

Self-Study Guide for Career Readiness in Secondary Schools

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Self-Study Guide for Career Readiness in Secondary Schools

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This self-study guide provides state and local education agencies and schools with a tool to assess implementation of career readiness practices across a district or secondary school and to plan improvements. It is arranged by implementation areas that have been found to be important to career readiness efforts based on a review of the literature and discussions with stakeholders. Each area includes guiding questions for discussion, potential sources of evidence, and a rating scale for self-assessment of implementation. This process of ongoing discussion, evidence use, and self-assessment can help states, districts, and secondary schools improve the effectiveness of career readiness practices.

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INTRODUCTION

The career readiness of students by the end of high school is critical, especially for the thousands of students who do not enroll in college. In 2017 approximately one in three high school graduates did not enroll in postsecondary education immediately after graduation (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). That figure does not take into account students who do not graduate from high school. Many students who do not pursue college or other postsecondary options enter the workforce. So, state and local education agencies and schools must ensure that career readiness practices in secondary school are sufficient for students' postsecondary enrollment or career success.

Statistics and conversations with education stakeholders suggest a need to bring school counselors, administrators, career and technical educators, and other teachers together to review and plan for career readiness practices in states, districts, and schools. In 2017, 43 percent of public school counselors reported that high school students were required to create personalized plans for postsecondary education, and most counselors reported spending 20 percent or less of their time on career counseling (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). In addition, the average student-to-counselor ratio in the United States is 482:1, well above the recommended ratio of 250:1 (National Association for College Admission Counseling and American School Counseling Association, 2015).

Based on the need to ensure that students are engaging in career readiness practices, this guide was developed specifically for educators supporting high school career readiness programs. State and local education agencies and schools that are implementing or planning to implement career readiness practices may find this guide helpful as they undertake a self-study process and consider which types of evidence to collect and which components of career readiness practices are important for evaluating implementation. Self-study is the process whereby a team uses a guide with predetermined areas of implementation and questions to collect, share, and discuss data with stakeholders. The self-study process can help ensure strong implementation of workplace-oriented career readiness practices and can document current implementation of career readiness policies and procedures.

This self-study guide was developed in partnership with the Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast's Florida Career Readiness Research Alliance, with feedback from alliance members and program administrators from alliance member districts. The guide was pilot tested with dozens of Florida school counselors, career and technical educators, other teachers, and administrators through the support of the Florida Department of Education and the Florida Association for Career and Technical Educators.

This guide covers seven career readiness elements in four areas of implementation drawn from the literature. These four areas are preparing career-ready students, teaching and advising, counseling, and building school and career networks. An annotated bibliography of the research supporting each element is in appendix A, and the development process for the guide is in appendix B. Educators engaging in a self-study process can review the conclusions from the research to learn about the importance of increasing career development practices in secondary schools. The areas of implementation, career readiness elements, and findings highlighted in the literature are:

- Area I: Preparing career-ready students.
 - *Career readiness element 1: Employability skills.* Findings include the importance of teaching employability skills in classes and programs.
 - *Career readiness element 2: Career exploration.* Findings include the importance of providing opportunities to explore careers through focused activities such as career exploration programs.

- Area II: Teaching and advising.
 - *Career readiness element 3: Relevant course content.* Findings include the importance of making connections between academic coursework and the world of work.
 - *Career readiness element 4: Individualized learning plans.* Findings include the importance of developing individualized learning plans.
- Area III: Counseling.
 - *Career readiness element 5: Collaborative career counseling.* Findings include the importance of involving family and community members in career counseling efforts.
 - *Career readiness element 6: Career counseling interventions.* Findings include the importance of career counseling interventions that guide students to the careers that best fit their personal attributes and talents.
- Area IV: Building school and career networks.
 - *Career readiness element 7: Work-based learning.* Findings include the importance of work-based learning.

Purpose and use of the self-study guide

The purpose of the Self-Study Guide for Career Readiness in Secondary Schools is to help state and local education agencies and schools:

- Collect baseline information for developing an implementation plan for career readiness practices.
- Prioritize student needs while developing the implementation plan for career readiness practices.
- Collect progress-monitoring information for continuous improvement of career readiness practices.
- Evaluate the implementation of career readiness practices.
- Examine patterns in student outcomes.

This guide aims to promote reflection on current strengths and challenges in planning or implementation, initiate conversations among staff, and identify areas for improvement. School counselors, administrators, teachers, and other staff (department chairs, coordinators, curriculum specialists, volunteers, and facilitators) knowledgeable in career readiness practices should participate in the self-study. It may also be helpful to include local or regional industry leaders or representatives of chambers of commerce in parts of the process.

The best time to conduct this self-study is at the beginning or end of the school year so that the self-study team can consider and assess prior-year implementation of career readiness practices and plan to implement data-informed improvements for the next year. Completing the process at the same time each year can facilitate continuous improvement.

The guide takes approximately three to five hours for the team to complete together, in addition to the two hours the facilitator will need to become familiar with the self-study process and the one hour each team member will

need for individual scoring. It may be helpful to divide the process that the team completes together into four sessions:

- Introducing the guide and the self-study process (approximately one hour the first time the process is completed and less time during subsequent iterations).
- Deciding on a group rating for each of the seven career readiness elements of the four implementation areas (approximately two hours).
- Prioritizing implementation of career readiness elements based on the evidence and importance for success described in the literature (approximately one hour).
- Developing an action plan (approximately one hour).

The self-study process works best when the team is led by a dedicated facilitator. The facilitator should be a careful listener and able to lead and structure discussions around collected evidence and decisionmaking processes. The facilitator should be knowledgeable in best practices for supporting career readiness, including the seven career readiness elements covered in this guide. It is also helpful for the facilitator to be familiar with instructional policies, procedures, and implementation in the state and local education agency and school context. The facilitator should review the guide in detail before beginning the self-study process, which will take approximately two hours. The facilitator should also collect relevant data and possible sources of evidence before convening a meeting. Examples of these sources of evidence for each career readiness element can be found in the Scoring Guide (see below).

It will be most helpful if the facilitator selects team members who are knowledgeable about career readiness practices in local education agencies and schools so that team members will not have to process and synthesize great amounts of information but will intuitively know how the practices are implemented locally.

Components of the guide

This guide has four components, discussed in more detail below:

- Scoring Guide.
- Implementation Majority Agreement Rating Form.
- Planning Next Steps Form.
- Action Plan Template.

Scoring Guide

The Scoring Guide includes guiding questions and potential sources of evidence to support self-study teams in reviewing local education agency– and school-based planning and implementation of career readiness practices.

The guiding questions are intended to stimulate team members’ thinking on practices that may be considered for each career readiness element. The potential sources of evidence are intended to help team members think about artifacts that may provide evidence that a career readiness element is being addressed. The sources are not meant to be all-inclusive.

Box 1 lists the steps for completing the Scoring Guide.

Box 1. Steps to complete the Scoring Guide

1. *Select a dedicated and knowledgeable facilitator and recruit team members.* Recruit five to seven team members with wide-ranging perspectives and expertise. Team members should include school counselors, administrators, teachers, and other staff (department chairs, coordinators, curriculum specialists, volunteers, and facilitators) knowledgeable in career readiness policies and implementation. Then convene a meeting to complete the self-study process.
2. *Convene a meeting and present an overview of the self-study process to the team.* The facilitator should review the data and possible sources of evidence that he or she has identified. [Activity length: 30 minutes]
3. *Ask each team member to review the contents of the Scoring Guide for each career readiness element to be rated, as well as appendix A, Support for Career Readiness Elements in the Scoring Guide.* [Activity length: 20 minutes]
4. *Answer team members’ questions about the review.* [Activity length: 20 minutes]
5. *Have each team member complete a numerical rating (1–4) for each career readiness element in the Scoring Guide.* Team members should base their ratings on relevant data or the sources of evidence provided by the facilitator. Each team member should rate each element independently. Team members may abstain from rating elements that they do not feel competent to rate. [Activity length: 60 minutes]

Implementation Majority Agreement Rating Form

After all self-study team members have completed the Scoring Guide, the facilitator should guide the team through a group rating process. The team should use the Implementation Majority Agreement Rating Form to reach agreement on the status of implementation of career readiness elements and to plan the next steps. The most important part of this process is the discussion that goes into group rating. The scores on the Implementation Majority Agreement Rating Form should reflect this discussion. Box 2 lists the steps for completing the Implementation Majority Agreement Rating Form.

Box 2. Steps to complete the Implementation Majority Agreement Rating Form

1. Meet as a group after all team members have completed the scoring guide individually.
2. *Rate as a group to reach majority agreement.* There are several steps to group rating [Activity length: 90 minutes]:
 - *Rate.* Ask each team member to provide the numerical rating selected for each career readiness element.
 - *Identify the most frequent rating.* For example, if three team members rate an element as 3, five rate the element as 2, and two rate the element as 1, the most frequent rating is 2.
 - *Discuss the rationale for high frequency ratings.* Ask someone who selected a high frequency rating to talk about what motivated it.
 - *Discuss the rationale for lower frequency ratings.* Ask other team members to talk about what motivated their rating.
 - *Rate again.* Ask each team member to provide a second numerical rating for each career readiness element for which majority agreement had not been reached. Team members may change their initial ratings based on the discussion.
3. *Record ratings.* If there is majority agreement (determined by majority vote), record the most frequent rating on the Implementation Majority Agreement Rating Form.
4. *Repeat this process for each career readiness element.* If majority agreement is not reached (there is no single most frequent rating), continue discussing and rating until majority agreement is reached.
5. *Discuss and record initial team thoughts on priorities, next steps, and activities on the Implementation Majority Agreement Rating Form.* [Activity length: 20 minutes]

Planning Next Steps Form and Action Plan Template

The Planning Next Steps Form is used to prioritize implementation of career readiness elements based on the evidence and importance for success described in the literature in appendix A. The self-study team should review the group ratings for elements that reflect a need for development or improvement and identify two or three priorities for action planning. The team should then record the priority areas and complete a detailed plan for next steps and activities, noting any potential challenges. Once this step is complete, the facilitator should use the information to complete the Action Plan Template. Box 3 lists the steps for completing the Planning Next Steps Form and the Action Plan Template.

Box 3. Steps to complete the Planning Next Steps Form and Action Plan Template

It is recommended that the Planning Next Steps Form and the Action Plan Template be completed in two separate sessions. The first session would consist of completing the Planning Next Steps Form and a detailed implementation plan and should take approximately one hour:

- *Lead a discussion with the team about the priorities for action* based on the research on implementation strategies highlighted directly below the description of each career readiness element and summarized in appendix A. Also incorporate the group discussions on current implementation. Record the results on the Planning Next Steps Form. Questions on the form may also guide decisions on priority career readiness elements. [Activity length: 30 minutes]
- *Develop a detailed implementation plan.* Lead a discussion with the team about the next steps and activities that are most urgent and actionable. [Activity length: 30 minutes]

The second session would consist of completing the Action Plan Template and should take approximately one hour:

- *Discuss potential challenges and roadblocks to the implementation plan.* Use the information gleaned to complete the Action Plan Template. [Activity length: 60 minutes]

SCORING GUIDE

Area I: Preparing career-ready students

Career readiness element 1: Employability skills

<p>Provide instruction in employability skills (such as communication, teamwork, social interaction, goal planning, problem solving, conflict management, initiative and enterprise, organization, self-management, resume writing, and interviewing).</p> <p>Soft skills or employability skills “are centrally important for human capital development and workforce success. A growing evidence base shows that these qualities rival academic or technical skills in their ability to predict employment and earnings, among other outcomes” (p. 4).</p> <p>Lippman, L. H., Ryberg, R., Carney, R., & Moore, K. A. (2015). <i>Workforce connections: Key “soft skills” that foster youth workforce success: Toward a consensus across fields</i>. Child Trends.</p>	
<p>Guiding questions</p> <p>To help you determine a numerical rating for this area, consider each question and then answer Yes (Y), No (N), or Developing (D).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Do courses include employability skills training?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Do teachers provide employability skills instruction?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Do employability skills courses use a curriculum?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Is professional development on teaching employability skills available to teachers who teach these skills?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Are employability skills curricula integrated into academic core courses (English language arts, math, science, and social studies)?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Are local employers involved in employability skills training (such as on-the job training, mock interviews, applications, invitations to employers for career days, and student video introductions)?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Are administrators, teachers, and school counselors involved with work-based learning programs that promote employability skills training?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Do students complete assessments that lead to industry certification or a career credential attainment?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Do teachers provide consistent instruction on the connections between positive school behaviors and work behaviors (such as being on time, performing well on assignments and completing them by an established deadline, and persevering through difficult tasks)?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Are students offered opportunities for employability skills training during the summer or throughout the year?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Are partnerships in place between secondary and postsecondary career and education institutions to ensure a seamless transition process for students?</p>	
<p>Possible sources of evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• School master schedule.• Professional development plans (including employability skills standards and competencies) for teachers.• Instructional plans for training in student employability skills.• Interviews with students, school counselors, administrators, teachers, and career and technical education coordinators who support employability skills training.• Schedules and calendars reflecting planning meetings with community business representatives and employers.• Agenda and copy of presentation materials and curriculum used for employability skills instruction.• Student individualized learning plans.• Co-planning between career and technical education teachers and core academic teachers.	
<p>Circle the rating number that best describes your institution’s implementation progress for this item.</p>	<p>1 = Not currently feasible</p> <p>2 = Feasible but not implemented</p> <p>3 = In process of implementing</p> <p>4 = Fully implemented</p>

Career readiness element 2: Career exploration

Provide career exploration (assessment, information, activities, and lessons), including career guidance programs.

Students and others need to explore career-related aspects to determine which careers may offer the best fit. “Individuals’ career-related preferences include many additional considerations beyond interests. Moreover, these additional aspects may also be used to characterize occupations and thus can be used to help deliberating individuals locate promising careers during the prescreening stage” (p. 353).

Gati, I. (1998). Using career-related aspects to elicit preferences and characterize occupations for a better person-environment fit. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 52(3), 343–356.

Guiding questions

To help you determine a numerical rating for this area, consider each question and then answer Yes (Y), No (N), or Developing (D).

- Are students provided with opportunities in a course or courses to explore careers that may match their career interests and that would be a good fit for them?
- Do students complete a career guidance program?
- Do students complete a portfolio of their work?
- Are training or planning sessions offered that enable discussing or sharing school practices in career exploration?
- Are formal assessments (ability, achievement, aptitude, and interest inventory) available for students?
- Are formal assessment data used to inform career program planning?
- Is professional development on how to interpret formal assessment data (ability, achievement, aptitude, and interest inventory) available to teachers and counselors to help them convey the results clearly to students?
- Are opportunities to increase career and technical education–related science, technology, engineering, and math training provided for students from low-income families?
- Are local or community agencies or school clubs available to support career exploration?

Possible sources of evidence

- Master plan and calendar for student career exploration (assessment, information, programs, and lessons).
- Roster of students completing career guidance programs.
- Data on student enrollment in career exploration courses.
- Schedules and calendars reflecting training or planning meetings to discuss career exploration efforts.
- Interviews with students, school counselors, administrators, and teachers detailing career exploration efforts.
- Engagement in school-sponsored clubs that provide career information.

Circle the rating number that best describes your institution’s implementation progress for this item.

- 1 = Not currently feasible
- 2 = Feasible but not implemented
- 3 = In process of implementing
- 4 = Fully implemented

Area II: Teaching and advising

Career readiness element 3: Relevant course content

Organize classes around career program areas and provide instruction that connects course content to the world of work.

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) practice guide, Preventing dropout in secondary schools, is an evidence-based guide that recommends that educators “engage students by offering curricula and programs that connect schoolwork with college and career success and that improve students’ capacity to manage challenges in and out of school” (p. 3). Recommendation 3 in the practice guide finds strong evidence for this. The first step to carrying out this recommendation is for educators to work directly to connect schoolwork to students’ options after high school by offering curricula and programs that are clearly connected to a career pathway or postsecondary education. This includes organizing classes around a career goal.

The WWC reviews existing research on programs, products, practices, and policies in education. Its goal is to provide educators with the information they need to make evidence-based decisions. The WWC focuses on the results from high-quality research to answer the question “What works in education?” Find more information about the WWC at <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/WhoWeAre>.

Rumberger, R., Addis, H., Allensworth, E., Balfanz, R., Bruch, J., Dillon, E., et al. (2017). *Preventing dropout in secondary schools* (NCEE 2017–No. 4028). Educator’s Practice Guide. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/24>.

Guiding questions

To help you determine a numerical rating for this area, consider each question and then answer Yes (Y), No (N), or Developing (D).

- ___ Are there career academies or other structures that provide an avenue for students to organize classes around a career goal? Career academies are smaller learning communities within secondary schools focusing on a specific career theme (Dynarski et al., 2008).
- ___ Do all programs of study offer a sequence of courses that provide rigorous academic content preparing all students for further education and training after high school?
- ___ Do all programs of study offer a sequence of courses that provide relevant technical skills preparing all students for further education and training after high school?
- ___ Are outcomes from student certification exams or work toward micro-credentials reviewed by instructors and others to determine whether career- or vocation-specific skills are adequately taught to ensure readiness in the field?
- ___ Are student data on postsecondary school attendance and workforce participation after graduation (disaggregated by such factors as gender, race/ethnicity, disability status, or first-generation postsecondary school attendee status) used to guide planning of career and technical education programs and considerations of equity for current students?
- ___ Are professional development, planning opportunities, or real-world experiences offered to content area teachers so that they can integrate relevant examples from the world of work into their courses?
- ___ Are professional development training and resources provided that relate to “stackable credentials” and career-building pathways, including postsecondary education?
- ___ Are professional development training and resources that relate to labor market and occupational outlook trends provided to teachers, school counselors, and other school support personnel?
- ___ Do teachers, school counselors, or other school support personnel provide career goal support to special populations such as English learner students, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, and students with disabilities?

(continued)

Possible sources of evidence

- School course curricula selection guide, including career and technical education programs of study that prepare students for industry or career certification attainment.
- Master schedule showing that classes are organized around career clusters.
- Evidence of teachers and school counselors planning lessons with career and technical education teachers that integrate examples of relevant application into content area courses.
- Interviews with students, administrators, career and technical education teachers, content area teachers, and business and community members.

Circle the rating number that best describes your institution's implementation progress for this item.

- 1 = Not currently feasible
- 2 = Feasible but not implemented
- 3 = In process of implementing
- 4 = Fully implemented

Career readiness element 4: Individualized learning plans

Assist students in formulating individualized learning plans or individual graduation plans.

The What Works Clearinghouse practice guide provides a checklist for effective career-focused programs that includes individual graduation plans (also known as individualized learning plans). “Starting in 9th grade, students work with their counselors to complete an individual graduation plan. Plans align students’ career goals with their course of study, work, and extracurricular experiences, as well as giving students feedback on how their academic progress relates to their post–high school goals” (p. 31). This comes from Recommendation 3 of the practice guide: Engage students by offering curricula and programs that connect schoolwork with college and career success and that improve students’ capacity to manage challenges in and out of school.

Rumberger, R., Addis, H., Allensworth, E., Balfanz, R., Bruch, J., Dillon, E., et al. (2017). *Preventing dropout in secondary schools* (NCEE 2017–No. 4028). Educator’s Practice Guide. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/24>.

Guiding questions

To help you determine a numerical rating for this area, consider each question and then answer Yes (Y), No (N), or Developing (D).

- Are student individualized learning plans in place and consistently used?
- Do individualized learning plans include components of career readiness practices, including alignment of students’ career goals with their course of study, work, and extracurricular experiences and feedback on how academic progress relates to post–high school goals?
- Do individualized learning plans use student assessment data in career advising?
- Do individualized learning plans include specific high school graduation planning information and progress toward satisfying standard diploma requirements?
- Do students and parents have online access to monitor academic achievement, attendance, and teacher syllabi:
 - For grades 6–8?
 - For grades 9–12?

Possible sources of evidence

- Student individualized learning plans or individual graduation plans.
- Plan and schedule for students to develop individualized learning plans or individual graduation plans.
- Student goal statements.
- Data that drive goals.

Circle the rating number that best describes your institution’s implementation progress for this item.

- 1 = Not currently feasible
- 2 = Feasible but not implemented
- 3 = In process of implementing
- 4 = Fully implemented

Area III: Counseling

Career readiness element 5: Collaborative career counseling

<p>Provide collaborative opportunities for school counselors, administrators, teachers, families, and community members to discuss career counseling with students.</p> <p>“Parental expectations and support play an important role in the development of children’s college and vocational aspirations” (p. 172). “The fact that students are going to school counselors, teachers, parents, peers, coaches, and religious leaders as sources of information over the course of their high school tenure points to the need for collaboration to exist among the teachers, families, and communities” (p. 178).</p> <p>Griffin, D., Hutchins, B. C., & Meece, J. L. (2011). Where do rural high school students go to find information about their futures? <i>Journal of Counseling & Development, 89</i>(2), 172–181. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ930514.</p>	
<p>Guiding questions</p> <p>To help you determine a numerical rating for this area, consider each question and then answer Yes (Y), No (N), or Developing (D).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Do administrators oversee efforts to bring together school counselors, administrators, teachers, families, and community members to share career options and availabilities in the community and beyond?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Are teachers involved in the discussion of individualized learning plans or individual graduation plans with students?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Are there programs and support services to counsel students on career options, job training, work-based learning, and available support services?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Are there programs and support services to counsel students on financial aid, secondary and postsecondary options, dual or concurrent enrollment, and other available support services?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Are students and parents taught financial literacy as it relates to postsecondary education planning and personal finance?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Are multiple opportunities provided for students based on career program areas and connections with community members working in various fields of interest?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Once course enrollment data are available at the beginning of the school year, are planned career exploration activities, employability skills curricula and instruction, and other programs modified accordingly?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Are parent workshops offered in the community (local library, community center, or religious center)?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Do parents attend workshops offered in the community?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does the local education agency ensure that parents receive information about high school curriculum choices and how those choices relate to career and postsecondary education options?</p>	
<p>Possible sources of evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website, flyer, or social media postings noting scheduled events. • Logs of event plans and outcomes. • Family/student career goal plans. • School counseling program master calendar. 	
<p>Circle the rating number that best describes your institution’s implementation progress for this item.</p>	<p>1 = Not currently feasible</p> <p>2 = Feasible but not implemented</p> <p>3 = In process of implementing</p> <p>4 = Fully implemented</p>

Career readiness element 6: Career counseling interventions

Provide group or individual career counseling interventions, such as academic advising (including access to various forms of accurate career planning information) and outcome expectations (career forecasts).

Career guidance has benefits for a variety of career-related and academic measures for students. “Of the different types of career guidance interventions, individual counseling interventions were most effective. This simple planning intervention may help students understand the connections between their goals and the necessary steps to take towards them. Thus, this intervention is potentially very effective” (p. 30). “Students do seem to benefit, both vocationally and academically, from participation in career courses. In particular, they seem to increase their knowledge of careers and their ability to make career-related decisions. On most career-related measures, students did see increased outcomes when compared with students not enrolled in a career course” (p. 29).

Hughes, K. L., & Karp, M. M. (2004). *School-based career development: A synthesis of the literature*. Columbia University Institute on Education and the Economy.

Guiding questions

To help you determine a numerical rating for this area, consider each question and then answer Yes (Y), No (N), or Developing (D).

- Are career counseling, planning, and academic advising sessions provided in a timely manner?
- Are positive outcomes reported from career counseling, planning, and academic advising sessions?
- Are reliable sources used to provide accurate career planning and outcome expectations for students, including information on career forecasts?
- Do career counseling efforts and supports ensure positive outcomes for students with disabilities and English learner students?
- Are career and technical education teachers involved in identifying the need for transition to high school career counseling services with the individualized education program team before a student with a disability turns age 14?
- Do programs and support services address the needs of grade 12 students who are undecided on their postsecondary education plans?
- Is professional development on multicultural career counseling and development competencies provided to teachers, school counselors, and support personnel to better promote the career development of all students?
- Do secondary and postsecondary institutions collaborate to provide counseling for students between high school and postsecondary enrollment to avoid “summer melt”?

Possible sources of evidence

- Master schedule noting career counseling courses or scheduled times for career counseling sessions with counselors or in classes.
- Documentation noting that accurate career planning and forecast information are provided to students in a systematic way.

Circle the rating number that best describes your institution’s implementation progress for this item.

- 1 = Not currently feasible
- 2 = Feasible but not implemented
- 3 = In process of implementing
- 4 = Fully implemented

Area IV: Building school and career networks

Career readiness element 7: Work-based learning

<p>Provide career days, work-related experiences, work-based learning (internships, apprenticeships, or school-based enterprises), and visits to postsecondary campuses.</p> <p>The What Works Clearinghouse practice guide provides a checklist for effective career-focused programs that includes work-based learning. “Students participate in work-based learning that links classroom activities with work experiences, such as job shadowing and career mentoring” (p. 31). It also recommends that educators connect relevant coursework with external opportunities. “Reinforce the relevancy of coursework by creating a continuum of experiential learning outside the classroom that builds awareness of the connections between high school and students’ college or career goals. This might include work-based learning experiences that begin with bringing in outside speakers to discuss their professions and culminate with a summer internship before senior year” (p. 33).</p> <p>Rumberger, R., Addis, H., Allensworth, E., Balfanz, R., Bruch, J., Dillon, E., et al. (2017). <i>Preventing dropout in secondary schools</i> (NCEE 2017–No. 4028). Educator’s Practice Guide. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/24.</p>	
<p>Guiding questions</p> <p>To help you determine a numerical rating for this area, consider each question and then answer Yes (Y), No (N), or Developing (D).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does the local education agency or school encourage and support postsecondary campus visits?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does the local education agency designate a representative to participate in chamber of commerce meetings (or equivalent) to inform business and community leaders about career and technical education and other programs of study and invite involvement?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does the local education agency or school collaborate with community businesses or local governments to recruit students for summer job opportunities?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does the local education agency or school offer school-based internships to students?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does the local education agency or school encourage community partnerships to offer students internships or apprenticeship opportunities?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Are students encouraged by educators and community members to participate in apprenticeships and internships in schools and the local community?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does the local education agency or school offer pre-employment summer transition opportunities?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Are processes in place to facilitate career exploration during the transition period between middle and high school?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Do instructors and others review data on outcomes of student work-based learning experiences to determine whether career- or vocation-specific skills are adequately taught to prepare students for work in the field?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Are student data on work-based learning experiences disaggregated by such factors as gender, race/ethnicity, and disability status used to guide planning of work-based learning programs and considerations of equity for current students?</p>	
<p>Possible sources of evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trip requests or approvals for postsecondary campuses. • Newsletters, job postings, memoranda of understanding, memoranda of agreement. • Social media postings. 	
<p>Circle the rating number that best describes your institution’s implementation progress for this item.</p>	<p>1 = Not currently feasible</p> <p>2 = Feasible but not implemented</p> <p>3 = In process of implementing</p> <p>4 = Fully implemented</p>

IMPLEMENTATION MAJORITY AGREEMENT RATING FORM

Self-study team member: _____

The facilitator should record on this form the results of group discussion and ratings for each career readiness element and priorities for improvement based on the discussion and ratings. Consider new priorities that arise from the discussion, the person or people responsible for meeting those priorities, and initial brainstorming ideas for next steps/activities for each area rated 2 or 3.

Rating key:

1 = Not currently feasible

2 = Feasible but not implemented

3 = In process of implementing

4 = Fully implemented

Career readiness element	Individual rating (circle number)	Group rating (circle number)	Priorities and person or people responsible	Ideas for next steps/activities
1. Employability skills: Provide instruction in employability skills (such as communication, teamwork, social interaction, goal planning, problem solving, conflict management, initiative and enterprise, organization, self-management, resume writing, and interviewing).	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4		
2. Career exploration: Provide career exploration (assessment, information, activities, and lessons) including career guidance programs.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4		
3. Relevant course content: Organize classes around career program areas and provide instruction that connects course content to the world of work.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4		
4. Individualized learning plans: Assist students in formulating individualized learning plans or individual graduation plans.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4		
5. Collaborative career counseling: Provide collaborative opportunities for school counselors, administrators, teachers, families, and community members to discuss career counseling with students.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4		
6. Career counseling interventions: Provide group or individual career counseling interventions, such as academic advising (including access to various forms of accurate career planning information) and outcome expectations (career forecasts).	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4		
7. Work-based learning: Provide career days, work-related experiences, work-based learning (internships, apprenticeships, or school-based enterprises), and visits to postsecondary campuses.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4		

PLANNING NEXT STEPS FORM

(to be led by the facilitator)

After completing the Implementation Majority Agreement Rating Form, the facilitator should begin completing this Planning Next Steps Form by leading a discussion with the self-study team on the priorities for action based on the strength of research on implementation. The facilitator should then lead a discussion on developing a detailed implementation plan for next steps and the most urgent and actionable activities. Finally, the facilitator should lead a discussion to identify potential challenges to the plan.

Consideration of self-study findings

In deciding priority career readiness elements, consider and discuss the findings for each element in appendix A.

Priorities for action

Based on the group discussion and ratings, list the priorities for improving implementation of career readiness practices.

Consider:

- Which career readiness elements are rated 2 (feasible but not implemented) or 3 (in process of implementing)?
- Which career readiness elements have actionable solutions for improvement identified by the team?
- Which career readiness elements have clear agreement for consideration of next steps?

Next steps and urgent and actionable activities

Based on the group discussion, what next steps and activities are needed to address the listed priorities?

Consider:

- What will be the timeline for implementing the practice?
- Who will be responsible for determining the strategies or providing the resources?

Challenges

Based on the group discussion, what general challenges are anticipated? How will the challenges be addressed?

Consider:

- Who will be responsible for addressing the challenges?

Person or people responsible, timeline, resources

Who will be responsible for monitoring progress as the plan is implemented?

Consider:

- What will be the timeline for implementation?
 - What budget and resources are needed?
-

ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

(to be led by the facilitator)

Purpose: To create an Action Plan for an institution’s implementation of evidence-based readiness practices in career counseling.

Directions: Using this form as a template, develop an Action Plan identifying the action items your institution must accomplish to ensure that the priorities outlined in the Planning Next Steps Form are thoroughly addressed.

Action steps What will you do?	Responsibilities Who will do it?	Timeline By when? (month/ day/year)	Resources • Resources available • Resources needed (financial, human, other) • Administrative support needed	Potential barriers/ challenges • What individuals or entities might resist and why? • How do we address this resistance? • What other challenges may arise? • How do we address these challenges?	Communications plan • Who is involved? • What methods? • How often?	Evaluation method • How will we determine that we have reached our goal? • What are our measures?	Budget
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Step 1:

Step 2:

Step 3:

Step 4:

Step 5:

APPENDIX A. SUPPORT FOR CAREER READINESS ELEMENTS IN THE SCORING GUIDE

Area I: Preparing career-ready students

Career readiness element 1: Employability skills

Bloch, D. P. (1996). Career development and workforce preparation: Educational policy versus school practice. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 45(1), 20–39.

This study focused on the results of a multistate survey of high school educators. The author noted that “the immediate impression was that large segments of the secondary population were not involved in curricular or guidance activities that lead to the personal and interpersonal career development outcomes identified in federal policy” (p. 30).

Lapan, R. T., Tucker, B., Kim, S. K., & Kosciulek, J. F. (2003). Preparing rural adolescents for post-high school transitions. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 81(3), 329–342. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ671134>.

This study evaluated career development strategies intended to support students in making successful post-high school transitions. The authors found that “increased career development activities predicted greater student satisfaction that their education was better preparing them for their future and for their plans to enter post-high school settings that require more education” (p. 339).

Lippman, L. H., Ryberg, R., Carney, R., & Moore, K. A. (2015). *Workforce connections: Key “soft skills” that foster youth workforce success: Toward a consensus across fields*. Child Trends.

Through a review of the literature, the authors found that “soft skills” or “employability skills” are “centrally important for human capital development and workforce success. A growing evidence base shows that these qualities rival academic or technical skills in their ability to predict employment and earnings, among other outcomes” (p. 4).

Career readiness element 2: Career exploration

Gati, I. (1998). Using career-related aspects to elicit preferences and characterize occupations for a better person-environment fit. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 52(3), 343–356.

The author of this study noted that students and others need to explore career-related aspects to determine which careers may offer the best fit. “Individuals’ career-related preferences include many additional considerations beyond interests. Moreover, these additional aspects may also be used to characterize occupations and thus can be used to help deliberating individuals locate promising careers during the prescreening stage” (p. 353).

Griffin, D., Hutchins, B. C., & Meece, J. L. (2011). Where do rural high school students go to find information about their futures? *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 89(2), 172–181. www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/Publications/ratioreport.pdf.

By analyzing the results of a survey of rural high school students, these authors found that providing access to career exploration materials, including internet-based career exploration programs, was important. “School

counselors should have updated brochures, pamphlets, and other print media regarding various career and educational opportunities. Internet-ready computers should also be equipped with career exploration programs to help provide students with a more comprehensive knowledge of various occupations” (p. 178).

Hughes, K. L., & Karp, M. M. (2004). *School-based career development: A synthesis of the literature*. Columbia University Institute on Education and the Economy.

This review of the literature on comprehensive guidance programs, career courses, counseling interventions, and computer-assisted career guidance programs found benefits from career guidance on a variety of career-related and academic measures. “The few studies on academic counseling or advising showed positive findings” (p. 29). “Computer-assisted career guidance programs appear to contribute to students’ career development, according to some career-focused inventories” (p. 30).

Super, D. E. (1983). Assessment in career guidance: Toward truly developmental counseling. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 61(9), 555–562.

The author of this study presented a model for career counseling that includes a series of steps that lead toward the development of the individual to understand and find the best career fit. “The career development model brings out the fact that readiness for vocational and related career-decision making requires, 1) a sense of autonomy, time or future perspective, and self-esteem, 2) a commitment to work or to a self-actualizing career (work salience), 3) career maturity in the sense in which that term is now used by counselors and career development specialists, and then 4) the search for a good match of developing interests, values, and aptitudes with those characterizing a field of work and other life career roles” (p. 562).

Swanson, J. L., & Fouad, N. A. (1999). Applying theories of person-environment fit to the transition from school to work. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 47(4), 337–347. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ598678>.

The authors of this study noted the importance of considerations for how well students may fit into potential workplace environments based on personal attributes. “Students need to spend sufficient time in exploration that leads to self-knowledge. School-to-work programs should teach the basic components underlying person-environment fit. Students entering work directly from high school are in particular need of the knowledge of self and work, and how to fit the two together” (p. 345).

Area II: Teaching and advising

Career readiness element 3: Relevant course content

Lapan, R. T., Tucker, B., Kim, S. K., & Kosciulek, J. F. (2003). Preparing rural adolescents for post-high school transitions. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 81(3), 329–342. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ671134>.

The authors of this study evaluated curricular strategies to prepare rural adolescents to make successful post-high school transitions. The authors found value in teachers making relevant connections between their content and the world of work. “Eighth graders who indicated that their curriculum had made more relevant connections between school and careers were more satisfied than were 8th graders whose curriculum had fewer relevant connections between school and careers” (p. 336). In addition, the authors noted that students found benefits in having their courses organized around a career goal. “Eighth and 12th graders who indicated that their high school course of study had been, or will be, organized around a career goal expressed greater satisfaction and had higher levels of education associated with their anticipated post-high school setting than did 8th and 12th graders whose course work was not organized around a career goal” (p. 336).

Rumberger, R., Addis, H., Allensworth, E., Balfanz, R., Bruch, J., Dillon, E., et al. (2017). *Preventing dropout in secondary schools* (NCEE 2017–No. 4028). Educator’s Practice Guide. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/24>.

This What Works Clearinghouse practice guide recommends that educators “engage students by offering curricula and programs that connect schoolwork with college and career success and that improve students’ capacity to manage challenges in and out of school” (p. 3). Recommendation 3 in the practice guide finds strong evidence for this practice. The first step to carrying out this recommendation is for educators to work directly to connect schoolwork to students’ options after high school by offering curricula and programs that are clearly connected to a career pathway or postsecondary education. This includes organizing classes around a career goal.

Career readiness element 4: Individualized learning plans

Rumberger, R., Addis, H., Allensworth, E., Balfanz, R., Bruch, J., Dillon, E., et al. (2017). *Preventing dropout in secondary schools* (NCEE 2017–No. 4028). Educator’s Practice Guide. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/24>.

This What Works Clearinghouse practice guide provides a checklist for effective career-focused programs that includes individual graduation plans. “Starting in 9th grade, students work with their counselors to complete an individual graduation plan. Plans align students’ career goals with their course of study, work, and extracurricular experiences, as well as giving students feedback on how their academic progress relates to their post–high school goals” (p. 31).

Solberg, V. S., Phelps, L. A., Haakenson, K. A., Durham, J. F., & Timmons, J. (2012). The nature and use of individualized learning plans as a promising career intervention strategy. *Journal of Career Development, 39*(6), 500–514. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ984300>.

The authors of this study noted that individualized learning plans are a promising practice to help prepare high school students with career readiness skills. “ILPs [individualized learning plans] support career readiness by helping students identify career goals based on self-exploration of their interests, skills, and values and supporting their development career planning and management skills” (p. 510).

Area III: Counseling

Career readiness element 5: Collaborative career counseling

Griffin, D., Hutchins, B. C., & Meece, J. L. (2011). Where do rural high school students go to find information about their futures? *Journal of Counseling & Development, 89*(2), 172–181. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ930514>.

The authors of this study used data from a national study of rural high school youth to examine where students go for information on their future and careers and which sources students find most helpful. The authors shared that “parental expectations and support play an important role in the development of children’s college and vocational aspirations” (p. 172). The authors also noted that “the fact that students are going to school counselors, teachers, parents, peers, coaches, and religious leaders as sources of information over the course of their high school tenure points to the need for collaboration to exist among the teachers, families, and communities” (p. 178).

Career readiness element 6: Career counseling interventions

Griffin, D., Hutchins, B. C., & Meece, J. L. (2011). Where do rural high school students go to find information about their futures? *Journal of Counseling & Development, 89*(2), 172–181. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ930514>.

The authors of this study noted the need for counselors, teachers, and parents to have access to accurate career planning information. “With accurate and realistic career information, students can assess their values, interests, self-efficacy beliefs, and career aspirations as they relate to potential occupations and careers. However, those students who do not have accurate information can develop unrealistic career goals that can lead to failure in completing college or obtaining a rewarding career” (p. 173).

Hughes, K. L., & Karp, M. M. (2004). *School-based career development: A synthesis of the literature*. Columbia University Institute on Education and the Economy.

The authors of this report found benefits from career guidance on a variety of career-related and academic measures for students through a synthesis of the literature on comprehensive guidance programs, career courses, counseling interventions, and computer-assisted career guidance programs. For career counseling interventions, “the meta-analyses found that, of the different types of career guidance interventions, individual counseling interventions were most effective. This simple planning intervention may help students understand the connections between their goals and the necessary steps to take towards them. Thus, this intervention is potentially very effective” (p. 30). In addition, the authors found benefits from offering career courses for students. “Students do seem to benefit, both vocationally and academically, from participation in career courses. In particular, they seem to increase their knowledge of careers and their ability to make career-related decisions. On most career-related measures, students did see increased outcomes when compared with students not enrolled in a career course” (p. 29).

Lapan, R. T., Tucker, B., Kim, S. K., & Kosciulek, J. F. (2003). Preparing rural adolescents for post-high school transitions. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 81*(3), 329–342. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ671134>.

The authors of this study noted the importance of providing career counseling interventions to students. “Theory-driven career counseling interventions facilitate the growth patterns of constructs that lie at the heart of issues that motivate students to better performance and emotional well-being” (p. 340).

Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (1994). Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest, choice, and performance. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 45*(1), 79–122. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ487458>.

The authors of this study found that self-efficacy helps “determine one’s choice of activities and environments, as well as one’s effort expenditure, persistence, thought patterns, and emotional reactions when confronted by obstacles” (p. 83). Understanding one’s abilities and strengths through exploration helps ensure better person-to-environment fit.

Savickas, M. L. (1999). The transition from school to work: A developmental perspective. *The Career Development Quarterly, 47*(4), 326–336.

The author of this study explained a framework for applying theories of the school-to-work transition. In terms of career counseling interventions, the author found that “there is a strong empirical base that documents the outcomes teachers and counselors can expect when they use career development interventions to smooth the STW [school-to-work] transition” (p. 334).

Area IV: Building school and career networks

Career readiness element 7: Work-based learning

Alfeld, C., Charner, I., Johnson, L., & Watts, E. (2013). *Work-based learning opportunities for high school students*. National Research Center for Career and Technical Education. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED574519>.

The authors of this report worked to provide a knowledge base on work-based learning to assist state and local educators in understanding best practices for implementation. “Our examination of selected WBL [work-based learning] models, as well as prior research, leads us to conclude that in order for WBL to be meaningful and worthy of investment, there must be a much stronger connection between the classroom and the workplace than currently exists in many WBL programs” (p. 28).

Dynarski, M., Clarke, L., Cobb, B., Finn, J., Rumberger, R., & Smink, J. (2008). *Dropout prevention: A practice guide* (NCEE 2008–No. 4025). IES Practice Guide. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. Retrieved April 23, 2020, from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc>.

How-to step 3 for recommendation 6 of this What Works Clearinghouse practice guide focuses on hosting career days and offering students opportunities to visit postsecondary campuses. “The panel suggests that schools can invite community members who work in different fields to share their experiences in the workplace. Introducing students to these types of experiences encourages students to consider career and postsecondary options early. Schools can also expose students to college campuses by facilitating visits to college campuses that include discussions with admissions or financial aid officials” (p. 37). In addition, how-to step 5 for recommendation 6 of this practice guide focuses on providing work-based learning experiences for students. “Partner with local businesses to provide opportunities for work-related experience such as internships, simulated job interviews, or long-term employment. Schools can provide opportunities for students to explore the value of education by establishing agreements with local businesses to provide simulated (or real) job interviews, internships, or long-term employment. These opportunities would provide practical on-the-job experience and exposure to employability skills in a range of occupations. Examples could include paid positions, school credit for internships, or work experience with a classroom-based component” (p. 38).

Rumberger, R., Addis, H., Allensworth, E., Balfanz, R., Bruch, J., Dillon, E., et al. (2017). *Preventing dropout in secondary schools* (NCEE 2017–No. 4028). Educator’s Practice Guide. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/24>.

This What Works Clearinghouse practice guide provides a checklist for effective career-focused programs that includes work-based learning. “Students participate in work-based learning that links classroom activities with work experiences, such as job shadowing and career mentoring” (p. 31). In addition, the practice guide recommends that educators connect relevant coursework with external opportunities. “Reinforce the relevancy of coursework by creating a continuum of experiential learning outside the classroom that builds awareness of the connections between high school and students’ college or career goals. This might include work-based learning experiences that begin with bringing in outside speakers to discuss their professions and culminate with a summer internship before senior year” (p. 33).

APPENDIX B. DEVELOPMENT PROCESS FOR THE GUIDE

Step 1: Training request from Florida Career Readiness Research Alliance members

In 2017 alliance members from the Florida Career Readiness Research Alliance requested training from the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southeast on evidence-based practices for career guidance systems, including career portfolios, through a review of best practices in the development and implementation of these systems, as described in the literature. REL Southeast staff conducted a thorough review of the literature in this area using searches of key terms and consultations with authors of related studies. Studies with descriptive, causal, and correlational designs were included. The REL Southeast team members conducting the literature review, and lead authors of this tool, are What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) Group Design Standards certified reviewers. While the included studies did not go through the full WWC Study Review Guide process, a priority was placed on including well designed causal studies.

Step 2: Conducting the training

Once the literature review was complete, the included studies were provided as handouts to alliance members for the initial training meeting. The group included stakeholders in school counseling, career and technical education, and school and district administration from the Florida Department of Education, regional agencies supporting school districts and workforce needs, and school districts in the state. Study overviews and findings were highlighted and discussed. Findings considered important and actionable by the stakeholders were summarized and included in subsequent training developed and shared with school and district administrators, school counselors, and career and technical education teachers across the state. Feedback from those training sessions was positive, and slight adjustments were made to the recommendations from the findings based on discussion and feedback from the training.

Training on these practices based on the literature was replicated for stakeholders in other states across the REL Southeast Region, and participants provided positive feedback on the training.

Step 3: Infographic

An infographic was also created to further disseminate the practices from the training. This infographic is available at https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/infographics/pdf/REL_SE_Preparing_A_Career_Ready_Student.pdf.

Step 4: Selecting the included studies for this report

After sharing the training set and infographic with Florida Career Readiness Research Alliance members, meetings were held with the full alliance and individual members to determine which areas of implementation and studies to include in this guide. In terms of selecting studies, considerations were made regarding study design, findings, and alignment with practices that alliance members felt were both important and actionable for districts and schools. Again, a priority was placed on including well designed causal studies. After a series of meetings and individual discussions, all alliance members agreed on the content of the guide.

The guide was then piloted with dozens of educators in 14 districts across the state and revised as needed. In general, the educators and their administrators felt that the materials were clear, easy to use, and helpful. Each participant noted priority areas and plans for improvement following the pilot. Pilot participants followed up to report that positive changes in implementation had occurred after the pilot sessions. The participants provided valuable insights that have aided in revisions to the document. Educators have confirmed the importance of each of the areas of implementation and provided several ideas for additional guiding questions and possible sources of evidence.

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This resource is available on the Regional Educational Laboratory website at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>.