

BACKGROUND STATEMENT

Advanced Career is an innovative initiative of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) and a consortium of states to create career pathway programs of study that prepare high school students for careers and meaningful credentials or postsecondary certificates or degrees. The Advanced Career initiative creates curricula for all students by blending learning experiences that advance students' literacy, math, science and technical knowledge and skills, and that strengthen the habits of behavior and mind for success. Understanding students' interests, abilities and potential career goals, and possible educational and training paths leads to students' deeper understanding of postsecondary education and workplace opportunities.

Advanced Career pathways for success will be implemented as a coherent, articulated sequence of four intellectually demanding courses that can lead to a recognized industry certificate, a community/technical college certificate, or an associate's or bachelor's degree. Specifically, SREB and member states have agreed that the career pathway courses will be organized around authentic, hands-on projects requiring application of the Common Core State Standards or other rigorous state standards in reading, writing, mathematics, science and technical standards, and 21st-century skills. **Each career pathway will be joined with a college-ready academic core and designed to bridge high school and postsecondary studies.** Both formative and summative assessments are built into each project and each course to advance academic and technical achievement and success in entry-level positions and in postsecondary entry-level, credit-bearing courses.

The consortium has agreed to curricula, assessment and staff development components to ensure fidelity of implementation at various school sites. Each course has a syllabus that includes instructional philosophy, course standards, instructional delivery and support systems, assessment, and a recommended grading system. Each course will be designed around at least six project-based units including essential questions, project scenarios, academic and technical standards and daily instructional plans. There will be an end-of-course assessment that determines students' understanding of college- and career-readiness standards.

Finally, staff development is a key element. It includes an intensive two-week summer institute. Teachers will perform students' assignments that blend reading, math, science and technology by using miniature devices and tools developed by national industry partners. This institute will include full-day sessions. Teachers will do daily "teach back" to set the context for project scenarios complete with assessments and rubric scoring. They will learn about special tools that help students read complex technical texts, practice counseling techniques for struggling students, and work with formative assessment math lessons. Teachers will learn how to manage and teach in a standard project-based classroom using technology as a learning tool. A two-day support seminar for principals, math, science and English teachers and counselors will be provided during the summer institute to promote cross-curriculum planning between the Advanced Career teacher and the core academic teacher.

SREB and several states have identified emerging career areas chosen for curriculum development — Alabama: Aerospace Engineering; Arkansas: Innovations in Science and Technology; Kansas: STEM Education and Training; Kentucky: Advanced Manufacturing and Informatics; Nebraska: Food and Nutritional Science; New Jersey:

Global Logistics and Entrepreneurship; North Carolina: Project Management; Ohio: Automated Materials Joining Technologies and Health Informatics; South Carolina: Clean Energy Technology; and West Virginia: Energy and Power.

As a result of this initiative, we expect to see significant increases in schools that adopt Advanced Career courses or redesign current career/technical courses in high-demand fields to fit the Advanced Career model. We expect significant increases in the number of students interested in and pursuing career pathways and graduating with career credentials ready for college programs or advanced career training without remediation. More students should graduate from high school with a focused plan to pursue postsecondary studies in a career field.

For more information, email AdvancedCareer@sreb.org.