

The New High Schools That Work Framework

When high school students complete a challenging academic core and a sequence of engaging, career-preparatory courses, they are not only more likely to achieve readiness benchmarks in reading, math and science, but also more likely to develop a plan for the future.

Launched in 1987, SREB's evidence-based **High Schools That Work school improvement framework** is grounded in the belief that when states, districts and schools create personalized, meaningful learning experiences and encourage students to succeed, students will make the effort needed to master complex academic and technical concepts. Further, schools that shift their school and classroom practices by adopting HSTW's **six Design Principles** and **nine Key Practices** can increase the percentage of students who graduate ready for college and careers to 80 percent or more.

As HSTW grew from 28 schools in 13 states to more than 4,000 schools in 36 states, SREB has partnered with state, district and school leaders, teachers, parents and communities to continuously improve the HSTW framework to reflect rising workplace requirements and place a stronger emphasis on connecting academic and career pathway courses to postsecondary credentials and good jobs.

HSTW can be adapted to suit districts of any size, from large urban and suburban districts to small rural districts or districts serving just one high school. Whatever the setting, SREB's experienced staff collaborate with district and school leaders to deliver a suite of curriculum products, professional development and instructional coaching services.

HSTW Sets Bold Goals for Student Achievement

No matter what career field students pursue, nearly all of today's middle- and upper-income jobs require an advanced industry credential or a postsecondary certificate, credential or degree. Leading employers convened by the Business Roundtable also agree that success in the workforce requires a broad mix of skills, including:

- *Personal skills* – dependability and professionalism
- *People skills* – the ability to function on a team and communicate well
- *Workplace skills* – the ability to plan, organize and make decisions carefully and use tools and technologies with ease
- *Applied knowledge* – the foundational literacy, math, science and critical-thinking skills needed to adapt in a changing workplace

With HSTW's **proven tools, strategies and structures**, schools create cultures of high expectations in which rigorous, real-world assignments that cultivate these essential skills are the norm in every classroom.

“Learning happens when students are given something to do, not something to learn. That’s the spirit of HSTW.”

HSTW helps teachers and school leaders design challenging assignments that motivate students to go the extra mile.”

Gene Bottoms

Senior Vice President, SREB

What's new in HSTW?

- ✓ Stronger focus on career pathways
- ✓ Stronger connections between academic and career pathway courses
- ✓ Stronger emphasis on helping students secure and maintain a middle-class life

Meet Bold Goals for Student Achievement With HSTW

SREB encourages middle grades schools, high schools and technology centers to use HSTW's six Design Principles and nine Key Practices 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 college ready, career ready or both
- Empowering 60 percent of students to earn a credential or degree of value by age 25



HSTW Spotlight School

By embracing HSTW, Georgia's Meadowcreek High School broke down barriers between academic and career pathway teachers and community partners. More students are performing at Level 3 or better in the school's expanded array of AP and Advanced Career courses.

“Meadowcreek has helped me change my mind about my potential and what I can do.”

Meadowcreek Student

What Makes It Work – HSTW’s Nine Key Practices

1. Schools provide students with access to **intellectually demanding career pathway programs of study** that:
 - Connect **at least four pathway courses with a college-ready core** of English, math, science and social studies. All students complete four years of math courses tailored to their career goals. Students pursuing credentials and degrees in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields take Algebra II and higher math. Students pursuing credentials and degrees in non-STEM fields take Algebra I, geometry and two career-related math courses.
 - Include **four or more career pathway courses** in which a high percentage of students report completing rigorous assignments, like Advanced Career courses. Alternatively, students may complete three AP courses in STEM or the humanities or three International Baccalaureate career diploma courses.
 - Connect three stages of learning — high school, postsecondary education and the workplace — through a **redesigned senior year** that includes dual enrollment courses and work-based learning opportunities.
 - Connect to **high-skill, high-wage, high-demand jobs** that help students secure a middle-class life.
 - Organize high school curricula around **career academies** that provide common planning time for academic and career pathway teachers to co-plan instruction, assignments and connected learning experiences for students.
 - Connect grade-level readiness standards with **rigorous instruction and assignments** in career pathway courses.
2. Schools provide teachers with the **ongoing professional development** they need to help students master the literacy (reading, writing and oral communication) and math skills that promote success in postsecondary education and the workplace.
3. Schools **extend learning time and provide personalized supports** to students who need help mastering foundational academic, technical, technological, cognitive and workplace skills.
4. Schools offer **specialized literacy and math readiness courses** to eighth- and ninth-graders who do not meet readiness benchmarks for high school and to seniors who do not meet readiness benchmarks for postsecondary certificate, credential and degree programs or entry-level jobs in high-skill, high-wage career fields.
5. Career pathway teachers draw on real-world problems to create **project-based assignments** that:
 - Incorporate grade-level college- and career-readiness standards in literacy, math and science.
 - Feature the use of technology, such as coding or learning new software.
 - Encourage students to work both independently and as part of a team.
6. With the support of caring employers and community partners, students participate in a series of **structured work-based learning experiences** — like worksite tours, job shadows, internships and capstone projects — that help them make the connection between their academic and technical studies and the world of work. Employers and schools co-develop work-based learning plans.
7. Teachers and counselors deliver **academic and career counseling and exploratory experiences** that help students and parents achieve a deeper understanding of their interests, aptitudes and opportunities and set postsecondary and career goals. Teachers and counselors work with students and parents to develop **personalized programs of study** that prepare students for a double purpose — college and careers. These plans span high school and at least the first year of postsecondary studies, if not more.
8. During a **redesigned senior year**, eligible students can earn up to 30 college credits by pursuing an early college program, an early advanced credential program or both. Struggling students take readiness courses that help them master literacy and math skills.
9. Schools cultivate a **culture of continuous improvement** in which teachers and leaders share the goal of helping at least 80 percent of students graduate college ready, career ready or both — with 60 percent of graduates earning a credential or degree of value by age 25.

Rigorous assignments engage students in:

| | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Real-world projects | Technology |
| Research | Technical skills |
| Planning | Teamwork |
| Applied academics | Feedback |
| Problem solving | Revision |



Learn more.

Email: hstw@sreb.org
sreb.org/hstw