



## COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READINESS

ACADEMIC PREPARATION • ACCESSIBILITY • ASPIRATION

# The Importance of Community Partnerships to Promote College- and Career-Readiness

Increasing the supply of educated workers is imperative to refueling the economy of the Appalachian region. To do this, schools are working to promote college- and career-readiness among students to ensure they are prepared to successfully pursue educational and career opportunities after high school that will lead to a high quality of life. Achieving a culture of college- and career-readiness is especially important for Appalachian communities, which have historically lower college going, college completion, and educational attainment rates compared to the rest of the state and nation.

Responding to this and other challenges, 21 Appalachian Ohio school districts joined forces with Battelle for Kids to form the Ohio Appalachian Collaborative (OAC) and implement a comprehensive model to transform rural education and accelerate college- and career-readiness for all students and ensure they are prepared for future success.

Using research and feedback from the field, the OAC has organized its work around college- and career-readiness around Three Pillars:

**Academic Preparation:** identifies the academic knowledge and preparation students need for success in college and careers. This involves a rigorous PreK-12 curriculum that incorporates college- and career-readiness opportunities in academic offerings.

**Accessibility:** includes many logistical aspects around college- and career-readiness, which include preparation, financial considerations, and degree/career attainment. Even if students are academically prepared, they also must know how to access educational and career opportunities beyond high school.

**Aspiration:** addresses how postsecondary education and workforce training opportunities are presented to students to ensure they are making appropriate and informed choices for opportunities beyond high school.

### Building Community Partnerships

Because higher rates of educational attainment are closely tied to economic development and opportunity, it is important for community stakeholders including parents, businesses, churches, and other community organizations to partner with school districts to promote work around addressing college- and career-readiness.



The Ohio Appalachian Collaborative *College- and Career-Readiness Strategic Plan* calls for partnerships between school districts and community organizations to promote a college- and career-readiness culture and leverage resources to ensure students are prepared for postsecondary success.

**The College- and Career-Readiness toolkit includes a variety of materials school districts and community partners can use to promote a culture of college- and career-readiness.**

- Ohio Appalachian Collaborative College- and Career-Readiness Strategic Plan
- College- and Career-Readiness Culture Self Assessment
- College- and Career-Readiness Standards in the Common Core
- Higher Education Partnerships
- College- and Career-Readiness on the Ohio Student Progress Portal

**Below are several suggestions for establishing successful partnerships between school districts and community organizations to accelerate college- and career-readiness programming around academic preparation, accessibility, and aspiration.**

1. Utilize the context information in this document to stress the importance of college- and career-readiness programming, and why it is important for the economic growth of the community and Appalachian region.
2. Establish a core team of community stakeholders to partner with the school district on college- and career-readiness programming. Activities could include:
  - Working with district staff to complete the CCR Self Assessment
  - Conducting a community analysis to understand community assets for college and career paths
  - Developing a communications plan for college- and career-readiness messaging in the community
3. Incorporate regular college- and career-readiness updates at board of education and other community meetings, or host community forums to engage parents and community members in discussions about what the district and community partners are doing to address college- and career-readiness in terms of academic preparation, accessibility, and aspiration.
4. Integrate information about college- and career-readiness in newsletters, websites, and other communication materials distributed by the school district and community partners.

## College- and Career-Readiness

# The Current Context

The following talking points can be used as conversation starters for school districts and community partners to talk about the importance of college- and career-readiness.

All students, regardless of where they live, deserve access to a high-quality education to be ready for post-high school or postsecondary opportunities and success.

### We live in a rapidly-evolving world.

- Technology continues to impact the way in which we live and work.
- The recent downturn of the nation's economy has changed the way businesses operate.
- Low-skill/high-wage jobs continue to decline and not be replaced.
- Job seekers are not only competing locally or regionally, but globally for jobs.

These changes are significantly impacting communities, states, and our nation. Everyone—from individuals, to businesses, governments, community organizations, and schools—must adapt to meet the demands of our rapidly-evolving world.

While the future of our economy is uncertain, one thing remains clear—education is the linchpin for our country's and individuals' future economic success.

- The "Buckeye Top 50" Report shows that by 2018, 43 of Ohio's 50 highest-paying jobs will require a postsecondary vocational award or better.
- Research demonstrates communities with higher degrees of educational attainment have more prosperous economies.
- The reality facing Ohioans is that only 25 percent of the state's adults have a four-year degree. In Appalachia Ohio, this percentage is even lower at less than 12 percent.

There is a clear connection between advanced education and increased employment and financial opportunities. Someone with a high school diploma can expect to earn \$1.3 million over a lifetime, but a worker with a bachelor's degree will earn \$2.3 million over a lifetime.

Having advanced education and/or training after high school means that students will be qualified for high-paying jobs. And having an increased number of educated and skilled workers in the region will increase the opportunity to attract more high-paying jobs to the region.

It is not about "raising the bar"; it is about adapting to a new bar created by the evolution taking place in our world.

The time is now to adapt to this new set of realities and think differently about schooling and its impact on students' future success. We must ensure schools prepare "future-ready students."

## Being future-ready means:

- Students start school ready to learn, and are prepared for each phase of their education, from Pre-K through postsecondary education.
- Students graduate from high school prepared for a variety of postsecondary opportunities, including two- or four-year college, vocational training, military service, or a number of other advanced learning and training paths.
- Students are aware of the many life opportunities available to them after high school.

For students to be future-ready, a high school diploma needs to represent that students are prepared to successfully pursue additional education and careers that will lead to opportunities and a high quality of life.

## Ohio's Future-Ready Plan

Educators have always worked to help students reach their highest potential, and there is much success to celebrate.

However, it is now more important than ever to make sure students start school ready to learn, and graduate ready to succeed in life opportunities.

Schools are doing their part to ensure students have access to a rigorous academic curriculum and have the supports needed to help them pursue a variety of opportunities after graduating from high school, whether it be two- or four-year college, vocational training, military service, or a number of other advanced learning and training paths.



## Three Pillars of College- and Career-Readiness

It is important for parents and community members to also support districts in their work around the three Pillars of College- and Career-Readiness: Academic Preparation, Accessibility, and Aspiration.

**Academic Preparation:** identifies the academic knowledge and preparation students need for success in college and careers. This involves a rigorous PreK-12 curriculum that incorporates college- and career-readiness opportunities in academic offerings.

**Accessibility:** includes many logistical aspects around college- and career-readiness, which include preparation, financial considerations, and degree/ career attainment. Even if students are academically prepared, they also must know how to access educational and career opportunities beyond high school.

**Aspiration:** addresses how postsecondary education and workforce training opportunities are presented to students to ensure they are making appropriate and informed choices for opportunities beyond high school.



## Partnering for College- and Career-Readiness

School districts cannot do it alone. It will take the collective effort of all of us to make certain students graduate future-ready.

There are various ways parents, businesses, and community organizations can help school districts promote a culture of college- and career-readiness and work to help all students achieve the Three Pillars of CCR: Academic Preparation, Aspiration, and Accessibility.

### Parents can:

- Make sure their children are taking the appropriate academic courses to prepare them for future success
- Help their children explore postsecondary opportunities and understand the process to pursue these opportunities
- Support their children in setting high aspirations for the future

### Businesses can:

- Visit schools to talk about career opportunities
- Partner with schools to offer internships or other learning opportunities

### Community organizations can:

- Host community forums to promote the school district's work around college- and career-readiness
- Utilize information from the CCR toolkit in community programming

For more information about other ways parents, businesses, and community groups can partner with school districts to promote college- and career-readiness, visit [www.BattelleforKids.org/ohio/oac](http://www.BattelleforKids.org/ohio/oac).



Battelle for Kids is a national, not-for-profit organization that provides strategic counsel and innovative solutions for today's complex educational-improvement challenges. Our mission-driven team of education, technology, communications, and business professionals specializes in creating strategies that advance the development of human capital, the use of strategic measures, the implementation of effective practices, and communication with all stakeholders in schools.

[www.BattelleforKids.org](http://www.BattelleforKids.org)