Rubric for Postsecondary Readiness

for SCHOOL + DISTRICT LEADERS

NOVEMBER 2023
Secondary leaders lay the foundation for students to be lifelong learners and determine their own future. In today’s world, that means preparing them to succeed in their chosen postsecondary path. This rubric and its accompanying worksheet can help you evaluate and grow your district’s postsecondary readiness. It looks at seven focus areas on a three-point scale:

1. **Beginning**
   We have not yet started plans in this area. We consistently display most of the descriptors in this category.

2. **Practicing**
   Plans are in place to implement these practices and processes and they occur with some regularity. We consistently display most of the descriptors in this category.

3. **Persisting**
   Practices and processes have moved from plans to habit and routine and serve as a model for others. We consistently display most of the descriptions in this category.
Seven Focus Areas

Core Areas are those practices that must be in place in order to achieve comprehensive improvements in postsecondary outcomes. We encourage districts to focus on improving Core Areas before addressing Secondary Areas in order to ensure a strong foundation for success across all areas.
## Core Focus Area → Shared Postsecondary Vision, Plan + Framework

District has coherent goals, plans, and an accountability framework reflective of a shared postsecondary vision

### Beginning
- District does not have a vision for student postsecondary readiness
- District and school improvement planning framework does not include postsecondary readiness priorities and strategies
- Postsecondary pathway readiness strategies are broad and fragmented and may not align with other improvement priorities and strategies
- Equity gaps are mostly unidentified in postsecondary readiness priorities and strategies
- Vision, goals, and framework are developed with little to no input from stakeholders and community representatives

### Practicing
- District has not yet fully developed its vision for student postsecondary readiness
- District and school improvement planning framework includes postsecondary readiness priorities and strategies
- Some postsecondary pathway readiness strategies are narrowly-focused, coherent, and align to other improvement priorities and strategies
- Some postsecondary readiness priorities and strategies address equity gaps
- District intermittently communicates its vision and goals for postsecondary success
- Vision, goals, and framework are developed with minimal input from stakeholders and community representatives

### Persisting
- A district-wide vision codifies student postsecondary success as critical to the district’s mission, aligned to its core values, and aligned with state initiatives and frameworks
- District and school improvement planning framework includes postsecondary priorities, strategies, and team structures; school accountability framework incorporates key college and career readiness metrics (e.g., FAFSA completion/industry credential completion)
- Almost all postsecondary readiness success strategies are narrowly-focused, coherent, and align to other improvement strategies
- All postsecondary success priorities and strategies fully address equity gaps
- District intentionally communicates its vision and goals for postsecondary readiness, clarifies repeatedly, and provides regular updates to the school board and community on this work
- Vision, goals, and framework are developed with the consistent input of key stakeholders & community voice

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Focus Area</th>
<th>Postsecondary Data Systems + Structures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District and school leadership utilize a user-centered comprehensive college and career readiness platform</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Beginning</strong></th>
<th>District does not have a college and career readiness platform that is inclusive of some student and adult facing functionalities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students are unable to navigate CCR platform</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most data tools and dashboards are not user-friendly; limited feedback from external stakeholders</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Little or no data collaboration between and within district and schools on key postsecondary readiness indicators</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Onboarding and training sessions for staff on college and career readiness platforms is limited or non-existent</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District does not have systems and structures to track alumni post-graduation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Practicing</strong></th>
<th>District has a college and career readiness platform that is inclusive of some student and adult facing functionalities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students can navigate CCR platform and track their own progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most data tools and dashboards are user-centered; analytic design includes some feedback from external stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermittent data collaboration between and within district and schools on key postsecondary readiness indicators</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District organizes some onboarding and training sessions for staff on college and career readiness platforms</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Student Clearinghouse StudentTracker partnership</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Persisting</strong></th>
<th>District has a comprehensive college and career readiness platform that is inclusive of multiple student and adult facing functionalities (e.g. student communication, application process, integration with SIS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students can navigate CCR platform and track their own progress to inform their individual learning plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Almost all data tools and dashboards are user-centered; analytic design is reflective of feedback from external stakeholders</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regular data collaboration between and within district and schools that improves system efficacy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District organizes consistent onboarding and training sessions for staff on college and career readiness platforms and data</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District has a National Student Clearinghouse StudentTracker partnership and systems that track student participation in progressive pathways</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Secondary Focus Area ➔ Continuous Improvement Cycles

District engages in postsecondary improvement cycles with fidelity that lead to student outcome improvements

#### Beginning
- No leadership team dedicated to postsecondary readiness
- Minimal continuous improvement cycles focused on postsecondary data
- Postsecondary readiness continuous improvement process has not yet been codified
- District provides limited support and resources to school teams
- No formal or tracked priorities, initiatives, or action steps related to postsecondary readiness initiatives sustained over time

#### Practicing
- Inconsistent and fluctuating leadership team dedicated to postsecondary readiness and improvement
- Inconsistent continuous improvement cycles and problem solving focused on postsecondary data
- Some data reflection protocols and norms used
- District provides some support and resources to school teams
- Some priorities, initiatives, and action steps related to post-secondary readiness sustained over time.
- Postsecondary leadership team sometimes shares updates and priorities with stakeholders

#### Persisting
- Consistent leadership team dedicated to postsecondary readiness and improvement
- Established and consistent school and district continuous improvement cycles and problem solving focused on postsecondary data that lead to system-wide practice changes for all students
- Data reflection protocols and norms used regularly
- District provides ongoing support and resources to targeted school teams based on data trends
- Priorities, initiatives, and action steps related to postsecondary readiness sustained over time
- Postsecondary leadership team regularly communicates updates to stakeholders
Secondary Focus Area ➔ Adult Capacity Building

Adults across the district continually acquire knowledge and skills about the postsecondary readiness landscape and practice reflective dialogue

### Beginning
- District and school staff engage in limited professional learning about postsecondary readiness
- Limited or minimal professional learning on postsecondary readiness
- Most postsecondary readiness professional learning is rarely job-embedded and reflects stand-alone, 1-day workshops
- Few staff members across the district engage in isolated reflective dialogue with students about postsecondary aspirations
- Districts provide limited informational resources to school staff on the latest research on postsecondary pathways, college match, financial aid, etc.

### Practicing
- District and school staff engage in some professional learning about postsecondary readiness
- District personnel own the design and facilitation of most postsecondary readiness professional learning
- Some postsecondary-readiness professional learning is job-embedded, sustained, and reflects adult learning principles
- Some staff members across the district engage in reflective dialogue with students about postsecondary aspirations
- District provides some informational resources to school staff on the latest research on postsecondary pathways, college match, financial aid, etc.

###Persisting
- District provides professional learning about postsecondary readiness to district and school staff and engages in their own ongoing learning
- Knowledgeable school staff and partners design and facilitate postsecondary readiness professional learning across the district, leading to the diffusion of new practice
- Postsecondary-focused professional learning is job-embedded, sustained, and reflects adult learning principles
- Staff members across the district engage in reflective dialogue and connect these reflections with student postsecondary aspirations
- District provides comprehensive and diverse informational resources to school staff on the latest research on postsecondary pathways, college match, financial aid, etc.
### Secondary Focus Area: Institutional Partnerships

District collaboratively partners with postsecondary and community partners and supports alumni across a range of postsecondary pathways.

#### Beginning
- Few or no formalized partnerships between district & postsecondary partners
- External support is minimal & ad hoc
- No systemic facilitation of postsecondary pathway activities (field trips, info sessions, site visits, etc)
- Ongoing support to alumni is limited and provided individual counselors
- No system-wide activities or initiatives designed to mitigate summer melt

#### Practicing
- District has developed some partnerships with postsecondary partners that allow for limited early postsecondary opportunities (e.g. dual credit and work-based learning)
- Partnerships are formalized with MOUs and focused on logistics
- District facilitates and tracks regular postsecondary pathway activities (field trips, info sessions, site visits, etc)
- District provides ongoing assistance to alumni through some opportunities and structures
- Some system-wide programs, designed with partners, are provided to a subset of students to mitigate summer melt
- Collaboration meetings with partners to ensure alignment between school requirements and postsecondary pathway expectations

#### Persisting
- District has a range of diverse postsecondary partners that allow for equitable early postsecondary opportunities (e.g. dual credit and work-based learning experience)
- District collaborates with high quality partners and engages in dialogue to improve program implementation. Partners have reviewed their roles & responsibilities
- District facilitates and tracks regular and wide-ranging postsecondary activities (field trips, info sessions, site visits, etc)
- District provides and tracks ongoing support to most alumni post-graduation through a variety of strategies (joint summer bridge programs, technology nudges, etc.)
- Wide-range of system-wide programs, designed with postsecondary partners, are provided to a majority of students to mitigate summer melt
- Collaborative planning with partners to ensure alignment between school requirements and postsecondary pathway expectations
Secondary Focus Area ➔ Student Supports, Advising, and Programming

District institutionalizes and embeds a research-backed postsecondary readiness advising program for all students in all schools and ensures equitable access to postsecondary acceleration courses.

**Beginning**
- Limited to no support from districts to schools to offer postsecondary acceleration/pathways courses (dual enrollment, IB, AP, CTE, etc.).
- No alignment of teacher, counselor, and school leader professional learning to postsecondary acceleration courses and curricula.
- No student access to postsecondary acceleration courses.
- Advising program implemented informally and intermittently across the district.
- District offers a limited number of advising supports that help teachers and counselors facilitate interventions for priority students.
- Limited postsecondary advising structures or internal capacity.

**Practicing**
- District provides informal support to schools to offer some postsecondary acceleration courses/pathways (dual enrollment, IB, AP, CTE, etc.); course sequencing and scheduling lacks coherence.
- Limited alignment of teacher, counselor, and school leader professional learning to postsecondary acceleration courses and curricula.
- Student access to postsecondary accelerate courses varies.
- System-wide, research-based advising program for some students that honors students' aspirations, develops non-cognitive skills and mindsets needed for success in college and career.
- Postsecondary advising offered across the district, but is not integrated into longer-term curriculum.
- District offers a variety of supports that help teachers and counselors facilitate interventions for most students.

**Persisting**
- District provides direct support to schools to offer postsecondary acceleration courses/pathways (dual enrollment, IB, AP, CTE, etc.) including coherent course sequencing and scheduling informed by local context.
- Alignment of teacher, counselor, and school leader professional learning to postsecondary acceleration courses and curricula.
- Students have equitable access to postsecondary acceleration courses.
- System-wide, research-based advising program for all students that honors students’ aspirations, develops non-cognitive skills and mindsets needed for success in college and career.
- Postsecondary advising integrated into long-term curriculum and academic programming.
- District offers a variety of timely academic supports that help teachers and counselors facilitate academic and non-cognitive interventions for all students.
Secondary Focus Area ➔ Aligned Human + Financial Capital
District allocates sufficient staffing and funding to align postsecondary readiness and improvement strategies

**Beginning**
- Limited funding secured and delineated in budget to sustain postsecondary readiness
- Funding is ad-hoc and may not align to high impact programs
- Limited district staffing of system-level postsecondary personnel
- District has not identified opportunities to increase staff credentialed to teach postsecondary acceleration classes
- Limited or no alignment between human resource policies and postsecondary goals
- Limited budgetary or human capital commitment to advising ratios; counselors used for non-core responsibilities

**Practicing**
- Short-term funding secured and delineated in budget to sustain postsecondary readiness
- Some funding aligns to high-impact, research-based programs that build system capacity
- Some district staffing of system-level postsecondary teams
- District identifies some opportunities to increase staff credentialed to teacher postsecondary acceleration classes specific to 1-2 classes
- Some alignment between human resource policies and postsecondary readiness goals
- Some district-wide human capital commitment to adequate advising ratios

**Persisting**
- Long-term funding secured and delineated in budget to sustain postsecondary readiness
- Funding aligns to high-impact, research-based programs that build system capacity and are equity-focused
- District staffing allocates appropriate capacity to system-level college and career readiness team; team’s purpose is clear
- District identifies multiple opportunities to increase staff credentialed to teacher postsecondary acceleration classes across a variety of contexts (eg. AP/IB, CTE, dual credit)
- Human resources policies support postsecondary readiness goals
- Staffing ratios allow for a full range of advising services and limited non-core responsibilities
Ready to Assess Your District?

This accompanying worksheet to this rubric assists leaders in making a personalized assessment of their district’s postsecondary readiness and helps districts outline a plan for improving district-wide postsecondary practices. The process is cyclical + should start before or early in the school year + be revisited 2-3 times throughout the year.
District Rubric
Glossary of Terms

+ **Adult capacity** // The skills, knowledge, and time within a day that affect an adult’s ability to take action or make decisions.

+ **Adult learning principles** // What needs to be in place for educators and trainers to make adult education more effective and help adults learn something new.

+ **Accountability framework** // System used to share information about educational outcomes and measure progress toward state and local improvement goals. Systems often include multiple indicators of student success or school quality.

+ **Continuous improvement cycles** // A cyclical process involving setting goals, identifying improvement strategies, and an evaluation system that works to promote a continuous loop of feedback and improvement.

+ **Cultural competence** // The ability to understand, communicate, and effectively interact with people across cultures; to practice being aware of one’s own world view, develop positive attitudes towards cultural differences, and gain knowledge of different cultural practices and world views.

+ **Culturally responsive pedagogy** // A pedagogical framework grounded in social justice, equity, and multicultural education. Based on three fundamental components: academic achievement (student learning and academic rigor), cultural competence, and socio-political consciousness. It encompasses both teaching and curriculum.
Continuous improvement cycles // A cyclical process involving setting goals, identifying improvement strategies, and an evaluation system that works to promote a continuous loop of feedback and improvement.

Human capital // District and school staff, and the corresponding policies (e.g., promotion), procedures (e.g., hiring), and tools (e.g., professional development) that influence how they go about their work.

Improvement planning framework // A planning structure where schools outline goals, strategies, and milestones that are aligned to the overall district mission and vision.

Networks for postsecondary improvement // A community of educators from multiple organizations that focuses on improving postsecondary success for students.

NSC, NCES, IPEDS // National Student Clearinghouse, National Center for Education Statistics, and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, respectively. These are organizations and systems that organize and aggregate student data and administration under the umbrella of the U.S. Department of Education.

Postsecondary pathway // The set of different paths that students can pursue upon high school graduation. Pathways can include traditional 4 year or 2 year college programs, employment, the military, job training programs or apprenticeships.
District Rubric

Glossary of Terms

+ **Postsecondary pathway courses** // College or workforce dual enrollment courses that help increase students' preparation for, access to, and completion of their postsecondary pathway. Examples include Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or career and technical education classes.

+ **Postsecondary pathway indicators** // Metrics across various data sources that provide information on whether students are on track to enroll, persistent, and eventually complete a postsecondary pathway credential. Sample metrics include: academic indicators (GPA), testing indicators (meeting college-ready benchmarks on the SAT), admissions indicators (completing college applications), and financial indicators (completing FAFSA).

+ **Student information system** // A system which can include a web-based platform, software, or other tools that contains and serves to manage all student records and administration.

+ **Summer melt** // Phenomenon in which a student plans to enroll in a postsecondary institution in the fall after high school graduation but fails to matriculate. This can be caused by a number of factors, including a lack of financial resources or support with the matriculation process.
Sources

Collaborative for Academic, Social, & Emotional Learning

Houston Independent School District

Annenberg Institute for School Reform @ Brown University
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