Waves Of Change

Adapting District Strategy and Culture to
Prepare All Students for the Future

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About JFF

JFF is a national nonprofit that drives transformation in the American workforce and education systems. For 35 years, JFF has led the way in designing innovative and scalable solutions that create access to economic advancement for all. Join us as we build a future that works. www.jff.org

Acknowledgments

The Central Ohio Partnership for College and Career Readiness Expansion

The Central Ohio Partnership for College and Career Readiness Expansion (CCRE) is a collaboration led by Columbus State Community College in partnership with JFF, the Educational Service Center of Central Ohio, the SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and seven school districts. It aims to increase college readiness and raise graduation rates by implementing early college designs. CCRE is supported by a five-year Investing in Innovation (i3) grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Education in December 2015.

This paper is the second in a JFF series highlighting lessons learned from the initiative. The first brief, *Forging Regional Connections: The Role of a Community College in High School Transformation* (August 2018) focuses on Columbus State's leadership in setting and implementing a new vision for K-12 and postsecondary partnerships in Central Ohio.

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Introduction

The urgent need to equip young people with the knowledge and skills necessary to be agile lifelong learners who can thrive in a rapidly changing economy has never been clearer. Frequently cited research concludes that most U.S. jobs will require some form of postsecondary education by 2020 and future workers will have multiple jobs, even careers, across their lifetimes.[1]

As a result, many school districts have been shifting their focus, aiming to better prepare all high school students to graduate ready to succeed both in college and in the new world of work. Still, attempting to change the culture and expectations of a deeply rooted American institution—the traditional high school—can feel like pushing a boulder up a mountain.

This is the type of transformation taking place in one the largest school districts in Ohio, which, incidentally, is representative of many districts across the country.

The South-Western City School District (SWCSD), which serves 22,000 students, is part of a unique regional coalition led by Columbus State Community College (Columbus State) to build a stronger talent pipeline for high-demand careers. The coalition's seven partner school districts have committed to implementing key principles of early college designs—increasing the number of high school students who complete college courses through dual enrollment and improving instruction in every school through intensive professional development. Their goal: 90 percent of all students in the region will graduate high school with college credit and/or an industry-recognized credential by 2020.

South-Western City stands out among the coalition partners because of its sustained consistent leadership at the top, its long-term partnership with Columbus State, and its strategic approach to implementing early college design elements. District leaders and staff focused on developing stronger systems, policies, and practices to ensure more of their students stay on track to be successful in postsecondary education. Important components of this change included:

- New roles and expectations for adults within the education system

- New expectations for what students need and can achieve before leaving high school

- New ways of interpreting and using data for student-centered planning and decision-making

- New ways of connecting school to college and careers

Together, these changes have already shifted the district's aspirations from graduating all students to equipping all students with the lifelong skills they need to take ownership of their learning, persist in college, navigate the current and future labor market, and succeed in their careers. They have also had a rapid and dramatic impact on the number of students accessing college courses before leaving high school: from 2015-16 to 2018-19, the number of students participating in dual enrollment through Columbus State more than doubled.[2]

This report is intended to capture the story of change within one school district that has had a dramatic effect on the day-to-day experiences of students and teachers. JFF, which is one of the coalition partners, conducted interviews with staff and students about the changes that have taken place over the past three years.

The report describes how intentionally shifting the culture of a large district is, in fact, possible in a relatively short period of time when approached systematically. It is our hope that other districts and regions can learn from these examples of one district's efforts.

Snapshot: The District and the Region

The work of the seven districts in the coalition—known as the Central Ohio Partnership for College and Career Readiness Expansion (CCRE)—is supported by a five-year Investing in Innovation (i3) grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Education to Columbus State Community College in December 2015. The partners' individual and collective efforts are supported by ongoing technical assistance and professional development from JFF and the Educational Service Center of Central Ohio. Columbus State serves as a regional intermediary providing connective tissue between the participating districts and with a larger set of partners—a role that it has played frequently since the 2011 inception of the Central Ohio Compact, which brings together K-12, higher education, and the business community with the goal of increasing the number of residents in the region with postsecondary degrees or certificates to 65 percent by 2025.

South-Western City is a microcosm of the demographic changes taking place in districts across the country. First, it is one of the largest districts in Ohio and it includes schools in urban, suburban, and rural contexts within its 120-square-mile boundary. Like all of the districts in the coalition, it serves a significant number of low-income students. While many of the district's strengths and barriers are unique, it shares a common challenge with other districts nationwide: how to systematically and equitably prepare students for a range of postsecondary plans that truly serve the entire student population.

SWCSD has a diverse student body: it enrolls the third-highest number of English language learners in the state (approximately 3,000 students), nearly 60 percent of students are economically disadvantaged, and 40 percent of students are non-white or Hispanic.[3] At the same time, some schools have an overrepresentation of white students while others are overrepresented by students of color. Some have an overrepresentation of socioeconomically disadvantaged students while others are overrepresented by more affluent students.[4] Educators face the challenge of addressing clear gaps in equity, opportunity, and academic performance across the district.

A unique asset of South-Western City is the long-term tenure of Superintendent Bill Wise. While most large school districts experience frequent leadership turnover, Wise's rare 12-year tenure has enabled the district's leadership team to hone its vision for instructional improvement and progressively strengthen its postsecondary partnerships. As Steve Dackin, Columbus State Community College's superintendent of school and community partnerships, articulated: "This longstanding relationship gave us a strong foundation to go in and ratchet the work up."

New Roles and Expectations for Adults

Raising the district's aspirations to focus on college and career success required rethinking and recasting the roles of educators. It required district administrators, school leaders, and teachers to create a common vision for instructional improvement—the Framework for Learning—to guide the work of all schools for all students; and it involved a thoughtful rollout process. This paradigm shift pushed teachers to work together in new ways, shifting the professional culture for all adults within the system. The following subsections outline these interrelated and equally pivotal changes.

Create a Common Vision for Instructional Improvement

Prior to receiving i3 funding, South-Western City had a college-going culture that served many students well. The vast majority of seniors graduated from high school and many enrolled immediately in college. In 2018, more than 87 percent of seniors earned their high school diploma in four years—up from nearly 85 percent in 2015.[5]

However, a deeper dive into the district's data revealed an overarching problem. Although students succeeded on traditional measures of high school success and postsecondary enrollment, far too many struggled with college persistence and completion. Roughly half of the graduating classes of 2015 and 2016 enrolled in postsecondary education within two years of earning their high school diploma. But only about 20 percent received a degree within six years.[6]

This data point, in particular, troubled district leaders, because it identified a clear gap between students' eligibility for and readiness to succeed in postsecondary education. Erik Shuey, the

district's executive director of secondary education, remarked in an interview: "If we graduate 100 percent of students, it means nothing to me if I'm not confident they have something else lined up [to do after graduation]. We need to think past graduation. That's too low a bar and should not be the goal."

The district took a hard look at what happened after students left its high schools. But leaders also decided to look inward, at the quality and consistency of classroom instruction.

As in many school districts across the country, teachers were largely isolated within their own classrooms and did not have a culture of sharing their instructional strategies or analyzing student data with their colleagues. District leaders recognized they needed to create a common definition of high-quality instruction, which would include preparing all students for a range of postsecondary options, and a more inclusive, collaborative approach to teaching and learning.

When Columbus State approached South-Western City about the prospect of joining the CCRE, it proved an opportune moment for the district to reassess its approach to college and career preparation and accelerate improvement efforts. After

spending the first months of the i3 grant working to establish a shared sense of urgency among district leaders and performing a needs assessment, which identified the student subgroups the district was not serving well, leaders were ready to focus on implementing change at the classroom level.

The district prioritized instructional design as the focus for all changes in district and school structures and practices that were needed to implement early college design principles. As part of the i3 grant, external coaches worked with district staff, school leaders, and cohorts of teachers in each of the CCRE districts to support implementation of JFF's "Common Instructional Framework"—a set of six research-based classroom strategies to promote college readiness.[7]

In SWCSD, leaders made the strategic decision to build upon the framework. In the grant's second year, the district focused staff professional development on creating a district-specific version, shaped by a range of staff at varying levels. The result was the "Framework for Learning" (FFL), which was designed to support high levels of student engagement and critical thinking (see Appendix). It created a common language for everyone within the school community.

District leaders understood that it was important to see the connections between the instructional strategies and the skills that regional employers need. They created a rubric that maps components of the FFL with employability skills, demonstrating how the district is preparing students for the future of work (see Appendix for an example).

Rollout of the Framework for Learning Districtwide

Stakeholders stressed the need to identify staff that had influence over their peers. They focused on the role of "department lead"—a position that previously had been eliminated due to budget cuts but was reinstated during the 2016-17

school year. Giving department leads the opportunity to be involved in the rollout aligned with the district's priority of building their instructional leadership and giving them responsibilities related to implementing districtwide initiatives. SWCSD leadership decided to reimagine this role to specifically support the rollout of the framework by providing coaching to other teachers in their department on how to incorporate the strategies from the FFL. Stakeholders said in their interviews that giving department leads responsibilities in the rollout proved to be successful largely because it promoted a more lateral communication structure versus a top-down delivery method, and staff could discuss the framework within the context of their particular department and discipline.

By spring 2019—the end of the third year of the grant—systematic implementation of the framework was supported through all levels of district and school leadership. Principals and assistant principals had all received external coaching and were participating in monthly meetings with the district's director of secondary education that focused on implementation and progress monitoring. Within each school, the Building Leadership Team—which includes department leads—hosted its own regular meetings on progress monitoring and planned professional development

for its teachers. School administrators have been especially intentional about promoting the systemic application of the framework beyond the classroom. For example, one district leader described how he uses protocols from the framework in weekly meetings with his administrative team as a strategy for holding himself and others accountable for what needs to get accomplished.

The i3 grant has also brought critical technical assistance and coordination support to SWCSD. Marcy Raymond, director of college and career readiness at the Educational Service Center of Central Ohio, and Debra Carver, the district's i3-funded grant coordinator, are deeply entrenched in the goals of implementation, and serve as neutral resources and support for leaders and teachers. In both cases, these roles are carried out by respected and experienced educators who support real-time implementation efforts like the FFL rollout, and also help principals and assistant principals develop their skills for observing classrooms. These on-the-ground roles have proven to be effective bridges both in gaining buy-in from teachers and in planning for sustainability so that building leaders are equipped to continue the work long after the grant term ends.

Changing the Professional Culture Around Collaboration

In our conversations with both teachers and department leads, they shared similar reflections about how the framework content was not necessarily new or groundbreaking. In fact, interviewees said the framework is in many ways the distillation of good teaching practices that they already knew and shared. Still, stakeholders said the strength of the FFL was connected to its reinforcing the basics of good pedagogy and student-centered learning through a common instructional focus.

The concept of reinvesting in the relationship between instructional practices and student learning as a means to dramatically improve college and career outcomes resonated with teachers. By emphasizing teachers' existing knowledge that was relevant to the "new" framework and securing their buy-in, department leads were able to support teachers in taking ownership of implementing the framework in their classrooms. In the process, department leads emerged as trusted ambassadors that both the building and district leadership could rely on to sustain momentum and move forward their collective work as a district. Consequently, a culture shift around collaboration among teachers took place at the same time.

While elements of the framework were familiar to many staff and teachers, our interviews with stakeholders revealed that it did not always feel natural to implement and required individuals to step outside their comfort zone as educators. For example, the framework required a major shift around expectations for teachers to open up their classrooms more regularly to both department leads and their peers for observing and even filming lessons. Teachers initially expressed fear about being judged by their peers and criticized when things did not go well. Given this reluctance, principals eased into establishing "peer visits" as a district norm by instructing observers to primarily focus on the positive.

Regardless of the somewhat uncomfortable transition, both teachers and building leaders remarked on the changes they've seen in their staff in a short amount of time. They believe that a degree of healthy peer pressure has encouraged more teachers to actively participate in peer visits and not only welcome but expect frequent feedback from colleagues.

As teachers within the same departments have begun to embrace new expectations for collaboration, the framework has also spurred new expectations for how teachers and department leads collaborate with one another across disciplines.

To aid this effort, some schools have used i3 resources to layer professional development focused on a "growth mindset" on top of coaching focused on early college designs and the learning framework. In addition, some schools use their "teacher-based teams"—groups of similar content-area or grade-level teachers that focus on data-driven solutions to improving instruction and closing achievement gaps—to facilitate peer-to-peer support in implementation of the FFL. This collective commitment to accepting and providing feedback without shame or judgment is what teachers and district leaders believe is essential to building a culture of continuous improvement and ongoing professional learning.

New Expectations for High School Students

Along with encouraging new roles and expectations for adults in its schools, South-Western City—as part of the CCRE—is also promoting a cultural shift in what is expected of students in order for them to be successful in college and careers. Two primary features of this shift include: (1) dismantling preconceived notions about what types of students take college-level courses in high school, (2) understanding the difference between students being *eligible* to take college-level courses and students being *prepared* for success.

Broadening Perceptions of Who Takes College Courses in High School

Historically, the SWCSD students who took advantage of dual enrollment were high-performing students already enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) and honors courses. However, participation has skyrocketed since the inception of the i3 grant in 2015. The grant coincided with the introduction of a new statewide dual enrollment policy, College Credit Plus, which increased the level of access to these opportunities by making tuition, fees, and textbooks free to students and their families (see *"College Credit Plus"*).

College Credit Plus:

College Credit Plus is Ohio's dual enrollment program that provides students in grades 7-12 with the opportunity to earn college and high school credits at the same time by taking courses from Ohio colleges or universities. The purpose of this program is to enhance students' career readiness and postsecondary success, while providing a wide variety of options to college-ready students, at no or limited cost to students and families. The College Credit Plus Act, which took effect in July 2015, mandated that high schools create pathways for participating students to earn 15 to 30 free college credits toward a college major or career path.

Leveraging new opportunities brought by College Credit Plus, as well as its partnership with Columbus State, SWCSD created an Accelerated Learning Center (ALC) on the campus of one of its high schools in 2015 to scaffold the experience of taking college-level courses through a cohort-based model with wraparound support services. Students travel from their home high schools for a portion of the school day to take a range of Columbus State courses, most of which are taught by college instructors. The ALC offers a wider range of college courses to students by aggregating demand from multiple high schools and provides a more intensive college experience for students taking multiple courses through dual enrollment, in fields ranging from liberal arts to software development.

In addition, all of the SWCSD high schools have increased their capacity to provide stand-alone dual enrollment courses on their own campuses during the past few years. These new policies and added infrastructure have helped to change the perception of the typical student who takes college-level courses.

Teachers and even students with whom we spoke believe that it is now the norm, rather than the exception, for students to take college courses. More students also are taking dual enrollment courses through career and technical education (CTE) programs at both the Career Academy—SWCSD's standalone CTE school serving students in grades 11 and 12 from across the district—and their home campuses.

According to district leaders, enrollment in the Career Academy has increased 20 percent in the past four years, and students at the Career Academy earned more than 430 industry credentials in 2018.

As a result of these combined efforts, total participation in dual enrollment in SWCSD has grown by 240 percent since 2015-16, with more than 1,000 students accessing these courses in 2018-19 (*see Table 1*). The number of credits earned per student has also increased, and the Course Success rate, defined as the rate at which courses are completed with a grade of C or better, has remained steady (approximately 88 percent) throughout the past four academic years.[8] These data indicate the South-Western City School District's dedication to increasing access to college courses and providing the support students need for success.

Table 1 – South-Western City School District Dual Enrollment Participation and Success			
Academic Year	Annual Unduplicated Head Count Participation	Total Credits Completed	Average Credits Earned per Student per Year
2015-16	320	2,020	6.31
2016-17	585	3,775	6.45
2017-18	874	5,741	6.57
2018-19	1,078	7,715	7.16

Source: Ohio Department of Higher Education, College Credit Plus annual reports, 2015-16 to 2018-19.

Preparing Students for College and Career Success

District leaders also have been intentional about leveraging dual enrollment courses to support a developmental approach to college and career preparation. As staff and district leaders described, they want to see students progress from an "exploration phase" to an "aspiration phase" that leads to successful enrollment and persistence.

As part of the CCRE's efforts to increase the number of students earning college credits, Columbus State Community College rolled out its College Success course across the seven participating districts. The course is required for all degree-seeking students at Columbus State. The new strategy is to offer it as a dual enrollment course to provide high school students with an early opportunity to build important academic success skills and get oriented to college environments and majors. As students move through high school and accumulate more credits, the expectation is that students are able to identify connections between their courses and future career goals and hone their postsecondary plans.

Students can also take advantage of Columbus State's mentorship programs and participate in job shadows with local professionals to help inform and contextualize classroom learning. In one

example, a student's experience shadowing an environmental consultant inspired her to take a college class on natural disasters, which sparked her interest in taking more geology courses and learning about careers in that field.

Perhaps the most encouraging takeaway about shifting expectations for students is related to the ones they hold for themselves. In focus groups with JFF, students reflected on the lessons they learned about time management and adjusting to the rigor of college courses. They also said that college coursework has helped them to better understand their career interests.

One student noted that taking dual enrollment courses has helped him to be more flexible and a more agile problem solver when things do not go as planned. Students agreed that the extra effort they needed to make in order to succeed in college courses would take some time for them to master, but would be a worthwhile investment in their future. Students also emphasized the importance of study groups they formed with peers, as well as informal ways they connected, such as group chats and texts. Based on this feedback, district leaders are planning to work with Columbus State to formally integrate these peer-support mechanisms into their programming.

New Ways to Use Data for Student-Centered Planning

As described above, the district's surprising data on college persistence and completion played a crucial role in the decision to refocus high school efforts on college and career readiness. Data analysis has continued to be an essential tool and has helped to empower staff to implement changes.

In 2017, as part of the i3 grant, the CCRE coalition invested in Tableau data visualization software, which has enabled counselors, administrators, and teachers across all participating districts to understand and use classroom and individual student data in new ways. For SWCSD, this has led to an enhanced districtwide emphasis on designing and delivering the necessary support services to help every single student achieve postsecondary readiness.

While the district historically had a clear idea of which students were struggling and which were excelling, leaders found it difficult to identify students who were underperforming academically but had untapped potential. With the help of Tableau, schools now track student progress on achieving "predictive

indicators" for each grade level. The CCRE chose to use the same set of predictive indicators for college readiness that is used by the Gates Foundation in their Networks for School Improvement, based on guidance from the American Institutes for Research.[9] The data help identify students who are not on track for postsecondary success. Indicators include: attendance rate, behavior (as measured by suspension/expulsion rates), proficiency in English language arts and math, on-track grade-to-grade progression through high school, college and career readiness (measured by remediation-free ACT/SAT or placement test scores), and college and career initiation (measured by enrollment in AP/dual enrollment/CTE courses, as well as credits and credentials earned through these courses).

In monitoring students across all indicators, teachers and administrators said, many more opportunities for promoting college and career readiness became visible. Educators now have more concrete ways of identifying and assisting students who might be ready to begin dual enrollment courses, for instance, but still need support. Staff said that analyzing the data has changed expectations of what postsecondary readiness can look like. Enrollment in career and technical education, for instance, is now considered an important factor contributing to

students' overall readiness and likelihood of success in postsecondary education, along with more traditional measures like attendance and GPA.

Along with these benefits, the ability to collect a more nuanced set of data has also brought additional responsibility. Both district leaders and school-based staff said that the new software, which has enabled more frequent use of data in meetings and in action plans, has created a culture where everyone is a "data miner." While staff generally regard Tableau as a helpful and powerful tool and they appreciate the more comprehensive view of student success it enables, several counselors did note its limitations around quantifying social-emotional factors that affect student

outcomes. These staff members said they hope that future CCRE professional development opportunities focus on ways to integrate key factors that are not captured in the data into intervention strategies.

In the next phases of this work, school counselors in the CCRE districts will receive external coaching on how to implement multi-tiered systems of support and action plans for students based on their achievement on college readiness indicators at various grade levels. In conversations with principals, several noted that not bringing counselors into the change management process earlier was a big oversight.

New Ways to Connect School to Careers

A substantial amount of data illustrates the positive impact that work-based learning can have on a student's academic success.[10] However, evidence also exists that students from higher-income backgrounds are more likely to participate in work-based learning opportunities.[11] South-Western City is finding ways to address these inequities and provide this important foundation for all students.

As mentioned above, the district's new approach to using data enables staff to identify students who are struggling in less-than-obvious ways and to be more proactive with intervention strategies. For example, eighth-grade students who have failed a core course but also have standardized test scores at the "Basic" level or above are selected to participate in a "career-based intervention" during their transition to high school. About 200 students across the district are enrolled in this specialized course. The goal is to make the connections between school and careers much more explicit for students.

Previously, the district used more traditional interventions for this group of potentially at-risk students, such as providing additional study hall periods. But they did not seek to engage students in exploring the real-world relevance of their core classes. Following the initial positive results of career-based interventions, the district plans to continue bolstering practical and impactful ways to find connections between academic courses, career development, and college preparation.

Being part of the CCRE also has brought the district into new partnerships brokered by Columbus State through its longstanding intermediary role. As one example, advisors from the Columbus-based organization I Know I Can have been credited with educating SWSCD's first-generation students and their families about college options and significantly increasing the number of students completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in order to qualify for scholarships and financial aid. Additionally, the national organization Communities in Schools helps families access physical and mental health services and other basic needs.

SWCSD is also connecting students to the world of work through "career pathway specialists." These individuals work with schools throughout the district and especially closely with the CTE coordinator and instructors. Career pathway specialists are responsible for building relationships with area employers

and designing a sequence of work-based learning experiences that align with students' developmental needs and the needs of particular CTE programs. Dedicating staff to structure work-based learning and develop, maintain, and grow employer partnerships is critical to ensuring that all students have equal opportunity to participate.

Beyond integrating career exploration into school, the district has committed to ensuring that all students leave high school with skills and credentials that have value in the labor market and put students on a path toward further postsecondary education. The most concrete example of this commitment is the "Senior Only Credential Program," which was introduced during the 2018-19 school year (see *"Senior Only Credential Program"*). This program is offered in occupations directly tied to local job openings in the area surrounding each high school and provides students with industry-recognized credentials upon completion. It provides important CTE opportunities at each school for seniors who did not meet the academic criteria for attending the district's standalone Career Academy earlier in their high school experience or were previously on a waiting list. In just the last year since the program was introduced, district and school leaders say it has had a positive impact on students who did not have a post-graduation plan at the start of their senior year.

Senior Only Credential Program:

The Ohio Senior Only Credential Program is a statewide opportunity for students in their senior year who have completed most of their curriculum requirements. The credentials available through the program are aligned with in-demand careers in Ohio. An industry credential can be part of students' path to graduation. The programs below are the Senior Only Credential programs offered at specific high schools within the SWCSD.

- Certified Logistics Technician Program (Central Crossing High School)
- Customer Service Support Program–with Bilingual Program Option (Franklin Heights High School and Westland High School)
- STNA Program (South-Western Career Academy)
- NCCER Construction Program (Westland High School)

In addition to leveraging career-focused education to improve outcomes for struggling students, SWCSD emphasizes the importance of establishing meaningful career connections for all students by integrating a continuum of work-based learning experiences in programs geared toward students who are accelerating through and succeeding in dual enrollment courses. SWCSD and Columbus State have partnered to connect course offerings at both the Career Academy and the Accelerated Learning Center (ALC) to high-demand career fields.

The ALC Software Development program, for example, consists of nine dual enrollment courses taken over two years, allowing students to earn 27 college credits through Columbus State. Highlights of the program, which serves approximately 25 students per cohort, include participation in hackathons, cybersecurity events, job shadowing opportunities, and field trips to large regional employers such as Nationwide Hospital, CoverMyMeds, and Pillar Technologies.

Employer needs are also integrated into the curriculum in real time: For instance, a division of the American Chemical Society recently provided a real-world problem for the students to solve involving agile project management. The district is currently piloting a software development internship program through Ohio Development Services, with a goal of growing students' awareness of and access to job opportunities in tech fields in Central Ohio.

Conclusion and Lessons Learned

A commitment to change is only as strong as the actions that follow. SWCSD's experience demonstrates that the results of ambitious calls for transformation depend on leaders and practitioners at all levels acting in concert to override "business as usual," even when improvement requires uncomfortable change. The district's collective decision to put the relationship between instructional design and learning at the center of its primary strategy to fulfill the expectations of the i3 grant created a ripple effect of ancillary positive change.

In taking a hard look at its college completion data, the district accepted that it was not doing enough to ensure that all students left their schools with the skills and experiences necessary to thrive as adults. In partnership with Columbus State, the district's systematic adoption of early college design elements, such as the Framework for Learning and increased dual enrollment opportunities, provided a way to mobilize changes leaders had wanted to make for years, but did not quite have the unifying momentum to do so.

While it is clear that the district's approach to change was thoughtful, inclusive, and data-informed, it also required a degree of courage to take certain instructional risks in the classroom, and to advance changes that were not immediately popular with all adults in the system. The rewards of these changes are visible today in the actions of students, educators, and administrators at all levels.

Lessons Learned

As Southwestern City and Columbus State continue to push forward to meet the ambitious goals outlined in the i3 grant, and sustain them long after the grant ends, several key lessons have emerged. Leaders of other school systems across the country can learn from and adapt these lessons in order to support their own journey to prepare all students for postsecondary success through the difficult but rewarding work of systems change.

 The lessons include:

1 — **The importance of systematic rollout of a common set of instructional practices, along with strategies to support continuous improvement for all levels of staff within the district**

2 — **The importance of developing student-centered, data-driven approaches to reach the students who were previously underserved**

3 — **The power of raising expectations for all students and embedding college courses and career pathways into the typical high school experience**

4 — **The critical role of partnerships—with colleges, community-based organizations, and employers—in expanding a school system's capacity to support all students and families in the transition from high school to college and careers**

Above all, perhaps the most important lesson for the field is that implementing culture change is not only possible in a relatively short period of time, but also effective at creating districtwide transformation and improvement.

Appendix

South-Western City School District Framework for Learning and Related Material

South-Western City School District Framework for Learning
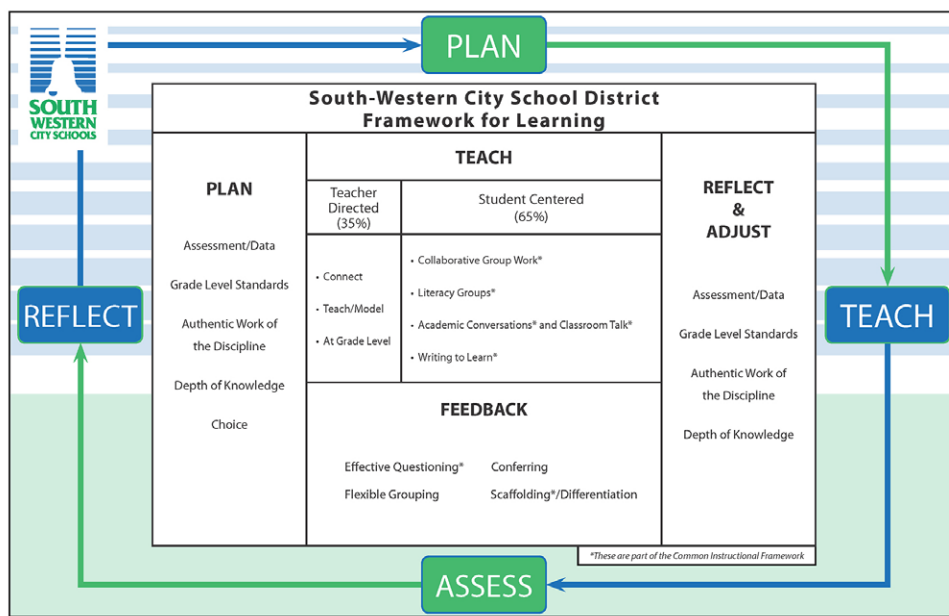
South-Western City School District Framework for Learning, Mapped to Employability Skills

Habits that are commonly found in successful workers and in those who persist to 2 or 4 year degree	What Employers Want	What Students Who Persist to Degree/Credential Attainment Do
Accountable Talk	Someone who is **responsible and reliable** regarding what they say and how it is said	Are accountable for their **participation and dialogue** with colleagues and peers to articulate thinking and strengthen their voice in the college classroom environment
Ask Questions	Someone who **asks questions** and tries to figure out solutions rather than waiting until someone tells them what to do	Formulate complex **questions** to deepen their understanding and engage in inquiry rather than listening, but not clarifying their own understanding
Figure out Scaffolds to Solve Problems, Demonstrating Grit, Persistence and Resilience	Someone who will try to figure out how to **solve a problem** rather than quitting	Enter new situations by **identifying what they know and what they need to know** and then scaffold processes to bridge that gap
Collaboration	Someone who can effectively participate in and lead a **team**	**Collaborate with others** to construct group products, solutions, text, etc. Can effectively put a team together with roles and responsibilities for production and outcomes
Write	Someone who can effectively and efficiently **communicate in writing**	Demonstrate **critical thinking, problem solving, and writing skills** for to deepen conversations, extend understanding and inform their learning
Reading Difficult or Technical Texts	Someone who can **read, understand and apply** technical texts	Unpack a variety of **complex text, documents and problems** to engage in high level discourse with peers

Endnotes

1   Anthony P. Carnevale, Nicole Smith, and Jeff Strohl, *Recovery: Projections of Job Growth and Education Requirements Through 2020* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 2013), https://1gyhoq479ufd3yna29x7ubjn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Recovery2020.FR_.Web_.pdf; Alastair Fitzpayne and Ethan Pollack, *Lifelong Learning and Training Accounts: Helping Workers Adapt and Succeed in a Changing Economy* (Washington, DC: Aspen Institute, 2018), https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2018/05/Lifelong-Learning-and-Training-Accounts-Issue-Brief.pdf?_ga=2.111094466.612212850.1569884895-980982350.1561998269.

2   Ohio Department of Higher Education, College Credit Plus annual reports, 2015-16 to 2018-19.

3   "South-Western City," Ohio School Report Cards, Ohio Department of Education, n.d, https://reportcard.education.ohio.gov/district/prepared/044800.

4   Ohio School Report Cards, "South-Western City."

5   Ohio School Report Cards, "South-Western City."

6   Ohio School Report Cards, "South-Western City."

7   "*Common Instructional Framework*," JFF, last updated March 1, 2016, https://www.jff.org/resources/common-instructional-framework/.

8   Ohio Department of Higher Education, College Credit Plus annual reports, 2015-16 to 2018-19.

9   Megan Sambolt and David Blumenthal, *Promoting College and Career Readiness: A Pocket Guide for State and District Leaders* (Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, March 2013), https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/CCR_Pocket_Guide_0.pdf.

10   M. Felicity Rogers-Chapman and Linda Darling-Hammond, *Preparing 21st Century Citizens: The Role of Work-Based Learning in Linked Learning* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, Stanford University, 2013), https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/preparing-21st-century-citizens-role-work-based-learning-linked-learning.pdf.

11   Nancy Hoffman, *Let's Get Real: Deeper Learning and the Power of the Workplace* (Boston: JFF, 2015), https://jfforg-prod-prime.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/Lets-Get-Real-021715.pdf.