secondary education director and high school principals commit to developing master schedules that guarantee common planning time for grade-level teams of pathway teachers and cohort scheduling for pathway students.

Reflect on Your Practice

- What experiences have individual departments on the district leadership team had with inquiry or project-based learning?
- Based on prior experience, how has department self-assessment, faculty self-assessment, or peer assessment influenced engagement and contribution.

Foundational Steps

- Increasing awareness of the curriculum and instructional strategies currently being used by the site or pathway.
- Scheduling time to collaboratively plan and integrate with cross-department, site, and pathway leaders.
- Scheduling time to manage and collaborate with coalition partners as they support industry-aligned pathway learning and teaching.

D3. High-Quality Learning and Teaching

	1 Emerging	**2 Developing**	**3 Advancing**	**4 Transforming**
Instruction and Program of Study				
D3.1 Structures to Improve Instruction	Pathway directors, site administrators, and district curriculum leaders value high-functioning **pathway communities of practice** focused on student learning, anchored in data, and supporting student progress toward the graduate profile outcomes. Leaders nurture and monitor Community of Practice effectiveness.	Site administrators and district curriculum and secondary directors provide **professional development** focused on teacher leadership, team development, cycle of inquiry protocols, culturally responsive instructional design, project-based learning management, and partnership development.	The district's directors for secondary education and curriculum and instruction, along with other curriculum leaders, site administrators and teacher leaders, use, a **learning and teaching framework** to support student, teacher, and site leader growth and promote **internal coherence**.	In addition to items in previous columns, the district director for curriculum and instruction and site principals **involve teachers** in sustained dialogue and decision-making around instruction and student learning. They also remain **central agents for change** and build trust and shared purpose.
D3.2 Practices to Improve Instruction	Site leaders, district instructional support personnel, and teachers adapt and use protocols for the evidence-based observation and analysis of classroom practice.	Data collected from these observations inform individual teacher, team or site-based goal setting, and professional development, aligned with the instructional framework.	Site leaders and district instructional support personnel provide the time and support necessary to create and maintain the structural conditions for instructional improvement.	In addition to items in previous columns, site leaders and district instructional support personnel provide the time and support necessary to support a system of assessment and accountability around the graduate profile outcomes.
D3.3 Systems of Intervention and Acceleration	District curriculum and instruction and secondary directors collaborate with site administrators to support pathway teachers to design rigorous and relevant learning activities and projects that reflect and respond to the diversity of student interests, strengths, cultural assets, and ways of learning.	District curriculum and instruction and secondary directors collaborate with site administrators to support pathway teachers to collaboratively review student outcomes and revise lesson plan designs to increase achievement and identify intervention or acceleration strategies.	District leaders support pathway teachers and site administrators to provide students with equitable access to high-quality **supplementary learning opportunities**, both within and beyond the regular school day and classroom, to accelerate student progress toward graduate profile outcomes.	District Leaders support pathway teachers and site administrators to regularly review lesson plan designs, intervention and acceleration strategies, and supplemental learning opportunities for effectiveness, equitable access, and cross-pathway coherence.

	1 **Emerging**	**2** **Developing**	**3** **Advancing**	**4** **Transforming**
D3.4 Incorporation and Integration of Work-Based Learning (WBL)	The director of curriculum and instruction and WBL coordinator collaborate with site principals and pathway teachers to ensure each industry theme in the district has an aligned employer partner, post-secondary partner, and clarified industry-based standards.	The director of curriculum and instruction and WBL coordinator collaborate with site principals and pathway teachers to ensure work-based learning is built into the program of study and there are guidelines to inform teacher work-based learning expectations.	The director of curriculum and instruction and WBL coordinator collaborate with site principals and pathway teachers to provide **professional development** that builds teacher capacity to use standards-based, outcomes-aligned WBL as an instructional methodology.	In addition to items in previous columns, the director of curriculum and instruction, WBL coordinator, pathway teachers, and business/industry partners design ways to **incorporate WBL experiences** routinely as key features of pathway student projects and performance assessments.
D3.5 Balanced Assessment and Accountability	District directors for curriculum and instruction and assessment and accountability support pathway teachers and industry partners to **benchmark the graduate profile outcomes** to K-12 grade levels showing the progression of student growth toward the outcomes over time.	District directors for curriculum and instruction and assessment and accountability support pathway teachers and industry partners to adopt, adapt, or create **common rubrics** to insure that teachers are calibrated in their assessment of student performance levels across schools and pathways.	District directors for curriculum and instruction and assessment and accountability support pathway teachers and involved industry partners to create, adapt, or design curriculum and **tasks** mapped to the graduate profile outcomes, benchmarks, and common rubrics;	In addition to items in previous columns, the school board, superintendent, and other district and site leaders support a shift toward a **balanced system of assessment and accountability** for student achievement that goes beyond standardized state tests and includes performance-based assessments aligned with the graduate profile.
School Schedules				
D3.6 Schedules to Support Pathway Quality	The district's director of secondary education supports high school principals to implement schedules that are flexible and accommodate the needs of pathway programs of study. District Leadership consults with union leaders and establishes agreements that support alternative scheduling options.	The director of secondary education and site administrators support the **flexible use of instructional time** to accommodate dual enrollment or work-based learning opportunities. Flexible scheduling is also used to align afterschool programs, online coursework, extra- and co-curricular activities, and summer programs with pathway programs of study.	The director of secondary education works with site administrators to establish **policies and procedures** that support master scheduling that ensures **common planning time** for pathway teams of teachers or grade-level pathway teams, "blocking" of courses with integrated curriculum, and **cohort scheduling** for pathway students in most if not all courses.	In addition to items in previous columns, the district secondary education director annually hosts a transparent and collaborative process to assess how individual pathways advance student progress toward the graduate profile outcomes, using the results of that assessment to determine priorities for master scheduling.

Sustained Partnerships

Preparing students for college, career, and community success is not solely an effort to transform high schools and the student experience; it is also a strategy for preparing the future workforce, expanding the regional economy, and improving conditions for those who live in the region. Students graduating from pathways should enjoy a seamless transition to post-secondary education and training options. These transitions are facilitated by strong, active partnerships with local postsecondary institutions and by leveraging the support of employers and civic and community leaders in establishing and sustaining high-quality pathways. Through such partnerships, communities can over time develop a qualified, diverse workforce and positively affect broader social and economic indicators.

This shift requires a new vision for collaboration across institutions, a new belief in shared responsibility for common goals, and a new willingness to make the boundaries between school and community porous. Leaders must recognize from the beginning the discomfort that this shift may cause, the natural frictions among institutions that have significantly different priorities and cultural norms, and the structured support that is needed to build new relationships and strategies.

Reflect on Your Practice

- What experiences have departments on the district leadership team had collaborating with industry or community partners?
- How has the graduate profile and clarity about pathway programs of study across the district helped with collaboration? How can these things help going forward?

Foundational Steps

- Identifying nearby 2–4 year colleges and their aligned programs.
- Identifying nearby employers in industries aligned with pathway themes.
- Assigning team members to support the development of community partnerships.

D4. Sustained Partnerships

	1 **Emerging**	**2** **Developing**	**3** **Advancing**	**4** **Transforming**
Post-Secondary Articulation				
D4.1 Post-secondary Partnerships	The superintendent has formed positive **working relationships** with leaders from nearby postsecondary institutions, with the intent to move toward formal agreements and smooth student transitions.	The superintendent, executive cabinet members, high school principals, and board members have joined with college administrators to **review historical data about student transitions**. They form a partnership to improve student access to and success in regional postsecondary institutions.	The superintendent and postsecondary presidents draft and sign **formal agreements** that may include: ■ data-sharing ■ reducing remediation rates ■ addressing equity and achievement gaps ■ bringing matriculation processes into high schools ■ expanding dual or concurrent enrollment opportunities ■ aligning high school pathways with college pathways ■ offering priority registration for graduates ■ exploring alternative options to placement tests, such as GPA, course completion, and portfolios.	In addition to items in previous columns, the superintendent (or designee) and college presidents ensure that their staff not only **follow through with commitments** embedded in the formal agreement, but also **standardize associated procedures** so that they become sustainable.
D4.2 Student Support Services	High school counselors, college counselors, and community-based non-profit partners collaborate regularly to ensure that, all 9th or 10th grade **students and their parents/families are aware** of community college, 4-year, and other **postsecondary options** and enrollment processes.	High school principals **assign a counselor** and/or community-based support services professional to assist students (and families) in applying to community colleges and 4-year universities and in completing matriculation, which involves admissions, financial aid, enrollment, placement, registration, and orientation.	The superintendent (or designee) has worked with college partners to create and implement a joint **plan to minimize** the number of students needing developmental or **remedial education** courses upon matriculation.	In addition to items in previous columns, district and college leaders commit to **continuously improving the conditions and support** for student transitions, resulting in increased enrollment, persistence, and completion year after year.

	1 **Emerging**	**2** **Developing**	**3** **Advancing**	**4** **Transforming**
D4.3 Early College Credit	The district's CTE director, curriculum, and instruction director, and high school principals, in coordination with a local occupational training provider or college, analyze their capacities to offer **academic and industry standards based career-technical coursework** aligned with each pathway's program of study, and **identify gaps** where new course offerings and/or refined vertical curriculum alignment is needed across institutions.	To round out pathway course offerings with advanced courses, the district superintendent has **formalized arrangements** with local community colleges, 4-year universities and other postsecondary institutions to expand student access to and success in readily available early college credit opportunities.	The director of secondary education and college administrators **systemically support** expanded student access to and success in early college credit opportunities by addressing: transportation needs, the registration process, fee waivers, counseling, discipline management, grading management, course selection and reviewing instructional professional development, management, and hiring concerns along with other considerations. These arrangements are embedded in a formal agreement.	In addition to items in previous columns, the superintendent and director of secondary education collaborate with college deans to support the planning, implementation, and sustainability of aligned **college pathways** that extend classroom and work-based learning from high school pathways, build on industry-recognized certifications and stackable credentials, and prepare students for high-skill, high-wage careers through mapped postsecondary transitional paths.

Business and Community Partnerships

	1 **Emerging**	**2** **Developing**	**3** **Advancing**	**4** **Transforming**
D4.4 Business and Industry Engagement	The superintendent, school board members, and site and district administrators **engage local business leaders**, employers, Chambers of Commerce, and industry associations, to form **mutually beneficial partnerships** that involve serving on advisory boards, assisting teachers with project design, providing feedback on student work, serving as classroom speakers and mentors, and offering job shadowing and internship opportunities.	The superintendent encourages business, postsecondary, and civic leaders to create a community agreement to support education transformation. The agreement ensures that high school and college pathways are developed in concert with regional employers to reflect in-demand competencies and skills.	Through their involvement on the broad-based coalition or regional intermediary and pathway advisory boards, **employers assume active leadership roles**. The superintendent, with fellow business, postsecondary, and civic leaders, support and monitor progress on goals.	In addition to items in previous columns, key industry leaders through their participation in the broad-based coalition or regional intermediary, assume leadership roles and hold themselves **mutually accountable** for growth on a set of educational, economic, and social indicators.
D4.5 Infrastructure to Support Quality Work-Based Learning (WBL)	The district's executive cabinet and industry partners commit resources to establish a work-based learning system of support, including **technology and staff infrastructure** at both district and site levels and the formation and sustainability of **industry advisory councils** for each pathway.	The district's directors for secondary education, CTE, and curriculum and instruction and their industry partners **embrace the graduate profile outcomes and create the conditions** for achieving those outcomes through WBL. The school board adopts **policies to support WBL** and addresses related liability, access, supervision, and transportation issues.	The superintendent and community leaders partner to establish **liaison connections** between pathway Industry Advisory Councils and broad-based coalitions. The WBL coordinator helps provide an orientation to WBL partners.	In addition to items in previous columns, the WBL coordinator establishes criteria for WBL, processes for monitoring equitable access and evaluating WBL quality, and sample strategies for connecting WBL to classroom instruction. The WBL coordinator also organizes regular recognition and celebration of business and industry partners.

	1 Emerging	**2** Developing	**3** Advancing	**4** Transforming
D4.6 Community Engagement	The superintendent, other district leaders, and site principals **engage students, parents, faith-based, and community-based organizations** during pathway designing, soliciting input on graduate profile development, pathway marketing strategies, pathway themes, and career exploration activities to ensure that pathways are equitable, accessible, and rigorous.	The superintendent, board members, and other district leaders partner with community-based, faith-based, and/or other organizations to develop a **family and student engagement strategy** that involves families and students as consumers, advocates, decision makers, and contributing partners.	The superintendent establishes **formal partnership agreements** with community-based, faith-based, and other organizations, which supports them in assuming responsibility for key functions in the process of expanding and sustaining equitably accessible high-quality pathway options for students.	In addition to items in previous columns, through their participation in the broad-based coalition, key community leaders assume leadership roles and hold themselves **mutually accountable** for implementation of pathways and growth on a set of educational, economic, and social indicators.

Operational Alignment

Throughout all facets of district operations, leaders align policies, practices, and resources to support pathway development and quality. In particular, human resource policies and practices support the unique instructional and leadership needs of pathways. To accomplish this objective, districts may need to renegotiate union agreements, implement waiver processes, consider practices related to teacher assignment and seniority-based placement, modify evaluation processes, articulate pathway staffing needs and expectations to university pre-service programs, establish internal leadership development programs, and pay attention to changing professional development needs.

District facilities will need to accommodate and support the teaching and learning needs of pathway programs of study. To accomplish this objective, districts may need to reconfigure or reassign existing space, plan for expansion or renovation, and/or consider sharing facilities with other educational or community organizations. Similarly, districts may need to invest to ensure that appropriate equipment is made available to support the particular teaching and learning needs of pathways with different career or industry themes.

Pathways may have start-up costs, and sometimes ongoing costs, above and beyond those of traditional high school education programs. District finance procedures ensure the regular evaluation of pathway funding needs and put plans in place to support those needs as part of the overall implementation plan.

Reflect on Your Practice

- How have individual departments on the district leadership team or individual departments on the team assessed needed resources or facilities for an upcoming project in the past?
- What kinds of parameters guide decision-making around refurbishing or resource allocation?

Foundational Steps

- Clarifying non-negotiable resources needed for the work to move forward.
- Clarifying potential funding sources and expense limitations.

D5. Operational Alignment

	1 Emerging	**2 Developing**	**3 Advancing**	**4 Transforming**
Human Resources				
D5.1 Recruitment and Hiring Practices	The district's human resources (HR) director adjusts recruitment and hiring practices to **address the unique knowledge and skills required** for teachers, teacher leaders, counselors, and administrators working in pathway settings; including revising job descriptions, interview questions, and selection criteria.	District HR staff and site principals consider future staffing needs and communicate them to local institutions that provide teacher and administrator preparation articulating the unique skills of pathway teachers and site leaders.	The district collaborates with teacher and site leader preparation institutions to **place pre-service interns and student teachers** in pathways. District hiring practices include pathway team members in the recruitment and selection of new team members and site leaders.	In addition to items in previous columns, the director of secondary education provides **ongoing support to site leaders** to develop their understanding and a servant/learning leader approach that values the expertise of teachers.
D5.2 Evaluating and Retaining Teachers and Administrators	The director for secondary education works with the teachers' union and site leader supervisor to ensure that the **unique qualifications** and abilities required are **reflected in teacher and site leader support processes** and evaluations.	The director for secondary education incorporates into site **administrator and pathway teacher support** professional development that builds capacity in the specific qualifications and capabilities identified.	The director for curriculum and instruction **aligns teacher support programs**, such as teacher induction, peer assistance and review, and professional learning communities (PLCs), as well as **site leader support programs**, such as coaching and Community of Practice offerings, with retention and professional development needs.	In addition to items in previous columns, the HR director works with high school principal supervisors and the teachers' union to **maintain effective cross-disciplinary teams** of pathway teachers and effective management/support of those teams by site administrators to retain uniquely qualified pathway teachers and site administrators.
Physical Infrastructure				
D5.3 Facilities and Equipment	The district's facilities director and/or site leaders consult with teachers, their local business and industry partners, pathway team leaders, and site administrators to determine the facility and equipment needs for current and future pathways.	The district's facilities director integrates the special facility and equipment needs of pathways into **short- and long-term facilities planning** processes.	The district's facilities director and site principals **re-purpose and re-configure use of existing space** to co-locate classrooms by pathway, rather than a traditional departmental configuration.	The district's facilities director and high school leaders take advantage of **creative facility use options**, such as sharing facilities at a nearby college or joint apprenticeship center.

	1 Emerging	**2** Developing	**3** Advancing	**4** Transforming
Funding				
D5.4 Leveraging Fiscal Resources	The district's chief financial officer identifies ways in which **existing state and federal funding resources**, including regional career and technical education resources, may directly contribute to the formation and support of career pathway planning, implementation, and sustainability.	The district's chief financial officer identifies ways to **reallocate and/or repurpose local, state, and federal funding** to align resources to support elements of pathway programs of study.	The district's chief financial officer, business office staff, and high school principals exercise flexibility in their use of funding to **combine and align resources** to support pathways. The superintendent independently or with a broad-based coalition dedicates resources to **identify potential new funding sources** and raise funds to support pathway expansion, quality, sustainability, and student access.	In addition to items in previous columns, the district's chief financial officer integrates pathway needs into **short- and long-term budgeting and funding processes** and develops systems to effectively manage resources. The district explicitly integrates pathway strategies into official reporting on budget decisions for accountability purposes. The school board ensures long-term support for pathway planning, implementation, expansion, and sustainability as part of the district's core investment.

Glossary

Term	Definition
Common Prep	A shared instructional planning time for teachers in the same pathway at the same grade level. Time is provide for teachers engaged in multi-disciplinary integrated projects to meet with their instructional partners and plan lessons as well as review formative and summative assessments in order to refine lessons.
Community of Practice	A designated time for people with similar work to come together and share their learning and problem-solve their challenges collectively. The Community of Practice sessions can take place at the pathway level during common planning or at any other level of the system including at the cross-district or community level.
Conditions for Instructional Improvement	These conditions include the availability of rigorous and relevant curriculum; incorporation of work-based learning; instructional leadership development of teachers and administrators; and site-based and centralized professional development on academic and technical standards, effective instructional design and delivery, performance assessment, and collaborative teacher cycles of inquiry using student work and other data sources.
Integrated Curriculum	A series of conscious and informed strategies used to connect the content of one or more academic and CTE courses so that what is learned in one discipline is combined with and reinforced in the other discipline over an extended period of time.
Integrated Multidisciplinary Project	A high-quality **integrated project** brings together multiple academic and technical disciplines to create deep and meaningful learning experiences for students. Integrated projects reflect differentiated, collaborative, and individualized curriculum, and in a Linked Learning context asks students to demonstrate the skills, knowledge, and behaviors authentic to an industry sector. When working on integrated, multidisciplinary projects, students are charged with finding viable solutions to real problems, or with achieving specific individual or group outcomes, through horizontally-aligned units of instruction. These instructional units often lead students through multiple steps, assignments, and subject-specific performance tasks, and ultimately culminate in a student product or performance.
Internal Coherence	A school's (or district's) capacity to engage in deliberate improvements in instructional practice and student learning across classrooms over time, as evidenced by educator practices and organizational processes that connect and align work across the organization (SERP, 2014).
Learning Outcome	The academic knowledge, behaviors, and skills that students are expected to learn and demonstrate. Learning outcomes can be created for a specific lesson, task, or project; for a course; or for a student's career in a pathway or school.

Master Schedule	**College and Career** pathways require common prep time for teachers with a shared cohort of students. The work of performance-based assessments also often demands longer instructional time. The master schedule can provide a common prep for all teachers and allow students to move through classes as a group. The traditional master schedule offers 6–8 periods a day at one hour each. Students are able to take 6–8 courses a year. The College and Career master schedule offers the same course credits a year but it is often designed using one of three configurations: (1) **4x4 Block:** where students take four courses in a semester for a longer duration of time. Each course period is roughly 90 minutes. (2) **AB periods:** where students take eight alternating courses every other day year round. One day has the 8 "A" strand of courses and the alternating day has the alternating 8 "B" strand of courses. (3) **Hybrid:** where some courses are offered year-round through an A/B structure and others are completed within one intensive semester using a block schedule. All of the configurations are designed to give students the additional time needed for the much more rigorous work required.
Pathway Team	Teachers and affiliated support staff with students in common who regularly meet to plan and implement curriculum, instruction, and assessment as well as the pathway events and other activities.
Postsecondary Alignment	Aligning a high school pathway's learning outcomes, curriculum, benchmarks, and indicators of progress with that of a similar pathway at the 2–4 year college level. This work can also be supported by offering courses that are either (1) **Dual** enrollment: simultaneous enrollment in a college course offered off-campus. (2) **Articulated** enrollment: enrollment in a high school course on campus taught by a high school teacher that has credits which have been approved at the high school and college level. There is a formal articulation agreement in place between the high school and the college. These course offerings can increase the college-going and college graduation rate for students.
Program of Study	A 3–4 year, full day, schedule of courses that specify a pathway's educational offering. The program includes the career technical education (CTE) sequence of courses or technical core, the core academic courses needed for graduation , a continuum of work-based learning opportunities by grade-level, and may include integrated projects listed by grade level. The Program of Study may also include postsecondary preparation experiences as well as articulated courses. The program of study is designed to help students attain agreed upon learning outcomes in a structure that provides long-term relationships leading to attuned personalization, depth of knowledge, and college and career readiness goal achievement.
Site Leadership Team	Designated teachers, school site leaders, counselors, other staff, and partners who regularly meet and have responsibility for the overall management and improvement of pathways.
Student Cohorts	Designated students in a pathway who travel from class to class together. "Pure" cohorts are those that are able to maintain the students in the same pathway in the program of study.
Student Internship	Students engage in work-based learning applying the industry skills they have acquired at an actual workplace setting in a manner which benefits both the company and the student.
Teacher Externship	A learning opportunity for teachers working in pathways that allows them to visit industry partners work sites and, validate the pathway student learning outcomes, learn about the work environment, observe daily tasks, and bring back work examples and project ideas. This helps teachers to create authentic learning experiences for students.

Unique Qualifications of Pathway Teachers	Teachers need to collaborate across disciplines to integrate curriculum, use project- and problem-based learning, connect with work-based learning, and utilize authentic assessment methods.
Unique Qualifications of Site Leaders with Pathways	Site Leaders need to be Instructional leaders for pathway teachers who exhibit unique skills, understanding of high-quality pathway implementation and effective instruction, ability to nurture distributed leadership, ability to use data-informed decision-making, and capacity to establish systems that will ensure pathway sustainability.
Wall-to-Wall	Indicates when a high school is only offering pathway enrollment options. Students who attend the high school must also select one of the college and career readiness pathways at the school. Many districts have high schools requiring enrollment in a pathway and high schools that are not wall-to-wall where students can choose to enroll in a pathway or opt for a traditional learning experience with the standard set of courses.
Work-Based Learning	An instructional strategy that allows students to interact with industry professionals, other than their teacher and which provides hands-on, real-world, practical application of their learning experiences. Designed correctly, work-based learning can help students achieve the pathway student learning outcomes and industry certifications.

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District Framework