



Paving the Pathway to College and Careers

Resource Compilation

Regional Educational Laboratory Appalachia at SRI International

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Paving the Pathway to College and Careers Resource Compilation Overview

Why is this compilation important?

While academic preparation is critical to students' successful transition to postsecondary education and training, it is not the only type of preparation students need. Many non-academic skills and resources can help students during the transition, including preparation for the expectations of postsecondary education and training programs, support with the logistics of the application process, and guidance regarding relevant social-emotional competencies. This resource compilation includes research and strategies related to these non-academic supports to help high school students successfully transition to postsecondary education or training programs.

Who is this compilation for?

This compilation is intended for a wide variety of audiences, including school counselors, school administrators, college access providers, case managers, and secondary teachers who support all students' postsecondary transitions. The materials in this compilation are based on a series of national webinars developed by the [REL Appalachia Improving Postsecondary Transitions partnership](#), with additional activities and resources as requested by partnership members from Virginia.

How can I use this compilation?

For personal learning: The compilation can be used as a source of personal learning. School counselors or others may review the slide decks and engage in personal reflection and action planning. The additional resources infographic will help extend practitioners' personal learning and direct educators to targeted resources to help support students' postsecondary transition.

For training and team learning: The compilation can be used as a training and learning tool for practitioners to use together. Optional activities included in the notes of the slide decks can extend the team's discussion and planning. The action planning templates will help members of the team to apply the content in their respective roles and to plan implementation of the strategies identified in the compilation.

What is included in this compilation?

- Four slide decks with talking points, facilitator notes, and references:
 - **The importance of supporting postsecondary transitions:** This deck introduces the series and the importance of focusing on non-academic components of postsecondary transitions.
 - **Laying the foundation for postsecondary success:** This deck includes strategies to expose students to the structures, norms, and expectations of college and to build their career goals.
 - **Supporting students with the nuts and bolts of postsecondary transitions:** This deck focuses on how to support students' process of postsecondary selection, application, and financial preparation.
 - **Building a postsecondary mindset:** This deck focuses on the social-emotional skills that prepare students for a successful postsecondary transition.
- Short summaries of research-based strategies related to each of the topics above.
- Student scenarios and associated questions to prompt reflection and discussion for groups reviewing the materials together.
- An action planning template to support practitioners in translating research-based strategies into practice.
- An infographic of additional resources, with relevant links to websites providing more information, online tools, and resources.
- A list of Virginia-specific resources related to postsecondary transitions.
- A list of references cited in the four slide decks described above.

Laying the Foundation: Strategies and Possible Applications

In this section, you will find the strategies highlighted in the “Laying the Foundation for Postsecondary Success” slide deck. Each table includes research-based strategies related to a particular topic from the deck, in addition to descriptions and suggested applications developed by REL Appalachia staff.

Table 1. Build students’ understanding of the norms and expectations in the college environment

| Strategy | Description | Possible applications |
|--|---|---|
| Invite college representatives to visit your school(s) | Bring college representatives to your school campus. | <p>Host monthly visits from representatives of different colleges.</p> <p>Provide students access to computers/Internet to attend webinars for prospective students.</p> <p>Request that college representatives discuss the norms and expectations of college.</p> |
| Organizing visits to the institutions (or virtual visits) | Take students to visit postsecondary institutions. | <p>Conduct an online virtual visit scavenger hunt, where you ask students to find specific information related to navigating college, such as availability of campus mental health and tutoring services.</p> <p>Schedule visits to different types of institutions, such as a community college, four-year commuter college, and a residential college. Ask students to discuss how norms and expectations might be different or the same.</p> |
| Invite alumni who are enrolled in postsecondary schools to speak to students | Bring alumni from students’ high schools to discuss their postsecondary experience. | <p>Keep a list of alumni and their postsecondary plans.</p> <p>Ask alumni to discuss how expectations for attendance, homework, and class participation may differ from high school.</p> |

| Strategy | Description | Possible applications |
|---|---|--|
| Share what students can expect from campus visits/ speakers | Prepare students for campus visits/speakers by sharing what they might expect on a visit or from a speaker. | <p>Walk through the itinerary of a visit with students.</p> <p>Share pictures of the campus before the visit.</p> <p>Provide background information to students on the speaker’s profession and educational background.</p> |
| Brainstorm questions for campus visits/ speakers | Help students gain insights from a campus visit to guide their understanding of postsecondary norms; work with students to brainstorm questions prior to attending a visit or hearing from a speaker. | <p>Prepare students with questions to ask postsecondary staff and speakers that can help students understand what to expect in postsecondary education, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you need help with a class, how do you get it? • What’s one thing you wish you knew in high school about attending college? |
| Set learning goals for campus visits/ speakers in advance | Determine learning goals to set the purpose for a visit or speaker. | <p>Set learning goals appropriate for the age-level and needs of the students.</p> <p>Request campus visit activities aligned with learning goals. For example, if a goal is for students to understand social life on campus, ask to visit the student activities office when setting up the visit.</p> |
| Give assignments prior to campus visits/speakers | Provide students with assignments to guide their learning. | <p>Provide students a visit scavenger hunt that ask students to find specific information about a college, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name two places to find academic help • Ask at least two students why they chose to attend the school |
| Share expectations with colleges/ speakers | When scheduling a visit or speaker, share your own goals for the experience. Explain what information you’d like college representatives/ speakers to share with students or the activities you’d like them to conduct with students. | <p>Request student visit guides who are first-generation college students, if your students fall into that category.</p> <p>Share that your goal is to help students understand how college and high school expectations differ.</p> |

Table 2. Expose students to careers and postsecondary majors

| Strategy | Description | Possible applications |
|---|---|---|
| Conduct career inventories | Administer questionnaires that map students' personality and interests onto careers. | <p>Use a career inventory to help students specify their career interests.</p> <p>Connect career interests to postsecondary training and college majors for students.</p> <p>Integrate career inventory activities during advisory or homeroom.</p> |
| Use college visits to introduce students to college majors | Incorporate exposure to different college majors as part of college visits. | Based on students' career and major interests, request visits to specific departments that include a description of the course requirements, discussion with students and professors, and career pathways of graduates from that major. |
| Leverage school counselors | Use school counseling resources, if available, to connect students' learning to majors and careers. | <p>Develop individualized student learning plans tied to career goals.</p> <p>Map out high school course sequences aligned with students' career goals.</p> |
| Bring students to career fairs and job talks | Host or bring students to career fairs or job talks. | <p>Identify careers with strong labor markets and wages in your area and hold a local career fair.</p> <p>Host a <i>lunch and learn</i> for students with a particular career interest and invite someone in the field to speak to them.</p> |
| Integrate exposure to careers and majors into classwork | Expose students to careers and majors by integrating them into academic and other coursework. | <p>Have students work on application essays as part of English class..</p> <p>Identify texts or develop project-based assignments that will allow students to explore different career pathways.</p> |
| Guide students to career pathway programs | Leverage career pathway programs or career and technical education (CTE) courses to expose students to potential careers. | Help students select appropriate career pathway programs or CTE courses that can help them explore their career interests. |
| Facilitate job experiences through internships, service learning, and apprenticeships | Connect students to job experiences, such as internships, service learning, and apprenticeships to give them exposure through hands-on experiences. | <p>Identify local youth employment organizations that have opportunities.</p> <p>Provide support for students in filling out applications and obtaining permissions for experiences.</p> |

| Strategy | Description | Possible applications |
|---|--|---|
| Offer career-focused dual enrollment | Encourage students to take dual enrollment courses and receive credit for both high school and college. | Share with students available dual enrollment courses that are career-focused and aligned with their interests. Support students in obtaining fee waivers and application processes as needed. |
| Support work-based learning opportunities | Support development of students' career goals and/or interests with work-based learning experiences, which are ideally integrated with instruction. They can range in level of intensity from guest speakers to internships. | Develop a job-shadowing program with a local company/organization. |

Table 3. Grow family expectations

| Strategy | Description | Possible applications |
|--|---|--|
| Encourage families to volunteer in school or at events | Invite parents to back-to-school nights or ask them to volunteer at events. | Incorporate messages and information about postsecondary options and processes at events. Invite colleges to attend school events where parents will be in attendance. |
| Encourage families to chaperone college visits | Invite parents to chaperone college visits to familiarize parents who may be unfamiliar with college. | Host a virtual or in-person event to prepare chaperones for the visit. Provide a stipend to parents who chaperone college visits to offset lost wages or the costs of childcare. |
| Plan parent-teacher conferences | Plan parent-teacher conferences as opportunities for teachers and parents to discuss postsecondary plans. | At parent-teacher conferences, discuss the link between academics and college and careers. |
| Organize a college application kick-off event | Include parents in postsecondary planning events such as a college application kick-off. | Consider times that work best for families and hold multiple events. Provide information and resources about application fee costs and waivers. Encourage parents and students to work together on activities. |
| Create a family space in your school | Create an inviting space for families to visit. | Provide information about postsecondary options and pathways in the family space. Offer materials in multiple languages. |
| Make events feasible for parents by offering food and child care | Plan for the needs of your families by offering food and child care at events. | If holding an event at dinner time, consider providing food, and if necessary, seek donations from local restaurants. Identify a staff person to support childcare at events. |

Nuts and Bolts: Strategies and Possible Applications

In this section, you will find the strategies highlighted in the “Supporting Students with the Nuts and Bolts of Postsecondary Transitions” slide deck. Each table includes research-based strategies related to a particular topic from the deck, in addition to descriptions and suggested applications developed by REL Appalachia staff.

Table 4. Application process

| Strategy | Description | Possible applications |
|--|---|---|
| Support students with application essays | Work with students one-on-one or in small groups to strengthen their essays. | Review drafts and give feedback. Share examples of high-quality essays so students know what they might look like. |
| Support letters of recommendation requests | Explain the purpose and need for letters of recommendation and help students in requesting them. | Create sample letters of recommendation for recommenders that represent a broad array of students and their strengths. Create templates for students to use when requesting letters. Help students think of which recommenders will be able to best represent them. |
| Assign staff to ensure student applications are complete and of sufficient quality | To support all students submitting applications, recruit other staff (e.g., English teachers, assistant principals, etc.) to help review applications for completeness. | Create a general checklist for supporting staff to use when reviewing applications. For postsecondary institutions where students commonly apply, create a school-specific ‘cheat sheet’ so supporting staff will know what to look for in a review. |
| Integrate application steps into course requirements | Work with teachers to use some of their class time to allow students to work on universal components of applications. | Use English classes to write essays or encourage English teachers to assign personal essays that students could use for applications. Use advisory or homeroom class to set a timeline for completing applications. |

| Strategy | Description | Possible applications |
|--|--|---|
| Encourage students to apply to a range of programs: safety, match, reach | Help students select safety schools that they will almost certainly get into, ones that match their qualifications, and ones they might wish to attend but would be considered a reach given their qualifications. | Help students categorize schools of interest as safety/match/reach to ensure students are applying to a range of programs. |
| Help students create an email account for the application process | If needed, help students create an email address to use specifically for college applications. | <p>Hold a demonstration of popular free email hosts.</p> <p>Have students setup an email address during advisory or homeroom, or during another class period.</p> <p>Use their newly created email address to communicate with them and ask for responses to ensure they are able to use it well.</p> |
| Create clear timelines for the application process and communicate deadlines | Create documents with easy to follow steps and timelines that students and families can use to track progress. | <p>Post timelines in easily accessible locations online or around the school. Ensure the timelines are easy to read.</p> <p>Include key milestones, such as assessment dates and application submission deadlines, in addition to smaller steps in between, such as receiving letters of recommendation or drafting essays.</p> |
| Seek application fee waivers | Ensure students know that fee waivers are possible and know the process for applying for waivers. | <p>Include fee waiver information in all meetings and presentations.</p> <p>Add a note about fee waivers to all timelines or other documents you are creating and sharing.</p> <p>Consider sharing data about the number of students receiving waivers in past years to help families recognize that they are possible.</p> |
| Hold postsecondary application weeks | Set aside a week for students to focus on completing their applications. | <p>Have teachers in core classes highlight aspects of the application (e.g., English classes talk about essays).</p> <p>Set aside time in advisory, homeroom, or other classes for checking that each piece is complete.</p> <p>Include reminders about applications during daily morning announcements.</p> |

| Strategy | Description | Possible applications |
|--|---|--|
| Partner with college access and/or postsecondary institution | Reduce high school counselor workload by utilizing existing resources at nearby postsecondary institutions. | Reach out to postsecondary institutions where your students often apply to see if they have counselors or other staff who can work with students to explain the application process. |

Table 5. Assessment

| Strategy | Description | Possible applications |
|---|--|--|
| Establish universal school-day testing | All students take college entrance exams during a regular school day. | End the testing day with a celebration. Make sure parents and families know that all students are participating. Plan to include a makeup day and time. |
| Obtain testing fee waivers | Help students reduce application costs by obtaining testing fee waivers, reducing barriers to application. | Clearly define how to apply for waivers. Identify students who are eligible. |
| Designate a testing center | Create a location on the high school campus where students can take tests, rather than asking them to travel to an alternate location. | Use a counseling or other administrative office on school days. Consider using a classroom on weekends. Have dedicated spaces, free from distraction. |
| Communicate testing schedule and timeline | Create an easy-to-understand flyer or document with key dates and share it widely with students and families. | Share information about testing at tables during athletic events. Send information to families using emails, phone blasts, text messages, and social media. |
| Help students prepare for assessments | Offer supports to students at varying times and settings to prepare for entrance exams. | Hold exam preparations or workshops. Offer direct tutoring. Supply practice tests or training software. |

Table 6. Financial

| Strategy | Description | Possible applications |
|--|--|---|
| Share information on net versus sticker price | Share what the student might pay after financial aid versus the advertised sticker price of college. | Help students make a table that lists schools with full tuition prices, and the possible costs after receiving aid. |
| Host Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion night | Bring families together at a dedicated time to work on their applications and have questions answered in real-time. | <p>Prepare a list of documents that families should bring to the FAFSA night to facilitate completing their application.</p> <p>Encourage students to remind family members to attend.</p> <p>Communicate prior to and during the event that families will not be sharing their financial information with counselors, but that counselors will be available to answer questions about the application.</p> |
| Use student- and school-level data to know who's completed their FAFSA | Regularly check completion rates using online, free, public tools. Consider creating an agreement with your state agency that receives data from Federal Student Aid (a common practice) to access student level data on completion. | <p>Set goals for your school to reach FAFSA completion benchmarks, such as 90 percent by a certain date.</p> <p>Communicate progress on completion rates to all school staff and students.</p> |

Building a Postsecondary Mindset: Strategies and Possible Applications

In this section, you will find the strategies highlighted in the “Building a Postsecondary Mindset” slide deck. Each table includes research-based strategies related to a particular topic from the deck, in addition to descriptions and suggested applications developed by REL Appalachia staff.

Table 7. Strategies for promoting social-emotional preparedness

| Strategy | Description | Possible applications |
|--|---|--|
| Promote school connectedness | Promote belief by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals. | <p>Increase student sense of belonging to positive peer groups.</p> <p>Create a club for career training.</p> <p>Mentor students in a group for completing college applications.</p> <p>Provide a healthy and safe school environment free from graffiti or litter.</p> <p>Provide opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities.</p> |
| Praise the process, rather than the product, to promote growth mindset | Praise the process of learning, solving a problem, or completing a task, not just having intelligence. | <p>Emphasize challenge, not success. If students are not challenged, they may attribute their successes to intelligence or natural talent—leading to a fixed mindset.</p> <p>Point out where students’ efforts lead to improvements over time.</p> <p>Factor in growth when creating grading systems.</p> |
| Teach students their brains can grow | Teach students that intelligence is malleable; with effort and the right strategies, they can take on challenging tasks. | Have students read an article or watch a video on the malleability of the brain, then ask students to write a letter to their future selves in college to read if they are struggling with a class. |
| Guide students to build a road map | Provide a “mastery experience” for students to build their own self-efficacy through scaffolding. Build confidence in achieving each step on the way to the goal. | Guide students to create a timeline of activities that includes college entrance testing, FAFSA completion, searching out institutions and options, essay writing, and application submission, and break down each activity into manageable steps. |

| Strategy | Description | Possible applications |
|--------------------------------|--|---|
| Identify role models | Parents, teachers, and peers demonstrate how to navigate challenges and help adolescents believe they can do the same. | <p>Invite graduates to return and discuss their successful experiences in the postsecondary transition.</p> <p>Create/share stories about similar students who have successfully completed postsecondary steps.</p> |
| Support goal-setting | As short-term goals are met, students gain confidence in their abilities. Goals should be attainable, timely, and specific. | <p>Students can set a goal for completing the FAFSA, researching postsecondary options, or completing applications.</p> <p>Students can set goals for their current course assignments or course milestones.</p> <p>As students achieve their goals, encourage them to set new goals.</p> |
| Use verbal persuasion | People who play a significant role for students (such as parents, coaches or peers) provide convincing verbal persuasion that can improve student self-efficacy. | <p>Go beyond telling students you think they can do a task and give them examples of why you think they have the skills to do the task.</p> <p>Involve parents to provide encouragement to students.</p> |
| Design role play opportunities | Students can imagine success through role playing. | Have students write a story about their future selves going to college or training for a career. |

Student Scenarios: Applying the Learning

The three scenarios in this section are designed to prompt discussion related to the content of the resource compilation. Following the scenarios, we provide a note-taking template and discussion questions that are aligned with the three overarching topics in the compilation: postsecondary knowledge, nuts and bolts, and the postsecondary mindset.

Student A

Introduction

[Student A] is a grade 7 student at Bethel Wilson Middle School. This year the school counselor came into her homeroom to talk about college and career readiness and asked students to complete a college and career survey that included questions about interests and talents.

Student A's parents went to college and work full time. She is the oldest of three children, and she often takes care of her younger siblings who are in elementary school. She enjoys occasionally babysitting for neighborhood children, and she is comfortable taking care of them. In the summer, she will be working as a counselor apprentice at a day camp in her community. In filling out the college and career survey, Student A noted that her interests are children, reading, and science. She thinks that she might want to be a teacher when she grows up.

Academic preparation

Student A usually gets A's in her classes and is a consistent honor roll student. In grade 7, Student A is taking intensified Algebra I. She is getting an A in the class and always finishes her homework on time, completes extra credit assignments, and helps her classmates who struggle. In her other core subjects, such as reading/English, science, and social studies, she gets A's as well. If a teacher offers extra credit to boost a grade, she'll do the extra work because she enjoys the challenge it provides, even if she is already getting an A in the class. Her Standards of Learning (SOL) scores in math and reading were "advanced proficient" in grade 6. She is on track to take intensified geometry in grade 8.

Social-emotional preparation

Teachers and friends would describe Student A as studious but social. Student A works hard in school, and if she doesn't understand something, she stays after school to get one-to-one attention from the teacher. She is proactive in raising her hand during class to ask a question. Teachers often call on her to answer a question because they know she is paying attention. She prefers individual work, but she usually acts as a leader during group activities or projects. Sometimes she gets anxious about homework because she puts pressure on herself to complete it perfectly. She plays the flute in the school band, but she does not participate in any other after school or extracurricular activities because she has to be home to take care of her younger siblings while her parents are at work.

Logistical preparation

Student A's immediate and extended family live in the area. She is interested in staying in the area to be close to family.

Financial preparation

Student A has not yet talked with her parents about paying for college. She is the oldest child and her parents have not yet focused on postsecondary plans for their children.

Student B

Introduction

[Student B] is a grade 9 student at George Smith High School. This year the school counselor came into his homeroom to talk about college and career readiness and asked students to complete a college and career survey that included questions about interests and hobbies, academic strengths and talents, college and career preparation, and leadership qualities.

Student B's dad went to college and works full-time. His mom did not go to college and works part-time. He is the youngest of three children. Because his parents work, he has participated in 4-H after school programs since elementary school. Over the summer he helps at a local farm. His oldest brother is in the military, having joined immediately after high school, and his next oldest brother is a senior at the county high school. When his oldest brother comes home, he takes him on hunting and fishing excursions. They talk about the brother's work in cybersecurity in the military and what it is like to live in other parts of the country and the world. In filling out the college and career survey, Student B noted he would like to travel and see the world like his brother. He is not sure about going to college because his brother did not go immediately to college and gets to travel. Student B likes science and technology, particularly using his phone for social media and games. He struggles in math. He thinks that he might be interested in cybersecurity like his brother, but he doesn't quite know what that is.

Academic preparation

Student B usually gets C's in his classes, but he struggles in math and got a D in Algebra I in grade 8. His Algebra I SOL score was in the "below proficient" range. In grade 9, he was placed in another Algebra class where the pace is slower. He has managed to get a C but continues to struggle. He generally gets C's in his other core subjects, such as reading/English, science, and history. He likes science and thrives in class when lessons and assignments are more hands-on, similar to his 4-H experience. In science class, he usually gets an A on hands-on assignments. He tends to struggle in classes that focus on memorizing facts and formulas and he finds taking multiple-choice tests challenging.

Social-emotional preparation

Teachers and friends would describe Student B as easygoing and nice. He is comfortable with a C average. He likes to take his time to understand his work, and prefers working individually at his own pace. When he is working in a group setting, he usually follows along with everyone, but he does not lead the group. If he does not understand something in class, he sometimes asks the teacher for help during lunch, depending on the relationship he has with the teacher. He does not usually raise his hand to ask questions or participate during class, but he is responsible about submitting his homework on time. At home, Student B does not need prodding from his parents to complete assignments.

Logistical preparation

Student B wishes to leave his hometown like his brother in the military. When thinking about life after high school, Student B would like to get a job in a profession that can help support his family. He does not think he needs a college education or needs to start planning for college.

Financial preparation

Student B's parents will be paying their second son's college expenses with a mix of need-based grants and loans, and they will have limited savings available for Student B in three years. He has not talked with his parents about paying for education after high school.

Student C

Introduction

[Student C] is a grade 11 student at Central High School. She has talked to her school counselor about college and careers and is preparing to take the ACT in the spring.

Her stepdad went to technical school, completed an apprenticeship, and became a licensed electrician. He works full time. He does not have a college credential. Her mom earned an associate's degree from a nearby community college and works full-time as an assistant at a local business. Student C has a part-time job working in retail on the weekends. She has a younger sister in grade 9. Both sisters are active in indoor track in the fall/winter and softball in the spring. Student C has participated in track and softball since her freshman year in high school and has played softball since elementary school. Student C wants to work in a sports-related career, and she is also thinking about working in the health care industry.

Academic preparation

Student C usually gets A's and B's in her classes with some effort. With track or softball practice and part-time work, she often does not have time to stay after school when she needs extra help from the teacher. She is on track to get a standard diploma. She took Algebra I in grade 9, Geometry in grade 10, and is taking Algebra II in grade 11, which will be her last high school math class. Her grades in math were passing (B's), and her SOL math scores were in the "proficient" category. She surprised herself when she earned an A in Biology II (anatomy/physiology). She liked the class because it helped her think about getting better at sports.

Social-emotional preparation

Student C is very responsible. She never misses a track or softball practice or game, and she is always on time for her part-time job on the weekends. She finds consistently excelling in academics difficult due to her many extracurricular activities, but she manages to complete her homework on time. Student C likes group work in school because she is a natural leader and does not want to let others down. When she works alone on homework or other assignments, she

is more concerned about completion than quality. If teachers provide extra credit opportunities, she completes extra work only if she feels her grade needs a boost; otherwise, she is satisfied with her grades. When she doesn't understand something in class, she rarely raises her hand or asks the teacher. Instead, she will ask a friend. Student C is popular and likes school because she gets to hang out with her friends. She is nervous about life after high school because her friends and teammates will not stay together.

Logistical preparation

Student C has her own car, so she can drive her sister and herself to track and softball practices and games. Because her parents both work, it was important for Student C to learn to drive and have a car. She is looking for colleges within commuting distance.

Financial preparation

Student C has talked to her school counselor about scholarships, including sports scholarships. She is talking to her parents about financial aid, and she is saving money for college from her part-time job.

Student Scenarios: Notes for Postsecondary Transitions

| Student | Postsecondary knowledge | Postsecondary nuts and bolts | Postsecondary mindset |
|-----------|-------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Student A | | | |
| Student B | | | |
| Student C | | | |

Student Scenario Discussion Questions: Postsecondary Knowledge

1. What knowledge does each student have about postsecondary structures, norms, and expectations? How might you improve their knowledge or access to this information?
2. How might you work with, or encourage others to work with, each student to help them identify and define their career goals?
3. Are there key pieces of information missing from the scenarios that would affect your approach? How would you obtain the missing information?
4. What supports or services are you aware of that you would advise these students to explore? What supports or services do you wish you had to help these students?
5. Is there any information that you would flag for these students' future teachers or counselors to pay attention to?

Student Scenario Discussion Questions: Postsecondary Nuts and Bolts

1. What knowledge does each student have about the nuts and bolts of postsecondary transitions (selection, application and assessment, and financial requirements and supports)? How might you improve their access and support?
2. Are there key pieces of information missing from the scenario that would affect your approach? How would you obtain the missing information?
3. What supports or services are you aware of that you would advise these students to explore? What supports or services do you wish you had to help these students?
4. Is there any information that you would flag for these students' future teachers or counselors to pay attention to?

Student Scenario Discussion Questions: Postsecondary Mindset

1. What social-emotional knowledge and skills does each student have that can support a postsecondary mindset? How might you improve these students' postsecondary mindsets?
2. Are there key pieces of information missing from the scenario that would affect your approach? How would you obtain the missing information?
3. What supports or services are you aware of that you would advise these students to explore? What supports or services do you wish you had to help these students?
4. Is there any information that you would flag for these students' future teachers or counselors to pay attention to?

Action Planning Document: Example

Here, we provide an example of how you might complete the action planning template based on the information and resources provided in the resource compilation. A fillable PDF template is also provided with the rest of the materials.

Strategy: Implement SMART goal-setting sessions with students

| Action step | Responsible parties | Approvals or communications needed | Due | Measures of success | Additional notes/questions |
|--|---|---|----------------------------|--|---|
| <i>(1) Research online tools for goal-setting with students and select tool.</i> | <i>Jane Smith, School Counselor</i> | <i>John Silbey, Technical Director and Carla Webb, Superintendent</i> | <i>August 15, 2020</i> | <i>Identify which tools are appropriate for your needs and students. Select one tool to implement.</i> | <i>Are there costs associated with these tools?</i> |
| <i>(2) Create timeline of key submissions and dates in the college application process.</i> | <i>Jane Smith, School Counselor</i> | <i>John Delaney, Principal</i> | <i>August 15, 2020</i> | <i>Implementation team approves a timeline. Timeline is created in a user-friendly format.</i> | |
| <i>(3) Review school calendar to schedule time for goal-setting sessions with students (by advisory).</i> | <i>Bill Smithers, Associate Principal</i> | <i>John Delaney, Principal</i> | <i>September 1, 2020</i> | <i>School counselor visits each advisory class at least once during the fall semester. 25 percent of students schedule meetings with a counselor.</i> | <i>How can we use prior data about on-time application and FAFSA submissions to determine the best times to schedule these goal-setting sessions?</i> |

| Action step | Responsible parties | Approvals or communications needed | Due | Measures of success | Additional notes/questions |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| <p><i>(4) Share application timeline with families and inform them of its use.</i></p> | <p><i>Jane Smith, School Counselor</i></p> | <p><i>John Delaney, Principal</i></p> | <p><i>October 1, 2020</i></p> | <p><i>Students and families report the use of the timeline.</i></p> <p><i>On-time application submissions increase by 10 percent.</i></p> <p><i>FAFSA completion increases by 15 percent.</i></p> | |
| <p><i>(5) Regularly meet with students and encourage them to use the online application tool.</i></p> | <p><i>Jane Smith, School Counselor</i></p> | <p><i>John Delaney, Principal</i></p> | <p><i>February 1, 2021</i></p> | <p><i>Fifty percent of seniors use the online tool for applications in 2020/21 school year.</i></p> <p><i>Students report, via survey, that the tool is helpful.</i></p> | |

Action Planning Document: Blank

Strategy: _____

| Action step | Responsible parties | Approvals or communications needed | Due | Measures of success | Additional notes/questions |
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| Action step | Responsible parties | Approvals or communications needed | Due | Measures of success | Additional notes/questions |
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Postsecondary Transition Resources

Laying the Foundation for Postsecondary Success



- [You Visit's](#) college search tool
- [Campustours.com's](#) interactive virtual campus tours and college maps
- NWEA's [College Explorer](#) tool
- National Center for Education Statistics' [College Navigator](#) tool
- College Board's [BigFuture](#) college and career search engine
- [Work-based Learning](#) (WBL) toolkit (from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education)

Supporting Students with the Nuts and Bolts of Postsecondary Transitions



- [College and Career Readiness and Success Center's](#) implementation tools
- CollegeData's [financial aid tracker](#)
- Tracking [FAFSA completion](#) by high school and public school district (from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Federal Student Aid)
- Form Your Future's [FAFSA tracker](#)
- [Helping Students Navigate the Path to College](#) from the Institute of Education Sciences
- College Board's College Application Checklist (for a [single](#) school or [multiple](#) schools)

Building a Postsecondary Mindset



- Smartsheet's S.M.A.R.T. goals [template](#) (download in Word)
- [Nudges, Norms and New Solutions](#): Evidence-based strategies to get students to and through college (from the University of Virginia)
- [Transforming Education's](#) self-efficacy toolkit

Virginia-Specific Resources

Below are resources specific to Virginia and aligned with the content of the Paving the Pathways to College and Careers series.

General resources

The [Center on Transition Innovations](#) (CTI) at Virginia Commonwealth University provides resources to support transitions for students with disabilities. Their resources address issues specific to students with disabilities, but also provide information useful for all students. [CTI's YouTube channel](#) provides a series of short videos on a variety of topics. The videos aligned with the topics in this series are linked to below.

[Virginia Education Wizard](#) is a tool from Virginia's Community College System (VCCS) designed to help students with identifying and navigating their pathway to postsecondary education and work. The resource is available to K–12 and VCCS students, and also for all Virginia counselors to use with their students.

Laying the foundation for postsecondary success

- [Understanding the Differences](#): This video from CTI provides a quick overview of the differences between high school and college. Topics highlighted include schedules, class structure and content, and self-advocacy.
- [Community College, Four-Year College and Universities, Additional Postsecondary Options](#): A set of three videos from CTI that provides an overview of types of postsecondary options, including requirements for entry, purposes for each option, types of certificates and degrees, and alignment with Virginia's high school diploma options.
- [Virginia Education Wizard Career Assessments](#): The Virginia Education Wizard offers two career assessments: *Career Interests & Work Values Assessment* and the *Skills Assessment*. Both assessments identify specific careers and career clusters aligned with assessment results. Careers are linked to occupational profiles with descriptions of the careers, career growth, salary, and college programs in Virginia.

- [Student Profiles by CTE Career Cluster](#): The resource features profiles of former CTE students describing their academic and career pathways to their current professions. The profiles are aligned with and clustered by Virginia's CTE Career Clusters.

Supporting students with the nuts and bolts of postsecondary transitions

- [Applying to College & Training Programs](#): In this video, CTI reviews the variety of college entrance requirements and admissions policies, the importance of multiple options, and the importance of students' using counselors for support.
- [Test Preparation](#): This page of the Virginia Education Wizard links to resources for the Virginia Community College Placement Test, SAT ACT, ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery), and GED Preparation.
- [Opportunities: Preparing for College Guide & Workbook Virginia 2019-2020](#): This resource guides students through the process of choosing a college, completing the college application process, navigating the financial aid process, and making a final decision. Information specific to Virginia students and college is included.

Building a postsecondary mindset

- [Setting Goals](#): This video from CTI provides an overview of the importance of goal setting, describes long and short-term goals, and includes videos of students discussing goals.
- [Making Goals SMART](#): This CTI video introduces the importance of setting clearly defined goals and provides an overview of how to make goals SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely).
- [Turning Goals into Action](#): This video from CTI provides a process for creating an action plan to meet your goals by setting steps, creating a timeline, identifying supports, and tracking progress.

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