



# Closing the Gaps of College and Career Readiness

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(a white paper to guide schools and districts)

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This white paper provides a framework and action plan to guide services provided by InnovateED through partnership with the Riverside County Office of Education. The goal is to attain the outcomes set forth in the RCOE pledge: "all students in Riverside County will graduate from high school well prepared for college and the workforce."

## Closing the Gaps of College and Career Readiness

### Summary

InnovateED has written this framework to provide schools and districts a clear understanding of the evidence-based practices and high performing school culture needed to ensure all students graduate high school prepared for postsecondary education and attainment of viable careers. The work of Achieve, ACT, Gates Foundation, Education Policy Improvement Center (EPIC) and practices being implemented in high performing school districts across the United States serve as foundations for identifying and closing the gaps of instructional programs and prioritizing action steps. Defining student success is shifting from that of standards proficiency to preparedness for the next level of learning; college and career readiness. The overarching message from the findings can be summed up as a single outcome; **"students develop the attributes of college and career readiness from successful completion of a rigorous, college-aligned course of study with seamless transition into post-secondary education toward a viable career."**

The research indicates that eighth-grade academic achievement and being on target for college and career readiness in eighth grade have a significant impact on students' ability to become college and career ready by the end of high school. A transitional approach to college and career readiness from entry into middle school to freshman year in college is essential with systematic intervention beginning with fourth-grade literacy skills and continuing with a focus on strategic reading, expository writing and algebra preparedness. The completion of Algebra II and four years of English are clearly the minimum for developing the skills of accessing text resources, thinking critically and effectively communicating in preparation for the demands of postsecondary education. The ability to solve problems, interpret and use reasoning with precision and accuracy are key attributes. Academic behaviors of self-monitoring and study skills that allow students to become self-directed learners are vital for completing a rigorous academic program. The shifts in practice loom large, but can be accomplished by adjusting classroom instruction toward a simple question: **How do learning experiences develop students' ability to solve real world, standards-based problems using rigorous academic language and higher order skills with precision and accuracy?** The way in which students' master standards will become equally important as standards mastery.

Students and their parents need to be able to celebrate progress along this learning continuum leading to postsecondary preparedness, monitored at critical transition points of entry into middle school and high school, at grade 11 and entry into freshmen year of college. The new measurement of student success for K-12 education is shifting to **college-going rates without need for remediation.**

## Introduction

The blueprint for reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) connects the past decade of school reform research and evidence-based practices having the greatest impact on student achievement. The work of Achieve, ACT, Gates Foundation, EPIC and practices being implemented in high performing school districts across the United States serve as foundations to this blueprint. It is essential that middle schools and high schools take a proactive stance toward assessing current instructional programs and prioritizing action steps to align with key components of the blueprint. Two immediate impacts of the proposed ESEA reauthorization are the adoption of California Common Core Standards and the current development of a new assessment model for federal accountability that measures college and career readiness.

There are additional, recent state and federal higher education policies involving the California Community College system and the California State University system that will significantly impact K-12 education. The California State University (CSU) Executive Order 1048, "Early Start Program," requires that, beginning in summer 2012, incoming freshmen who have not demonstrated proficiency in English and/or mathematics will be required to begin remediation prior to the term for which they have been admitted (e.g., summer prior to fall). Each individual CSU campus will design a program for incoming freshmen to develop proficiency in mathematics and/or English before they enroll as matriculated freshmen. Currently over 60% of incoming freshmen require remediation in math and/or English.

In 2008, Congress completed reauthorization of the Higher Education Act by passing the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA). This act includes new reporting and disclosure requirements implemented in August 2009 that post college graduation and transfer rates on the US Department of Education's College Navigator website. Of primary focus are the graduation and transfer rates of California Community Colleges. Currently only 29% of students who attend California's community college system receive a certificate, degree or transfer to a four year college.

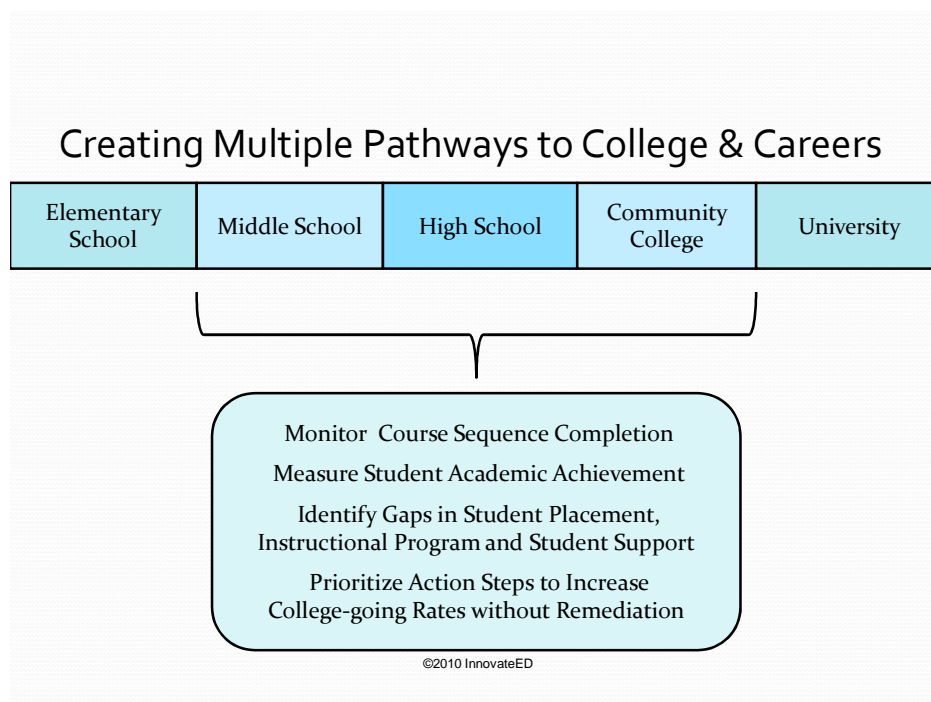
ESEA reauthorization, common core standards, Early Start Program and HEOA will result in far reaching changes for K-12 education. This new focus brings to center stage a new performance outcome; **college-going rates without need for remediation**. The underlying paradigm shift is that the role of K-12 education will go beyond credits earned and passage of CAHSEE for high school graduation to requiring students graduate high school prepared for college and careers. Defining student success is shifting from that of standards proficiency to preparedness for the next level of learning; college and career readiness.

To create a clear understanding of the evidence-based practices and high performing school culture essential for ensuring all students graduate high school prepared for postsecondary education and attainment of viable careers, InnovateED has written ***Closing the Gaps of College and Career Readiness***.

Four fundamental questions clarify the Keys to Success under this new paradigm for K-12 education:

1. Which student attributes define college and career readiness?
2. Which key components of a coherent instructional program lead to college and career readiness?
3. Which systematic support structures develop college and career ready students?
4. What defines a high performing school culture promoting college and career readiness?

Each of these four questions will be addressed, citing research and evidence-based practices. The overarching message from the findings can be summed up as a single outcome; **"students develop the attributes of college and career readiness from successful completion of a rigorous, college-aligned course of study with seamless transition into post-secondary education toward a viable career."** The diagram below redefines how this rigorous, college-aligned course of study begins in middle school and continues through the freshman year of college. The key to success is in providing all students equal access to a coherent instructional program with systematic support that bridges this learning continuum.



## **Research in Practice**

In *The Forgotten Middle* (2008), ACT demonstrates that maximizing students' readiness for college and career by high school graduation requires a focus on the role of upper elementary and middle school. The research indicates that eighth-grade academic achievement and being on target for college and career readiness in eighth grade have the greatest impact on students' ability to become college and career ready by the end of high school. Therefore, the need for a transitional approach to college and career readiness from entry into middle school to freshman year in college is essential. Without sufficient preparation before high school, students cannot successfully benefit from exposure to and completion of a rigorous high school course of study. To ensure more students are on target to be college and career ready by the end of eighth grade requires a focus on the attainment of foundational skills in English, mathematics and reading. This requires monitoring of student progress with systematic intervention beginning with fourth-grade literacy skills and continuing with a focus on strategic reading, expository writing and algebra preparedness. In addition, students must be supported to develop appropriate academic behaviors during the K-8 years through a disciplined approach and positive attitude toward academics with an emphasis on career planning.

In *Creating Seamless Educational Transitions*, ACT clarified the following courses and course sequences have the biggest impact on college success: English 9 through 12; Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2, and at least one upper level course such as Trigonometry; and Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. This rigorous curriculum helps students develop the critical thinking and writing skills they will need to be successful in college. Although most students pursue postsecondary education, less than half of all students take the courses they need to be prepared in mathematics and science. Delineating high school graduation requirements in terms of minimum numbers of course credits, rather than completion of specific courses, allows students to satisfy requirements without taking the rigorous course sequence that would best prepare them for postsecondary success.

In *Reaffirming Quality: Rigor at Risk in the High School Curriculum* (2007), ACT found that 74% of students completing required high school courses for college entrance were placed in remedial entry-level college coursework. The loss of momentum in attaining college and career readiness status occurs during grades 11 and 12. At issue are two problems: 1) lack of alignment of high school graduation requirements with course sequences needed for success in college and 2) a misalignment of state standards and college expectations.

Further, ACT reinforced the need for all students to complete a rigorous, college-aligned course of study in *Mind the Gaps: how college readiness narrows achievement gaps in college success* (2010). Four years of English and completion of Algebra II are essential for college and career readiness. The alignment of student performance outcomes from entry into middle school to freshman year in college is vital, and implementation of the California Common Core Standards will help to close the gaps of performance outcome alignment. Similarly, the use of end of semester/course exams, or anchor assessments, aligned with the appropriate rigor of the common core standards and college entry requirements will provide the information needed to assess student progress toward attaining college and career readiness.

Finally, ACT published a report in 2010 that defined what works for increasing college retention rates. At the community college and four year college/university, student attrition was primarily attributed to the low level of preparation for college-level work and lack of study skills. At the community college level retention increased with access to tutoring and remedial coursework mandated by placement testing. This data points to the value of the Early Assessment Program (EAP) administered as part of annual STAR testing during grade 11 of high school. EAP provides a measurement of students' readiness to engage in college-level coursework in mathematics and English, and points to the math and English remediation students will need to be successful in their postsecondary education.

### **Toward College and Career Ready Academic Programs**

Over the past decade The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has spent billions of dollars toward improving the U.S. education system. As a result, they are focused on a mission of College Readiness for All with the goal of ensuring 80% of high school students graduate college-ready and attain a postsecondary education with genuine economic value. To attain this goal, the Gates Foundation has identified six high leverage strategies:

1. Define the steps required to achieve college readiness and interventions to accelerate progress
2. Identify a core set of standards focused on the skills students need for success after high school
3. Create classroom learning, student assignments and tests that reflect core standards
4. Design better data systems that measure progress and identify effective classroom practices
5. Develop academic supports that engage students and ease transition into high school
6. Develop pathways to graduation based on demonstration of college-ready knowledge and skills

The American Diploma Project (ADP) led by Achieve provides a clear pathway for schools and districts to align graduation requirements with college and career readiness expectations. ADP focuses on aligning standards, graduation requirements, assessments, and data and accountability systems with the expectations of postsecondary institutions and employers. Today 35 states, educating 85% of students in the United States, are committed to the four overarching areas of focus that guide the work of ADP:

1. Align high school standards and assessments with the knowledge and skills required for success after high school
2. Require all high school graduates to complete a college- and career-ready curriculum so that earning a diploma assures a student is prepared for opportunities after high school
3. Build assessments into the statewide system that measure students' readiness for college and careers
4. Develop an accountability system that promotes college and career readiness

As an outgrowth of the ADP initiative, Achieve partnered with the National Governors Association and Council of Chief State School Officers in developing the National Common Core Standards. According to the 2011 Report on Closing the Expectation Gap that describes the current alignment of high school policies with demands of college and careers, 47 states and the District of Columbia have adopted the Common Core Standards (3 have adopted a similarly rigorous set of standards). Twenty states and the District of Columbia have a high school graduation requirement based upon a default college and career ready curriculum with four years of English and completion of Algebra II as the minimum. Fourteen states currently have an assessment at grade 11 that measures college and career readiness skills (California has the EAP as part of STAR) with 45 states on target to implement the new federal accountability assessment based upon the Common Core Standards in 2014-15. One state, Texas, has a state-wide accountability system for education that uses the four college and career readiness indicators promoted by Achieve; the percentage of high school graduates who earn a college- and career-ready diploma, obtain a readiness score on a high school assessment, earn college credit while still in high school, and require remediation upon entering college.

In *Redefining College Readiness* (2007) David Conley (EPIC) identified the key characteristics of students demonstrating the ability to succeed in college, and in doing, communicated to K-12 educators a clearly defined focus for developing four essential student attributes; key cognitive strategies, key content knowledge, academic behaviors and an understanding of the college system and culture. Key cognitive strategies rely heavily on a students' ability to problem solve, research, interpret, reason and be precise and accurate. Key content knowledge is grounded in strategic reading, expository writing, research and conceptual understanding of algebra. Academic behaviors consist largely of self-monitoring and study skills. Finally, to be successful, a student must possess the ability to navigate the college system and interact in an academic environment.

In *Creating College Readiness* (2009), EPIC used the student attributes to study high schools across the United States as a means for identifying evidence-based practices that promoted college and career readiness. The research pointed to ten themes of high performing schools:

1. Create and maintain a college-going culture in the school
2. Emphasize key cognitive strategies such as reasoning, problem solving, and research
3. Hold high expectations for all students, then provide differing degrees of scaffolding based on student need
4. Create a core academic program that is aligned with and leads to college readiness by the end of 12th grade
5. Make the senior year meaningful and challenging, keeping all students fully engaged
6. Reduce course selection choice in favor of college-focused offerings
7. Create assignments and grading polices that more closely approximate college expectations each successive year of high school
8. Promote key self-management skills and provide students feedback on the development of these skills
9. Prepare students for the academic and social differences between high school and college
10. Build partnerships with and connections to postsecondary programs and institutions

### **Measuring College and Career Readiness**

Assessing student progress toward attaining college and career skills and knowledge defined by ACT, Achieve and EPIC must be connected to students' ability to attend postsecondary education without the need for remediation. Measuring college and career readiness; therefore, must serve as formative feedback as to students' progress toward completing a rigorous, college-aligned course of study.

Achieve (2009) provided six indicators of progress toward college and career readiness status.

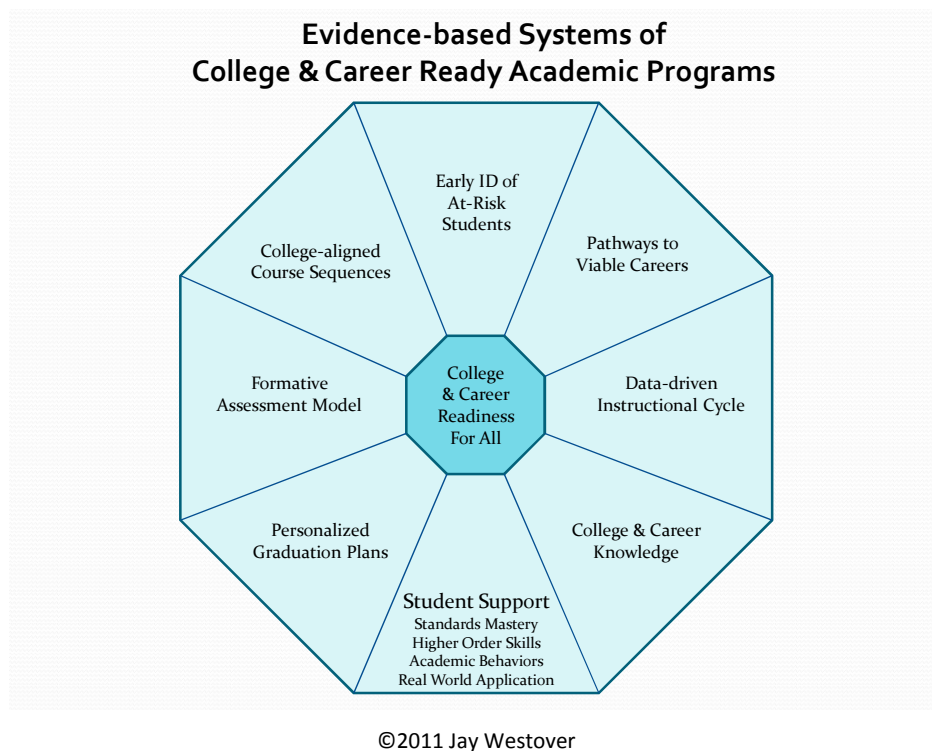
1. The percentage of students graduating high school, measured by the four-year cohort high school graduation rate
2. The percentage of students taking and completing a college-aligned course of study
3. How students perform on statewide assessments of college and career readiness
4. How many students are earning college credit while in high school
5. How many students enroll in postsecondary education after high school
6. How many students enroll in remedial courses in their first year of college

The following is a snapshot of student outcome data from 2008-09 in Riverside County, California referencing leading indicators of college and career readiness.

<b>Strategic Reading &amp; Expository Writing (prof/adv)</b>					
Grade 4 ELA	Grade 6 ELA	Grade 8 ELA	Grade 9 ELA	Grade 10 ELA	Grade 11 ELA
61%	50%	47%	49%	40%	36%
<b>Algebra 1 Preparedness</b>					
Grade 8		Grade 9		Grade 10	
enrolled	prof/adv	enrolled	prof/adv	enrolled	prof adv
54.5%	36%	57.3%	17%	29.2%	8%
<b>CAHSEE (10th grade)</b>					
ELA			Math		
80% pass	378 mean SS (380 prof)		81% pass	382 mean SS (380 prof)	
<b>Algebra 2 Completion</b>					
Grade 10 Alg 2		Grade 11 Alg 2		Grade 11 Summative Math	
Enrollment	prof/adv	Enrollment	prof/adv	Enrollment	prof/adv
3.4%	57%	22.4%	9%	20.4%	34%
<b>High School Graduation</b>					
Graduation Rate			A-G Completion Rate		
80%			29.4%		
<b>College Preparedness</b>					
EAP Alg 2		EAP Summative Math		EAP English	
complete	status	complete	status	complete	status
74%	3%R-18%C-79%NR	85%	11%R-72%C-17%NR	84%	12%R-88%NR
<b>College Success (statewide)</b>					
CC Attendance Rate		CC Remediation Rate		CC Completion Rate	
31%		90% math - 75% ELA		29%	
Cal State Attendance Rate		Cal State Remediation Rate		Cal State Grad Rate	
13%		60% math - 60% ELA		48%	
UC Attendance Rate		UC Remediation Rate		UC Grad Rate	
7.4%		9% (Berkley) to 59% (Merced)		81%	

## Advancing College and Career Readiness

The mission of InnovateED is advancing educational excellence. We believe that promoting college and career readiness is the single highest leverage action to ensure excellence in K-12 education. This requires that districts and schools are provided a clear understanding of evidence-based practices, methods for identifying gaps in current practices, and leading indicators for prioritizing actions steps in shifting from standards proficiency to college and career readiness. InnovateED has taken a systems approach in identifying the eight components essential for a college and career ready academic program. Schools and districts should use transition points for examining the impact of current practices toward developing college and career ready student attributes: 1) entry into middle school, 2) entry into high school, 3) grade eleven and 4) entry into college. As a result of this gap analysis, schools and districts will be able to assess needs and implement action steps in alignment with the eight components. This will provide more meaningful performance outcomes and create data predictive of college-going rates without need for remediation.



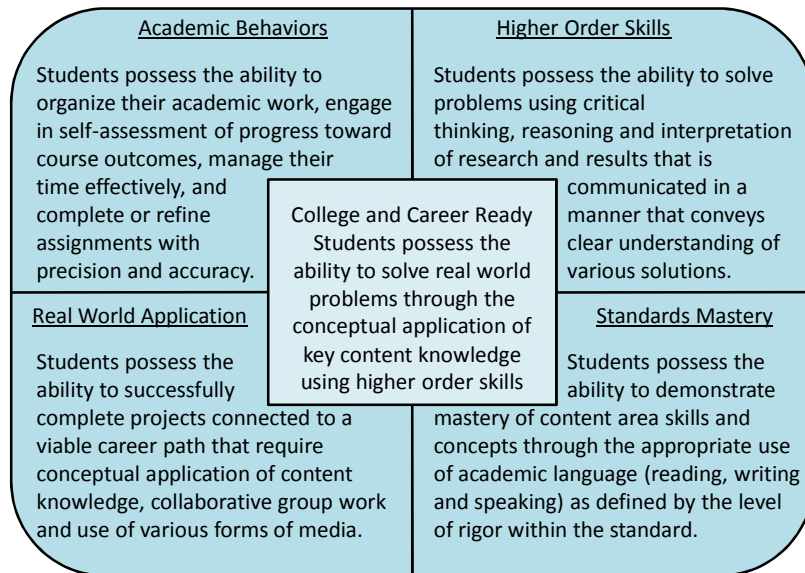
In subsequent sections, four key questions are used to guide K-12 educators in understanding the evidence-based practices of a college and career ready system. The findings associated with these key questions are then used to create the Six Steps to Success that serve as a framework for implementing college and career ready academic programs.

## Key Questions for College & Career Ready Academic Programs

### Which Student Attributes Define College and Career Readiness?

The American Diploma Project, Common Core Standards and research from ACT and EPIC provide the basis for defining the attributes of college and career ready students. The completion of Algebra II and four years of English are clearly the minimum to be prepared for postsecondary education.

Foundational academic skills of strategic reading, expository writing, research and conceptual application of Algebra are essential for students to access text resources and effectively communicate. The ability to think critically using problem solving, interpretation, reasoning, precision and accuracy are key attributes. Academic behaviors of self-monitoring and study skills allow students to become self-directed learners essential for completing a rigorous academic program. The gaps in preparedness for college and careers go beyond academic skills and behaviors, and directly points to the ability of students to apply concepts to real world problems, making learning more authentic, relevant and practical for students. The diagram below depicts the four student attributes of college and career readiness that K-12 academic programs must develop.



### Student Attributes of College and Career Readiness

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## Shifts in Practice

Currently the emphasis on daily classroom practice is placed upon mastery of discrete standards rather than students demonstrating the ability to solve real world, standards-based problems using rigorous academic language and higher order skills with precision and accuracy. The issue is that standards alone are not grounded in strategic reading, expository writing, research or key concepts of Algebra. Higher order skills, rather than being a primary means to demonstrate understanding, is often a desired outcome and not a required student attribute. In addition, students often are expected to have acquired study skills and the ability to self-monitor in the absence of classroom learning environments that scaffold the development of these skill sets. Finally, many students disengage when there is lack of relevancy and practical application of learning in the classroom.

The shifts in practice loom large, but can be accomplished by adjusting classroom instruction to align with one simple question: **How do learning experiences develop students' ability to solve real world, standards-based problems using rigorous academic language and higher order skills with precision and accuracy?**

David Conley in *Redefining College Readiness* stated:

"Students entering college and career-technical fields are more likely to succeed if they can formulate, investigate, and propose solutions to non-routine problems; understand and analyze conflicting explanations of phenomena or events; evaluate the credibility and utility of source material and then integrate sources into a paper or project appropriately; think analytically and logically, comparing and contrasting differing philosophies, methods, and positions to understand an issue or concept; and exercise precision and accuracy as they apply their methods and develop their products. They should assemble work samples regularly, self-assess their performance using a common scoring guide and set goals to improve performance."

### Key Action Steps:

- ✓ Ensure students use self-assessment tools to increase precision, accuracy and organization skills
- ✓ Ensure students demonstrate standards mastery as part of solving real world problems through conceptual application of skills and knowledge using rigorous academic language and higher order skills

## **Which Key Components of a Coherent Instructional Program Lead to College and Career Readiness?**

To reiterate, research from ACT and Achieve demonstrate that a rigorous, college-aligned course of study leading to successful completion of four years of English and Algebra II with seamless transition to postsecondary education is essential. The transitions at entry into middle school, entry into high school, at grade eleven and entry into freshmen year of college serve as critical points for measuring college and career readiness. Performance-based formative assessments that occur between these transition points indicate the degree to which students are developing the ability to solve standards-based problems using academic language and higher order skills with precision and accuracy.

Currently, school academic programs consist of a progression of courses with a sequence of standards guiding instruction and measuring student progress toward course completion. Course pacing guides serve as loose structures toward ensuring all students demonstrate mastery of priority standards. Student enrollment and progress through course sequences is based upon individual student academic ability, and to an extent, student academic discipline. As a result, not all students are provided access to a rigorous, college-aligned course of study.

### **Shifts in Practice**

Monitoring student progress toward completion of the A-G diploma and attaining readiness status on grade 11 EAP math and English assessments should serve as guide posts for creating college and career ready academic programs. Following this course of study, based on the California Common Core Standards, and providing access to senior year math and English courses to remediate deficient skills, would align with the outcomes of the American Diploma Project. A final shift in practice would be to incorporate end-of-semester performance assessments in core classes that measure student mastery of common core standards by solving real world problems using rigorous academic language and higher order skills.

### **Key Action Steps**

- ✓ Ensure each course has clear and consistent performance outcomes with student attribute descriptions
- ✓ Ensure each course has end-of-semester performance assessments aligned with student attribute descriptions
- ✓ Ensure course progress is measured by frequent, formative assessments of performance outcomes
- ✓ Ensure each student completes a rigorous course of study concluding with senior year English and math courses providing remediation based upon grade 11 EAP results

## **Which Systematic Support Structures Develop College and Career Ready Students?**

The Professional Learning Community movement and use of the Response to Intervention model has gained momentum in schools as a means for creating a collaborative culture focused on results and student learning. In most districts course pacing guides, priority standards and student outcome data serve as drivers to guide and inform the focus of instructional programs. As a result, the extent to which student support structures are systematic depends upon the precision and fidelity to which these drivers are in practice. It is not uncommon to find schools with systematic student support processes based on 3 week, 9 week and even 18 week data-driven instructional cycles. Frequency of common assessments and variations in intended outcomes for student learning are the primary reasons for inconsistencies in systematic responses to student learning.

Intended outcomes of student learning vary within schools and districts, and are dependent upon pacing guide coherence and delineation of priority standards. The question of "what aspect of student learning is most valued as to require systematic support?" is essential, and most often aligns with highly tested standards from the CST and CAHSEE blueprints. The end goal being that student support results in higher proficiency rates on CA standardized assessments. The extent to which teachers can cover highly tested standards within a pacing guide and provide systematic support for students becomes the daunting challenge for schools and districts.

As we look toward the student attributes defining college and career readiness, additional outcomes for student learning emerge; rigorous use of academic language, higher order skills, relevant application of key concepts, and academic behaviors promoting precision and accuracy. Strategic reading, expository writing, research, and conceptual application of algebra are also essential skills. All connect to and are defined by **the ability of students to demonstrate standards mastery through problem solving, interpretation and reasoning that is effectively communicated with precision and accuracy using rigorous academic language.**

### **Shifts in Practice**

Systematic support structures must shift in focus to align with the student attributes of college and career readiness; standards mastery, higher order skills, real world application and academic behaviors. Such a shift requires that performance outcomes of courses delineate these attributes with pacing guides emphasizing a learning progression to which student support can be directed. The creation of college and career readiness performance outcomes and end-of-semester task analyses as part of course pacing guides can clearly articulate "how students should demonstrate standards mastery." This shift in focus provides teachers the clarity needed to distinguish the attributes of college and career

readiness of highest deficiency, and provides course-alike teams with information needed to target these skills through instruction and intervention support.

Another key component of college and career readiness is successful completion of a rigorous, college-aligned course of study leading to seamless transition to postsecondary education and a viable career. Course placement and targeted intervention are essential for at-risk student populations to successfully complete such a course of study. Students are provided four year graduation plans upon entry into high school, with plans being reviewed annually based upon student progress toward credits earned for graduation. However, course sequence progressions do not extend back to the eighth grade, the most critical transition point in the k-12 system, and do not extend into the freshmen year of college to ensure a seamless transition. By instituting a six year personalized graduation plan, spanning from grade eight to freshmen year of college, a more focused approach to student placement, monitoring progress toward course sequence completion and career planning would occur with interventions provided along the continuum to develop college and career ready attributes.

#### **Key Action Steps**

- ✓ Ensure early identification and monitoring of at-risk students based on course performance outcomes
- ✓ Ensure students have six year personalized graduation plans (grade 8 to freshman college year) providing multiple pathways to college and viable careers

#### **What Defines a High Performing School Culture Promoting College and Career Readiness?**

Much has been done in schools to promote a collaborative culture focused on results and learning. The idea of ensuring that all students learn by providing the support needed to attain standards mastery is not new to schools. Academic achievement is clearly the focus for all students. In California the Academic Performance Index (API), Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and CAHSEE receive the most public scrutiny, and therefore, are most often the focus of schools in defining success. With the rise in API amongst schools and districts, lower achieving student populations are showing progress toward standards proficiency. As federal AYP targets rise in math and English, schools and districts are putting time and resources toward ensuring all student subgroups are supported in attaining these performance outcomes. And with graduation of high school dependent upon passage of CAHSEE, teachers in grades 9 and 10, as well as those in lower grade levels, provide targeted instruction and intervention to support student success on this high stakes exam.

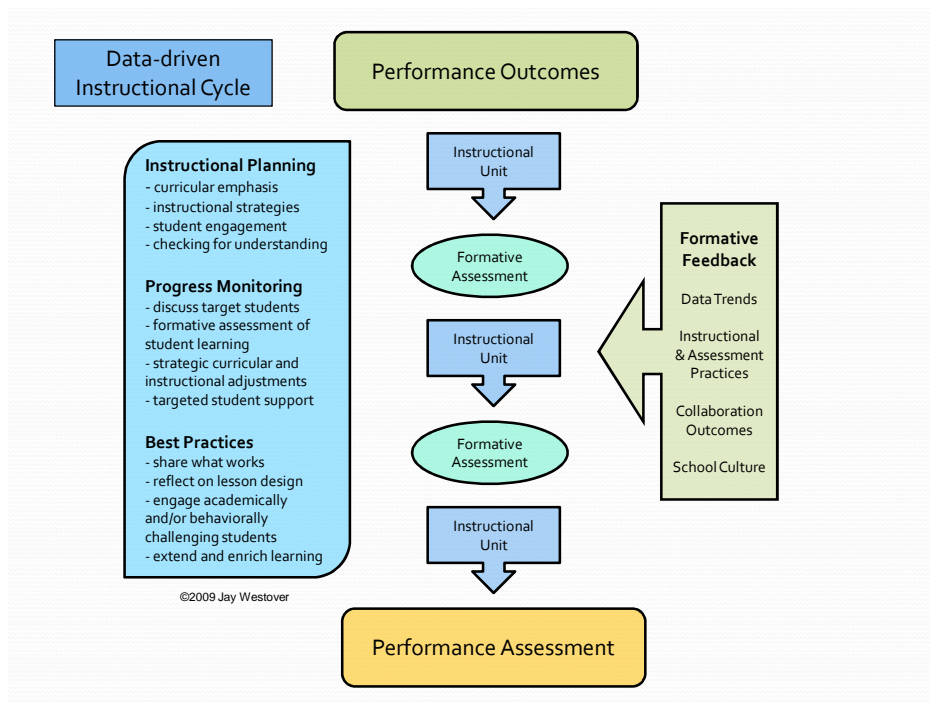
As new state and federal policies begin to impact K-12 education, a measurement will emerge that redefines student success; college-going rates without need for remediation. High school graduation will no longer be perceived as an end point, but rather the mid-point in preparing students for success. Currently, school cultures celebrate student performance based upon API, AYP and the CAHSEE. These outcome data trends provide a reference for standards proficiency at specific grade levels and courses. Under the new paradigm, these measurements will serve as transitional data points demonstrating the degree to which students are becoming college and career ready and prepared for postsecondary education. School cultures will celebrate student progress toward becoming college and career ready, rather than attaining discrete grade level competencies. Student success will be celebrated as a progression of learning leading to postsecondary preparedness, monitored at critical transition points of entry into middle school, entry into high school, grade 11 and entry into freshmen year of college.

### **Shifts in Practice**

High performing schools with a "culture of college and career readiness" have a pervasive, school-wide belief that all students can succeed in postsecondary education. Students understand that the progression of learning in elementary school to middle school and through high school is done in preparation for postsecondary education. Students and their parents then become the drivers of their own learning as a result of monitoring progress along this learning continuum. By making these transition points and learning outcomes clear and visible to students and parents, the community becomes a strong proponent of the academic programs and learning required to prepare all students for college and careers. Fourth grade literacy, strategic reading, expository writing, research, algebra preparedness, successful completion of four years of high school English and Algebra II, and attaining college readiness status on the grade 11 EAP all serve as points of celebration. The ability to problem solve, interpret, reason and use higher order skills in solving real world problems is celebrated. The ability to communicate using rigorous academic language with precision accuracy is celebrated. How standards are mastered becomes as important as the mastery of standards.

School culture is also defined by the collaborative culture that drives the work of teachers within schools. Central to this collaborative culture is structured collaboration wherein teams of teachers engage in instructional planning, monitoring student progress and identifying best practices for student learning. Structured collaboration will maintain focused on these high leverage actions, but will need to shift in how effective instruction is designed, how to monitor student progress and how to develop best practices that align with student attributes of college and career readiness. Data-driven instructional cycles that guide the work of teachers and teams will need to align with the end-of semester performance outcomes that serve as measurements of college and career ready student attributes.

The use of a data-driven instructional cycle, as depicted on the diagram below, is central to creating a high performing school culture. The degree to which students are attaining college and career readiness attributes needs to be transparently monitored and supported. The data-driven instructional cycle seamlessly integrates the coherent instructional program with systematic student support providing opportunities for staff, students and parents to receive formative feedback of student progress. This creates the transparency and clarity needed to ensure all students develop the essential attributes of college and career readiness.



### Key Action Steps

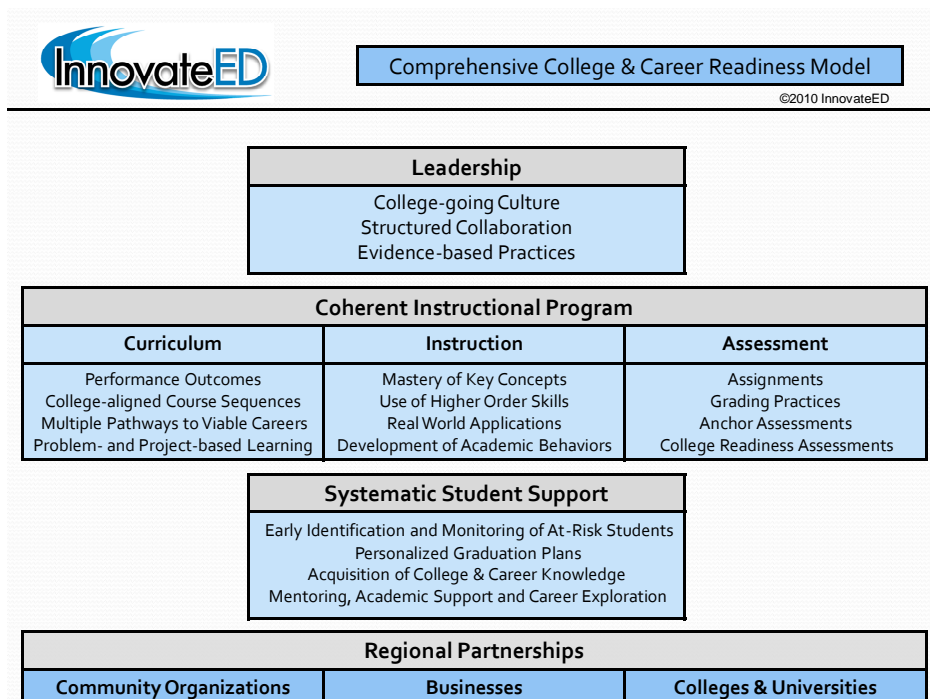
- ✓ Ensure students are empowered to become leaders of a "college and career ready culture"
- ✓ Ensure evidence-based practices are implemented through structured collaboration
- ✓ Ensure transparent student progress is created through frequent, formative feedback of performance outcomes

## A Call to Action

In moving forward the mission of college and career readiness for all students, InnovateED will be working with a select group of schools and districts to implement the Six Steps to Success. A three-phased approach will be used to meet the diverse needs of schools and districts; 1) complete a college and career readiness gap analysis, 2) prioritize action steps based upon gaps of current practices and readiness factors, and 3) implement evidence-based practices emphasizing leadership, coherent instructional program and systematic student support.

The **Six Steps to Success** are listed below.

1. Focus on College and Career Ready Student Attributes
2. Establish Clear Performance Outcomes of College and Career Readiness
3. Engage All Students in a Rigorous, College-aligned Course of Study
4. Formatively Assess Performance Indicators of College and Career Readiness
5. Ensure Early Identification and Systematic Support of At-Risk Students
6. Create a Culture of High Performance



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The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers (NGA Center/CCSSO), owners of the Common Core State Standards (College- and Career-Readiness Standards and K-12 Standards in English Language Arts and Math)

## **Contact Information**

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