

Senior-Year Redesign

When coupled with college-ready academics, career pathways have the power to move students into good, higher-paying jobs — and into the middle class.

The new High Schools That Work school improvement framework transforms high schools by using career pathways to connect secondary and postsecondary studies and workplace learning.

In many schools, the last year of high school finds students stuck in a holding pattern — eager to take their first steps into the adult world of careers and college but held back by academic deficiencies, graduation requirements or institutional barriers that prevent them from getting a head start on a credential or degree or launching their careers.

The **Senior-Year Redesign**, a key feature of the new HSTW framework, reclaims this critical year and transforms it into an opportunity to bolster students' readiness for postsecondary studies or employment when they graduate — and to accelerate credential or degree attainment for students who already meet readiness benchmarks.

With the Senior-Year Redesign, every senior can gain college-like experiences before graduation — and potentially earn up to 30 semester hours of credit toward an associate or bachelor's degree or an advanced credential.

How the Senior-Year Redesign Works

The Senior-Year Redesign offers four options — each designed in partnership with local colleges, universities, community leaders and employers — that suit students of all abilities. **In one option**, seniors who meet readiness benchmarks on 11th-grade assessments take college-level dual enrollment courses at their home high school or on a college campus. **Three other options** serve students who need extra help meeting readiness benchmarks. In all options:

- Dual enrollment courses are taught on the college schedule and use college syllabi, exams and materials; extra time is provided for labs, internships or capstones.
- High school career pathway courses and college courses are taught by qualified high school teachers or college faculty and offered at the high school, at the college or online.
- Academic and career pathway teachers collaborate to integrate project-based instruction and assignments.

Junior Year	Senior Year – Four Options		
All students take a state-approved college- and career-readiness assessment — like the ACT, SAT or other approved college placement exam — to gauge their preparedness for college-level studies.	OPTION 1 Seniors who meet literacy and math readiness benchmarks complete graduation requirements plus dual enrollment courses that equal up to 30 college credits toward an advanced industry credential or an associate degree at a community college (Accelerated Option) or a bachelor's degree at a four-year college or university (Accelerated+ Option).	OPTION 2 Seniors who aren't quite ready for college-level studies — for example, those whose literacy and math scores fall no more than a few points below benchmarks on a state-approved readiness assessment — enroll in a double-block of readiness courses during their first semester. In their second semester, seniors who meet benchmarks complete graduation requirements plus dual enrollment courses that equal up to 15 college credits toward a postsecondary credential or degree.	OPTION 4 Seniors whose assessment scores fall well below readiness benchmarks receive a suite of services designed to enhance their foundational academic, technical and workplace skills while empowering them to make informed educational and career choices. Students receive intensive instruction in literacy and math along with their core academic and career pathway courses. Students also receive career counseling, take aptitude and interest inventories, attend time management and study skills workshops, and engage in work-based learning experiences that help them build skills, gain confidence and prepare to enter the workforce or pursue a credential.

"Schools that adopt the Senior-Year Redesign can ensure that their students graduate fully prepared for their next steps — whether that involves earning an industry credential or a two- or four-year degree or climbing the first step on the career ladder."

Gene Bottoms

Senior Vice President, SREB



Senior-Year Redesign Services

SREB supports states, districts and schools in redesigning the senior year to:

Meet graduation requirements. Under some state academic graduation requirements, selected college English and math courses could substitute for a fourth high school English or math course. SREB can share how other states have made policy changes that allow eligible seniors to satisfy graduation requirements with challenging college courses.

Connect high school and postsecondary studies. Accreditation organizations set criteria for the kinds of courses that can be offered for college credit and where and by whom they can be taught — for example, by postsecondary faculty versus by high school teachers who meet guidelines. SREB can share how other states have worked with two- and four-year colleges and universities to streamline credit transfer policies and identify the conditions under which high school teachers may offer college courses.

Create time for accelerated learning. More seniors will choose accelerated learning options if they know they can also continue to participate in sports, clubs and other meaningful activities at their home high schools. SREB can help create schedules that balance accelerated learning with time for important senior-year milestones.

Address funding concerns. Extending postsecondary education to high school seniors carries financial implications — from tuition and full-time equivalents to transportation to and from college campuses, technical centers or work sites. SREB can share how other school districts and postsecondary institutions have negotiated funding agreements that honor each institution's contribution to students' education.

Offer postsecondary and experiential learning. As more seniors engage in work-based or experiential learning activities, schools need to ensure that both students and employers or community partners are protected from harm. SREB can share how other states are leveraging available resources to offer real-world learning opportunities and identifying the policies needed to insure students and limit employers' liability if a student is injured during a work experience.



Learn more.
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