



## GEAR UP: College and Career Preparation Educator Standards 6-12

### K20 Center for Educational and Community Renewal

6-12	Key Understandings	Teacher Actions
<b>Career Pathway Exploration</b>	<p><b>E.K.1</b> Gain a comprehensive understanding of the structure, types, and options within postsecondary education to guide students in making informed decisions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>E.K.1.1</b> Identify academic, financial, and logistical requirements necessary for students to successfully access and enroll in postsecondary pathways.</li><li>• <b>E.K.1.2</b> Understand the array of college and career options, including four-year universities, community colleges, career technology programs, apprenticeships, and military opportunities, where students can achieve success based on their strengths and goals.</li><li>• <b>E.K.1.3</b> Understand the key academic, financial, social, and cultural expectations associated with college and career readiness to better support students and families in preparing for the transition.</li><li>• <b>E.K.1.4</b> Develop familiarity with the National Career Clusters and their career pathways to help students align their interests and skills with potential careers and corresponding educational options.</li></ul> <p><b>E.K.2</b> Value the diverse structures, types, and opportunities within postsecondary pathways, understanding that success looks different for every student and includes options such as four-year colleges, community colleges, career technology programs, apprenticeships, military service, and direct entry into the workforce.</p>	<p><b>E.S.1</b> Proactively stay informed about evolving postsecondary education opportunities, admission requirements, and the skills needed for success in diverse career pathways. Attend professional development sessions, network with industry professionals, and explore resources to better support students in aligning their interests and goals with realistic college and career options.</p> <p><b>E.S.2</b> Engage in consistent, cross-grade-level communication with colleagues to ensure a cohesive approach to college and career readiness. Share insights about students' aspirations, skills, and progress, and collaborate to embed college and career exploration and readiness activities into the curriculum.</p> <p><b>E.S.3</b> Partner with school counselors and advisors to create a unified support system for students. Work together to provide personalized guidance, facilitate access to resources (e.g., career interest inventories, college and career fairs, financial aid workshops), and address barriers to pursuing postsecondary education.</p>



## Goal Setting

**E.K.3** Recognize how goal setting fosters self-motivation, accountability, and a growth mindset, helping students take ownership of their personal and academic progress.

**E.K.4** Understand that students' ability to set, plan, and monitor goals varies based on their developmental stages, learning preferences, and unique challenges or strengths.

**E.K.5** Acknowledge the importance of helping students regularly review and reflect on their progress, adjust their strategies as needed, and celebrate achievements to build confidence and resilience.

**E.K.6** Recognize that personal and academic goals are interconnected and support students in aligning their academic pursuits with personal interests, values, and long-term aspirations.

**E.K.7** Be aware of potential obstacles, such as lack of resources, time management challenges, or limited self-confidence, and how to provide targeted support to help students overcome these barriers.

**E.S.4** Guide students in developing college and career readiness by guiding them to set meaningful goals, foster a growth mindset, practice self-management, and take ownership of their learning journeys.

- **E.S.4.1** Regularly examine academic performance, career interest inventories, behavioral trends, and personal aspirations to identify each student's unique college and career needs. Use this data to tailor guidance for goal setting and provide targeted interventions.
- **E.S.4.2** Introduce students to career clusters and pathways, helping them connect their interests, skills, and academic strengths to potential careers and the educational requirements needed to achieve them. Facilitate activities like career exploration projects or discussions with professionals in relevant fields.
- **E.S.4.3** Actively work to identify and address barriers and provide resources and classroom opportunities for students to navigate these challenges, including guidance on FAFSA completion, scholarship opportunities, and fee waivers, and by advocating for equitable access to opportunities.



## Academic Preparation

**E.K.8** Understand how to integrate postsecondary education discussions and resources into the curriculum in meaningful and age-appropriate ways, ensuring alignment with academic standards and career readiness goals.

**E.K.9** Understand how to create a classroom environment that fosters regular, engaging, and inclusive conversations about postsecondary education, while providing students with access to relevant resources and opportunities for exploration.

**E.K.10** Recognize how academic knowledge and skills build progressively from middle school through high school, forming a foundation for success in postsecondary education and career pathways.

**E.S.5** Include discussions about diverse postsecondary pathways, such as career technology programs, apprenticeships, military service, and workforce entry, alongside traditional college options.

- **E.S.5.1** Highlight connections between academic content and real-world applications in postsecondary settings to make learning more relevant.
- **E.S.5.2** Partner with school counselors, career advisors, and industry professionals to bring authentic experiences and up-to-date information related to careers into the classroom.

**E.S.6** Plan and facilitate meaningful postsecondary education experiences outside of the classroom.

- **E.S.6.1** Organize campus visits, job shadowing opportunities, career fairs, and community service projects to expose students to real-world environments and college and career options.
- **E.S.6.2** Partner with local businesses, colleges, and organizations to create opportunities for students to interact with professionals and explore potential career paths.

**E.S.7** Incorporate postsecondary education discussions and content in the curriculum.

- **E.S.7.1** Embed lessons on career clusters, financial literacy, and college and career readiness into core subjects.
- **E.S.7.2** Use project-based learning to connect academic content with postsecondary education and career readiness goals.



**Classroom  
Culture and  
Learning  
Environment  
To Support Self-  
Management,  
Self-Efficacy, and  
Awareness**

**E.K.11** Recognize that addressing students' social, emotional, and academic needs holistically is essential for fostering meaningful engagement and success. By creating a supportive classroom culture, offering diverse and personalized learning experiences, and integrating practices that prioritize personal growth, teachers can empower students to develop confidence, resilience, and a sense of belonging.

**E.K.12** Understand that equitable education involves recognizing and leveraging students' strengths, interests, and unique circumstances. By adopting strengths-based approaches, offering diverse instructional methods, and being flexible with expectations when appropriate, teachers can ensure all students have access to high-quality learning opportunities tailored to their individual needs and aspirations.

- E.S.8** Offer a wide array of quality learning experiences.
- **E.S.8.1** Design and provide courses that challenge students academically while fostering skills in literacy, numeracy, scientific literacy, and critical thinking, building a strong foundation for college and career success.
  - **E.S.8.2** Design interdisciplinary projects that allow students to explore their personal interests and aspirations.
  - **E.S.8.3** Include diverse instructional methods (e.g., problem-based and project-based, small-group and whole-class discussions, group collaborations) and principles of the Universal Design for Learning framework to appeal to various learners' needs.
  - **E.S.8.4** Integrate opportunities for students to develop self-management, leadership, and communication skills into the curriculum, as well as into extracurricular activities and elective courses, by designing projects, activities, and roles that foster these essential competencies.
- E.S.9** Create an educational environment that attends to the whole student.
- **E.S.9.1** Foster a supportive classroom culture that prioritizes students' social, emotional, and academic needs.
  - **E.S.9.2** Integrate mindfulness practices, advisory periods, or community circles into the classroom to address students' personal growth alongside academic learning.
- E.S.10** Enable students to develop a range of learning skills.
- **E.S.10.1** Teach essential skills such as time management, critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving.
  - **E.S.10.2** Incorporate metacognitive strategies into learning to help students reflect on their learning processes and outcomes.
- E.S.11** Develop social and academic support systems for students.
- **E.S.11.1** Ensure that the classroom curriculum reflects diverse student backgrounds, interests, and challenges.
  - **E.S.11.2** Clearly defines expectations for academic performance, behavior, and participation, while providing consistent and constructive feedback.
  - **E.S.11.3** Celebrate student successes to reinforce high standards.
- E.S.12** Adopt strengths-based and flexible practices.

- **E.S.12.1** Prioritize asset-based thinking by recognizing and building on students’ strengths and potential.
- **E.S.12.2** Be flexible with deadlines and assessments when appropriate, considering individual circumstances, to support equitable opportunities for success.

## Sense of Self

**E.K.13** Understand that students can achieve success in various areas, including academics, athletics, the arts, career technology programs, and other postsecondary pathways, and value each student’s unique potential and aspirations.

**E.K.14** Acknowledge and critically examine your own biases, assumptions, and beliefs about students’ abilities, identities, and potential. Recognize how these biases influence interactions, expectations, and teaching practices.

**E.K.15** Understand how your expectations—whether high, low, or differential—can shape students’ self-perceptions and outcomes. Strive to maintain high, equitable, and supportive expectations for all students.

**E.K.16** Believe in the importance of ongoing professional and personal growth for educators and staff. Continuously seek to expand your knowledge and skills to better support students in their college and career readiness journeys.

**E.S.13** Embrace and integrate culturally responsive practices that honor and affirm the diverse identities, experiences, and perspectives of all students, ensuring they feel seen, valued, and supported.

**E.S.14** Foster an inclusive classroom environment to ensure that all students have access to opportunities for growth and exploration.

**E.S.15** Support students in engaging in a journey of self-discovery and self-reflection to better understand their interests, values, strengths, and aspirations as part of their college and career exploration.

**E.S.16** Be tolerant and supportive of students as they navigate struggles to define themselves, recognizing that identity formation is a complex and ongoing process.



## Self-Advocacy

**E.K.17** Recognize how your guidance, encouragement, and modeling can position you as a trusted mentor who inspires and supports students in exploring and pursuing postsecondary pathways.

**E.K.18** Acknowledge your responsibility in equipping students with the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to navigate the college and career readiness process, including setting goals, meeting academic requirements, and overcoming potential barriers.

**E.K.19** Be aware of the various influences on students' aspirations, including family, cultural values, socioeconomic background, community, and personal interests, and how these factors shape their college and career goals and decision-making processes.

**E.K.20** Embrace the belief that every student has unique college and career aspirations and the right to pursue them, regardless of their background, and actively work to create equitable opportunities for all students to achieve their goals.

**E.K.21** Believe that seeking knowledge and skills to support students in developing college and career readiness is an ongoing and continual process for educators.

**E.S.17** Provide students with objective and personalized guidance about postsecondary pathways, respecting their interests, goals, and aspirations without projecting personal preferences or assumptions.

**E.S.18** Actively mentor students from diverse backgrounds and with varying interests, helping each student prepare for their unique college and career goals, whether those goals are academic, career technology-focused, or otherwise.

**E.A.19** Act as a role model by demonstrating lifelong learning, perseverance, and adaptability. Show students how to connect academic and personal growth to college and career success.

**E.S.20** Create a safe space for students to express their concerns or anxieties about postsecondary education. Offer encouragement and resources to help them navigate and overcome challenges, such as financial fears or uncertainty about readiness.

**E.S.21** Share your own experiences with postsecondary education and pathways to inspire students and illustrate the variety of opportunities and challenges they might encounter.

**E.S.22** Participate in professional development opportunities to enhance your ability to mentor students effectively. Focus on building rapport, active listening, and strategies for providing actionable, empathetic guidance.



## Family Outreach and Support

**E.K.22** Recognize that students and their families come from varied cultural, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds, which influence their perspectives, needs, and approaches to postsecondary education.

**E.K.23** Understand that family involvement in college and career readiness takes many forms, from direct participation in school events to behind-the-scenes encouragement and support, all of which are valuable contributions.

**E.K.24** Acknowledge and celebrate the critical role families play in shaping and supporting students' college and career aspirations, and work to strengthen partnerships with families to enhance student outcomes.

**E.K.25** Understand that preparing students for postsecondary pathways is a collaborative effort involving educators, families, and students themselves, and requires clear communication, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to success.

**E.S.23** Appreciate and respect diverse family roles, perspectives, and means of involvement in supporting their students' college and career journey.

**E.S.24** Actively involve families in the postsecondary education preparation process by sharing information, guidance, and opportunities for participation.

**E.S.25** Streamline messages to families with concise, prioritized information about preparing students for next steps.

**E.S.26** Build positive relationships with families by creating an inclusive and supportive atmosphere for college and career discussions.

**E.S.27** Facilitate family learning and engagement.

- **E.S.27.1** Empower families with resources and learning opportunities to support their students' goals effectively.
- **E.S.27.2** Provide multiple ways for families to engage with their students' education based on their availability and circumstances.
- **E.S.27.3** Use principles of adult learning to design family engagement activities that are relevant, practical, and accessible.

## Teacher Actions

### Starting Grade 7

**E.S.28** Partner with postsecondary institutions to align curriculum, expand student opportunities, and create a bridge between secondary and postsecondary education.

**E.S.29** Maintain up-to-date knowledge of postsecondary institution entrance requirements to effectively guide students in meeting their college and career goals.

### Starting Grade 8

**E.S.30** Identify students who would benefit from dual enrollment, AP classes, or other advanced programs early and advocate for equitable access to these programs to ensure all students have the opportunity to participate.

**E.S.31** Schedule regular one-on-one appointments with students to discuss their college and career goals, progress, and available resources, fostering personalized guidance and support.

**E.S.32** Collaborate with school counselors to deliver career exploration and college education discussions during core classes, ensuring all students are exposed to these important topics.

**E.S.33** Assist families and students in maintaining organized records of academic accomplishments, scholarship opportunities, deadlines, and extracurricular programs to streamline college and career planning.



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**Starting  
Grade 9**

**E.K.26** Ensure that high school courses are appropriately aligned with postsecondary requirements, and prepare students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences necessary for college and career readiness.

**E.K.27** Investigate and stay informed about local course offerings, such as career technology programs, dual enrollment, and elective classes, to guide students in developing personalized postsecondary pathway plans.

**E.K.28** Keep up to date with admissions requirements, deadlines, resources, and preparation tools for colleges and other postsecondary institutions to provide accurate and timely guidance to students.

**E.S.34** Integrate ACT and/or SAT test-taking strategies and preparation into the curriculum and raise awareness about the benefits of these exams, ensuring students are well-prepared and understand their role in college admissions and other postsecondary institutions.

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**Starting  
Grade 10**

**E.S.35** Encourage students to enroll in dual enrollment courses, and assist them by providing ongoing support to ensure they succeed in balancing the demands of college-level coursework with their high school responsibilities.

**E.K.29** Recognize how geography affects students' choices, opportunities, and experiences, and provide tailored guidance that considers local, regional, and global factors in students' college and career planning.

**E.S.36** Help students identify postsecondary institutions that align with their academic goals, personal preferences, financial needs, and career aspirations, ensuring a good match and fit.

**E.S.37** Demonstrate how to create professional resumes, write compelling application essays, and complete college and other postsecondary institute applications effectively, providing students with templates, examples, and hands-on practice.

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