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

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

Sample Process

1. Form a broad-based planning team that will be responsible for action plan development and will organize and pass off plans to a community implementation team

2. Inventory current college and career readiness activities conducted by school and community-based organizations for elementary, middle and high school students

3. Utilize guiding questions to determine unmet needs and additional opportunities

4. Develop an action plan for addressing opportunities; include metrics for monitoring programs, an evaluation component and a mechanism for revising the plan as needed.

5. Implement the plan. Evaluate, report results, and revise plan as needed.

Potential Members of the College and Career Readiness Community Team
- Elementary school
- Middle school
- High school
- Community college
- Two-year college
- Four-year college
- Postsecondary representatives from career services offices
- Library
- Chamber of Commerce
- Other business representatives
- Religious organization leader
- Local service organizations
- Community-based organizations
- Afterschool programs
- YMCA or YWCA
- Local governmental agencies
- United Way
- Other entities essential to the future of the children in the community
Guiding Questions—Career Exploration and Development

Use these questions to identify unmet needs and additional opportunities.

**Late High School Students (11-12)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Early High School Students (9-10)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Middle School Students**

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

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

Integration of career activities into classroom work

Development of soft skills (e.g., communication, teamwork, problem solving, curiosity, etc.)

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

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

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

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

**Elementary School Students**

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

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

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

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

How are students exposed to pathways other than those modeled at home?
### Sample Calendar of Activities for Students—Career Exploration and Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Late High School Students (11-12)</th>
<th>Spring (January–May)</th>
<th>Summer (June–August)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall (August–December)</strong></td>
<td>Create a resume and personal statement</td>
<td>Participate in career-oriented team challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in mock job interviews</td>
<td>Attend workshops to find and apply for internships</td>
<td>Participate in assessments for industry credentials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serve as a leader in your extracurricular activities</td>
<td>Serve as a leader in your extracurricular activities</td>
<td>Participate in mock job interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Register for appropriate dual credit, AP, or IB courses aligned with a career pathway</td>
<td>Register for appropriate dual credit, AP, or IB courses aligned with a career pathway</td>
<td>Participate in projects and presentations involving industry volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult with the local community college about any articulated credit earned as part of a career tech course</td>
<td>Consult with the local community college about any articulated credit earned as part of a career tech course</td>
<td>Receive recognition for attainment of industry credentials as part of the school honors banquet/assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer at nonprofit organizations in your interest area (e.g., animal shelter, homeless center, food bank, hospital)</td>
<td>Volunteer at nonprofit organizations in your interest area (e.g., animal shelter, homeless center, food bank, hospital)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early High School Students (9-10)</th>
<th>Spring (January–May)</th>
<th>Summer (June–August)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall (August–December)</strong></td>
<td>Participate in a workshop series on careers in the community and hear from professionals about careers of interest; follow up with a professional by phone, email, or letter and ask for advice on preparing for your own career</td>
<td>Participate in career pathway-oriented visit days (e.g., manufacturing day)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in a career fair with specific local institutional information about the amount and type of education required</td>
<td>Participate in a career fair with specific local institutional information about the amount and type of education required</td>
<td>Connect with mentors for STEM career pathways projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enroll in classes that will build as part of a career pathway</td>
<td>Enroll in classes that will build as part of a career pathway</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle School Students</th>
<th>Spring (January–May)</th>
<th>Summer (June–August)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall (August–December)</strong></td>
<td>Participate in a module that explores careers connected to career clusters of interest and write a reflection about which careers are most interesting or appealing and why</td>
<td>Participate in career exploration activities offered by community organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose a career cluster of interest and develop a plan for high school which supports that area of interest</td>
<td>Choose a career cluster of interest and develop a plan for high school which supports that area of interest</td>
<td>Participate in community service activities that build relationships with career professionals (e.g., Rotaract, Kiwanis Kids, Leo Club)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in community group activities that emphasize students' interests and careers</td>
<td>Participate in community group activities that emphasize students' interests and careers</td>
<td>Participate in summer reading programs and camps that emphasize different student interests and their connections to careers and STEM content</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elementary School Students</th>
<th>Spring (January–May)</th>
<th>Summer (June–August)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall (August–December)</strong></td>
<td>Participate in career highlights days and ask questions of professionals in eight of the 16 different career clusters</td>
<td>Participate in career exploration activities offered by community organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage with professionals who work with the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, 4-H, and other student groups and ask about activities to explore careers</td>
<td>Engage with professionals who work with the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, 4-H, and other student groups and ask about activities to explore careers</td>
<td>Participate in community service activities that build relationships with career professionals (e.g., Rotaract, Kiwanis Kids, Leo Club)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend community programs with business leaders to build relationships with career professionals</td>
<td>Attend community programs with business leaders to build relationships with career professionals</td>
<td>Participate in summer reading programs and camps that emphasize different student interests and their connections to careers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Guiding Questions—College Exploration, Preparation and Selection
Consider these questions to identify unmet needs and additional opportunities.

### Late High School Students (11-12)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Early High School Students (9-10)

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

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

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

- Campus visits
- Development of soft skills

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

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

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

### Middle School Students

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Elementary School Students

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

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

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

How are these opportunities shared with all students?
### Late High School Students (11-12)

**Fall (August–December)**
- Participate in a college fair
- Participate in school activities supporting a postsecondary orientation
  - College T-Shirt Dress-Up Day
  - Hang pennants for destination schools in a public place
  - Display teachers' degrees and alma maters
  - Present college reps in the school building
- Take SAT, ACT, and AP exams
- Participate in College Application Month activities, including workshops focused on choosing colleges to apply to and how to complete and submit college applications
- Become a leader in student activities, clubs and/or sports. Keep a record of your activities to use for scholarship applications
- Visit the Disabilities Resource Centers on the campuses of postsecondary schools of choice

### Early High School Students (9-10)

**Fall (August - December)**
- Participate in a college fair
- Participate in school activities supporting a postsecondary orientation
  - Host College T-Shirt Day
  - Hang pennants for destination schools in a public place
  - Place placards outside classroom doors with teacher degrees and alma maters
  - Meet with visiting college representatives
- Register and take the PSAT or other college entrance practice exams
- Invite high school alumni to serve as mentors to freshman/sophomore students

### Middle School Students

**Fall (August–December)**
- Hear from community leaders about attending college and how attending may be necessary to acquire livable wage jobs

### Elementary School Students

**Fall (August–December)**
- Participate in discussions about why people go to college
- Hear from alumni about the college experience in different career clusters
- Participate in school activities to promote college-going (e.g., faculty alma maters, local sports heroes)

### Spring (January–May)

- Participate in a college application party to kick off choosing and completing college applications
- Complete a profile in the College Scholarship Service System for access to scholarships
- Participate in National College/Signing/Decision Day
- Take prom pictures with each student indicating a postsecondary destination
- Add activities to graduation celebrations
  - Recognition for college acceptance/military enlistment
  - Wear emblem of chosen college
  - Pair up with K graduates for Kindergarten ceremony
- Encourage families to participate in a parent university

### Summer (June–August)

- Announce student’s postsecondary destination at end of year banquet and senior night
- Visit colleges of interest
- Encourage students to make sure they have completed the “Nine steps to making your college plans a reality!”
- Mentors meet with students and families to make sure they understand these details
  - The Academic Side
    - Registering for and attend orientation
    - Taking placement tests
    - Registering for classes
  - The Other Details
    - Receiving required immunizations
    - Completing housing forms
    - Arranging transportation
    - Navigating online portals
    - Using college support systems

### Fall (August–December)

- Begin plans for attending college
- Complete a profile in the College Scholarship Service System for access to scholarships
- Visit the campuses of postsecondary institutions
- Engage undocumented families in conversations about postsecondary options and overcoming barriers
- Connect families of students with special needs to one another to discuss college plans

### Spring (January–May)

- Course catalogue prominently features

### Summer (June–August)

- Enroll in classes for next year according to requirements for your postsecondary plans
- Enroll in classes for next year that earn early college credits (AP, Dual Credit, Articulated Credit)
- Participate in group college visits to local institutions
- Summer camp or Saturday classes at a local college
- Summer school for remediation or acceleration opportunities

### Fall (August–December)

- Participate in discussions about why people go to college
- Attend summer school for acceleration or remediation
- Attend summer or Saturday programs at a local college
- Attend summer school for acceleration or remediation

### Spring (January–May)

- Attend activities in which college representatives talk about the difference college can make in your life and how to prepare
- Hear from upperclassmen about the connection between student interests and high school activities

### Summer (June–August)

- Hold meetings with families of special needs students and high school support staff to discuss individual plans
- Attend summer or Saturday programs at a local college
- Attend summer school for acceleration or remediation

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**On PaCE to Thrive**

Guide to Cultivating Community Action for College and Career Readiness

[www.niu.edu/p20network](http://www.niu.edu/p20network)
## Guiding Questions—Financial Aid and Literacy

Consider these questions to identify unmet needs and additional opportunities.

### Late High School Students (11-12)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What opportunities do students have in the school and the community to develop adult financial literacy?</th>
<th>• Estimate costs of postsecondary attendance</th>
<th>• Determine the role of debt in their postsecondary goal attainment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How are students and families, including English Language Learners (ELL), low-income, and first-generation supported to complete their financial planning for the chosen postsecondary option?</td>
<td>• Determine the financial return on investment of specific postsecondary options</td>
<td>What supports are there for undocumented students to navigate the financial aid application and decision making process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understand financial aid options</td>
<td>• Apply for financial aid/scholarships/grants</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Evaluate financial aid offers</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Early High School Students (9-10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What opportunities do students have in the school and the community to develop age-appropriate financial literacy?</th>
<th>How are students and families informed about the general cost ranges of various postsecondary options and completing return on investment analyses?</th>
<th>• Estimate costs of postsecondary attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How are students and families assisted in completing a financial aid assessment?</td>
<td>In what ways are families who are unfamiliar with postsecondary financial aid options, expectations, and outcomes supported to think through and fully understand their options?</td>
<td>• Determine the financial return on investment of specific postsecondary options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Determine the role of debt in their postsecondary goal attainment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Middle School Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What opportunities do students have in the school and the community to develop age-appropriate financial literacy?</th>
<th>Where can families go for assistance to better understand the financial return on investment of different postsecondary options?</th>
<th>How are students and families informed about the general cost ranges of various postsecondary options and to understand that each options provides a return on investment?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How can families of ELL or first-generation students receive support in planning for their child’s postsecondary goals?</td>
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</table>

### Elementary School Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What opportunities do families have in the community to learn about planning for and financing a child’s postsecondary goals?</th>
<th>What additional supports are in place for the families of ELL, low-income or first-generation students?</th>
<th>What opportunities do families of special needs students have to discuss and prepare for the financial future of their children?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Additional Possible Activities

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

### Resources

- Achieve http://achieve.org/postsecondary-readiness
- Complete College America http://completecollege.org/
- Econ Illinois http://www.econillinois.org
- Illinois Pathways https://www2.illinoisworknet.com/IIPathways/Pages/default.aspx
- Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) https://www.isac.org/
- Illinois Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (ILASFAA) http://www.ilasfaa.org/
- LEAP Liberal Education & America’s Promise (AAC&U) https://www.aacu.org/leap
- Navigate http://www.dallasfed.org/educate/navigate/
- O*Net https://www.onetonline.org

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### Late High School Students (11-12)

**Fall (August–December)**
- Participate in FAFSA Completion Month (October) activities
  - FAFSA Completion Workshops (stand alone or during school open house/parent-teacher conferences)
  - Affording College/Financial Aid Workshops
  - Determine the Cost of Attendance Workshops
    - At the high school during a football or basketball games
    - At a local eatery with computers, a support person, and activities for younger children and receive a free burger or scoop of ice cream for completing the FAFSA
- Receive and read communications on why completing the FAFSA is important
- Participate in Scholarship Application Month activities including workshops on how to find, apply for, and evaluate scholarships and other types of financial aid
- Participate in College Changes Everything activities including workshops on how to find, apply for, and evaluate scholarships and other types of financial aid
- Participate in The Stock Market Game™ for high school students

**Spring (January–May)**
- Complete paperwork for assistance with fees for applications.
- Participate in workshops for tax filing assistance for families

**Summer (June–August)**
- Participate in Award Letter Comparison Month (March) activities
  - Make sense of financial aid award letters
- Participate in the Personal Finance Challenge for high school students

### Early High School Students (9-10)

**Fall (August–December)**
- Complete a financial aid assessment with a family member
- Attend a workshop about financial planning for various postsecondary options with a family member including a section on return on investment

**Spring (January–May)**
- Participate in The Stock Market Game™ for high school students
- Participate in Gen i Revolution online personal finance program

**Summer (June–August)**
- Participate in a family-based community challenge that requires the demonstration of financial literacy competencies like the Utility Bill Challenge
- Participate in Navigate or other transition to college programs

### Middle School Students

**Fall (August–December)**
- Participate in a parent-to-parent session on affording college; college financial aid staff may be on hand as a resource
- Engage in activities to develop competencies in financial literacy related to earning income, buying goods and services, saving, using credit, financial investing, and protecting and insuring assets
- Participate in the Stock Market Game™ for middle school students
- Participate in the Illinois Economics Concepts Poster Contest

**Spring (January–May)**
- Participate in the Personal Finance Challenge for middle school students

**Summer (June–August)**
- Participate in a family-based community challenge that requires the demonstration of financial literacy competencies like the Family Savings Challenge

### Elementary School Students

**Fall (August–December)**
- Learn about the importance of earning an income
- Understand how money is required to buy goods and services and practice making choices about how to spend your money by participating in the Reality Store event offered by ILASFAA
- Learn about why people save and some guidelines for determining how much to save for future goals
- Open community supported college savings accounts for each student
- Participate in the Stock Market Game™ for late elementary school students

**Spring (January–May)**
- Learn about using credit
- Participate in the Illinois Economics Concepts Poster Contest

**Summer (June–August)**
- Attend a financial literacy workshop for families
- Identify one or more financial goals for your family together
**Action Plan Template**

Plan to take action on unmet needs or newfound opportunities.

Community Partner(s)/Champion ____________________________________________________________

Goal (What are you trying to accomplish?) __________________________________________________

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

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are you trying to accomplish?</td>
<td>Relationships, Methods, Activities</td>
<td>Person/s Responsible</td>
<td>Implementation Timeline</td>
<td>What would we need in order to be able to afford it?</td>
<td>Where are we in the process?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Endnotes


16 LD Online. College Planning for Students with Disabilities.


Comments or Questions

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