

Conference Objectives & Sub-Objectives

1. **Close the engagement gap by designing rigorous career pathway programs of study that connect middle grades and high school students to promising postsecondary education and career goals.**
 - a. Align structured career pathway programs of study that begin in high schools and technology centers to workplace opportunities and continued postsecondary studies through early credential and college programs, dual enrollment, work-based learning and other approaches.
 - b. Develop career pathway programs of study that a) combine a college-ready academic core with challenging technical studies, b) engage students in completing challenging real-world assignments, and c) allow students to choose accelerated learning options to earn relevant industry credentials and/or postsecondary credits toward an associate degree or higher.
 - c. Develop opportunities for work-based learning, job shadowing, internships, training and school-based enterprises to expose students to career opportunities.
 - d. Develop and adopt Advanced Career pathway programs of study to meet emerging opportunities in STEM-related fields such as informatics, computer science, cybersecurity, advanced manufacturing, aerospace engineering, energy and power, renewable energy, innovations in science and technology, and more.
 - e. Incorporate computer science into middle grades, high school and technology courses — including biology, mathematics, engineering or physics — and design computer science and cybersecurity career pathways that align to postsecondary studies and emerging career opportunities.

2. **Close the credential gap by working with employers and postsecondary institutions to design and select assessments that offer long-term value to students, employers and the economy and to design career pathways that span high school, two- and four-year institutions, and the workplace.**
 - a. Work with postsecondary and industry partners to set academic, technical and workplace-readiness standards that students must master to enter postsecondary education and training and secure good jobs in high-wage, high-demand fields.
 - b. Involve industry and postsecondary partners in identifying, evaluating and implementing industry certification exams that are valued by employers, give students an edge in the job market and carry postsecondary credit.
 - c. Involve employers in designing authentic, project-based assignments that require students to apply academic, technical, workplace-readiness and problem-solving skills and in assessing students' skills attainment.
 - d. Work with two-year community and technical colleges to develop and approve dual credit academic and career and technical education (CTE) courses as part of structured programs of study leading to a credential or degree.
 - e. Establish state and local policies to support high schools, communities and employers in implementing the major recommendations proposed by SREB's Commission on Career and Technical Education, as detailed in SREB's publication *Credentials for All: An Imperative in SREB States*.

3. **Close the literacy and math readiness gaps by facilitating learning experiences in elementary school, the middle grades, high school and technology centers that provide all students with opportunities to master grade-level competencies needed to succeed in college and careers.**
 - a. Incorporate the Literacy Design Collaborative strategies in all elementary (grades three to five), middle grades, high school and technology center classrooms to engage students in mastering

- grade-level texts across academic and technical disciplines and in demonstrating their understanding orally and in writing.
- b. Incorporate the Mathematics Design Collaborative strategies in all elementary (grades three to five), middle grades, high school and technology center classrooms to advance students' abilities to apply math concepts to abstract and real-world problems and to demonstrate their understanding both orally and in writing.
 - c. Develop students' digital literacy skills in understanding and using technology tools and software to create and communicate mathematical concepts and to critically evaluate electronic sources.
 - d. Identify at-risk elementary, middle grades and high school students and provide the extra learning time and quality support they need to achieve grade-level college- and career-readiness standards, such as transitional literacy and math courses in eighth or ninth grade and senior-year courses in literacy and math for underprepared students.
- 4. Close the opportunity gap by creating systems of ongoing career counseling, exploration and advisement in the middle grades, high school and technology centers and by assisting students to plan programs of study aligned with career opportunities and postsecondary studies.**
- a. Educate students and parents about college- and career-readiness benchmark standards in literacy and math that students must master to enter credit-bearing postsecondary courses and avoid remedial studies.
 - b. Develop exploratory courses and activities in the middle grades and early high school that allow students to become familiar with a variety of career pathways.
 - c. Design distributive, curriculum-based career counseling systems in the middle grades, high schools and technology centers.
 - d. Establish a system of counseling for careers that assists parents and students in designing personalized career pathway programs of study based on students' interests, aptitudes, academic strengths and personalities and aligned with emerging career opportunities and postsecondary studies.
 - e. Educate students, teachers and parents about advanced industry credentials, certificates, and associate and bachelor's degree programs aligned to emerging career fields and about career pathways that can provide the experiences needed to acquire such credentials.
- 5. Close the motivation gap by tailoring personalized learning experiences to the interests and preferences of students to advance college and career readiness in the middle grades, high schools and technology centers.**
- a. Share best practices of schools and districts using personalized learning experiences to advance students' college and career readiness.
 - b. Understand the range of options for personalized learning and the basic principles and conditions for success.
 - c. Develop policies and structures to provide quality personalized learning for students to advance student achievement.
 - d. Create options for students to personalize a career pathway program of study to fit their career goals utilizing school-based resources, resources from other institutions (technology centers and community colleges), web-based courses and work-based learning.
- 6. Close the gap in instructional practices by preparing all academic and career pathway teachers — especially new teachers from industry — with the professional development and fast-track induction needed to meet high academic, technical and pedagogical standards to enhance students' academic and technical readiness for college and careers.**
- a. Provide an intensive, fast-track induction program for new, alternatively certified career pathway teachers that supports teachers through at least the first full year in the classroom.
 - b. Provide academic and career pathway teachers and administrators with professional development to design intellectually demanding project-based assignments that blend the

academic, technical and problem-solving skills students need to succeed in work and advanced study.

- c. Engage employer partners in offering industry internships for academic and CTE teachers during the summer, as needed, to refresh and develop their understanding of the requirements and opportunities in the 21st-century workplace.
- d. Assist career pathway teachers (academic and CTE) in designing classroom assessments that measure academic, technical, problem-solving and 21st-century skills.

7. Close the school design gap by making better use of time and other resources in the middle grades, high schools and technology centers to advance student readiness for the next grade level, college and careers, and for postsecondary credentials and degrees.

- a. Adopt a transformational middle grades and high school framework, based on best practices, for organizing a college-ready academic core around rigorous career pathway programs of study leading to an advanced credential, associate degree or bachelor's degree.
- b. Create teams and schedules in the middle grades to ensure collaboration among academic teachers in planning relevant and impactful assignments within and across disciplines.
- c. Establish a personalized learning environment that ensures each student is a member of a team and has the same adviser/mentor throughout the middle grades, high school and in technology centers.
- d. Revise the school schedule in the middle grades, high schools and technology centers to provide all students with the time and extra help needed to be successful in meeting grade-level college- and career-readiness standards or in acquiring an advanced industry credential that has value to students, employers and the economy.

8. Close the school practices gap by supporting school leaders in creating a culture of continuous improvement that centers on college and career readiness.

- a. Develop school leaders' understanding of good assignments and proven instructional strategies and their ability to support teachers in implementing such strategies.
- b. Value academic college readiness and academic and technical career readiness equally through awards, graduation honors and other types of recognition.
- c. Create a distributive leadership system in which teams of school and teacher-leaders work together with outside partners to design solutions for difficult problems.
- d. Create a succession plan to ensure new leaders and teachers are prepared to continue and sustain school improvement efforts.
- e. Assist teachers and administrators in using student and faculty survey data, classroom formative and summative assessments, and external assessment data to make informed decisions about improving school and classroom practices.