

# District Partnerships — Why They Matter

**Our school improvement services share a common goal — to give districts the tools and strategies they need to help students achieve college and career readiness.**

School turnaround initiatives succeed when district personnel — from school board members and the superintendent to central office staff, teachers and principals — come together to develop and articulate a shared vision and goals for school improvement and adopt proven practices and accountability measures that help principals and teachers achieve those goals.

**Our school improvement frameworks and services give districts a way to streamline their many college- and career-readiness efforts into a single, integrated strategic plan.** We align with districts' plans instead of adding to what schools already do.

**HSTW works for all districts**, from large urban and suburban districts to rural districts and districts with just one high school. HSTW staff have spent more than three decades partnering with superintendents, chief academic officers, board members and others to transform schools. Our professional development providers, instructional coaches and content specialists have led school reforms and served long tenures as classroom teachers.

## Districts Can Meet Bold Goals for Student Achievement With HSTW

SREB encourages districts and schools to use the HSTW framework to set and meet bold goals like these:

- Empowering 90 percent of students to enter ninth grade ready for high school
- Empowering 95 percent of students to graduate on time
- Empowering 80 percent of students to graduate
- Empowering 60 percent of students to earn a credential or degree of value by age 25

School turnaround initiatives succeed when district personnel come together to develop a shared vision and goals for school improvement and adopt **proven practices** that help principals and teachers achieve those goals.

### HSTW's Proven Practices

- School improvement frameworks
- Professional development and instructional coaching services
- Research-based curricula
- Special convenings and services

## Ten Ways Districts Can Use HSTW and Other SREB School Improvement Services to Achieve Their Goals

1. We offer districts the **research-based school improvement frameworks** they need to meet state and federal guidelines for improving challenged schools. SREB helps districts design strategic plans to achieve their school improvement goals through curriculum products, staff development, technical assistance, communications and assessment services.
2. We work with districts to design **structurally guided career pathways** that are taught in conjunction with a college-ready core and lead to postsecondary programs and good jobs.
  - Pathways consist of **four or more rigorous career pathways courses** that are aligned with readiness standards and lead to postsecondary programs and good jobs; or **at least three AC, AP or IB courses** in STEM or in the humanities. Instruction and assignments challenge students to apply academic, technical, technological, cognitive and workplace skills to solve real-world problems.
  - **The college-ready core includes English, math, science and social studies.** SREB advocates that high school students benefit from four years of rigorous math courses. Whereas many students may benefit from taking Algebra II and higher math — especially those interested in credentials and careers in STEM fields — others may benefit from taking four math courses that include algebra, geometry, statistics and higher math related to a non-STEM career field.
3. We offer guidance that helps districts and schools **build partnerships with postsecondary institutions, community organizations and employers** and develop career pathways leading to postsecondary credentials and degrees and good jobs in fields that matter to the regional and state economy.



AC academies



Career pathway reviews and development

4. We work with districts to transform high schools into **personalized learning environments** in which students' interests drive curriculum and instruction. This involves:
  - Organizing high schools around **career academies** in which students take their courses as a cohort with a dedicated team of academic and career pathway teachers, an assistant principal and a counselor.
  - Ensuring that **school schedules** give academic and career pathway teachers the time they need to co-plan challenging assignments within and across disciplines.
  - Redesigning **the senior year** to allow eligible students to earn up to 30 college credits toward an advanced credential, certificate or degree.
  - Offering **ninth- and 12th-grade readiness courses** that help struggling students master foundational literacy and math skills and meet readiness benchmarks.
  
5. We show district and school staff how to design **counselor-led, curriculum-based career counseling systems** in which teachers and counselors help middle grades and high school students and their parents identify their interests, explore jobs and design and revise personalized programs of study. Students take career exploration courses and meet regularly with a dedicated teacher-adviser to discuss their educational and career options.
  
6. We partner with districts to deliver robust **teacher induction, professional development and instructional coaching services** that help good teachers become great teachers and help principals become true instructional leaders. Professional development empowers teachers at all stages of their careers to make instructional shifts that advance student achievement. Principals learn how to use classroom observation rubrics to provide instructional feedback that supports school improvement goals. Such services include:
  - Preparing academic and career pathway teachers to **use literacy strategies** that engage students in reading, understanding, writing and speaking about grade-level texts in all subject areas. Students learn how to conduct research, identify and define problems, and develop plans to complete project-based assignments.
  - Preparing math teachers to **use math practices and formative assessment lessons** that engage students in completing assignments that advance their math understanding and reasoning skills and their ability to apply math concepts to multistep abstract and real-world problems.
  - Preparing academic and career pathway teachers to **design standards-driven, project-based assignments** that require students to think creatively, work in teams and apply academic, technical, technological and soft skills. Teachers also receive support for integrating technology in their instruction.
  - Preparing **new and early career teachers from business and industry backgrounds** to design standards-driven, project-based instruction and assignments, engage students, manage classrooms and assess learning.
  
7. We work with districts to **develop recruitment and retention strategies** that promote and reward effective educators. We also help districts **sustain and deepen school improvement efforts in the face of change** by identifying and developing individuals who can replace departing leaders.
  
8. We help districts provide access to the **equipment, hardware, software and technologies** career pathway students need to master industry-driven technical and workplace readiness standards.
  
9. We help districts **align their budgets** and **use available time, tools and resources** to meet student achievement goals. Districts find time for teachers to engage in a full day of professional development every month while certified personnel cover their classes with learning and enrichment activities tailored to students' unique needs.
  
10. We support districts in **defining academic college readiness and academic and technical career readiness**; measuring achievement at each grade level and at the end of grades five, eight, 10 and 11; and creating long-term plans for annually improving the percentage of students who graduate college ready, career ready or both.



Readiness courses



Counseling for careers and college



Classroom observation tools



Literacy and math strategies



Project-based learning