

Redefining the High School to College Transition in Illinois:

A Framework for Local Action and State Supports



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PREFACE

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The following report is the culmination of five months of planning designed to improve the high school to postsecondary transition in Illinois. With generous support from the Joyce Foundation and College Board, Advance Illinois and Education Systems Center at Northern Illinois University led the process with representatives from nine regional teams, state education agencies, and national experts.

The report contains four key components developed through information gathering and discussions with the representatives mentioned above:

- a framework with articulated elements and examples of regional best practices to serve as a guide for local action, state policy alignment, and philanthropic investment;
- performance metrics aligned to the framework for measuring progress at the state- and community-level and informing efforts to improve systems performance;
- state policy recommendations to support and accelerate local action aligned to the framework; and
- recommendations for external investment from either state agencies or philanthropies to scale up practices aligned to the framework and deliver supports across multiple regions and statewide.

The planning process led to several important outcomes:

1. It established a network of regions from across Illinois that have impressive practices in place for supporting student transitions from high school to postsecondary education and beyond.
2. It enabled the development of a coherent framework for aligning high school and postsecondary education systems to provide students with well-articulated paths for credential and degree attainment
3. It identified opportunities for state policy action and strategic state and philanthropic investments that will support and accelerate local alignment efforts.

Illinois can build from the regional efforts and framework described in this report to establish an aligned statewide system for placing more high school graduates on a path to attain a postsecondary credential or degree with lifelong value. We hope that policymakers, funders, education practitioners, and community stakeholders will utilize the framework and recommendations in this report to guide the development of such a system.



I. INTRODUCTION

Since March 2015, Advance Illinois and Education Systems Center at Northern Illinois University (EdSystems), with support from the Joyce Foundation and College Board, have led a planning process with representatives from nine regional teams, state education agencies, and national experts to improve the high school to postsecondary transition in Illinois. The primary objective of the planning process is to develop a framework for redefining the high school to college transition. The project addresses three overarching goals:

1. Improve the college and career readiness of Illinois high school students;
2. Ensure all high school graduates are on a path toward a postsecondary credential or degree with value; and
3. Position students to accelerate toward postsecondary credential or degree completion.

This project has included information-sharing on the best practices from nine regions geographically distributed across Illinois. Between 30 and 60 participants attended five working sessions over the course of the planning period to learn from each other and contribute to meeting the project goals. Most regional teams consisted of a community college, at least one school district, and a four-year university which had established or was organizing a regional partnership to improve college and career readiness. Some regional teams had years of formal partnerships, while others were newly launched. All participants sought to identify new, innovative ways to tackle common challenges.

These regional teams have demonstrated highly effective practices which were shared at project meetings and via the project website at <http://ilhstocollege.org>. In addition, the teams collaborated to develop the *Framework for Local Action and State Supports* detailed in Section II of this report and offered advice on recommendations for state policy changes and external investment. The regional teams also received a project participation grant for carrying out a collaborative local initiative aligned to the goals and focus areas of this project.

Regional Leadership Teams Participating in this Project

Area	Community College	School District	University
Aurora	Waubensee	Aurora 129	Northern Illinois U.
Carbondale	John A. Logan		Southern Illinois U.
Chicago	City Colleges	Chicago 299	U. of Illinois Chicago
Danville	Danville	Danville 118	Eastern Illinois U.
East St. Louis	Southwest Illinois	East St. Louis 189	Southern Illinois U. at Edwardsville
Elgin	Elgin	Elgin U-46	Northern Illinois U.
McHenry	McHenry	Huntley 158	Northern Illinois U.
McLean County	Heartland	McLean 5	Illinois State U.
Northwest Suburbs	Harper	Arlington Hts 214 Barrington 220 Palatine 211	Northern Illinois U.

The project included a preliminary field review by a team of researchers at Northern Illinois University of initiatives in Illinois and across the country to raise readiness, postsecondary enrollment, retention, and graduation. Another researcher surveyed Illinois high schools, community colleges, and universities on their practices to improve alignment across the P-20 system, reduce the need for developmental courses, and increase opportunities to earn college credit while still in high school. Illinois state agency representatives described their programs and policies to support higher educational attainment at all levels and support local efforts aligned to the overall project goals. National organizations including College Board, Achieve, the Pathways to Prosperity Network, and Jobs for the Future explained strategies for supporting student transitions to postsecondary education and careers that are occurring across the country and shared the results of those efforts to date.

The results of the information gathering and ensuing discussion among local, state, and national experts are compiled in four areas of this report:

1. *Framework for Local Action and State Supports*: A framework with articulated elements to serve as a guide for local action, state policy alignment, and philanthropic investment
2. Performance metrics aligned to the *Framework* for measuring progress at the state- and community-level and informing efforts to improve systems performance
3. State policy recommendations generated through input during the planning process to support and accelerate local action aligned to the *Framework*
4. Recommendations for external investment from either state agencies or philanthropies to scale up practices aligned to the *Framework* and deliver supports across multiple regions and statewide

The regions involved in this planning process have impressive practices in place for supporting student transitions from high school to postsecondary education and beyond. However, a coherent framework is needed to move from isolated best practices to an aligned statewide system for well-articulated paths that lead students from high school to postsecondary credential and degree attainment. The project leaders (Advance Illinois and EdSystems) intend that this report, its *Framework*, and the aligned recommendations for policy action and strategic investments will accelerate Illinois' establishment of such an aligned statewide system.

A Caveat on the Project's Focus

This project focuses on one segment of a comprehensive system that leads students to postsecondary credentials and degrees and on into meaningful careers. The grade 9 through 13 focus of the project does not imply there is no need to ensure students are meeting grade-level expectations aligned to standards in Pre-K through 8, that career exploration only starts in high school, or that students transitioning to non-remedial courses in postsecondary education are ensured continued success. Rather, the *Framework* and recommendations in this report are intended to align with other state- and community-level efforts aimed at the earlier and later segments of the pipeline.

II. FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL ACTION AND STATE SUPPORTS

The *Framework for Local Action and State Supports* results directly from the information gathered during the planning process and input from regional teams, state agencies, and national experts. Its purpose is to serve as a guide for local action, state policy alignment, and philanthropic investment. The project leaders propose that all elements of the *Framework* be addressed in high school to postsecondary transition systems that result in student success. However, the project leaders recognize that the depth and focus of implementation will vary from community to community based on local resources, needs, and context.

As depicted in **Figure 2**, the *Framework* includes two overarching categories:

A. High School and Postsecondary System Alignment:

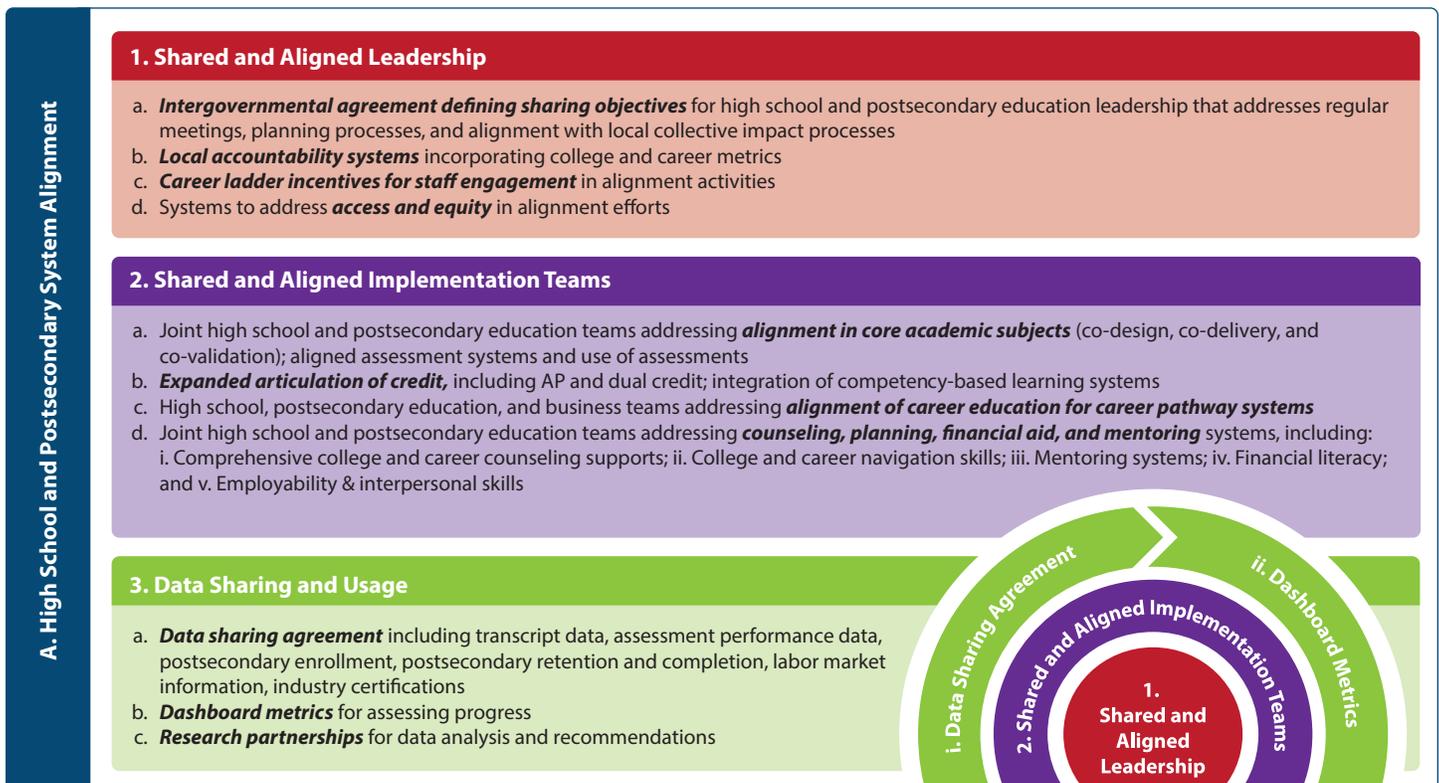
Collaborative and coordinated actions to align local policies, programs, and resource allocation decisions, as directed by leadership and implemented by staff in high school and postsecondary education systems. System alignment activities must also include the strategic use of data to monitor local educational system performance and inform improvement strategies.

B. 9th Through 13+ Student-Facing Systems: An aligned system of educational programs, structures, and supports that students engage with as they progress through high school

and transition to postsecondary education and careers. These proposed systems include strong core academic instructional systems for all students, “catch-up” supports for students that need them, planning and transition supports to guide students toward individualized goals, and comprehensive “speed-up” opportunities for students to attain college credit and career credentials while in high school.

These two categories and the elements within them are detailed below, along with survey findings and Illinois regional spotlight practices.

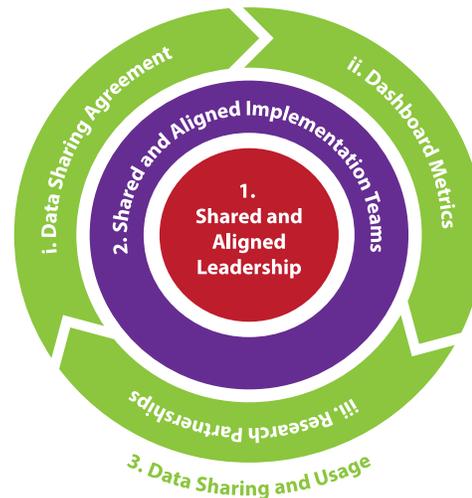
- **Survey Findings:** Key findings from the survey of Illinois high schools, community colleges, and universities on their practices relating to the various elements of the *Framework* appear throughout this section of the report. Survey data collected by this project represents a limited sample of Illinois institutions. Respondents included 32 school districts serving 180 of the state’s 654 high schools, 21 of 38 community colleges, and 10 of 12 public universities. All regional leadership teams participating in this project responded to the survey, which may have skewed results.
- **Regional Spotlight Practices:** Examples of practices being implemented by various regional teams can inform efforts to scale up elements of the *Framework* to additional regions across Illinois. More information on policies and practices for each of the nine teams may be found at <http://ilhstocollege.org>.



		9th	10th	11th	12th	13th +
1. Core Academic Systems	a. Foundational academic systems					
	i. Curriculum and assessment systems in core academic areas aligned to Illinois learning standards and preparing students for a full array of postsecondary education and career opportunities ii. Response to Intervention systems with on-track monitoring and tiers of targeted interventions iii. Integration of college and career awareness and navigation into academics					
	b. Aligned 11–13 developmental ed models					
			★ <i>Milestone:</i> i. Multiple measures readiness determination for senior year courses		ii. Targeted Senior year remedial instruction co-developed by HS & CC; informed by readiness determination data	ii. Multiple-measures placement & co-requisite remediation
c. Summer bridge programs with primary postsecondary education partners						
2. Planning and Transition Supports	a. Individualized plan for postsecondary education, careers, and financial aid updated annually					
	b. Outreach, exposure, and near-peer mentoring systems for students who may not otherwise pursue higher education, or have been historically underrepresented in higher education					Continue near-peer mentoring systems
	c. Aligned scholarship and financial aid monitoring and supports: Systems to support identification of scholarship opportunities, completion of scholarship applications, completion of FAFSA, and Promise Programs					
	d. Match and fit, proactive advising systems, and progress monitoring					
			i. Identify and explore colleges utilizing “match and fit” advising system		ii. Application tracking, proactive advising	iii. Continue proactive advising; additional retention support strategies
3. Accelerated Learning (“Speed-up”)	a. Accelerated learning goal and opportunities for all students					
	i. Comprehensive focus and systems that expand early college credit for all students, particularly those in mid- to low- performance quartiles, and career-oriented education for all students ii. Grade weighting/GPA policies do not incentivize particular types of accelerated learning					
	b. Continuum of professional learning for all students					
	i. Career exposure: Job shadows, real-world problems, “micro” internships			ii. Career preparation: Capstone projects, school-based enterprises, internships, pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships		
	c. Career-focused instruction and assessments for all students					
i. Career interest inventory & orientation on career cluster framework		ii. Orientation to a particular career cluster or related grouping of career clusters (e.g., Information Technology) ★ <i>Milestone:</i> Selection of career pathway focus by end of 10th grade		iii. Articulated sequence of instruction in a career pathway area (e.g, Network Systems, Programming & Software Development) iv. Sequenced, stackable industry certifications ★ <i>Milestone:</i> By end of senior year, completion of at least one gateway college course and receipt of an employer-validated certification of career readiness		
d. Expansive early college credit opportunities for all students						
i. AP potential review to expand access; AP and community college outreach		ii. Expansive credit by examination offerings (AP, IB, PLTW) iii. Expansive dual credit offerings that leverage available funds to minimize student costs iv. Structured programs with outcomes ranging from a semester’s worth of credit up to an Associate Degree (e.g., Power of 15, Early College, Running Start models)		vi. Articulation of early college credit to degree requirements		
v. Opportunities for earning college credit on-campus						

A. HIGH SCHOOL AND POSTSECONDARY ALIGNMENT

Building a successful transition system requires careful alignment of expectations and integration of efforts by stakeholders in high schools, postsecondary institutions, and the workforce. Significant results depend on strong direction from executives who are familiar with the issues and committed to solving problems together and from implementation teams composed of representatives from all levels who are charged by the leadership with addressing specific issues. Data, which often provides the spark that inspires a partnership, also provides connections that hold a partnership together by documenting both its successes and its ongoing challenges.



1. Shared and Aligned Leadership

- a. **Intergovernmental agreement defining sharing objectives** for high school and postsecondary education leadership that addresses regular meetings, planning processes, and alignment with local collective impact processes
- b. **Local accountability systems** incorporating college and career metrics
- c. **Career ladder incentives for staff engagement** in alignment activities
- d. Systems to address **access and equity** in alignment efforts

Shared and aligned leadership requires a documented structure for decision-making among local high school and community college executives, and agreements for holding system actors accountable for progress toward defined goals and objectives. Leadership across high school and community college systems needs to ensure that staff members are appropriately incentivized through opportunities for career advancement related to their engagement in alignment activities. Finally, executive leadership also needs to ensure that promoting access and equity to college and career readiness programs is a core value embedded across all of the local collaborative activities.

Key Survey Findings on Shared and Aligned Leadership Practices in Illinois

- About 60% of high schools, 80% of community colleges, and 67% of universities work in multi-level partnerships to improve transitions
- Regular meetings with counterparts at other levels occur for 81% of high schools, 90% of colleges, and 89% of universities
- 45% of high schools, 81% of colleges, and 67% of universities consult with employers on local workforce needs

Regional Spotlight Practices of Shared and Aligned Leadership

- East-Side Aligned is a collective impact process that began in November 2012 to achieve measurably better outcomes for children and youth in the East St. Louis District 189 footprint. East-Side Aligned is governed by a 39-person cross-sector leadership council, known as the Alignment Council, and supported by a backbone organization, United Way of Greater St. Louis. East-Side Aligned has activated a number of designated strategy teams, including a cross-sector Pathways Team that is working to create the conditions to ensure many more youth complete high school, attain a postsecondary degree credential with currency in the labor market, and get launched into a career.
- The Northwest Educational Council for Student Success (NECSS) administers a collaboration of Harper College, Arlington Heights District 214, Barrington District 220, and Palatine District 211, which includes 12 high schools in all. An established, well-organized, and effective partnership, NECSS develops programs, shares data, and leverages joint resources to increase completion and achievement of all students. NECSS has earned state and national recognition for its high impact programs.
- McHenry College (MCC) and all of its feeder school districts launched the McHenry College and Career Readiness Alliance with a shared definition of college readiness. MCC regularly supplies data on students' preparation, performance, and persistence at MCC to the 14 high schools in the district. The college reorganized its personnel and alignment of responsibilities to better support activities that improve college readiness and performance. McHenry County College is a 2015 Bellwether Finalist.

2. Shared and Aligned Implementation Teams

- a. Joint high school and postsecondary education teams addressing **alignment in core academic subjects** (co-design, co-delivery, and co-validation); aligned assessment systems and use of assessments
- b. **Expanded articulation of credit**, including AP and dual credit; integration of competency-based learning systems
- c. High school, postsecondary education, and business teams addressing **alignment of career education for career pathway systems**
- d. Joint high school and postsecondary education teams addressing **counseling, planning, financial aid, and mentoring** systems, including:
 - i. Comprehensive college and career counseling supports;
 - ii. College and career navigation skills;
 - iii. Mentoring systems;
 - iv. Financial literacy;
 - v. Employability & interpersonal skills

Joint high school and postsecondary teams of educators are essential to this process, because practitioners in each field need to agree on what to do, how to do it, and how to tell if they are successful. Local trust, respectful relationships, and solid agreement must guide both the alignment process and implementation. Sometimes, the conversations prove difficult. Alignment in core academic subjects can be laborious, but is necessary to successfully implement the revised Illinois Learning Standards and prepare more students for college-level instruction. Alignment of career pathways and student support services are as important as efforts in the core academic fields. In many areas of Illinois, CTE and student support services personnel are already more closely connected than are core academic instructors, but the joint teams are equally necessary since the work requires a continuous improvement across institutions. The implementation teams for career pathways must also include local employers that can articulate the knowledge and skills students need to succeed in locally prioritized industry sectors.

Key Survey Findings on Shared and Aligned Implementation Teams

- 76% of community colleges work with high schools to articulate programs of study for majors, certificates, and careers
- 87% of high schools and 90% of colleges assist students with financial literacy and FAFSA workshops, and 83% of high schools and 85% of colleges offer prep for ACT or placement exams, but these activities are not usually conducted collaboratively across institutions

Regional Spotlight Practices

- McLean County Area established the *Modeling Effective Collaboration on Common Core Standards Initiative* in 2015, a partnership that includes the Regional Office of Education, local school districts, Heartland Community College, and Illinois State University, for the purposes of aligning K-12 and higher education curricula, standards, and pedagogy in math and English Language Arts (ELA). As part of this work, a regional task force is aligning high school curriculum and expectations in math and ELA to determine vertical articulation as students develop college readiness skills. The partnership is also working regionally to inform and prepare higher education faculty for students meeting the revised Illinois Learning Standards and infusing new standards-related content and pedagogy into teacher preparation programs and clinical practice.
- Composed of Danville Area Community College (DACC), 13 school districts, more than 150 businesses, and Eastern Illinois University (EIU), the Danville Area Transition Team builds on the work of implementation teams that established alignment of curriculum and practices. As a result, students can earn dual credit in 15 career and technical education areas. DACC and Danville 118 have articulated 18 programs of study. DACC and EIU have articulated 13 2+2 bachelor's programs. The partnership sponsors a variety of career exploration activities as well as opportunities to learn about workforce needs, dual credit, and scholarships. A special focus has highlighted STEM careers and nontraditional careers.
- The Elgin Alliance for College Readiness was founded in 2006 by Elgin Community College (ECC) and four school districts (Elgin U-46, Carpentersville-Dundee 300, Central 301, and St. Charles 303). Winner of the 2013 Bellwether Award for Instructional Programs and Services, the Elgin Alliance maintains a robust organization with implementation teams working on alignment of curriculum and instruction in math, writing, reading, and science; student transition processes and parent communications; and assisting English language learners.

3. Data Sharing and Usage

- a. **Data sharing agreement** including transcript data, assessment performance data, postsecondary enrollment, postsecondary retention and completion, labor market information, industry certifications
- b. **Dashboard metrics** for assessing progress
- c. **Research partnerships** for data analysis and recommendations

In dialogues and presentations during the four months of this project, the regional leadership teams frequently requested more data and more timely data about students' preparation, performance, and persistence. Illinois has been in the process of building a longitudinal data system for years, but the results of that work are only now beginning to provide information to guide local activities. Even when the state longitudinal data system is fully operational, regional teams will still need to have local data sharing agreements that facilitate the sharing of information not collected by state agencies. Regions need to define local performance metrics for assessing progress, which can be informed by the Performance Metrics Guide in Section III of this report. Research partnerships with universities are providing assistance for several partnerships in collecting, managing, and using data.

Key Survey Findings on Data Sharing and Usage

- 62% of high schools, 71% of colleges, and 78% of universities analyze performance data, but not as part of a shared system
- Employer data generated new degrees or certificates in 50% of schools and 82% of community colleges

Regional Spotlight Practices

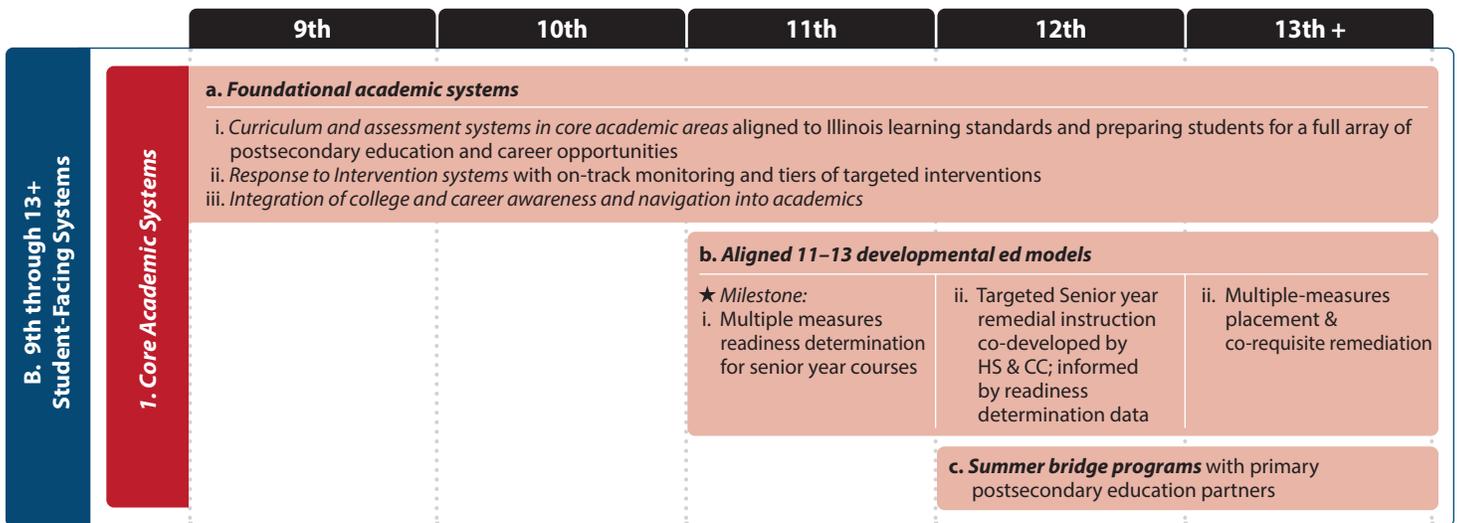
- The Elgin Alliance for College Readiness works collaboratively with its school district partners to monitor and share annual college readiness rates of high school graduates who enroll at Elgin Community College. The Alliance partnership also uses National Student Clearinghouse data to establish a regional college-going, college persistence, and college completion rate for all high school graduates.
- NECSS, which includes Harper College and three school districts, has a regional data-sharing agreement that facilitates the development of NECSS' initiatives and the monitoring of successes and challenges. The 12 high schools in the partnership receive data on the performance of students who enroll at Harper.
- The Chicago Higher Education Compact conducts and shares research that is being used by Chicago Public Schools (CPS) District 299, and 21 colleges and universities for the purpose of increasing college enrollment, persistence and completion for CPS graduates. Milestone metrics for CPS include an increased high school graduation rate, increased college readiness levels and college enrollment rates of high school graduates, and training of all postsecondary advisors in CPS in best practice college advising. Metrics for postsecondary institutions include increased persistence and graduation rates, increased enrollment targets, and increased meeting of financial aid needs. A good example of the usefulness of research is the Freshmen on Track metric, developed by the Consortium on Chicago School Research, that is now part of the Illinois Report Card. CPS has used this data to identify and intervene with students who are not on track to graduate from high school. Since these interventions were introduced, the percentage of students graduating has increased significantly.
- The Northern Illinois Regional P-20 Network, which is based at Northern Illinois University and comprised of 25 educational institutions, state agencies, and advocacy organizations, was founded in 2014. During its first year, the P-20 Network fielded survey instruments on ten disparate topics, researched and published two policy papers, completed three literature reviews, collected data on educational attainment across the region, and prepared labor market reports on current and emerging jobs. The resulting data was shared with four working groups that engage more than 70 representatives of partner institutions. The partnerships in Elgin, Harper, McHenry, and Waubensee are members of this network.

B. 9TH THROUGH 13TH + STUDENT-FACING SYSTEMS

This project focuses on redefining the high school to college transition in Illinois. In the narrowest view, the transition point is between grade 12 and grade 13. In the broadest view, preparation for this transition begins in early childhood and ends when a student transitions from postsecondary education into a career. The process of transition does not start in 9th grade nor end with matriculation to postsecondary education. Not surprisingly, several of the regional leadership teams in the project have added pre-K committees, and others are broadening their scope to include student support and success services throughout the postsecondary experience. The components of this framework for grades 9 to 13+ will necessarily need to be coordinated with pre-school, K-8, and higher education activities to raise educational attainment.

With that limitation of the project scope in mind, the *Framework's* three components of 9th through 13th + Student Facing Systems -- Core Academic Systems, Planning and Transition Supports, and Accelerated Learning — comprise an integrated approach to address the needs of all students as they progress through high school and transition to college or career. Core Academic Systems provide a solid foundation that defines academic expectations for students and addresses individual gaps as they occur, while focusing intensive supports for students not on-track for college-readiness by high school graduation. Planning and Transition Supports customize programs and services for individuals, helping students meet expectations and move smoothly from high school to college and careers. The elements of Accelerated Learning enable high school students to attain both college credit and career credentials that will guide and speed up progress toward their goals.

1. Core Academic Systems



The revised Illinois Learning Standards and the aligned PARCC assessments provide clear academic expectations and regular measures of achievement for Illinois students. Using a variety of measures in their classrooms, educators can track students having difficulties and provide targeted, just-in-time activities, so that they can catch up quickly. The grades 11 to 13 developmental education models delivered by regional teams in this project are demonstrating that remedial education rates can be dramatically reduced by collaborative approaches across high schools and community colleges. Instead of using only the Compass or Accuplacer test to determine readiness for college courses, these teams are combining tests with measures included in regular instruction, GPA, and teacher recommendations. Multiple measures are resulting in more accurate placements for

both senior year and college-level courses. Students identified as not yet ready for college-level instruction through a junior year readiness determination receive targeted “catch-up” instruction that, if successfully completed by the student, enables automatic enrollment into credit-bearing courses at the community college without another placement exam. For students still not ready for college-level instruction upon high school graduation, summer bridge programs and co-requisite remediation approaches help ensure students’ postsecondary education progress is not sidetracked through non-credit bearing remedial coursework. “Co-requisite remediation” refers to the combination of regular credit and developmental courses at the college level, with remedial modules introduced only as needed.

Key Survey Findings on Core Academic Systems Components

- 58% of high schools test students for developmental education needs during the junior year
- 50% of community colleges offer developmental education courses to seniors in high school, usually with high school instructors
- 76% of colleges and 70% of universities offer co-requisite remediation courses, most frequently in writing

Regional Spotlight Practices

- McHenry College and Career Readiness Alliance was founded when school district administrators learned that 57% of entering students needed developmental courses in math; in other words, a majority were not ready for college work. High school and college math instructors opted to offer McHenry's developmental math course to seniors in high school as a possible solution. Juniors were tested to assess need for developmental math, and high school teachers trained to teach the course to their students, who use the same textbook and take the same tests as MCC students in developmental education. In fall 2015, only 26% of entering freshmen were not ready for college math, a drop of 31 points. This alliance is now working on using multiple measures to determine if high school juniors should take the McHenry developmental math courses in senior year and have also identified a need to update the content of developmental courses to align with the Illinois Learning Standards.
- The Elgin Alliance for College Readiness developed a senior-year transition math course that is aligned with the new Illinois Learning Standards, Elgin Community College's (ECC) highest-level developmental math course, and incorporates real world applications. Math instructors from ECC, four school districts, and Northern Illinois University worked together to write the course. During the first two years of implementation, 65% of students who completed the course and pre- & post-tested moved up at least one mathematics course level of readiness.
- The partners in Modeling Effective Collaboration on Common Core Standards Initiative (McLean County) have co-designed both math and English Language Arts courses for delivery in high schools. Meetings among high school and Heartland College faculty have served to align curriculum and agree on expectations. This partnership uses multiple measures to identify students who need these developmental courses in high school, including assessments embedded in regular high school courses as well as ACT, SAT, Compass, PARCC, an Alternative Writing Exam, and an Alternative Reading Exam.

2. Planning and Transition Supports

		9th	10th	11th	12th	13th +	
B. 9th through 13+ Student-Facing Systems	2. Planning and Transition Supports	a. Individualized plan for postsecondary education, careers, and financial aid updated annually					
		b. Outreach, exposure, and near-peer mentoring systems for students who may not otherwise pursue higher education, or have been historically underrepresented in higher education					Continue near-peer mentoring systems
		c. Aligned scholarship and financial aid monitoring and supports: Systems to support identification of scholarship opportunities, completion of scholarship applications, completion of FAFSA, and Promise Programs					
		d. Match and fit, proactive advising systems, and progress monitoring					
		i. Identify and explore colleges utilizing "match and fit" advising system			ii. Application tracking, proactive advising		iii. Continue proactive advising; additional retention support strategies

The *Framework's* category of Planning and Transition Supports addresses whether students are guided and supported through key milestones in the high school to college transition. At the foundation of these supports is an individualized plan for postsecondary education, careers, and financial aid, which leverages student interests and experiences to help shape course selections and career exploration. In addition to individualized planning, students and families also need to understand that postsecondary education is both possible and necessary. Near-peer mentoring, academic support, outreach from postsecondary institutions, and visits to college campuses, especially for hands-on activities in labs or other meaningful learning experiences, can help raise students' aspirations. How to finance postsecondary education and avoid debts is a critical concern for many families. Many would be surprised to know the amount of scholarship funding that goes unclaimed in Illinois. A system of scholarship and financial aid support, beyond general information, is necessary to ensure that students find funding and keep it through graduation. "Match and fit" advising systems help students enroll in the most academically demanding institution that will admit them by providing students with tailored information to help them navigate the college exploration and enrollment process. Proactive advising and intervention systems that use data such as students' course completions and GPA need to continue through grade 13 and beyond. These systems require certain students to consult with advisors to promote on-time degree attainment.

Key Survey Findings on Planning and Transition Supports

- 64% of high schools, 90% of colleges, and 67% of universities sponsor visits to campuses for high school students
- Coordination of financial support information is the most frequent transition activity for partnerships
- 100% of universities offer proactive advising, tutoring, college knowledge courses, and other supports for underprepared students. These resources are available but not usually required

Regional Spotlight Practices

- Unit 5, a part of the McLean County Collaboration, has instituted individual planning processes for students in grades 6-12, and relevant processes are extended at Heartland Community College. Middle school students develop individualized learning plans in electronic portfolios through the Career Cruising portal. Career interest inventories and skill assessments help them determine a career cluster; goal setting and achievement results are added through grade 12. In high school, the electronic portfolios evolve to include artifacts such as a resume, extracurricular activities, and volunteer experiences. Heartland Community College provides ongoing college and career advising, planning, and financial aid systems. Face-to-face career expos, college visits, college success workshops, and professional development for guidance counselors are part of this system starting in grade 6.
- Elgin Community College offers a Transition Academy, a high school “bridge” program for grades 9-12, that enrolls underserved and first-generation students. The sessions are team taught by high school and college faculty and focus on culture strengths, setting goals, affective dimensions of college readiness, applied mathematics, and college transition planning. Students work with a community mentor and participate in a summer corporate challenge program.
- Harper College announced in 2015 the establishment of a Promise Program for students in the 12 NECSS high schools in Arlington Heights, Barrington, and Palatine. High school students in the Harper district can earn up to two years of tuition if they maintain a C or C+ average in rigorous courses, have good attendance, do not repeat courses, and provide service to the community. To continue to earn free tuition once they enroll at Harper, students must maintain a C or C+ average with no D's, F's, or withdrawals; enroll in at least 15 hours per semester; complete a certificate or degree within four semesters; and perform community service in a Harper-related program. Harper College contributed \$5 million for the program and the College Foundation is raising an additional \$5 million from local businesses. The Promise Program begins tracking students during the second semester of freshman year.
- Chicago Public Schools (CPS) District 299 has launched the College and Career Advising Credential through its professional development for school counselors. The program is designed to help counselors ensure best practice “match and fit” advising for all students and uses a curriculum developed in partnership among The Options Institute, Chicago Public Schools, and Thrive Chicago. Over the next three years, all high school and elementary school counselors, support staff, and partners will participate in training for the credential. Following up on research findings that completing a FAFSA application is linked to college matriculation, CPS is holding FAFSA workshops for seniors admitted to college and helping families to complete the forms. Additionally, district counselors complete FAFSA certification by attending modular sessions provided by the Illinois Student Assistance Commission at CPS host sites.
- East St. Louis 189 has instituted a program of planning and transition supports that includes individualized learning plans, college- and career-focused cohorts, and pre-college requirements for high school students. All 7th to 12th grade students complete individualized learning plans through Career Cruising software. In addition to helping with customized plans unique to their individual secondary and postsecondary goals, Career Cruising sets milestones and activities for students to complete on a timeline. Students, parents, and counselors are able to track students’ progress based on these milestones. High school students are divided in four academic cohorts based on their college and career goals. Cohort 1 is for high achieving students with GPAs ranging from 3.5 and up and ACT scores of at least 20. Cohort 4 students are experiencing academic challenges, with GPAs ranging from 1.9 and below and ACT scores of 14 and below. Cohort managers monitor the students and help devise targeted support. Further, each student must complete pre-college requirements starting in the junior year on specific days set aside for this purpose. Teachers and cohort managers assist the students in completing five college applications, two community service projects, FAFSA, three scholarship applications, and a personal statement. Career exploration expos and college visits are scheduled regularly. These strategies are paying dividends for students and families, as demonstrated by these results:
 - The high school graduation rate has climbed by 10.2% from 2012 to 2014.
 - As of February 2015 90% of the Class of 2015 had been accepted to a 2- or 4-year college.
 - 100% of the Class of 2015 has submitted 5 applications to postsecondary institutions.
 - 100% of the Class of 2015 has submitted 5 scholarship applications, earning over \$2.4 million in scholarships, more than a 400% increase over the prior year.

3. Accelerated Learning

		9th	10th	11th	12th	13th +
B. 9th through 13+ Student-Facing Systems	3. Accelerated Learning ("Speed-up")	a. Accelerated learning goal and opportunities for all students				
		i. Comprehensive focus and systems that expand early college credit for all students, particularly those in mid- to low- performance quartiles, and career-oriented education for all students				
		ii. Grade weighting/GPA policies do not incentivize particular types of accelerated learning				
		b. Continuum of professional learning for all students				
		i. Career exposure: Job shadows, real-world problems, "micro" internships		ii. Career preparation: Capstone projects, school-based enterprises, internships, pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships		
c. Career-focused instruction and assessments for all students						
i. Career interest inventory & orientation on career cluster framework		ii. Orientation to a particular career cluster or related grouping of career clusters (e.g., Information Technology) ★ Milestone: Selection of career pathway focus by end of 10th grade		iii. Articulated sequence of instruction in a career pathway area (e.g, Network Systems, Programming & Software Development)		
iv. Sequenced, stackable industry certifications ★ Milestone: By end of senior year, completion of at least one gateway college course and receipt of an employer-validated certification of career readiness						
d. Expansive early college credit opportunities for all students						
i. AP potential review to expand access; AP and community college outreach		ii. Expansive credit by examination offerings (AP, IB, PLTW)		vi. Articulation of early college credit to degree requirements		
		iii. Expansive dual credit offerings that leverage available funds to minimize student costs				
		iv. Structured programs with outcomes ranging from a semester's worth of credit up to an Associate Degree (e.g., Power of 15, Early College, Running Start models)				
v. Opportunities for earning college credit on-campus						

Accelerated learning refers to opportunities for students to attain college credit and career education and credentials that advance attainment of postsecondary education and career goals. Early college credit and career-oriented educational opportunities should be available to all students in a high school, with a focus on avoiding tracking practices that direct academic high achievers into AP and dual credit and lower achievers into career and technical education. Research and experience in high schools have shown that students in the lower quartiles of academic performance can flourish in accelerated learning programs and are more likely to attend and succeed in college regardless of how well they score on summative measures such as AP exams. Also contrary to prevalent practice, students at all academic levels who select a career pathway by 10th grade and gain real-world experience with career options are more likely to find inspiration to succeed in both high school and postsecondary education. Earning college credit for a "gateway" course while still in high school also increases the likelihood of transitioning to and persisting through postsecondary education. "Gateway" courses include college-level, credit-bearing introductory courses in a program of study (e.g., English 101, College Algebra, or a gateway math course in a technical program of study). Accelerated learning can increase the rigor of high school coursework, shorten time to graduation, result in improved postsecondary education persistence and completion, and save significant amounts of money for families.

Key Survey Findings Related to Accelerated Learning

- 37% of high school districts participating in the survey offer opportunities to earn 12-15 credits or an associate degree during high school, but only a few districts offer such opportunities to all students in all high schools
- 50% of high school districts offer dual credit and dual enrollment courses
- 61% of high school districts and 86% of postsecondary institutions say they are increasing access to college credit courses for high school students
- Almost 35% of high schools report that the cost of dual credit courses is paid by the high school; 31% indicate that individual students pay the costs; and 21% say that community college cover the costs of these courses

Regional Spotlight Practices

- West Aurora School District 129 and Waubonsee Community College have worked diligently to provide opportunities for students representing first generation, minority, and/or low income demographics to take full advantage of dual credit, AP, and college readiness courses. Initiatives include testing high school students after three years of math and English to place them into the appropriate college courses and incorporating general education/Illinois Articulation Initiative courses into the dual credit offerings. Waubonsee Community College partners with 10 area high schools to offer dual credit on their campuses. Dual credit and dual enrollment increased from 2,733 in FY13 to 3,505 in FY14. In FY15 Waubonsee is piloting a new Fast Start Program with East Aurora High School for an anticipated 20 students who will enroll as full-time Waubonsee students during their senior year and take all of their coursework at the community college.
- NECSS (Harper College partnership with Arlington Heights, Barrington, and Palatine school districts) announced the *Power of 15* initiative in 2014. The *Power of 15* provides access for all students to earn, at a minimum, 15 early college credits through dual credit, AP, articulation, credit by exam, and other options by high school graduation. Research shows that successfully completing 15 college credit hours increases the likelihood of not only completing a college degree but also completing it on time. Building on this research, NECSS has identified five 3-credit-hour courses for high school students. These five courses are accepted at Harper College and transferable to any public university in Illinois as part of the Illinois Articulation Initiative.
- District 214 works with 600 employers to offer internships to all students in the district's six high schools. To be eligible, students must take at least one course in the area of career interest and attend college and career exploration activities. Written assignments are expected and are evaluated by teachers. Most of the 5-10 hours per week internships are unpaid, but students earn one semester of credit. Since the program began in 2009, District 214 interns have logged 1.1 million hours of hands-on exposure to careers.
- Danville Area Community College (DACC) provides opportunities for high school juniors and seniors to earn dual credit in 15 career and technical education areas through the College Express program. The program benefits from partnerships with 13 area school districts and more than 150 businesses. Transfer-oriented dual credit is also offered to district high school students at the high schools and on the DACC campus allowing students to get a jump start on their transfer Associate degree. The Danville area partnership is now establishing an EIU Express program to expedite the transfer of students from DACC to Eastern Illinois University. This program will guarantee admission and transfer of courses and will strengthen the student-to-college relationship.
- East-Side Aligned (Southwest Illinois College (SWIC) and East St. Louis 189) is rapidly expanding accelerated learning opportunities. East St. Louis High School has increased the number of pre-AP and AP courses, increased the number of students taking AP courses and exams, increased AP exam scores, and increased community awareness of its AP program. SWIC is expanding its Running Start program to East St. Louis High School. Running Start allows qualified high school juniors to attend SWIC for the final two years of high school, graduating with both a high school diploma and an associate's degree. SWIC anticipates enrolling 125-130 Running Start students from 9 school districts in fall 2015.
- Chicago District 299 (CPS) is rapidly expanding AP courses, dual credit, and dual enrollment programs. AP course enrollments exceeded 35,000 students in both school year 2013-14 and 2014-15. Dual credit programs have grown 249% from school year 2013-14 to 2014-15 to serve over 2,400 students while increasing pass rates to 81%. Dual enrollment participation has also grown by 152% from school year 2013-14 to 2014-15 to serve over 2,000 students. Pass rates in dual enrollment programs grew 14% in one academic year resulting in a dramatic increase in the number of students leaving high school with college credit. More students are being encouraged to take the PSAT to assess readiness for AP courses and to establish eligibility for participation in a program that provides 700 free enrollments for CPS students across the City Colleges of Chicago system. CPS is also partnering with community colleges and corporate partners at five Early College STEM high schools. The goal for these schools is that all students graduate with a high school diploma and an associate degree in select technology pathways. A sixth Early College STEM high school will launch in the 2015-16 school year in partnership with Illinois Institute of Technology, the Exelon Corporation, and Von Steuben High School.

III. PERFORMANCE METRICS GUIDE

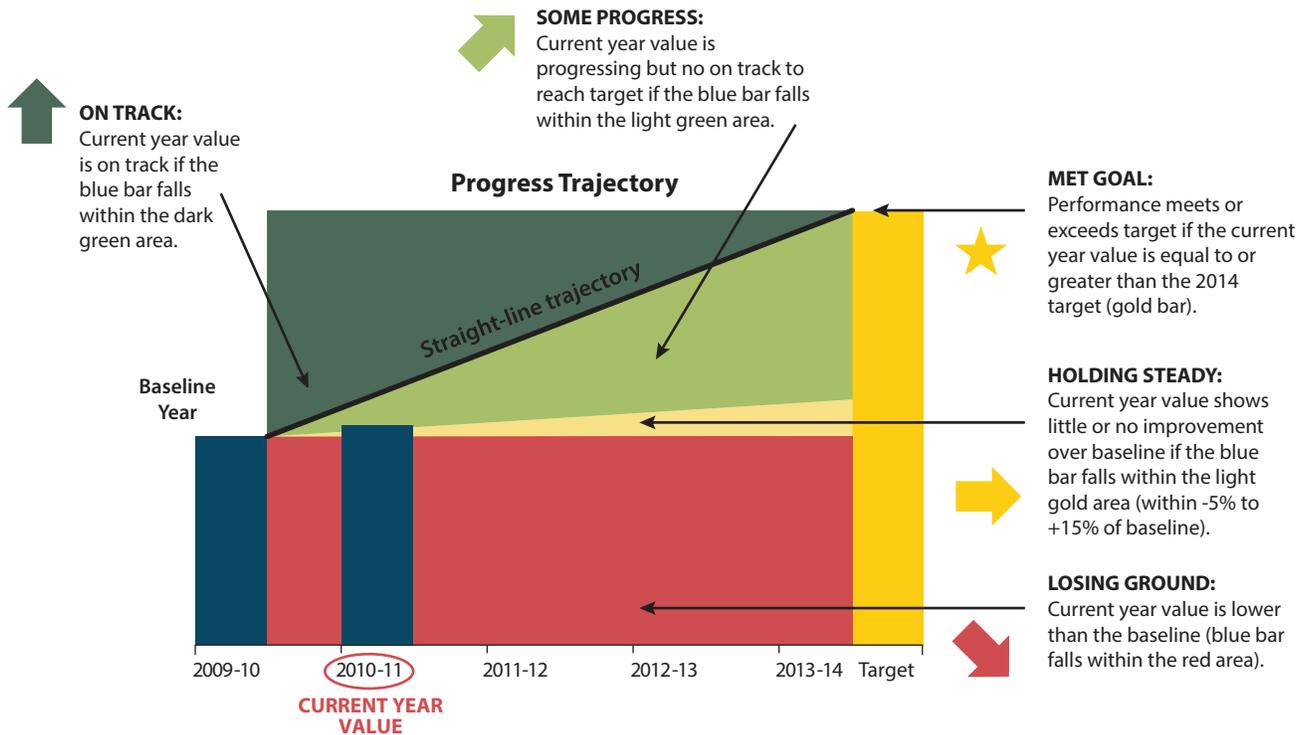
During the planning process, the regional teams and state agency representatives helped identify performance metrics for monitoring key outcomes and indicators of progress relating to the high school to college transition. In addition to input from the regional teams, the project leaders reviewed the outcomes and indicators utilized for Advance Illinois' *State We're In* report¹, metrics developed by the Consortium on Chicago School Research in reports such as *From High School to the Future: Potholes on the Road to College*², and comparable state reporting systems including the dashboard developed by the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education for its Stronger by Degrees program.³

This input and analysis informed the performance metric guide set forth in this section, which is intended to help regional teams with the following purposes:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of local strategies for aligning the high school to college transition;
- Prioritize resources (both monetary and time) to areas needing support; and
- Benchmark regional progress to other comparable regions and state averages.

For assessing progress against targets, regional teams should consider utilizing the model developed by the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education for Stronger by Degrees. As shown in the diagram below, this model includes a method for assessing trends in relation to the established targets, based on whether

- the end goal has been met,
- the current year value is on track to meet the target,
- the current year value shows progress but is not on track to meet the target, the current year value is holding steady with little or no improvement over the baseline, or
- the current year value is losing ground with a value lower than the baseline.



¹ <http://www.advanceillinois.org/publications/the-state-were-in/>, last visited July 2, 2015.

² <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/high-school-future-potholes-road-college>, last visited July 2, 2015.

³ Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, Metrics and Dashboard Technical Guide, October 22, 2012, available at http://dataportal.cpe.ky.gov/sadashboard/sascorecards/satechnical_guide.pdf, last visited July 2, 2015.

Regional teams receiving state or philanthropic investments for alignment work (see Section V) should be expected to establish baselines for each outcome area and indicator and targets to achieve by the end of a five-year period. Then, each year, the region would assess progress toward the established targets and use that information to develop strategies for the upcoming year. In addition, the region should be expected to perform a deeper analysis of the data that includes:

- Reviewing equity gaps by disaggregating data by White, Black, Latino, Special Education, and Low-Income population groups; and
- Determining the outcomes of students participating in particular programs (such as AVID or career pathways) that are being implemented by the regional team.

The proposed performance metrics guide is organized into four categories, aligned with the *Framework for Local Action and State Supports*.

- *Overall*: Are students completing high school and persisting through postsecondary?
- *Core Academic Systems*: Are students completing high school ready for college-level instruction?
- *Planning and Transition Supports*: Are students guided and supported through key milestones in the high school to college transition?
- *Accelerated Learning (“Speed-up”)*: Are students earning college credits and credentials while in high school that accelerates attainment of postsecondary education and career goals?

Each category includes **Key Outcomes** and **Leading Indicators**. Key Outcomes are intended to serve as the primary measures of progress for implementing a successful high school to college transition system. Leading Indicators provide additional information to guide regional strategies intended to improve the Key Outcomes. For both Key Outcomes and Leading Indicators, the tables identify a **Data Source** from which regions can obtain information to populate a localized performance metrics dashboard or report. The Illinois Report Card refers to www.illinoisreportcard.com, a website established by ISBE and administered by NIU that publicly reports information on all Illinois public schools and districts. An Illinois Students Assistance Commission (ISAC) customized report can be provided by ISAC as an Excel file to a designated contact within the region. If “local sources” is listed in a table, there is currently no available state data source for that information. In several instances, the tables identify opportunities for new state-level reports through the activities of the Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS) Governing Board.

The performance metrics guide should continue to evolve as regional teams engage with it to inform their work. On at least an annual basis, outcome and indicator definitions should be refined and new outcomes and indicators identified. In addition, regional teams should be encouraged to supplement the outcomes and indicators shown below with others that address local context and priorities.

Overall: Are students completing high school and persisting through postsecondary?	
Key Outcomes	Data Source
High school graduation rate	Illinois Report Card
Postsecondary Enrollment: Percentage of students who graduated with a regular high school diploma from a public high school and enrolled in a two-year or four-year college in the U.S. within 12 or 16 months.	Illinois Report Card
Degree Attainment Index: Out of 100 students who commence 9th grade, how many will earn an Associates or Bachelors degree within 10 years?	The Urban Education Institute at the University of Chicago is publishing this index for all Chicago high schools later in 2015. ⁴ Discussions are underway to extend this reporting statewide.

Core Academic Systems: Are students completing high school ready for college-level instruction?	
Key Outcomes	Data Source
Percentage of high school students scoring at or above a 3 on both Math and ELA on PARCC	Illinois Report Card (fall 2015)
Percentage of high school students scoring at or above a 4 on both Math and ELA on PARCC	Illinois Report Card (fall 2015)
Percentage of high school graduates enrolled in remedial math upon transitioning to an Illinois community college	Illinois Report Card (fall 2015)
Percentage of high school graduates enrolled in remedial ELA upon transitioning to an Illinois community college	Illinois Report Card (fall 2015)
Leading Indicators	Data Source
Percentage of students who enter 9th grade ready for high school coursework ⁵	Illinois Report Card (fall 2016)
Freshmen On-track Indicator. ⁶	Illinois Report Card

⁴ See <http://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/>, last visited July 13, 2015.

⁵ The definition of this indicator is still under development in consultation with ISBE.

⁶ Freshmen students identified as “on track” have earned at least five full-year course credits (10 semester credits) and have earned no more than one semester “F” in a core course (English, math, science, or social science).

Planning and Transition Supports: Are students guided and supported through key milestones in the high school to college transition?

Key Outcomes	Data Source
Percentage of high school graduates completing a FAFSA	ISAC customized report for region
Of high school graduates who filed a FAFSA and are MAP-grant eligible, percentage receiving MAP grant	ISAC customized report for region
Of community college students who filed a FAFSA and are PELL-eligible, percentage receiving a PELL grant	ISAC customized report for region
Leading Indicators	Data Source
Percentage of high school juniors with a recently completed or updated individualized plan for postsecondary education, careers, or financial aid	Local sources
Percentage of at-risk students participating in a mentoring program that supports postsecondary education access and attainment	Local sources
Percentage of high school graduates submitting at least 5 postsecondary education applications	Local sources
Percentage of high school graduates submitting at least 5 scholarship applications	Local sources

Accelerated Learning (“Speed-up”): Are students earning college credit and credentials while in high school that accelerate attainment of postsecondary education and career goals?

Key Outcomes	Data Source
Percentage of high school graduates with 15 credit hours of early college credit	Local sources or new state reporting through ILDS
Percentage of high school graduates that have received early college credit for an Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) introductory math course	Local sources or new state reporting through ILDS
Percentage of high school graduates that have received early college credit for an IAI introductory English course	Local sources or new state reporting through ILDS
Percentage of high school graduates that have completed an internship relating to the student’s career objectives	Local sources
Percentage of high school graduates that have attained an employer-validated certification of career readiness	Local sources
Leading Indicators	Data Source
Percentage of high school graduates that have taken at least one AP examination	Custom report from the College Board
Average number of early college credits received per high school graduate	Local sources or new state reporting through ILDS
Percentage of high school sophomores selecting a career pathway focus by end of 10th grade	Local sources

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STATE POLICY ACTION

The planning period included substantial engagement with state agency leadership and extensive feedback from the regional teams on state policy actions that can help support the high school to postsecondary education transition. As reflected in the participant list on the project website (<http://ilhstocollege.org/ilhstocollege/index.shtml>), senior-level leadership from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), and Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) actively participated in all project meetings. The second meeting during the planning process was entirely devoted to state policy, and participant reflections on state policy actions were solicited at several subsequent meetings.

Moving forward, the *Framework for Local Action and State Support* can serve as a tool for aligning state policies and programs relating to the high school to postsecondary education transition. As the *Framework* reflects leading practices in Illinois and nationally, it should be used to guide the structure of state programs and investments in related areas. State agencies and the Illinois P-20 Council can also provide leadership for establishing a system to share best practices and resources across Illinois communities addressing the various components of the *Framework*. Regional participants expressed their desire to have a forum for continued networking around these issues after the conclusion of the planning period.

In addition to using the *Framework* as an overall guide for state policy, the project leaders recommend that the structures for implementing House Resolution 477 be used as a vehicle for enacting state policies aligned to the *Framework*, and that state agency leaders focus on providing data for local action aligned to the *Framework*.

Postsecondary & Workforce Readiness Recommendations & House Resolution 477. In parallel to the planning process, a legislative initiative generated by an Illinois P-20 Council Committee tackled a number of issues relating to the high school to college transition. In 2012, the Illinois P-20 Council established the Postsecondary & Workforce Readiness (PWR) Steering Committee as a joint committee of the Subcommittee on College & Career Readiness and the Subcommittee on Data, Assessment, and Accountability. The PWR Steering Committee met regularly from May 2012 through July 2013, and issued a report identifying various “key success factors” for supporting student transitions from high school to postsecondary education and careers, including expanding the use of personalized learning plans, increasing opportunities for early college credit, ensuring that expectations for high school graduation signify readiness for college and career, and augmenting career exploration and work-based learning options.

Following the issuance of this report, State Representative Linda Chapa LaVia led a year-long engagement process with state agency leadership to develop legislation to address the PWR Steering Committee recommendations. The result of this process was the filing of House Bill 3196 in February 2015, which included a comprehensive multi-year approach to address the following topics:

1. *New Illinois Graduation Requirements:* Implementing new high school graduation requirements that are based on student demonstration of competencies aligned with the new Illinois Learning Standards.
2. *Student Readiness for College-Level Instruction (“Catch-up”):* Providing greater standardization of public postsecondary education expectations for placement in remediation and college-level coursework, and ensuring students have access to supports and instruction in the senior year of high school to avoid remediation.
3. *Early College Credit (“Speed-up”):* Expanding opportunities for students to access college-level instruction prior to high school graduation.
4. *Career Pathway Endorsements:* Establishing career pathway endorsements on high school diplomas relating to prioritized industry sectors, as well as ensuring student access to pathway opportunities in high school and postsecondary education.
5. *Awareness, Advising, and Planning for College and Careers:* Supporting students and families to understand college and career opportunities and expectations, as well as systems to support access to postsecondary education.

Following House Bill 3196’s introduction, various constituent groups advocated for additional time to respond to some of the bill’s far-reaching recommendations. In addition, parallel bills were advanced in the General Assembly dealing with aspects of HB 3196’s scope (such as HB 3428, addressing standardized postsecondary education credit for Advanced Placement examination scores). As a result, P-20 Council representatives worked with Representative Chapa LaVia to file House Resolution 477, which addressed critical aspects of HB 3196 where there was greater consensus for immediate action and that were not addressed by other bills. The areas addressed by HR 477 are described in the following table. HR 477 was adopted by the Illinois House on May 30, 2015.

House Resolution 477 Scope and Expectations

	Responsible Agencies	House Resolution 477 Expectations	Timing & Content of Recommendation
Competency-Based High School Graduation Requirements	ISBE ICCB IBHE	Recommendations to address: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competency-based HS graduation requirements • Multiple proficiency assessment methods • Roles of licensed teachers & non-licensed professionals in proficiency assessment • Postsecondary & financial aid acceptance of competency-based H.S. diplomas 	<i>February 1, 2016:</i> Deliver recommendations for pilot implementation & proposed legislation
Scaling of 12th Grade Developmental Education Models	ISBE ICCB IBHE ISAC	Recommendations to address: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple measures of college preparedness • Appropriate timing of preparedness in 11th grade • Use of curriculum/assessments co-developed by HS and postsecondary faculty • Development of statewide model instructional supports (contextual, career pathway-related) 	<i>February 1, 2016:</i> Deliver recommendations for implementation of policies & proposed legislation
Qualifying H.S. Teachers as Dual Credit Instructors	ISBE ICCB IBHE ISAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint establishment of program to incentivize/accelerate professional development/continuing education for HS teacher to qualify as dual-credit instructors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Common statewide application for instructors - Cohort models & additional supports for instructors 	June 30, 2016: Form intergovernmental agreement
Career Pathway Endorsements on High School Diplomas	Illinois Pathways Interagency Committee (IPIC) Agencies (ISBE, ICCB, IBHE, ISAC, DCEO, IDES)	Establish advisory committees to address: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requirements for awarding career pathway endorsements • Opportunities for expanded access to career pathway endorsements • Increased recognition for career pathway endorsements by postsecondary institutions for credit/course placement/advising • Appropriate supports from STEM Learning Exchanges 	<i>February 1, 2016:</i> Deliver recommendations for implementation of policies & proposed legislation
Education & Career Development Planning	IPIC Agencies	Establish advisory committees to address: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade-level expectations for planning • Web-based, individualized planning tools & alignment to instruction • Financial literacy program for student/families to align postsecondary ed/career choices with likely financial outcomes • Incorporation of post-graduation planning into H.S. instruction • Methods to increase FAFSA completion rates 	<i>February 1, 2016:</i> Deliver recommendations for implementation of policies & proposed legislation

Later in 2015, the various advisory committees called for by HR 477 will begin meeting to develop specific legislative and implementation recommendations for delivery in 2016. Through these committees, many of the state policy issues identified by regional participants in the planning process for this project can be more thoroughly vetted and actions formulated. These issues include:

- *Piloting competency-based learning systems: [The HR 477 committee addressing a pilot of competency-based systems can review how competency-based learning models can support “catch-up” and “speed-up” innovations consistent with the Framework.](#) For example, specific competencies can be targeted during the senior year of high school for addressing developmental education needs, or competencies learned in workplace settings can be utilized for credit attainment in career pathway courses.*

- *Establishing a program structure to incentivize and accelerate professional development and continuing education for high school teachers to qualify as dual credit instructors:* Regional team members frequently voiced concern over the shortage of high school teachers in math, ELA, and science courses qualified to teach dual credit because the teachers do not have a masters degree in the relevant content area. Community college accreditation requirements dictate that high school teachers have 18 hours of courses or a masters degree in the content area in order to be designated by the community college as an adjunct professor for dual credit purposes. In addition to the need to qualify more high school teachers as dual credit instructors, regional team members also identified the need for in-service and pre-service training for high school teachers on dual credit policies and practices. State agency efforts to help qualify more high school teachers as dual credit instructors and train these teachers on dual credit policies and practices will address a major policy concern of the regional team participants.
- *Addressing barriers to scaling career pathway programs:* The regional teams identified barriers for implementing aspects of career pathway programs, including issues relating to employing youth below age 18 for internships (such as unemployment compensation requirements) and the need for consistent state and/or industry funding streams to pay assessment costs for industry-based certifications. Impediments to scaling career pathway programs should be further reviewed as the HR 477 committees consider the specific criteria for career pathway endorsements.

Availability of Data for Local Action. The regional participants in the planning process unanimously called upon state agencies to do a better job of making state data available for local action. While the planning process included information on the work occurring through the Illinois Longitudinal Data System Governing Board, the planning participants expressed the need to access usable data as soon as possible. The performance metrics tables in Section III of this report include a number of indicators where data is currently available (or will be available in fall 2015) to help guide local action, including information on postsecondary enrollment, remediation rates at community colleges, and freshman on-track information. However, in other areas currently reliant on local data, the state's ILDS Governing Board should prioritize making this information available through statewide reporting systems where feasible.

The regional participants also expressed the need for data that can be analyzed by local team members in a deeper way than is feasible through publicly available dashboard reports. For example, while it is useful to receive reports on general postsecondary education outcomes for high school students, regional teams also want to understand whether specific programs like AVID or an IT career pathway program is leading to improved postsecondary education outcomes for participants. The Illinois State Board of Education is in the process of launching a secure District Portal that will enable authorized educators to access student information to inform instruction and support program evaluation. The state should incorporate into the new secure District Portal data that extends into postsecondary education and careers, so that appropriate members of regional teams can access the information for program evaluation purposes. This will require appropriate data sharing agreements among the ILDS agency partners, as well as security and authorization systems to ensure legally permissible access to the data.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXTERNAL INVESTMENT

As a complement to state policy changes, external investments by state agencies and philanthropic organizations can help establish strong regional proof points and launch supports across multiple regions that will accelerate statewide scaling of the *Framework* described in Section II of this Report. Based on input from regional teams and state leadership during the planning period, investments are recommended in four overall areas: regional leadership grants, community dashboards and analytical tools, HR 477 Advisory Committee staffing and expertise, and supports and systems shared across regions.

1. Regional Leadership Grants

Philanthropic grants or a new state program should provide funding to 4-5 regions to undertake deep implementation effort along all elements of the *Framework*. This funding would provide multi-year matching support to fund staff positions or other local needs that address high school and postsecondary system alignment. For example, each community could receive \$150,000 in school year 1, \$100,000 in school year 2, and \$50,000 in school year 3 for local activities, with the expectation that the external funds would be matched at least 100% by local sources and that any new positions would be sustained by local funding after the grant period.

Communities would be selected based on a Request for Proposals and selection rubric aligned to the *Framework*. Each community would be required to administer the grant through a regional governance system including high school, community college, university, and employer participants consistent with the *Framework* recommendations. On an annual basis, the community team would establish an action plan against all of the framework elements, and track progress using the metrics defined in Section III as well as other locally selected metrics.

An external network support provider would convene the regional teams on a semi-annual basis to share best practices and identify learnings for statewide scaling. On an annual basis, the network support provider would deliver recommendations for state policy action to scale the learnings from these regions across Illinois.

In addition to supporting a group of regions for deep implementation, a broader network of regions should be supported for ongoing alignment of the high school to college transition through the Illinois 60 by 25 Network. The Illinois 60 by 25 Network is an ever-emerging network of communities in Illinois that are committed to the goal of ensuring that 60% of all adults have a college or career credential by 2025. Supported by Advance Illinois, EdSystems, and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, the communities in this network are using the principles of collective impact to support local collaborations to improve college and career readiness.

Additional philanthropic support to the Network can help it to expand to include all the regions involved in this planning project, and to support regional efforts to address aspects of the *Framework* through a local collective impact process.

2. Community Dashboards and Analytical Tools

As described in the Section IV of this report, regional teams need better data to support local improvements to the high school to college transition. While addressing this need in part requires the agencies involved in the ILDS to prioritize making appropriate data available, external investments are needed to develop and maintain high quality dashboard reports and analytical tools to support regional engagement with the data. Several emerging projects could help address this need:

- The Urban Education Institute at the University of Chicago is launching “To and Through” reports for all Chicago high schools, which could be expanded statewide. The reports for Chicago schools are projected to be available later in 2015.
- NIU, ISAC, and Advance Illinois are launching a “60 by 25 Cradle to Career Dashboard” that utilizes existing data sources to provide community-level reporting on key indicators for cradle-to-career education initiatives in 60 by 25 Network communities. The initial version of this dashboard is planned for launch in January 2016.
- As discussed in the Section IV, ISBE is launching a secure District Portal that will enable authorized educators to access student information to inform instruction and support program evaluation.

These three efforts have the potential to address many of the data-related needs cited by local participants. However, as these efforts launch over the course of the upcoming school year, additional investments are needed to ensure that

- The scope of the projects can be expanded to support additional regions, or all of Illinois (such as statewide To and Through reporting, which is currently focused only on Chicago);
- These projects can be integrated in a way that best supports regional teams, such as providing access to the information from multiple sites through a coherent regional interface; and
- Regional teams have sufficient training and support to utilize the data to inform local action plans.

3. HR 477 Advisory Committee Staffing and Expertise

As described in Section IV, the advisory committees called for by HR 477 will soon be established to make specific legislative and implementation recommendations in many of the areas addressed by the *Framework*. These committees will need staffing support and external expertise to fully address the HR 477 subject areas; particularly

- Expertise on competency-based instructional systems to guide recommendations for a pilot of competency-based graduation requirements;
- Expertise on math and ELA developmental education models to advise on the successful scaling of models delivering developmental education during the senior year of high school; and
- Expertise on career pathway models and particular industry sectors to support the development of recommendations for career pathway endorsements and skill-mapping for entry-level careers.

Philanthropic support for staffing and expert assistance to the HR 477 advisory committees will help ensure these committees provide informed recommendations with the greatest likelihood of making impactful changes if enacted into law.

4. Supports and Systems Shared Across Regions

During the planning process, the participants identified multiple opportunities for collaborative work across regions to implement components of the *Framework*. These opportunities include

- *Common messaging and communication tools:* For regional alignment strategies to be successful, school district and community college administrators need to be able to effectively communicate with a broad range of stakeholders about the importance of the work and its various elements. Philanthropic support for common messaging and communication materials aligned to the Framework can help both state agency and regional leadership to engage effectively with stakeholders around the importance of aligning high school to postsecondary education systems.
- *Common, web-based developmental education instructional modules:* Rather than have each region develop its own math and ELA developmental education curriculum for delivery in 12th grade, a network of regions could develop common, web-based modularized learning units that include learning objectives, lesson plans, assessments, and student-oriented online content. Depending on local need, a regional high school and community college team could (i) adopt all of the modules for a particular course, (ii) elect to use some, but not all, of the modules, or (iii) use particular content embedded within the modules such as certain lesson plans or assessments. Modules could also be customized to include applications in various career pathways such as manufacturing, IT, and health sciences to provide learners interested in a particular career field with the opportunity to advance these career interests while avoiding the need for remedial education. The regions utilizing the modules should receive support for annual meetings to review successes and challenges of delivery over the course of the prior year and identify opportunities for improvement.

- *Common, web-based career pathway instructional modules:* Similar to the above strategy for developmental education instructional modules, a network of regions could develop common, web-based modularized learning units for key career pathway courses in critical industry sectors. Over the past few years, several working groups have explored the feasibility of developing web-based modules for courses such as Networking Fundamentals and Anatomy & Physiology. These courses are foundational to several IT and Health Science career pathway sequences and can be offered for dual credit. Web-based instructional modules would support the cost-effective deployment of these courses in Illinois regions that are newly developing career pathway systems.
- *Start-up costs for new dual credit training cohorts:* HR 477 calls for state agencies to establish a program to incentivize and accelerate training for high school teachers to qualify as dual credit instructors. Teacher training institutions are likely to have various start-up costs associated with the establishment of these programs, such as new outreach materials, translation of courses to an online format, and revising course content to align with the Illinois Learning Standards, thereby enhancing its relevance for existing high school instructors. State or philanthropic investments could help teacher training institutions to launch cohort programs for dual credit instructors on an accelerated timeline.

VI. CONCLUSION

The planning process for Redefining the High School to College Transition in Illinois achieved a number of important objectives.

- It established a network of regions from across Illinois that have impressive practices in place for supporting student transitions from high school to postsecondary education and beyond.
- Through collaboration with these regions, state agencies, and national experts, it enabled the development of a coherent framework for aligning high school and postsecondary education systems to provide students with well-articulated paths for credential and degree attainment.
- It identified opportunities for state policy action and strategic state and philanthropic investments that will support and accelerate local alignment efforts.

The moment is ripe for Illinois to take the isolated best practices identified in this report and move toward a statewide system that dramatically improves the percentages of Illinois' high school graduates that are on a path to attain a postsecondary credential or degree with lifelong value. Advance Illinois and Education Systems Center hope that the *Framework* and aligned recommendations included within this report provide a valuable contribution toward that movement.

