

Workforce Pathways Guiding Policy Principles

(<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/ct/gi/guidingpps.asp>)

The Workforce Pathways Joint Advisory Committee plans to address workforce pathways to address California's regional economies.

Guiding Policy Principles to Support K-14+ Pathways

Preamble

Several common themes have emerged from the work of the California Workforce Pathways Joint Advisory Committee (WPJAC) since it reconvened in 2017. The goal of the WPJAC is to build connected, equitable, accessible, and high-quality K-14+ college and career pathways by: 1) signaling the infrastructure needs, 2) promoting regional and local educational agency efforts for alignment, and 3) reinforcing student supports during critical transitions leading into high school, community college, and beyond.

The Guiding Principles to Support K-14+ Pathways highlight salient points raised to the WPJAC members since 2017, build upon existing practices across systems, and focus on key pressure points for supporting cross-system collaboration. They are intentionally designed to be inter-related because individually they are narrow in scope, so it's important to view them as a complementary whole. The Committee embraces the principle of continuous improvement, as it applies to its own work, thereby acknowledging that the Guiding Policy Principles, Essential Elements, Working Norms, and Glossary of Terms are dynamic and will continue to evolve and adjust over time, as necessary.

Guiding Policy Principles

A priority is to pivot towards purposeful integration of the student experience across systems and into college and career while addressing industry needs by incorporating the following guiding policy principles to:

1. Focus on a **Student-Centered Delivery of Services** for all K-14+ college and career pathways, which accommodates multiple entry points to facilitate students' needs to build their skills as they progress along a continuum of education and training, or advance in a sector-specific occupation or industry.
2. Promote **Equity and Access** by eliminating institutional barriers and achievement gaps for all students to realize their educational and career aspirations.
3. Achieve **System Alignment** in the economic regions of the state in order to create a comprehensive and well-defined system of articulation of high quality K-14+ pathway courses (i.e., both in-person and online) and work-based learning opportunities with a specific emphasis on career technical education. Bring greater coherence to programming, common use of terminology, appropriate data collection and sharing, and attainment of student outcomes in a timely way that lead to upward mobility in California's industry sectors.
4. Support the **Continuous Improvement and Capacity Building** at all levels and components to ensure smooth transitions in the system and focus efforts on implementation of state standards, attainment of student outcomes, and a strengthening of California's regional economies.
5. Ensure that **State Priorities and Direction Lead the State Plan** with opportunities in Perkins leveraged to assist in accomplishing the state goals and objectives, also known as "the California Way."

Essential Elements of a High-Quality College and Career Pathway

To realize the guiding policy principles outlined above, California recognizes the importance of the following essential elements of a high-quality college and career pathway:

1. **Student-Centered Delivery of Services** for all K-14+ college and career pathways incorporates the removal of institutional or systemic barriers that impede the progress of students in achieving their education and career goals. This includes a renewed commitment to offer an engaging learning experience and support the diversity of individual student needs while accommodating their multiple entry points as they progress along a continuum of education and training, or advance in a sector-specific occupation or industry.
2. **Equity** goes beyond the reduction of institutional barriers to create an environment of being fair, impartial and free from bias or favoritism, promote educational and employment attainment, and to eliminate the achievement gap for all students including, but not limited to, English language learners and students with disabilities in the K-14+ college and career pathway system.

3. **Access** denotes a broader vision of equity ensuring that all students are provided ample opportunities to attain the necessary skills, education and training required to maximize their individual goals including a collective awareness of all the supports that are available to students both inside and out of class. **Access** also facilitates the elimination of the achievement gap by providing information on how to access programs, services, and rigorous course work for all California students regardless of region, gender, socio-economic status, special needs, and/or English proficiency.
4. **Leadership at All Levels** is required to achieve greater integration across systems and programs to ensure that the contexts for an engaging learning experience can occur and programs connect, so all students succeed with their desired outcomes including employment, and employers have the workforce needed to thrive.
5. **High-Quality, Integrated Curriculum and Instruction** informed by labor market information, student interest, technology, industry standards, and real-world engagement through relevant work-based learning opportunities is essential to prepare students. Rigorous and aligned programs should be supported to guide students through relevant course sequences (i.e., both in-person and online) and work-based learning opportunities leading to a mastery of standards, high school graduation, and transition to postsecondary education, training, apprenticeship, and/or employment, as appropriate. Courses and programs may be designed to use cross-system strategies like dual enrollment and/or dual credit with community colleges and universities or other articulations to create a seamless student experience, and avoid unnecessary repeating of courses or other inefficient practices to facilitate “on-time” postsecondary graduation, where appropriate. Stackable badging and credentials can ensure frequency of assessment and a value-added outcome.
6. **Skilled Instruction and Educational Leadership, informed by Professional Learning**, is the cornerstone of the public education system in California. The educational experience is only as strong as the capacity and investment made in faculty, educational leaders, and the other key field talent to provide in-class, online, or work-based learning opportunities as well as developing an awareness of student support services. California encourages the culture of innovation and entrepreneurialism in program instruction and design.
7. The strong presence of **Career Exploration and Student Supports** is an essential component for establishing a learning plan for all K-14+ students. This includes identifying appropriate foundational courses (i.e., using competency-based learning) and information about jobs, determining student progression in a single pathway or along multiple pathways or sequences of learning, or making available in-class and online course offerings and work-based learning opportunities. To complement their learning plan, students should also have access to comprehensive counseling, individualized supports along their journey (including, but not limited to, for students who are part-time, face barriers to learning, need academic or cultural supports, transportation, child care, or financial aid), or opportunities through student leadership development organizations to achieve their individual goals and aspirations, through a variety of transitions, in an ever-changing workforce.
8. **Appropriate Use of Data and Continuous Improvement** should continue to drive Career Technical Education through relevant accountability that is outcomes-based, is supported both vertically and horizontally across systems, and ensures equity and access for all students. Focusing on students’ and employers’ needs will allow for identification of capacity building, refinement of programs, and elimination of inefficiencies to meet the existing and emerging needs of regional economies. Through intentional sharing of specific data elements that are actionable across systems will help to showcase student attainment, including mastery of standards, and be informed by industry needs to achieve relevant system outcomes. Responsible data use is to inform practice and improve programs, not to track students.
9. Opportunities for strategic and intentional **Cross-System Alignment** should be informed by the ongoing analysis of student data, and alignment of data definitions across systems to provide, for example, deliberate sector-based programs, deployment of technical field assistance using a regional distribution, or evidence-based practices and processes to optimize pathway success and upward mobility opportunities for all participants.
10. **Intentional Recruitment and Marketing (Promotion, Outreach, and Communication)** should reflect an understanding of students’ and employers’ needs, be consistent in its messaging to stakeholders across all segments, and use tools and reports as a platform to display the added value of high quality K-14+ college and career pathway programs.
11. **Sustained Investments and Funding through Mutual Agreements** must be present to encourage regional alliances along with industry sector strategies, especially with a focus on current and/or emerging high-skill, high-wage, and/or high-demand occupations. This includes but is not limited to K–12 Education, Adult Education, Higher Education, Labor, Economic Development Councils, Chambers of Commerce, Workforce Development Boards, career advisory boards, and regional industry alliances aligned by sector that lead to an industry-recognized credential or certificate, postsecondary training, apprenticeship, and/or employment.

Working Norms for Fostering a Mutually-Beneficial Intersegmental Relationship

These working norms are designed help guide state, regional and local entities in building high-quality K-14+ college and career pathways. This collaborative work necessitates:

1. **Frequent, Open, and Intentional Communication** between Educational Agencies, Workforce Agencies, and Employers.
2. A **Mindset Shift** from insular to **Coordination of Planning** and from independent to **Interdependent Implementation of Systems** to make better use of and maximize scarce public funds.
3. A continual scan for opportunities to **Leverage, Build Upon, and/or Replicate Effective Models and Practices** in order to benefit from the scale of the state.
4. An understanding of the existing eco-system as a basis to **Build a New Culture for our Institutions** and **Incentivize Behaviors and Relationships**.
5. **Ongoing Alliances through Sustained Funding** and **Mutual Agreements** in order to “stay the course” despite governance changes.
6. A **Commitment** to the work to create **Stability and Sustainability** of the K-14+ college and career pathway system.

Glossary

Access – The institutions’ responsiveness to individual students’ unique social, economic, and cultural conditions to ensure all students have equal opportunities to take full advantage of their education, including a collective awareness of all the supports both inside and out of class that are available to them.

All Students – The state of California recognizes its deep responsibility to ensure that each and every student receives a world class 21st century education, one that supports the achievement of their highest potential. In order to accomplish this goal, it is important to continuously strive for equity in all classrooms, schools and districts by considering students’ cultural, ethnic, and linguistic background; disability; sexual orientation; economic status; and other factors.

Attainment Gap – Some students have limited access to well-prepared teachers/faculty and other educational resources. Recognizing the specific inequities that exist helps educators and communities to purposefully and strategically take action to strive for true educational equity for all learners.

Equality – This is the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, and educational and training opportunities or proportionality to reflect the communities being served.

Equity – To systemically create an environment of being fair and impartial, and be free from bias or favoritism to promote educational and employment attainment among all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities.

Methods of Learning – Different modes of learning may include, but is not limited to, in-person or online instruction, apprenticeship, internship, and other work-based learning opportunities; however instruction is provided, it must adjust to distinct learning needs and cultural backgrounds of students in order to lead to a certificate, credential, or degree.

Socioeconomically Disadvantaged – For K-12, this includes students eligible for the free and reduced priced meal program, foster youth, homeless students, migrant students, and students for whom neither parent is a high school graduate. For community colleges, this definition also includes veterans, Pell and Promise Grant qualified, and/or first generation students.

Student-Centered – A restructuring of policies so that the provision of education and training programs, engaging learning experiences, instructional approaches, and academic support strategies at our institutions address the distinct learning needs, interests, and aspirations while also honoring cultural backgrounds of individual students or groups of students who may have a variety of needs (including homelessness or food insecurity; need academic, cultural, and/or linguistic supports; transportation; or child care or financial aid). For community colleges, the movement to implement Guided Pathways embodies a student-centered restructuring of the student experience.

System Alignment – Bringing greater coherence and efficiency to curriculum, programs, initiatives, and education and training system that includes K-12, community college, and the public workforce system and beyond, with a particular focus on workforce pathways that consider regional labor market needs.

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