EDUCATING FUTURE-READY STUDENTS

POLICY ROADMAP TO BRIDGE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND CAREER AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



CIVIC
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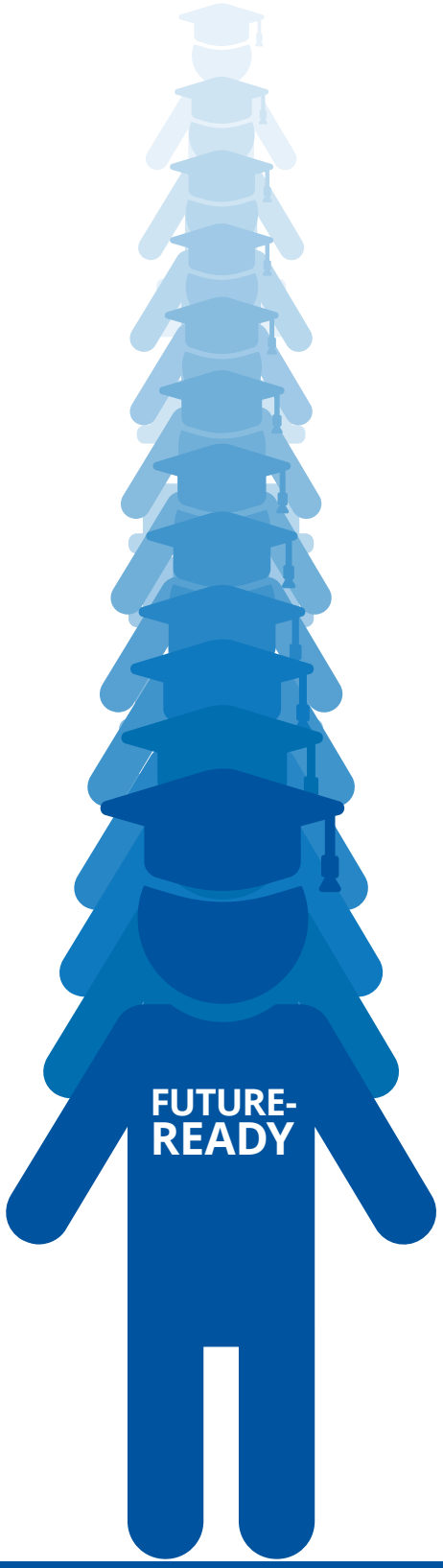
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A key goal of preschool to high school education is to ensure that students are "future-ready"—with the knowledge, skills, and drive to navigate their careers and lives. But the future is rapidly shifting. How can policymakers, educators, business leaders, and community leaders come together to nourish students' real-world competencies?

This report reframes what it means for students to be future-ready. Its aim is to provide a state policy roadmap for a PreK-12 education that prepares students to succeed in a rapidly changing world. Key to this effort is the integration of social and emotional learning (SEL) with career and workforce development (CWD). This roadmap builds on prior efforts by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), Civic, and the Coalition for Career Development Center to advance a state-level developmental framework for systematically integrating SEL and CWD.



WHAT IS FUTURE READINESS?

For too long, we've seen a false dichotomy in our conception of student success. Success can mean graduating college; alternatively, it can mean being entering a career. But even taken together, this conception of "college and career" is too shallow. College attendance and career are just two indicators of a broader vision of success for students. That broader vision is *future readiness*.

To be future-ready, students need academic knowledge, training, and credentials that have traditionally been viewed as central for success in a particular pathway. But equally important are the social and emotional skills necessary for success in work and life.

Thus, future success is about more than a degree or job. It is about students having a wide range of skills and attitudes, including

- The ability to communicate and collaborate effectively, including with supervisors, co-workers, and others
- Knowing how to cultivate relationships with mentors and others who can support them in their career path and life, as well as family, friends, and others
- Developing and sustaining a sense of purpose and belonging
- Being mentally and physically healthy
- Being civically engaged and culturally responsive

While many skills support students' success, these specific attributes support well-being in all parts of students' futures: their careers, their communities, and their personal lives.

MULTIPLE PATHS, MULTIPLE COMPETENCIES

There is no one path to reach this goal. Students need an education that allows them to set and follow their own unique paths without limiting their options. They need opportunities that foster lifelong learning to meet the shifting challenges of the future of work.

All future-ready students will need academic skills and training to succeed, whether they pursue college, apprenticeships, military training, or jobs as they create careers. But just as pressingly, they will need the personal resources to develop relationships with mentors and seek help when faced with new opportunities or challenges. They must be equipped to show initiative, work collaboratively, respect diverse perspectives, and make ethical judgments. They will also need CWD experiences so they can apply their learning to real-world situations as they develop the self-determination and agency to set and pursue their own goals.

The bottom line is that youth need social and emotional skills and rigorous academic pathways linked to colleges or careers to succeed in the future. The following policies provide a roadmap of how states can integrate SEL and CWD to prepare students for the future:

- Develop a shared vision of student success that explicitly integrates SEL and CWD.
- Build adult capacity to provide productive and collaborative instructional strategies.
- Foster the creation of safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments.
- Cultivate opportunities for customized learning, including Personalized Career and Academic Planning (PCAP) individualization.
- Provide flexible, future-ready pathways that lead to stackable credentials that are valued by institutions of higher education and employers.

By following this roadmap, states can lay the groundwork to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to take them to a successful future.

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INTRODUCTION

This report provides a policy roadmap for how states can design PreK-12 education to prepare students to be successful in a rapidly changing world by integrating social and emotional learning (SEL) with career and workforce development (CWD).

A lot is required of young people today. They are encouraged to get good grades and graduate from high school ready either for college or further training, and ultimately, for a career.

Along the way, they must prepare for an ever-shifting "future of work" and be ready for jobs that do not yet exist. The labor market they enter is difficult to navigate, and success often depends on their network and previous connections. They must also face daunting, global challenges and work collectively on ethical solutions. These are considerable challenges for all students, but they are even more difficult for youth from historically marginalized backgrounds, who often must be "twice as good" to overcome the systemic barriers to success.

We look to the education system to equip young people to succeed in this environment, but traditional approaches have often fallen short. Schools have long emphasized academic instruction, preparing students for tests and college entrance. While academic instruction is important, there are other key areas that contribute to making our students future-ready that are often neglected. These areas include CWD and SEL.

CWD gives students the opportunity to apply classroom learning to future courses of study or career paths. These experiences vary widely (e.g., career days, job shadowing, internships, etc.) and complement academic learning and credentials by offering "real-world" applications. CWD engages students in developing their own path to future success.

SEL also deepens students' ability for future success by giving them the social and emotional skills necessary for success in work and life. In their future careers, students will need to communicate and collaborate effectively with supervisors and co-workers. They must have the skills to cultivate relationships with mentors and others who can support them in their career paths and lives. Additionally, there are personal attitudes and aptitudes that contribute to a larger sense of "success" that SEL supports: a sense of purpose and belonging, an ability to develop and sustain relationships, mental and physical health, and civic engagement.



For students to achieve this fuller notion of "success," schools must develop students' social and emotional skills and enhance their CWD experiences. Indeed, these two aspects of learning are intertwined; social and emotional skills and workforce readiness skills are to a large extent synonymous (Dondie et al., 2021). A recent scan of employer surveys and job listings confirmed that the most in-demand skills, such as teamwork and adaptability, are high-level social and emotional skills (Yoder et al., 2020).

THE PARALLEL ADVANCEMENT OF CWD AND SEL

Thus far, national efforts in SEL and CWD have advanced along parallel tracks, with momentum and the research base for each growing apace. Research has shown that SEL is central for improving positive life outcomes for children. Importantly, surveys show that parents, educators, and students all highly value social and emotional skills and support further implementation in schools (Atwell et al., 2021; Atwell & Bridgeland, 2019; DePaoli et al., 2018; Flanagan et al., 2021; Lieberman, 2021).

Meanwhile, there have been concerted efforts to expand CWD activities to prepare youth for postsecondary attainment, including two-year degrees and high-quality credentials to provide access to career pathways. Efforts like Pathways to Prosperity and the New Skills for Youth Initiative have identified implementation levers to improve and expand CWD in K-12 and postsecondary education. The reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Act (Perkins V) in 2018 and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in 2014 (set for reauthorization in 2022) sparked deeper collaboration among educators, the business community, and policymakers to strengthen CWD programming with a commitment to equity. (See Appendix A.)

As revealed by a detailed review of SEL and CWD initiatives and research, there are five domains of policy levers to explicitly integrate SEL and CWD in service of adequately preparing youth to be future-ready:

- Develop a shared vision of student success that explicitly integrates SEL and CWD.
- Build adult capacity to provide productive and collaborative instructional strategies.
- Foster the creation of safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments.
- Cultivate opportunities for customized learning, including Personalized Career and Academic Planning (PCAP) individualization.
- Provide flexible, future-ready pathways that lead to stackable credentials that are valued by institutions of higher education and employers.

These five domains provide a roadmap for policy to support future-ready students via SEL and CWD. This report explores each of these domains in greater detail.



EQUITY AND INDIVIDUALIZATION

At the core of this roadmap is a deep commitment to equity and individualization. Equity means each and every student—regardless of their background, geographic locale, race, home income, or learning differences—has access to the same opportunities and supports needed to reach their full potential and chosen pathway. Individualization recognizes and supports each student's unique identity – including their personal goals, strengths, needs, culture, and academic interests.

Currently, structural barriers exist for many students—including youth from Black, brown, and Indigenous communities, low income homes, rural areas, and those with disabilities—across PreK-12 education. These barriers include lack of access to rigorous college and career preparatory courses at the high school level, implicit bias from educators and the labor market, and a lack of representation and voice in the workforce. While SEL approaches in education will not solve these challenges, fostering SEL skills helps to create learning environments and experiences that more fully nurture the development of all students so that they can thrive. Similarly, while CWD is not a panacea, it helps students develop their occupational identities at an early age and further their social and emotional competencies.

One goal of this roadmap is to ensure that the full suite of educational opportunities and career pathways are available and welcoming to all—not that some students get funneled into career pathways rather than four-year degrees. This is the true meaning of equity. A second goal of the roadmap is to ensure that CWD opportunities are flexible to support the unique needs and goals of each student. Integrating SEL development to all CWD activities and emphasizing it within Personalized Career and Academic Planning help to foster this individualization by supporting a student-centered approach.

Anchoring these goals and this roadmap is a commitment at every level to continuous improvement. Research on the integration of SEL with CWD is at an early stage, and much remains unknown. Moreover, metrics to ensure students are on track to enter and complete postsecondary education and/or other training that equip them for jobs are just emerging. As such, it is essential to build in mechanisms to continually evaluate how integrating SEL and CWD impacts students.

LOOKING AHEAD

This report has two sections:

- Part I, **The Case for an Integrated SEL-CWD Model,** outlines the challenges facing youth as they try to successfully transition from high school to further education, training, and careers. It introduces a framework for integrating SEL with CWD that is explicitly designed to prepare future-ready students.

- Part II, **A Roadmap for Future Readiness,** details each of the policy domains and briefly discusses future considerations for research in this space.

PART 1
THE CASE FOR AN INTEGRATED SEL-CWD MODEL

The Fourth Industrial Revolution, which will change how individuals interact with technology, and transform where and how work is done, is dramatically changing work (*Fourth Industrial Revolution*, 2018). Within the next decade, research predicts that emerging technologies will entirely reset workforce expectations (*Future of Work*, 2017). Here are some changes we've already seen:

- More than 60 percent of jobs now require some type of postsecondary education, compared to in 1970, when 70 percent of jobs only required a high school diploma (Carnevale, 2016).
- Workers currently in the labor force change jobs at rates 20 times higher than previous generations (Berger, 2016).

Despite this uncertainty, surveys with business leaders show that young people will need social and emotional skills. These include the ability to communicate their ideas and solve problems effectively with their colleagues, as well as self-awareness, self-management, and responsible decision-making (*Global Talent Trends*, 2019). In other words, CWD entails not only essential knowledge and technical skills, but also a range of social and emotional skills (Lim-Lange & Lim-Lange, 2019; Yoder et al., 2020).

Yet, employers report these social and emotional skills are the most difficult to find in job candidates. That means it is essential to integrate these skills into CWD to develop students who are adaptable, lifelong learners (Yoder et al., 2020).

THE CHALLENGES OF OUR CURRENT CONTEXT

Our education system is not adequately structured to prepare students for this changing world of work. Moreover, contemporary challenges (including the COVID-19 pandemic, labor market demands, and systemic inequity) present additional barriers to all students and disproportionately impact youth from historically marginalized backgrounds.

Currently, PreK-12 education often leaves youth unsure of and unprepared for their next steps. Surveys show:

- 63 percent of teenagers wish their high schools provided more information about postsecondary opportunities (*Today's Teens*, 2021).
- Less than half of high school students felt prepared for college or careers (*Learning from Student Voice*, 2017).

This is not a surprise—the current system makes the transition from high school unnecessarily difficult. In 41 states, high school graduation requirements do not align with the state's flagship university admission requirements. This stunning misalignment means students who graduate with a regular diploma are not automatically prepared for their state's university system (Atwell et al., 2021). Often, the result is remedial coursework that increases the cost of college.

The bottom line: Each year one million students leave high school and do not successfully transition to postsecondary education or training programs (*From Tails to Heads*, 2020).

The Impact of the Pandemic

COVID-19 has disrupted students' decision-making about the future at the very moment many young people are struggling socially, emotionally, and educationally. Data indicate students are struggling with their mental health and relationships. Schools have also observed declines in math and reading scores and student engagement, as well as increased rates of course failure (Calderon, 2020; Flanagan et al., 2021; West & Lake, 2021).

COVID-19 also has resulted in significant decreases in postsecondary enrollment, particularly for low-income individuals, exacerbating a steady decline in college enrollment over the past decade (Causey et al., 2021; DeBaun, 2021). Moreover, students are increasingly worried about how they will pay for college, reporting that the financial impact of the pandemic makes them less likely to pursue future education (Hiler et al., 2021; *Today's Teens*, 2021).

The result: rising numbers of 16-to-24-year-olds out of school and out of work. Researchers estimate that the number of these "opportunity youth" will balloon to more than 6 million, up from 4.1 million in 2019 (Lewis, 2021). This is troubling—especially because young people who are unable to access consistent work before age 25 are estimated to earn 44 percent less over the course of their lives (Belfield et al., 2012).

Heightened Equity Challenges



The current educational challenges only exacerbate inequality, especially in underserved communities, calling into question the nation's promise of opportunity for everyone. Rates of children outearning their parents—one measure of economic mobility—have plummeted over the last 50 years, especially for communities of color (Chetty et al., 2016; Chetty et al., 2020).

A recent nationwide study showed that white students are more likely than Black and Latinx students to take classes in fields such as manufacturing, information technology, and other STEM fields, while Black students are more likely to take classes in hospitality and tourism (Butrymowicz, 2021). The share of the STEM workforce for these populations is about half of their respective shares of the overall population (*Labor force characteristics*, 2018).

This disproportion partially stems from high-level math and science courses being less available to youth of color. Fewer than 10 percent of Black and Latino/a/x students complete the high school mathematics sequence needed to successfully access traditional STEM pipelines, a consequence of systemic discrimination, stereotypes, and biases (Coleman & Anjur, 2005; Office for Civil Rights, 2018). This cycle trends toward Black and Latino/a/x young adults being less likely to attend four-year colleges, less likely to persist through college, and more likely to leave school with debt but without a degree (Libassi, 2018; *College Enrollment Rates,* 2021).

Similarly, access to SEL in schools is not equitably distributed. Low-income and Black, Indigenous, and peoples of color (BIPOC) youth have less access to "soft skills" training (Venator & Reeves, 2015; Smith et al., 2019). Recent surveys show that low-income and rural schools are less likely to have systemically implemented SEL as well (Atwell et al., 2021). COVID-19 effects have been particularly damaging for BIPOC communities—particularly youth—who were hit hardest by the pandemic recession; their job prospects have been the slowest to recover (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020).

A racialized society with intergenerational inequality deeply impacts youth. As Jagers et al. lay out, "for youth of color, low-income youth, and immigrant youth the prevailing social arrangements can induce stress, alienation, stereotype threat, mistrust, and disengagement" (2021). These realities weigh on youth's beliefs of what is possible in their future. Systemic inequality also impacts marginalized young people's ability to find work, and racial bias is a barrier for BIPOC Americans in the labor market (Unequal America, 2021; Caraballo, 2017; Nasir & Vakil, 2017).

Building a more equitable society will require direct action to counteract these barriers. While education is not a remedy for inequality on its own, the racial wage gap stems in part from occupational differences tied to educational pathways. Education must be reimagined to better serve every student, particularly those from underserved communities. As such, the recommendations in Part II seek to advance equity and break down barriers for BIPOC, low-income, and rural youth, as well as students with disabilities.

REIMAGINING EDUCATION TO SERVE A BROADER VISION OF STUDENT SUCCESS

A consensus has been emerging that the U.S. education system requires transformation. As the School Superintendents Association (2021) puts it: "Many of today's practices and processes were born from the 20th-century industrial model of education. As a result of these legacy practices and processes, **we too often teach outdated skills that prepare learners for our past, not their futures. …** We must redesign schools and reengineer learning through a future lens."

When the current secondary education system was first developed, a high school diploma was considered an educational endpoint that prepared youth for agricultural or industrial jobs of the day (Miller, 2017). Today, however, more than 60 percent of jobs require some form of postsecondary degree (Carnevale, 2016). Yet, because high school and postsecondary opportunities are misaligned, youth are left unprepared.

The demand is clear. Now is the time to reinvent education to put youth firmly at the center, using the emerging science of how students learn to develop supports so every student may thrive.

What Do Students Need to Be Successful in the Future?

For too long, we've seen a false dichotomy in our conception of student success. Success can mean graduating college; alternatively, it can mean being entering a career. But even if we integrate these two outcomes, the result is too narrow. Indeed, college attendance and career are just two indicators of a broader vision of success for students. That broader vision is *future readiness*.

There is no one path for "future-ready" students. The goal of reimagined systems of education should be to equip students with skills they will need to become effective lifelong learners and navigators of whatever career path(s) they may choose.

Four-year college degrees lead to higher incomes on average and are more resilient during recessions. However, high-quality credentials and two-year degrees can also provide a sturdy pathway to future success or further degrees (Mountjoy, 2021). CWD in high school can lead to some form of postsecondary credential without incurring substantial costs.

Currently, there are 30 million middle-skill jobs that require some postsecondary degree or credential, but not a bachelor's degree. These jobs offer a pathway to the middle class (Carnevale et al., 2017; 2018). Students must receive an education that allows them to set and follow their own unique paths. This means providing information about and access to all options, whether they lead to a four-year degree, a two-year degree, or a high-quality credential.

Whatever path they choose, future-ready students must acquire the academic skills and training they need to succeed. This includes equipping them with the mindset of a lifelong learner who is able to adapt when new skills are required.

This education should also nourish students' social and emotional skills. Students will need to develop relationships with mentors and seek help when faced with new opportunities or challenges. They will need to show initiative, work collaboratively, respect diverse perspectives, and make ethical judgments at work and in their careers, communities, and personal lives. Ideally, each future-ready student will take a unique path, filled with purpose and passion to make a difference and with the credential or degree needed to reach their goal.

The science of learning and development point to a variety of factors that allow students to develop holistically:

Caring, culturally responsive adults

These adults must be able to engage with and affirm students from a broad range of cultures, seeing their unique perspectives and experiences as valuable assets (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Ideally, adults bring knowledge of emerging pedagogy and career education. They must have the capacity to support students through personal challenges and professional endeavors.

Supportive, nurturing environments

These environments must be physically, mentally, and emotionally welcoming and culturally responsive so youth feel a sense of belonging (Osher et al., 2018).

Individualized support

Research shows students engage best with academic material when it is applied to real-world situations (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Bridgeland et al., 2006). Students will need individualized support to apply their academic and social and emotional skills to real-world situations. Opportunities such as work-based learning, service-learning, and experiential learning help students engage more deeply with course content, practice emerging social and emotional skills, and discover their passions. Student-centered approaches like project-based learning and youth participatory action research give youth agency in their learning and support optimal learning outcomes. They also provide important opportunities to practice social and emotional skills.

Flexible, future-ready pathways

It is impossible to predict the specific technical skills or jobs that will be available when youth enter the labor market. They will need flexible, future-ready pathways supported by adaptable skills and mindsets. Education systems must provide multiple on-ramps and off-ramps so that students can change their mind as they develop their identities and interests or face unexpected challenges.

Continuous improvement

Policymakers must strive to continuously improve all these factors by developing accountability systems that recognize a broad vision of student success. It should include building on-track and success metrics, with wraparound support systems for all students and early interventions for those who fall off-track.

Additionally, youth must feel welcomed. This sense of belonging is key to an individual's occupational identity, defined as "a vision of [youth's] future selves in the workforce—what they like to do, what they believe they are skilled at, and where they feel they belong" (Callahan et al., 2019).

Currently, structural barriers impede marginalized youth from feeling welcomed in high-prestige occupations (Barton & Tan, 2010; Caraballo, 2017; Nasir & Vakil, 2017). These barriers, unwelcoming company cultures, and skewed labor market outcomes restrict what youth can imagine for their futures, creating a vicious cycle by limiting the fields where BIPOC, low-income, and female students feel they belong.

To ensure equitable opportunities, schools must confront these barriers and work to build occupational identities:

- This should begin with exposure as early as **elementary school** through field trips, career days, or presentations.
- In **middle school**, youth should continue exploring careers and engaging new opportunities through project-based learning or service-learning, as well as job shadowing or mock interviews.
- Once in **high school**, students should actively engage in potential careers through work-based learning, CWD coursework, or internships.

All the while, schools should be confronting equity challenges including stereotypes, implicit bias, and homophily (i.e., the universal tendency to look for and bond with people who are similar to oneself). These challenges to equity limit access to the educational opportunity for students. Steps to address these challenges should prioritize alternative representation, culturally relevant pedagogy, and affinity-based mentorship (Callahan et al., 2019).

Youth need social and emotional skills and rigorous academic pathways linked to colleges or careers to succeed in the future. **Policymakers can help build an education system that fulfills this need by developing a shared vision for student success that explicitly integrates SEL and CWD in a new model for future-readiness.**

This model will foster and engage caring, culturally responsive adults to provide youth with supportive, nurturing environments and flexible, future-ready pathways. The pathways must include customized learning opportunities and center on equity, with a commitment to continuously improve these efforts over time.

The Research Base for the Integrated Framework

Through evidence-based SEL, students develop more positive beliefs about themselves; improve their behaviors, skills, and competencies; and increase their academic achievement (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017). Further, students learn critical skills, attitudes, and knowledge pivotal for success in school, in their future lives and careers, and in community and civic engagement (DePaoli et al., 2017; Jones & Kahn, 2017).

The educational impacts of CWD are strong, too. Research has found that CWD has a positive impact on test scores, graduation rates, college enrollment, and earning a postsecondary degree (*Issue Brief*, 2017). Students who enter high school at the conventional age and take CWD education courses combined with regular curricula are less likely to drop out of high school (Plank et al., 2005). Further, experiencing at least two years of CWD has a positive impact on students' "test scores, academic grade point averages, and progress to graduation" (Castellano et al., 2012).

The CSI: Bringing Together SEL and CWD

Based on high demand from states, CASEL selected eight states—Delaware, Kansas, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Utah, and Wisconsin—to join a community of practice within their Collaborating States Initiative (CSI). The goal is to align and integrate CWD and SEL practices through an equity lens to more intentionally promote the competencies and environments youth need to thrive in school as they prepare for the workforce.

States in the community of practice have repeatedly emphasized the inherent link between SEL and CWD. They have begun the important of work of reinforcing and elaborating these linkages through crosswalks and resource development. Already, there is momentum to carry this work forward and additional states began joining the community of practice in 2021.

The CASEL Collaborating States Initiative (CSI), launched in 2016, is now partnering with more than 40 states working to advance SEL. The mission of the CASEL CSI is to help policymakers create statewide conditions where districts and schools are encouraged and equipped to implement systemic, evidence-based, equity-focused SEL, with a strategic focus on aligning efforts across policies and practices.

Recently, CASEL, Civic, and the Coalition for Career Development Center advanced a PreK-12 developmental framework for states that integrates systemic SEL and CWD to advance a holistic vision of future readiness (Dermody et al., 2022).

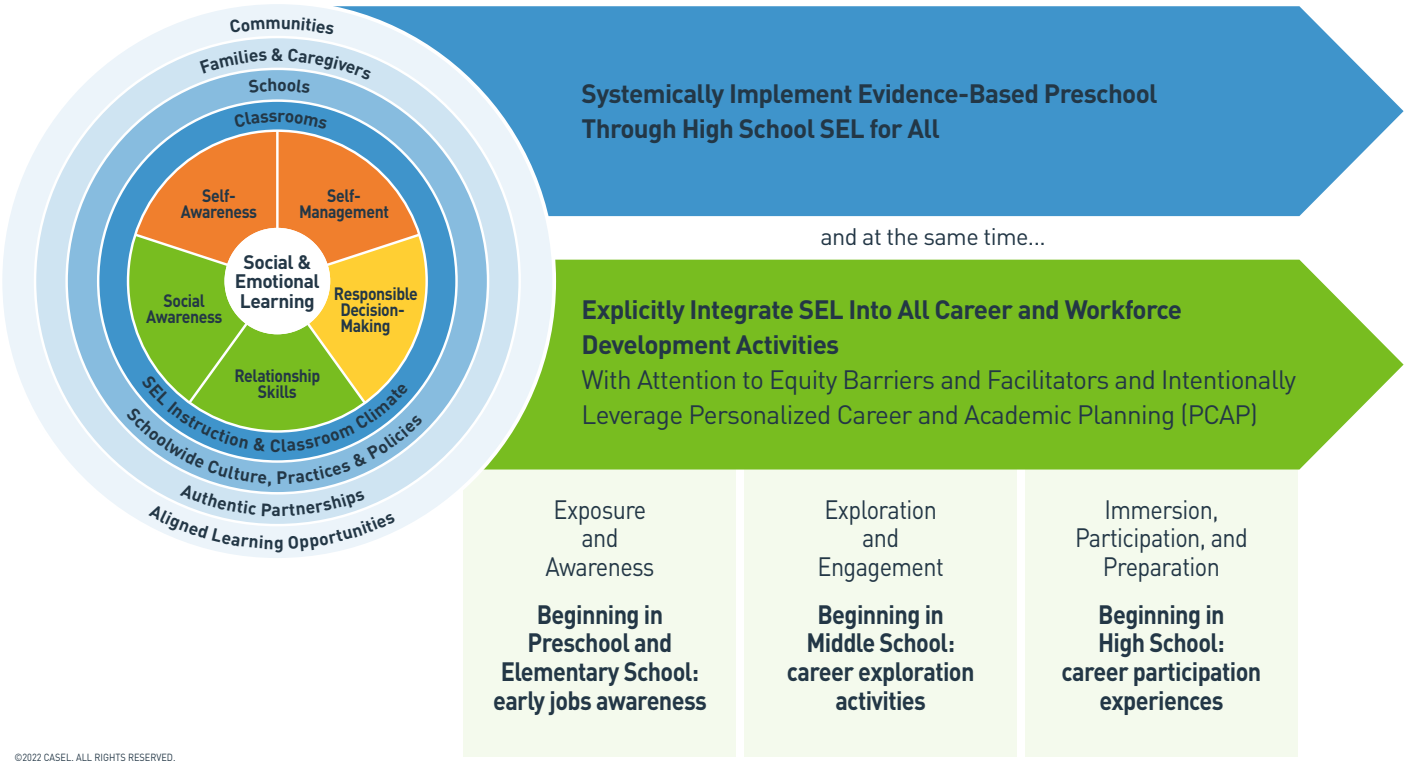


Figure 1. CASEL's developmental framework for integration of SEL and CWD

The roadmap that follows builds on this framework, the examples set by the states participating in the community of practice, and other ongoing efforts across the nation. It provides policy options to enable states to integrate SEL with CWD in PreK-12 education so that students may be prepared for the future.

To continue to support the integration of SEL and CWD, visit the Additional Tools and Resources section on CASEL's SEL and Career and Workforce Development Initiative Page.



Start Here

To create the conditions where every student will thrive in adulthood

01 POLICY DOMAIN

Shared Vision of Student Success

- Coalition of Youth Organizations
- Aligned Goals and Definitions
- Holistic standards
- Data systems

02 POLICY DOMAIN

Adult Capacity for Instructional Strategies

- Professional development competency modeling
- Diverse educator workforce
- Counseling services for students
- Youths' Networks

03 POLICY DOMAIN

Safe and Inclusive Learning Environments

- Support strategies
- Positive relationships
- Safety and a sense of belonging

04 POLICY DOMAIN

Opportunities for Customized Learning

- Systemic PCAP
- Career exploration and advising
- SEL in CWD
- Out-of-school programs

05 POLICY DOMAIN

Flexible Pathways with Valued Credentials

- SEL in Workforce Pathways
- Value for all learning
- Inclusive approaches
- Alignment with higher education and employers

A generation of future-ready, life-long learners

PART 2
A ROADMAP FOR FUTURE READINESS

The sections below identify five policy domains and associated policy recommendations to ensure youth are adequately prepared for the future:

- Develop a **shared vision** of student success that explicitly integrates SEL and CWD.
- Build **adult capacity** to provide productive and collaborative instructional strategies.
- Foster the creation of safe, supportive, and inclusive **learning environments**.
- Cultivate opportunities for **customized learning**, including Personalized Career and Academic Planning (PCAP) individualization.
- Provide **flexible, future-ready pathways** that lead to stackable credentials that are valued by institutions of higher education and employers.

The integrated roadmap for future-readiness is designed to break down barriers and advance equity. Exposing youth of all backgrounds to a growing breadth of potential career pathways will empower them to expand their vision of what they can become. Many of the policies that follow explicitly call out how education can help close equity gaps, building a more just future for all.

As stated above, it is essential that states implementing these policy domains have a culture of continuous improvement. While decades of research have illuminated what works to support students' successful development, and there are emerging metrics to assess post-secondary success (Balfanz et al., 2016; From Tails to Heads, 2020), much remains unknown. As such, it is essential to build in mechanisms to continually evaluate how integrating SEL and CWD is affecting students. Find more about approaches to support equity and continuous improvement in CASEL's CSI State Theory of Action.

DEVELOP A SHARED VISION OF STUDENT SUCCESS

The current U.S. education system's vision of student success fails to capture the full breadth of student learning and experience. It is a poor indicator of future-readiness and predictor of success. There are several ways states can influence a more robust vision of student success.

Convene a Coalition of Youth-Serving Organizations

To develop a shared vision, it is essential to engage all stakeholders, including educators, parents, youth, employers, business leaders, and community organizations. A first step is to bring together a coalition of all youth-serving institutions. States recognize the importance of convening and promoting collaboration among key stakeholders to build buy-in, connection, and alignment with work that is already underway. CWD and SEL leads should connect with stakeholders from the state education agency (e.g., curriculum and instruction, professional learning, support services including special education, school counseling, and positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS)), the governor's office, other state agencies (e.g., labor), members of the business community, representatives of higher education, district education leaders, and family and youth.

States can create a children's cabinet, which leaders meet regularly or issues guidance on how state agencies can coordinate and streamline services for children. For example, Massachusetts established a Workforce Skills Cabinet that brings together the departments of Education, Labor and Workforce Development and Housing and Economic Development around a comprehensive approach to skill and knowledge development to meet the hiring needs of Massachusetts employers. In North Dakota, the newly formed K-12 Coordinating Council assists in the implementation, dissemination, and communication of the statewide strategic vision. The council also evaluates progress toward meeting the identified goals and strategies.

Recommended Resources

Tool	Children's Cabinet Playbook (Forum for Youth Investment)
Report	Building Partnerships in Support of Where, When, and How Learning Happens (National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development)

Establish Aligned Definitions and Goals

It is more important than ever for states to break down the silos within systems to meet the needs of students. When uniting multiple stakeholders to create a shared vision, states will need to establish common language, definitions, and goals. Once a vision is established, leaders at all levels of government and across state education, workforce, and labor departments must communicate that vision clearly and regularly, infusing it into strategic plans, mission statements, and other policy-guiding documents.

Policymakers should adopt shared terms and definitions of key outcomes and indicators that bridge education and workforce. It is important that these definitions are aligned across the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and Perkins legislation. These shared definitions should not only guide the policymaking process but also should be integrated into college and career pathways systems and frameworks.

States can establish aligned terms, definitions, and goals through a systemwide "Portrait of a Graduate." For example, Utah's Portrait of a Graduate, called Utah Talent MAP, includes P-20 competencies that express a holistic view of student success. The state is partnering with chambers of commerce to refine common language and terminology that can be used by both education and business/industry partners relative to social and emotional skills. This requires two-way communication between initiative leaders and the business community.

Recommended Resources

Guidance	Utah's Portrait of a Graduate
Guidance	Colorado's Essential Skills

Develop New Standards That Capture the Holistic Vision of Student Success

To support these visions, states should create integrated SEL and CWD frameworks that include explicit learning benchmarks for social and emotional skills. Where separate standards for SEL and career already exist, states can begin this work by crosswalking SEL benchmarks and employability or career readiness benchmarks (several states in CASEL's SEL workforce community of practice have already done this). These benchmarks should be embedded into existing academic standards and accountability systems to ensure prioritization.

In states where social and emotional and career-ready skills are already articulated separately, a common strategy is to develop tools to illustrate linkages. Pennsylvania aligned its Career Ready Skills with SEL progressions. Other states, including Delaware and Wisconsin, developed a crosswalk of their SEL standards and CWD skills to assist educators in understanding the intersection and overlap of both domains. States that have not yet developed SEL standards or career development frameworks have an opportunity to create fully aligned SEL and CWD frameworks.

In creating shared goals, policymakers should articulate specific student outcomes that constitute meeting that goal. These include academic and cognitive development, SEL, mental and physical health, and career and workforce exposure or experiences. These goals should be accompanied by specific targets and learning benchmarks to ensure they are a priority and stakeholders are held accountable for progress over time. This should include articulated strategies for how the goals will be assessed, including in-school climate measures. Kansas engages portfolios, work skills, and employability skills rubrics in their work to measure the skill and knowledge that students gain from work-based learning.

High school graduation requirements and postsecondary pathways should align with future-ready standards that include social and emotional skills and college and career-ready expectations. States can do this by making rigorous course requirements the default, which emphasizes the potential of all students to succeed in high-level coursework when provided the necessary supports and positive learning environments.

Recommended Resources

Report	Kansas' Employability Skills: Measuring and Reflecting Student Learning
Crosswalk	Delaware CASEL Bridge Crosswalk: Empowering Every Student to Achieve Purpose, Place, and Plans for the Future
Tool	Integrating Employability Skills: A Framework for All Educators (College and Career Readiness and Success Center)

Align and Integrate Data Systems to Track Progress

Research demonstrating the effectiveness of integrating SEL with CWD is emerging (e.g., Linked Learning). While the promise of this approach is clear, it will be important for states and districts to gather data that can be used to ensure that innovative approaches are having desired effects with all youth. Additional guidance is available in CASEL's Theory of Action, Minnesota's SEL Implementation Guidance, or Kansas's Measuring Social and Emotional Growth Locally. Data should be aligned across secondary, postsecondary, and workforce systems to assess student outcomes and a system's effectiveness. By doing so, agencies can track student progress, identify where barriers arise, and detect which students need support by disaggregating data to ensure equitable outcomes for different groups of youth.

ESSA and Perkins V provide opportunities for improved alignment. For example, under ESSA, states can adopt college and career pathways as a school improvement strategy for low-improvement schools. States can also align CTE standards with rigorous math and reading standards. SEL standards and benchmarks should also be integrated into CTE standards. Also, states can explore how to align resources with a focus on equitable distribution of funding. This work should seek to break down funding silos, allowing states to blend and braid resources and federal funding across Perkins, WIOA, and ESSA.

Recommended Resources

Report	Designing a Coherent State System of Accountability: The Every Student Succeeds Act and Perkins V (The Center for Assessment)
Brief	Developing a College and Career-Ready Workforce: An Analysis of ESSA, Perkins V, IDEA, and WIOA (College and Career Readiness and Success Center at AIR)

BUILD ADULT CAPACITY TO PROVIDE PRODUCTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Students need the support of a range of caring, encouraging adults. This certainly includes educators and guidance counselors, but it also includes mentors and supervisors in work-based and field-based learning opportunities. Employers also play a role by signaling to youth that they belong in these industries, decision-making roles, and the innovation process, in both in-school and outside of school spaces.

These adults offer a range of supports. On the interpersonal level, they foster the positive, supportive relationships that are essential in all learning settings, but they also offer special guidance and expertise suited to their unique roles. In the classroom, educators bring their pedagogical expertise, using evidence-based practices and instructions. At the school level, guidance counselors must be knowledgeable about diverse pathways for youth, including career education, as well as how to effectively use PCAPs to support student engagement and success.

There are several ways states can support the development of these skills and assets.

Provide Professional Development That Builds Career and SEL Knowledge

All adults supporting students must be knowledgeable of career and workforce pathways and the importance of SEL in preparing youth. States can support this effort by providing guidance on how to develop instructional materials that introduce youth to a variety of occupations and career pathways.

When developing these materials, it is important to thoughtfully and explicitly integrate SEL. For example, states can provide tools for supervisors and mentors on how to offer strategies for supporting social and emotional development in young people. This effort can also include incentivizing career days on campus or career and workforce exposure that more explicitly integrates SEL into instructional materials.

When developing materials and media, states must ensure diverse representation in all careers to help counteract stereotypes that may influence students' career choices. States can also partner with local and state employers to encourage teachers to incorporate labor market and other forms of economic data into career curricula.

In Delaware, SEL and career and workforce professional learning opportunities are being co-constructed to provide educators with academic skills, technical skills, and concepts to bolster SEL practices. Pennsylvania's Career Ready Skills Toolkit also provides educators with resources to help students develop SEL-based employability skills.

Support Adult Capacity to Both Model and Promote Critical Competencies for Students

For students to develop workforce competencies, educators must exemplify what those behaviors look like. States can incentivize the redesign of educator preparation and in-service programs or other adult supports so that they align with the most recent science and are culturally sustaining and affirming. States can also develop micro-credentials for teaching and integrating SEL and CWD.

Nevada offers all adults professional development on cultural competence. The state supports foundational, equity-focused social and emotional skills across professional spectrums through its new Digital Learning Collaborative, hosted within the Nevada Social, Emotional, and Academic Development Center.

This is in addition to starting a new SEL endorsement in partnership with its higher educational institutions to reinforce a prepared educational workforce. Pennsylvania has developed professional development courses linking SEL with the state's Career Ready Skills (CRS) and integrating the CRS into the classroom, which can be accessed by creating a login here.

Recommended Resources

Policy Scan	Micro-Credentials and Education Policy in the United States (Digital Promise)
Policy Brief	Investing in Effective School Leadership: How States Are Taking Advantage of Opportunities Under ESSA (LPI)
Report	Strategies for Building the Teacher Pipeline (CCSSO)

Build a Diverse Educator Workforce

To foster an inclusive and equitable education system, states must promote broader, more diverse talent pipelines into the education profession. More than half of students in the United States are BIPOC, and they need role models they identify with who can also help them to build their occupational identity. Recent research also points to a positive benefit of same-race teachers on Black students (Gershenson et al., 2018). See this recent scan by Ed Trust for a snapshot of state policies designed to promote educator diversity from all 50 states.

States, districts, and schools can intentionally allocate funds to address educator diversity and grow pipelines. To do this, states can support high-retention programs, including residencies and Grow Your Own (GYO) programs to target communities and schools with shortages (Muniz, 2020). States can also invest in service scholarships or loan forgiveness programs to increase access for economically disadvantaged youth to the educator profession.

Teacher retention is also an area states can support to build a diverse educator workforce. By examining current funding formulas, they can increase teacher salaries and close salary gaps across districts. States can also use funds provided under Title II of ESSA to strengthen teacher preparation, recruitment, and support efforts to boost effectiveness and retention. ESSA funds can close equity gaps by expanding access to high-quality teacher preparation programs, including GYO programs.

Educators also include work-based learning and out-of-school instructors and mentors, so schools should take care to uplift and partner with organizations that reflect the diversity of their community.

Recommended Resources

Report	A 50-State Scan of Grow Your Own Teacher Programs (New America)
Report	Investing in Grow Your Own Teacher Programs (New America)
Scan	Is Your State Prioritizing Teacher Diversity and Equity? (The Education Trust)

Provide All Students With Comprehensive Counseling Services

All students need high-quality college and career advising in high school. It has far-ranging benefits, including enrollment in postsecondary and high-quality career pathways (Reyna & Norton, 2020).

This advising should also be informed by principles and strategies to support SEL. A recent survey showed school counselors believe they are responsible for students' social and emotional development, and they are very interested in incorporating SEL into their programming (Bobek et al., 2021). Unfortunately, most school counseling systems are drastically understaffed, leaving many students, especially those from historically underserved communities, without adequate counseling (School Counselors Matter, 2019).

States should integrate SEL practices and pedagogy into counselors' professional development and provide funding to promote the availability of SEL training. States can also invest in ongoing training and certification programs for high school guidance counselors.

A key piece of counselor professional development must also be related to working with students to develop PCAP. This requires counselors to be knowledgeable of career and workforce preparation activities and pathways, as well as working collaboratively with students, teachers, and parents to nurture their personalized pathway.

Kansas prioritizes counseling as part of implementing the state's Personalized Career and Academic Plans, locally called the Individual Plan of Study (IPS). The Kansas Comprehensive School Counseling Program provides a systematic framework for "helping school counselors design and implement comprehensive school counseling programs." The state also provides counselors with support and technical assistance through the Kansas Curricular Standards for School Counseling.

Recommended Resources

Microsite	Making the Connection: Aligning Advising to Improve Postsecondary Access and Success (Education Strategy Group)
Website	Delaware Plan for Success

Enrich Young People's Network of Relationships

A recent report shows that young people believe connections and social capital are essential for navigating their career journeys, but many report a lack of access to robust networks (Flanagan et al., 2020). Students need mentors who can help open possibilities to the future.

States can help by:

- Expanding investments in mentorship programs
- Expanding work-based learning, internships, and apprenticeship opportunities to provide additional opportunities for students to find and build positive relationships outside the classroom

Schools can help by:

- Identifying good mentors for students and support student-mentor relationships
- Teaching students skills for identifying and building relationships with mentors during high school and beyond

Recommended Resources

Report	Where Do We Go Next? Youth Insights on the High School Experience During a Year of Historic Upheaval (America's Promise)
Resource	Community Partnerships (CASEL)

FOSTER SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

A review of school climate studies showed that a positive school climate boosts academic outcomes and reduces the negative impacts of poverty, improving grades, test scores, and student engagement (Berkowitz et al., 2016; Wang & Degol, 2016).

There are several ways states can foster safe and supportive learning environments.

Support Strategies for the Creation of Safe, Quality Learning Environments

To foster supportive learning environments, states can recommend evidence-based programs to improve school climate and align and use resources available through ESSA, including Title I, Title II, and Title IV funds. Examples of evidence-based approaches for improving school climate and methods of conducting needs assessments and collecting data are offered in CASEL's Program Guide, State and District resource centers, and School Guide.

States can explore further alignment between school quality and student success (SQSS) and program indicators. Twenty-one states already include attainment of a recognized postsecondary credential in high school as part of their SQSS indicators, which is also a program indicator for CTE under Perkins V. Thirty-one states included attainment of a postsecondary or CTE credit in their ESSA state plan (*Innovating for Equity and Excellence*, 2019).

In Kansas, the state accreditation system includes tracking progress toward social-emotional growth goals—including individual learning plans—as well as measures to ensure students are academically prepared for postsecondary success. The Kansas Education System Accreditation also provides direction for districts as they develop their SEL programs locally.

Recommended Resources

Resource	Ohio's School Climate Guidelines
Resource	School and Classroom Climate Measures: Considerations for Use by State and Local Education Leaders (Rand)
Tool	National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments Open-Source School Climate Surveys

Promote Positive Relationships in Learning Environments

Students who have access to positive relationships are more engaged academically, demonstrate stronger social skills, and exhibit more positive behavior (Roehlkepartain et al., 2017). Positive adult relationships in and out of school are also important for expanding the networks of marginalized youth, who are less likely to have strong positive relationships (Callahan, 2019; Scales et al., 2020).

State policymakers should develop and provide guidance on best practices to create relationship-centered schools to boost student learning. They should also pay special attention to affinity-based mentorships, both in and out of school, to combat homophily and build belonging for all students and youth.

States should also consider how they can eliminate barriers to relationship-building in schools by reducing school transitions, adopting block scheduling, or allowing students to remain with one teacher for multiple years. In addition, states can assist educators in using Early Warning Systems, which use student data to identify students at risk of dropping out, to distinguish students who struggle with transitions between schools (e.g., middle to high school), and to continuously support children's path to post-secondary success.

Recommended Resources

Report	Restarting and Reinventing School: Redesign Schools for Stronger Relationships (LPI)

Create Inclusive Environments That Provide All Students With Safety and a Sense of Belonging

Historically marginalized student subgroups participate in CTE and advanced coursework at lower rates than their peers (Butrymowicz, 2021; Office for Civil Rights, 2018). States should conduct equity audits to assess how CTE is serving learners of color and other marginalized populations. These audits should assess system barriers to inform policy changes to create more equitable environments, especially in regard to historically underserved student subgroups accessing college-level and CTE courses.

Guidance or standards from states can support more inclusive environments by including information on best practices to support students' mental health, especially trauma-informed practices in the aftermath of COVID-19, and developing diversity as a strength by using diverse materials, including in CWD. States should also promote the adoption of culturally responsive and affirming pedagogy and practices in CTE courses and work-based learning. In support of personalized experiences, SEL and equity resources have also been built into the Equitable Practices Hub as part of Pennsylvania's Standards Aligned System (SAS) portal.



CULTIVATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CUSTOMIZED LEARNING, INCLUDING PCAP INDIVIDUALIZATION

Students learn best and are most motivated when they can connect what they learn in the classroom to topics relevant to them. This is especially true in situations where they are challenged to make connections between familiar and new situations and when they can apply knowledge to tasks and real-world situations (Design principles for schools, 2021). This aligns with a new paradigm and framework states are advancing for CWD that focuses on students' strengths and passions and supports students to set long-term goals for postsecondary success.

Educators across the country are building systems that support PCAPs.[1] PCAPs allow students to create and track their postsecondary plans aligned to their future goals. Ideally, this should inform all their course and activity planning while in high school and even in middle school (Solberg et al., 2014). When personally selected by students, work-based learning, early access to college, and service-learning provide young people important opportunities to practice emerging social and emotional skills at the same time they explore and discover their own life goals, thus building their potential, capacity, and occupational identities.

There are several ways states can cultivate opportunities for customized learning.

Scale Systemic PCAP

Emerging evidence supports PCAPs. One multi-method study showed 85 percent of families and 67 percent of educators felt that the PCAP process helped youth transition into further education and careers. This study also showed that participation in PCAPs boosted engagement in course and educational planning and contributed to stronger partnerships among educators, students, and families about students' career goals and interests (Solberg et al., 2014).

CASEL's Developmental Framework for the Integration of Social and Emotional Learning and Career and Workforce Development lays out how the PCAP process helps students build social and emotional skills into each student's CWD experience in high school:

> This process requires that students understand a set of career and workforce opportunities (social awareness), determine their own talents and interests (self-awareness), plan for and set goals (self-management), pursue steps to experience career and workforce opportunities (responsible decision-making), and seek help from others and establish relationships with mentors to advance goals (relationship management) (CASEL, 2020; Coalition for Career Development Center, 2021).

Research also supports the PCAP process in developing students' self-exploration, social and emotional resiliency, career search and planning, and management skills (Solberg et al., 2014).

While many states have PCAP policies, high-quality implementation lags. Most states do not mandate PCAPs until the ninth grade (Advance CTE, 2021). While most students report developing an education and career plan (ECP) in high school, far fewer students received support from an adult to do so, and even fewer reviewed their plan with an adult annually.

1 While the PCAP process is similar, the name and individual components may vary across states. PCAPs may also be referred to as Education and Career Planning, Individual Career and Academic Planning, Individualized Learning Plans, and others.

When students develop an ECP without adult support and yearly reviews, it does not lead to higher rates of submitting a FAFSA, completing a college prep curriculum, or applying to or enrolling in college. Students who reviewed their ECP annually with an adult were more likely to do all of these activities (Torre Gibney & Rauner, 2021).

There are several actions states can take to scale learner-centric future planning through the PCAP process:

- Expand accountability mechanisms for PCAPs by defining quality PCAP implementation, building incentives for districts to track and report data on participation, and requiring that data be disaggregated by race, gender, and special populations.
- Ensure districts are adequately equipped to enact PCAPs by providing training and resources to interpret and analyze PCAP data (including analyzing disaggregated data to ensure equity), professional development, and technical assistance to schools and districts, and highlighting best practices.
- Highlight how the PCAP process can be integrated from middle school to high school and into connections to SEL programming and activities.

There are strong examples of states that have developed and successfully implemented their PCAP that enabled integration of SEL and CWD. In Wisconsin, the process of launching the state's PCAP process, referred to as Academic and Career Planning, was led by the offices for Career and Technical Education and Student Services/Prevention and Wellness, enabling natural connection of CWD with SEL. In Delaware, PCAPs are mandated for all students in grades 8-12, while Wisconsin's Academic and Career Planning is mandated beginning in grade 6.

Recommended Resources

Report	Helping Youth Become the Drivers of Their Own College and Career Readiness Success (Massachusetts Department of Education)
Toolkit	Individual Career Academic Planning Implementation Toolkit (Oklahoma Edge)
Report	Implementing Individual Career and Academic Plans at Scale (Advance CTE)

Provide Personalized and Culturally Sustaining Student Supports in Navigating Future-Ready Pathway Options

Less than half of students say their school helped them figure out which careers match their skills and interests (Learning from Student Voice, 2017). States should create opportunities for districts and schools to provide stronger career exploration and advising. States can link education advising and career navigational systems that fit each learner through the PCAP process.

These integrated systems should make sure students take the necessary courses to pursue their dream careers, whether through credentialing, two-year, or four-year programs. As such, they should connect students to experiential learning opportunities that allow students to apply their learning, build relationships, and enhance career readiness skills.

States could provide guidance to districts on best practices to communicate future pathways to families and caregivers, including the social and emotional skills required for these careers. Effective communication between educators and caregivers about students' futures is important because parents' expectations and values affect students' career aspirations and occupational futures (Jungen, 2008).

PCAPs can also be helpful in communicating and developing future pathways. Wisconsin uses a software platform as a tool for career awareness, exploration, and planning by students through the state's PCAP process.

Recommended Resources

Guidance	Kansas' Individual Plan of Study Digital Reference
Website	Wisconsin's Academic and Career Planning

Ensure Every Student Has Opportunities to Engage Social and Emotional Skills in CWD

Research has identified effective student-centered instruction approaches, such as project-based and experiential learning, that support student interests and conceptual understanding and boost engagement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Experiential learning experiences such as work-based and service-learning can develop various social and emotional skills (Honig & Hopp, 2018; Allen et al., 2019). Recent surveys also suggest that service-learning and SEL are mutually reinforcing, with service-learning building students' social and emotional skills, and SEL boosting a civic mindset in students (Atwell et al., 2021).

To promote these experiences, states should provide high-quality standards, curricula, and structures. This includes curricula that intentionally integrate SEL into CDW courses and activities. Graduation requirements should also recognize work-based learning, service-learning, internships, and competency-based assessments as valuable sources of learning, particularly SEL. Future policy scans should assess the extent to which state plans and credentials work to support the explicit integration of SEL with CWD.

For example, in Kansas' work-based learning pilot, Kansas Can, students enhance their skills through exposure to social and emotional skills in a variety of work-based preparation experiences. These experiences include business and industry partner presentations in the classroom, field trips, career fairs, technical/community college and university tours, mentoring with business and industry partners via Pathway courses, job shadows, internships, on-the-job training, apprenticeships, skill training in CWD classrooms, and employability skills training. All these experiences emphasize social factors to maximize their impact. States could incentivize these types of redesigns of junior and senior curricula to provide relevant postsecondary and career-preparation experiences.

Delaware's Department of Education and Department of Labor partnered with community organizations and higher education to develop Delaware Pathways. This program for high school students combines CWD classroom learning with connections to employers. Students can select from a range of career clusters and explore resources to map their education and career goals, gain experience through work-based learning, and explore postsecondary and financing options. The Delaware Office of Work-Based Learning also helps students prepare for interviews, access job shadowing, and connect with local employers. Delaware Student Success provides information to students and families about the often-complicated postsecondary process. Lastly, Pathway Languages allows students to gain work experience in a variety of languages, including American Sign Language.

Recommended Resources

Report	Taking Deeper Learning to Scale (LPI)
Brief	State Strategies for Scaling Work-Based Learning (National Governors Association)
Tool	Framework for a High-Quality Pre-Apprenticeship Program (Jobs for the Future)
Report	Wisconsin's Guide to Social and Emotional Learning and Workforce Readiness: A Powerful Combination

Use Out-of-School Programs for Additional Opportunities for SEL and CWD

Out-of-school-time programs, including after-school and summer learning programs, are excellent places to support SEL and CWD integration. Research shows high-quality expanded learning programs have positive benefits to educational outcomes, build good attendance habits, narrow achievement gaps, and boost SEL (Auger et al., 2013; McCombs et al., 2017; Chang & Jordan, 2012; Durlak & Weissberg, 2012).

States can support policies that increase expanded learning time, especially to build positive relationships and promote holistic student learning, including CWD and SEL. Policies could focus on providing tutoring outside of school and promoting high-quality summer learning programs that connect youth with positive-adult relationships through community organizations or local businesses, including through work-based learning or internships. In addition, states could explore ways to promote summer jobs. For example, Wisconsin's Academic and Career Planning community of practice supports SEL integration through out-of-school programming. Examples are available on the state's website. The state community of practice also produced outcomes on integration policy found in reports on practice outcomes.

The Urban Alliance's High School Internship Program helps more than 3,000 at-risk high school seniors each year in Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, and Washington, D.C. gain professional experience. During senior year, the interns are paid to work part-time throughout the school year and full-time over the summer. Students are paired with a program coordinator and a mentor in their workplace who are dedicated to their academic and professional growth.

Recommended Resources

Website	Supporting Student Success through After-School Programs (NCSL)
Example	Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time Initiative
Brief	The Science of Learning and Development in After-School Systems and Settings (AIR)

PROVIDE FLEXIBLE FUTURE-READY PATHWAYS THAT ARE GROUNDED IN SEL

To be prepared for the rapidly changing future, students will need to graduate high school ready for college or with high-quality credentials. Youth development is nonlinear and highly responsive to context. (See Appendix B on Science of Learning and Development [SoLD] findings.) As such, youth need multiple on-ramps and off-ramps for their chosen pathway. This requires pathways with stackable credentials (e.g., credentials earned over time to help students move along a desired career path or ladder) that serve as a strong foundation and are valued by industry and higher education.

States must take a variety of approaches to support pathways to future readiness. These pathways should allow for youth to change their mind as they grow and get more exposure to the world of work.

Explicitly Embed SEL in Career and Workforce Pathways

Evidence shows that there are more pathways to future success than just four-year college degrees. Momentum is growing to provide students career pathways, with 19 states offering pathways that often culminate in a credential (Ready for What?, 2021).

Pathways should include core college preparatory academics with an emphasis on real-world application through experiential learning. It is essential, however, that SEL is explicitly integrated into these growing career pathways and CWD. There are already programs that integrate high-quality CWD and College and Career Readiness approaches with SEL, including Linked Learning and the Possible Zone.

One state example is Wisconsin's Regional Career Pathways, a statewide effort to deliver high-quality career pathways in high schools. These pathways reflect the needs and goals of specific regions across the state. They identify and develop pathways for high-demand, high-skill industries and jobs by using labor market data and working with a collaborative of employers, educators, and economic and workforce development experts. The state works with state and regional employers and employer associations to develop regional career pathway industry sector maps that identify the entry-level academic, technical, employability, and SEL skill sets students need to enter each career pathway.

Ohio developed and piloted a diploma endorsement for career readiness called the Ohio Means Jobs-Readiness Seal. Graduates who receive this endorsement demonstrate proficiency in 14 competencies—including social and emotional skills like communication, critical thinking and problem-solving, and work ethic—as affirmed by three of their professional mentors in school, work, and/or the community.

05

Recommended Resources

Example	The Possible Zone
Example	Linked Learning

Ensure All Learning Is Valued and Counted

More states are providing students with high-quality pathways through workplace experiences and project-based learning blended with rigorous academics. However, state policies lag and often fail to value all learning by awarding credits only for traditional coursework. This makes it difficult for students to participate in career pathways and stay on track to graduation.

Flexible policies can allow students to earn credits in ways beyond seat time, including competency-based or performance-based assessments and portfolios. A recent scan found that 40 states are already allowing students to earn high school credits flexibly. In most of these states, students can earn credit through taking exams, completing performance-based assessments, participating in nontraditional learning experiences like work-based learning, or submitting a work portfolio (Preparing high school students for careers, 2021).

States should also allow flexibility in how courses are counted toward credit hour requirements. In Kansas, students are able to earn full or partial academic credit by demonstrating they have met academic and CWD requirements through proficiency ("Guidance for Awarding Proficiency Credit").

States could also promote innovative learning structures that support SEL through CWD and experiential learning. This can include competency-based course sequencing and learning progressions based on individual progress rather than age or grade level. Competency-based assessments can help remove silos between academic and CTE instruction by integrating education and training programs that help develop knowledge and skills in diverse learning settings. Kansas' Personalized Learning Plans process incorporates the creation of a portfolio that highlights multiple modalities of learning, including work-based learning, with an accompanying rubric for employability skills development.

It is important that all students have this opportunity, not only students in certain schools or pathways. Deep inequities persist for Black, Latinx, and low-income students' access to rigorous courses, such as Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) classes (Office for Civil Rights, 2018), as well as access to CWD. Every student must have equal access, but students must also feel welcome in these alternative pathways.

Recommended Resources

Report	Recognizing Academic Achievement in Career/Technical Education (Southern Regional Education Board)
Example	Kansas Guidance for Awarding Proficiency Credit

Ensure Pathways Are Flexible, Responsive, and Valued

Thirteen states require students to choose between a college-preparatory pathway and a career pathway (Preparing high school students for careers, 2021). States must avoid tracking students into pathways based on stereotypes or beliefs about their academic potential that stem from ill-suited assessment measures or implicit bias. To do this, states can prevent grouping students solely on achievement levels and provide guidance on more inclusive approaches. Analyzing disaggregated data can also support equity.

States with multiple diploma options or endorsements should require that all districts and schools offer every possibility, including advanced coursework that is most predictive of postsecondary success, such as high-level coursework in math and science (Balfanz et al., 2016; Balfanz & Byrnes, 2019).

Recommended Resources

Report	Integrating Classrooms and Reducing Academic Tracking (The Century Foundation)

Ensure That Higher Education and Employers Value and Recognize High School Career Pathways

Currently, only 19 percent of credentials earned by K-12 students are in demand by employers (Credentials Matter, 2019). To help ensure credentials are valued and industry-recognized, states can complete an audit of CWD programs for quality, alignment, and equity. The audit should identify strategies to ensure program offerings lead to in-demand careers and create a process to identify and approve valued credentials across the state.

Once identified, states can establish definitions for industry-recognized credentials and communicate them to districts, students, and families or caregivers. To ensure continuous improvement, states can enter into data-sharing agreements to understand attainment rates, equity gaps, and outcomes for students.

The Ohio Department of Education formed the Quality Program Standards (QPS) Steering Committee, which created 10 program standards for the state's career-technical education programs. Among these standards are evaluations for program improvement and alignment with the job market. The committee suggests a review of each CTE program annually by school administration, an advisory committee, and instructors to ensure quality.

Similarly, in 2020, the Kansas Department of Education published Creating a Quality Pathway Rubric II, a self-assessment for CTE programs on their partnerships with the community and workplace, professional development to keep highly qualified teachers, instructional strategies, and the physical learning environment. The areas of improvement identified based on the rubric will form an improvement plan for the assessed CTE program.

Recommended Resources

Guidance	Ohio's Quality Program Standards for Career-Technical Education Programs

CONCLUSION



The future demands a great deal from students. Adults across the education and youth-serving continuum—policymakers, educators, business leaders, and community leaders—bear a huge responsibility to prepare them for that future. We must provide an education that develops their academic and cognitive abilities, nourishes their social and emotional skills, and gives opportunities to apply these skills in real-world situations and find future pathways that ignite their passions. Following the roadmap in this report, states can fulfill this need by integrating SEL with CWD throughout PreK-12 education.

Policymakers across youth-serving institutions should collaborate to develop a shared vision that aligns definitions, goals, and standards under a holistic image of student success that fosters efficient use of resources. They should:

- Build adult capacity in and out of school through professional development and technical assistance so students have a vast network of caring, knowledgeable adults who can help youth along their career journeys.
- Create guidance that enables inclusive, supportive learning environments that combat systemic barriers for historically disadvantaged youth.
- Scale and emphasize the PCAP process to ensure students can customize their educational journey through experiential learning opportunities that develop their strengths and ignite their passions.
- Ensure this work builds flexible, future-ready pathways that build students' academic, social, and emotional skills and provide access and non-duplicative education and training to advance to further employment and economic opportunity.

As this work moves forward, states must develop ways to measure its impact, especially in advancing equity in education and beyond. This means measuring future readiness in high school accurately, with metrics and indicators that allow educators to understand if students are on track, not only for high school graduation, but success in postsecondary and into their adult lives.

Thanks to recent efforts like Perkins V, additional data on student outcomes will continue to emerge. These future efforts will require parsing the available data, identifying gaps in collection and collective understanding, and evaluating the work being done across the nation. Future work should also seek to understand the role higher education institutions must play in advancing the policy framework laid out here, as well as the developmental framework set out by CASEL.

The future depends on the success of young people around the world. Now is the time to join together and provide students the tools they need to set their own path to future success for themselves and their communities.

APPENDIX A
NATIONAL EFFORTS TO EXPAND CAREER AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The U.S. educational system has primarily focused on attainment of degrees from four-year universities or colleges; however, a more intentional focus on diverse strategies to prepare youth to be future-ready has increased in recent years (De Pleijt & Weisdorf, 2017). This is clear from the following efforts from federal and state governments, nonprofits, and for-profit organizations:

- **Through the reauthorization of Carl D. Perkins Act, workforce preparation efforts in K-12, post-secondary schools, and vocational training build on an employer-informed body of knowledge and technological skills** shaped by labor market needs and emerging career pathways. Career pathways integrate programs and services intended to develop students' readiness for the workplace and are aligned with a given state's high-demand, high-opportunity jobs.
- **Jobs for the Future is working within 12 states as part of its Pathways to Prosperity network** to develop public policy and share best practices. The Pathways to Prosperity approach is guided by five key implementation levers: Grades 9 to 14 College and Career Pathways, Career Information and Advising Systems, Intermediaries, Effective Leadership and Enabling Policies, and Employer Engagement.
- **The New Skills for Youth (NSFY) initiative by JPMorgan Chase and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSO) worked with select states (through 2019) to expand their career readiness systems**, in which states conducted comprehensive needs assessments and developed action plans to examine their career readiness systems and expand opportunities available to learners.
- **Through the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices Policy Academy on Scaling Work-Based Learning, the NGA worked with 19 states and territories** over four years to scale high-quality work-based learning opportunities for youth and young adults.

These efforts continue the long-term work of the CWD fields that have developed foundational approaches, including service learning and work-based learning as well as career pathways. CWD programs have long recognized the need to support the development of problem-solving skills, creative abilities, and collaboration through career preparation programs and instruction—all social and emotional skills.

Successful career arcs require a mastery of transferable skills with the ability to adapt (Hoffman & Schwartz, 2019). Despite obvious alignment, however, the SEL field has not explicitly connected SEL to CWD efforts (Yoder et al., 2020), though the opportunity for explicit integration is clear. A strong body of evidence demonstrates that youth excel in career development and pathway progressions when career and technical education courses emphasize social and emotional skills in addition to technical skills. Evidence is also strong that SEL is a catalyst for everything states, districts, and schools already measure, including achievement, graduation rates, post-secondary attainment, attachment to the workforce, and contributions in civic life.

CWD includes multiple evidence-based practices that align with SEL and are intended to help youth become aware of and explore careers (e.g., service-learning, job shadowing and mentorship, and national service opportunities) and to prepare for and train for careers (e.g., paid summer employment, apprenticeships, internships, individual learning programs (Reyna & Norton, 2020).

APPENDIX B
SoLD FRAMEWORK

The Science of Learning and Development Alliance is a partnership between leaders and organizations who want to change education systems and help young people succeed through lessons from the science of learning and development. The SoLD Alliance was founded in 2016 and consists of experts in neuroscience, epigenetics, learning science, SEL, early childhood development, the science of adversity, and human development.

The science of learning and development is continuously growing, and therefore so are the knowledge and resources from the SoLD Alliance. To date, their key findings are:

- **Potential.** Children have billions of neural pathways that allow them to master new skills and topics. They can reach their potential if their interests and abilities are matched with opportunity and support.
- **Malleability.** In early childhood and adolescence, the brain is highly malleably and will continue to allow people to learn throughout life. Given this, the possibilities for child learning and development when paired with well-designed approaches are very optimistic (Cantor et al., 2018).
- **Individuality.** Student potential is best unlocked when their individuality is recognized because all children do not learn in the same way and bring different experiences to the table. When recognized, this individuality allows better growth and learning.
- **Context.** Children do not learn in a vacuum: their experiences, environments, and cultures create the context in which they live. Understanding this context, both its negative and positive aspects, will have positive impacts on brain development.
- **Relationships.** Because people are social beings, strong and trusting relationships are a key to a young person's learning, and they can even help negate adverse or traumatic experiences (Osher et al., 2018).
- **Integration.** A developing brain learns best when "affective, cognitive, social, physical, and emotional development are intentionally integrated within and across learning environments" (SoLD Alliance, 2022). Eventually, the brain will learn sophisticated tasks, helping the child live up to their full potential.
- **Continuum.** Development is continuous, not linear. Progress and challenges should not be standardized but based on the learner.
- **Meaning making.** Learners solidify new information best when they can connect it with their past experiences and knowledge. This allows them to "develop greater motivation and agency and form a stronger foundation for future learning" (Cantor et al., 2020).

The SoLD Alliance recognizes that the current education system prevents these findings from being implemented due to standardization, structural racism, and implicit bias. To address this, the SoLD Alliance recommends a variety of K-12 strategies for system change that better implement the science of learning and development to increase student potential and equity.

- The first of these strategies is a **Positive School Climate** that allows students to form trusting relationships, feel safe, and belong. Components of this practices are (1) structures for effective caring, (2) identity-safe classroom learning communities, and (3) trust and connections among staff and families.
- Second is **Productive Instructional Strategies** that focus on (1) student-centered instruction, (2) conceptual understanding and motivation, and (3) learning-to-learn strategies.

- The third practice implication is **Social and Emotional Development** to promote self-regulation, interpersonal skills, and resilience. This happens through (1) integration of social and emotional skills, (2) development of positive mindsets, and (3) educative and restorative behavioral supports.
- Lastly is a **System of Supports** that meets student needs and addresses learning barriers through (1) extended learning opportunities, (2) coordinated access to integrated services, and (3) multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS). Implemented together, these four strategies help support the well-being of the whole child (Design Principles for Schools, 2021).

The roadmap presented above takes into account the early findings from the science of learning and development. By expanding the pool of occupational identities for all youth, it recognizes that every young person has the potential to learn and thrive.

Providing flexible pathways with multiple on-ramps and off-ramps supports the malleability of youth and their nonlinear development. These flexible pathways allow youth to explore their individuality through a personalized, supported progression to future success.

Cultivating safe and supportive learning environments depends on fostering a positive developmental context full of strong, trusting relationships with caring, culturally affirming adults. In this environment, adults can foster a multitude of transformative learning experiences over a continuum in which they scaffold skills and competencies for students. Finally, by providing opportunities to transformative learning that are tied to a student's development and interests and are culturally relevant, adults can support students in *meaning making* in this environment.



APPENDIX C
BENEFITS OF CAREER AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

CWD programs have become more widely available and accepted in recent years. In fact, one study shares that students have access to them in more than 90 percent of public high schools.

Yet, participation in these kinds of programs—approximately one in five students—leaves students and employers alike advocating for a stronger focus on professional skills in education (Dougherty, 2018). The Coalition for Career Development Center reports that more than 90 percent of CEOs report skills shortage as a problem, and 61 percent of college grads "want classes designed to help build career skills."

A Brookings Institution report compiled the positive effect a variety of CWD programs have on high school graduation, postsecondary enrollment, and lifetime earnings. This includes:

- Cooperative education (co-ops), which have evidence of higher post–high school employment rates, higher earnings, and more ambitious postsecondary plans
- Career academies, which have evidence of a reduction in dropout rates, improved attendance and graduation rates, and increased long-term earnings
- Linked Learning, which has evidence of increased graduation rates and reductions in achievement gaps
- P-TECH, which evidence indicates leads to higher standardized test scores and more career and technical education credits
- Registered apprenticeships (RAs), which have evidence of increased employment rates and short-term and lifetime earnings (Ross et al., 2020)

Academic Benefits

The educational impacts of CWD are strong. CTE has a positive impact on test scores, graduation rates, dropout rates, college enrollment, and earning a postsecondary degree (Issue Brief, 2017). Students who entered high school at the typical age and took career and technical education courses combined with regular curricula were less likely to drop out of high school (Plank et al., 2005). Early longitudinal study results also indicate that CTE has a positive impact on students' "test scores, academic grade point averages, and progress to graduation" after two years (Castellano et al., 2012).

A more recent case study was based on Massachusetts because CTE instruction is widely accepted there. In that state, it is integrated into students' regular school days at comprehensive high schools or alternates weekly at 32 regional vocational and technical schools (RVTSs). The study found that CTE can boost graduation rates, exam scores, and certificate completion. These programs were found to increase the likelihood of graduation for high-income students by up to 10 percent, and the impact is even larger for low-income students. Importantly, RVTSs in Massachusetts do not have differing diploma requirements from other types of schools, so students are receiving a strong academic knowledge in addition to career and technical skills (Dougherty, 2018).

Financial and Career Benefits

In a longitudinal study of career academies, students who participated in the programs earned about 11 percent more monthly after high school graduation. The monetary gains were larger for students who fully participated in career academies throughout high school, versus those who partially participated (Kemple, 2008). A 2017 study showed that participation in high-level CTE technical courses lead to a nearly 2 percent wage increase for each year in that coursework (Kreisman & Strange, 2017).

One report found that work-based learning in high school was associated with higher-quality jobs for low-income and young people of color. This report also showed that high school work experience leads to higher-paying jobs later in life (Ross et al., 2018). Other studies also report important wage benefits for early workforce experience. Working a 20-hour-per-week job in high school is correlated with 20% higher wages.



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