

CCCR

Career and College Readiness
Resource Guide



Dear Educator:

Minnesota envisions that all students will have the knowledge, skills, and mindset to successfully pursue and complete a viable career pathway in a 21st century economy.

It is our charge to ensure that students are prepared not only with the core academic content but also with the skills necessary for any type of postsecondary education and career. Minnesota ranks as one of the highest in degree attainment and employment rates, yet sizeable gaps among racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic population groups exist. Although graduation rates and state and national academic indicators continue to trend upward over the last several years, suggesting that diligent efforts are being made to decrease academic disparities in K–12 education, achievement and career attainment gaps among groups persist. In order for Minnesota to fully realize an educated and prepared workforce, it is critical to bridge the opportunity gap for all students.

Although our educational communities are committed to preparing students for their future, the current statute definition of “career and college readiness” lacks the necessary guidance of what it means to be “ready” and “how to get there.”

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) has developed this collection of career and college readiness (CCR) resources to offer guidance, strategies, and tools for educators to expand and improve their local CCR programming and outcomes. These resources were assembled with invaluable input from stakeholders across the state and in collaboration with the Midwest Comprehensive Center (MWCC) and the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest.

We created this guidance with you in mind. We encourage school administration, district leaders, and local partners to explore and apply the contents of these documents to build upon the good work in which your schools and districts are currently engaged. Start where you are and grow CCR!

Equity of opportunity and success is at the core of our approach. All Minnesota students must have access to a variety of learning options to be able to explore their further educational and career trajectory. At the heart of this work, are strategies and processes to inform both classroom-level and whole-school decision-making about CCR programming and continuous improvement. Our hope is that this approach will assist districts in creating coherence in their World’s Best Workforce CCR goals and strategies leading to student success.

Thank you for your dedication to Minnesota students. We look forward to partnering with you in preparing our students for career and lifelong learning success. Together, we will nurture students’ dreams in whichever pathways they choose, making Minnesota the best state in the nation in which to be educated.

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What Is Career and College Readiness (CCR)?

Preparing students for post-high school graduation opportunities has long been the priority of school districts across the nation. However, the past few decades have generally aimed at “college for all,” with the assumption that “college” means a four-year degree. Our reality is now driven by global economic needs and the challenge to meet domestic and global workforce demands for jobs that require a combination of academic knowledge *and* technical skills. Of the careers requiring some type of education, a significant number of them are now requiring a technical two-year degree and/or credential or certification. Additionally, occupations need a workforce of life-long learners to keep abreast with technology and career area knowledge changes. Current trends are breaking down the silos in which education and workforce sectors often operate, thus leading the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) to strengthen support to schools and districts in creating the [World’s Best Workforce \(WBWF\)](#).

In March 2016, MDE, in collaboration with the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest and the Midwest Comprehensive Center (MWCC), brought together a group of stakeholders to articulate what career and college readiness (CCR) means for Minnesota students. The group consensus was that *in addition to* discipline-specific academic knowledge, fundamental mindsets, abilities, and skills that the visioning work provided these underpinnings for the formation of the Minnesota CCR Work Group to develop CCR resources for schools and districts.

With this shifting landscape in mind and Minnesota’s [current definition of career and college readiness](#), the state work group committed to creating a comprehensive view of career and college readiness and success for all students. Although some thought leaders believe that the terms “career ready” and “college ready” can be used interchangeably, others suggest more distinctive definitions. A [recent scan](#) by the College and Career Readiness and Success (CCRS) Center found that state definitions generally identify critical skills and competencies for CCR: academic skills, critical-thinking and/or problem-solving skills, social-emotional learning (SEL), perseverance and grit, and citizenship skills and knowledge. Achieve and Inflexion, two prominent education reform organizations, acknowledge noteworthy differences between the two. But they also find enough convergence and overlap of the skills and knowledge needed for success to not warrant a purposeful separation. On the other hand, career and technical educators often refute the interchangeability, contending that “college ready” is too often associated only with *academic skills*, which is just one component of “career readiness.” Despite the differing views, the core values of the Minnesota CCR Work Group adhere to the idea that college readiness and career readiness are interdependent and have defined the term as such.

Minnesota’s Vision of CCR

Embracing a well-rounded view of education is needed to drive educational and workforce goals and policies. Taking many perspectives into consideration, along with stakeholder feedback, the Minnesota CCR Work Group developed a holistic vision of career and college readiness:

A sufficiently prepared student is one who has the knowledge, skills, mindset, and experiences in the academic, workplace, and personal/social domains to keep learning and, beyond secondary school, to successfully navigate toward and adapt to an economically viable career.

The CCR Work Group developed the following principles to guide this work:

1. Minnesota's economic and societal success depends on increasing the educational level and career-ready competencies of our state's population.
2. College and career preparation extends beyond just eligibility and emphasizes what students need to know to graduate from a postsecondary program. College and career readiness is a multifaceted concept that includes factors both internal and external to the school environment.
3. Student success is formatively assessed along the entire educational continuum from preschool to kindergarten, through high school, to college and career. Student success is not limited to high-stakes test scores at a single transition point along the continuum.
4. Students' career and college aspirations begin to form in elementary or middle school, but students must become more informed and plan fully each consecutive year to remain effectively engaged in the process.
5. Stakeholders must provide academic, emotional, and social supports and services for all students to successfully navigate transitions along their entire educational pathway.
6. Stakeholders must collaborate effectively to provide contextualized learning opportunities to improve student readiness.

Focus on Equity

All Minnesota students deserve high-quality learning opportunities which lead to workforce readiness and access to further learning. The pursuit of educational equity recognizes the historical conditions and barriers that have prevented opportunity and success in learning for students based on their race, gender, language, disability, income, and other social conditions. All stakeholders must work intentionally and collaboratively to correct these realities. Minnesota's WBWF, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and [Minnesota's Commitments to Equity](#) require meaningful inclusion of all students in the system and hold every public school accountable for the outcomes of each student group.

Equity is different from equality. Although equality demands that everyone is treated the same, equity recognizes the unique identity of a student that is too often impacted by racism, bigotry, or bias. Equity corrects these realities through conversations, actions, and distribution or redistribution of resources based on individual and group needs to eliminate structures and barriers to ensure equitable outcomes.

By eliminating systemic barriers and biases, well-implemented CCR programs improve outcomes for underserved students and benefit everyone. Throughout this guide, you will find specific actions that schools and districts must take to provide equity for all learners. The following commitments to equity provide the framework for school- and district-level actions that will result in greater access, participation, representation, and attainment of CCR skills for all students.

Ten Minnesota Commitments to Equity

Creating equitable opportunities is dependent upon having inclusive policies and practices that **represent** all students, and providing each student increased **access** to and creating meaningful **participation** in high-quality learning experiences where each student realizes positive **outcomes**.

1. **Prioritize equity:** Set and communicate a vision and targets for high outcomes for all students.
2. **Start from within:** Focus on leadership, diversity and inclusiveness.
3. **Measure what matters:** Use relevant and meaningful data. Hold each other accountable for equity.
4. **Go local:** Engage and develop leaders at all levels. Empower community partners in the continuous improvement work.
5. **Follow the money:** Allocate resources to learners who need them most.
6. **Start early:** Invest in families and learners early on.
7. **Monitor implementation of standards:** Improve the quality of curriculum and instruction for all students.
8. **Value people:** Focus on teachers and leaders. Develop the people you have. Ensure equitable access to the best teachers.

9. **Improve conditions for learning:** Focus on school culture, climate, and social-emotional development. Connect teaching to the experiences, assets and needs of learners.
10. **Give students options:** Empower students with high-quality options to support every learner's success.

Adapted from the Council of Chief State School Officers, Florida Department of Education and the Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center (MAP Center).

About the CCR Resources

The purpose of this collection of resources is to provide a comprehensive set of guidance, strategies, and tools for engaging districts and schools in equity-oriented CCR program planning and a continuous improvement process. This tool aligns with resources that the Minnesota Department of Education has developed to support educational work at the local level. The CCR Resources can be used to guide schools and districts through program planning decisions – either as a step-by-step guide, or as individual pieces which best fit with the current phase of planning or improvement efforts.

Your CCR programs and outcomes will be strengthened when school administration, district leaders and local partners explore and apply the contents of these documents to build upon the good work in which your schools and districts are currently engaged. Start where you are and grow CCR! The resource is organized into the following three sections:

CCR Domains and Competencies



Four domains and competencies represent Minnesota’s vision of career and college readiness and the principles established by the Minnesota CCR Work Group: Employability Skills, Mindsets and Social Awareness, Career Development and Transitional Knowledge. This section would be helpful for K-12 curriculum planning and a springboard for professional development for educators and administrators. In addition to defining the four CCR domains and corresponding competencies, it outlines roles and responsibilities for various stakeholders in the school community, with sample activities to document student progress toward CCR.

Highlights include:

- An in-depth explanation of Minnesota’s CCR Domains, with definitions of each competency.
- A suggested list of sample CCR activities for each competency.
- A guide about how legislated Personal Learning Plans (PLP) anchor schools’ CCR programming.
- A planning template for integrating and aligning CCR competencies with Minnesota State standards.
- A list of additional resources which correspond to each CCR domain.

CCR Program Planning Guide



Planning for comprehensive CCR programs requires collaboration, thoughtfulness, and extended effort. This section is intended to provide tools for districts to reflect on and create local prioritized needs. Learn about existing program models around the state and determine your school or district’s readiness for CCR implementation. Highlights include:

- A graphic overview of successful CCR programming with a focus on equity.
- A step-by-step action planning tool for planning and launching CCR efforts in your school or district.
- Descriptions of current CCR program highlights in our state, from elementary grades through high school.

CCR Data Inquiry



Understanding what data is available to monitor student progress is a critical component to your CCR programming and improvement efforts. This section outlines CCR data indicators and provides guiding questions to consider throughout your CCR program implementation and improvement process. Highlights include:

- An explanation of federal and state accountability systems and how they connect to CCR.
- A guide for developing CCR goals for your World's Best Workforce plan which correspond to the CCR domains and competencies.
- A list of both state level and locally determined CCR indicators.
- A Data Handbook which demonstrates how to access and analyze state-level data to inform your CCR program goals and strategies.

Acknowledgments

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) engaged the Minnesota Career and College Readiness (CCR) Work Group, in partnership with the Midwest Comprehensive Center and the Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest, to establish a cohesive vision and guidance for career and college readiness and success in our state. The CCR Resources were developed to assist districts in defining, measuring, and developing CCR strategies to support their World's Best Workforce goals.

Project Partners

The Midwest Comprehensive Center (MWCC) at American Institutes for Research (AIR) is part of a federally funded network of regional centers that provide technical assistance to the state educational agencies (SEAs) of Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. It focuses on building SEAs' capacity to support districts and schools to ensure that all students graduate from high school ready for college or a career. As part of its partnership with MDE, MWCC provides organizational and content expertise to support states' development of an operationalized vision for CCR and a resource guide.

The Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest is part of a network of 10 RELs funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES). REL Midwest has partnered with MDE to provide data analysis to address important policy and practice issues, with the goal of improving student outcomes. As part of the partnership, Minnesota participates in the Midwest Career Readiness Research Alliance.

The College and Career Readiness and Success (CCRS) Center is dedicated to ensuring all students graduate high school ready for college and career success. The mission of the CCRS Center is to serve Regional Comprehensive Centers in building the capacity of states to effectively implement initiatives for college and career readiness and success. CCRS provided resources and content expertise to support the development of this resource guide.

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Related Legislation

Definition of Career and College Readiness

[Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.30, subdivision 1 \(p\)](#), defines CCR as follows:

For purposes of statewide accountability, career and college readiness means a high school graduate has the knowledge, skills, and competencies to successfully pursue a career pathway, including postsecondary credit leading to a degree, diploma, certificate, or industry-recognized credential and employment. Students who are career and college ready are able to successfully complete credit-bearing coursework at a two- or four-year college or university or other credit-bearing postsecondary program without need for remediation.

World's Best Workforce, 2013

[Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.11](#), requires school districts to develop a World's Best Workforce (WBWF) Annual Report and report summary for each school year. This summary should document the WBWF student achievement goals that were established last year, the strategies and initiatives that the district engaged in to meet the goals, and the subsequent progress made on those goals by the end of the school year. Districts will post their reports on the district website and submit the summary report to MDE each year.

Personal Learning Plans, 2013

[Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.125](#), requires all students beginning no later than 9th grade to have a Personal Learning Plan (PLP) around several key elements. This plan should be looked at as a life plan that includes academic scheduling, career exploration, career and employability skills, community partnerships, college access, all forms of postsecondary training, and experiential learning opportunities.

The development of PLPs could serve as the backbone for establishing career development services for a school district. Districts should determine their own means for implementing, selecting resources, reviewing, and record keeping of students' personal learning plans.

Career Assessments

[Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.30, subdivision 1 \(1\)](#), requires districts to offer career assessments to encourage students to identify personally relevant career interests and aptitudes. Career information tools can help students and their families develop regularly reexamined personal learning and transition plans for postsecondary education or employment.

Student Progress Toward Career and College Readiness on Transcripts

[Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.30, subdivision 1 \(k\)](#), requires schools, districts, or charter schools to record a student's progress toward CCR on the high school transcript.

Schools, districts, and charter schools are best positioned to make individual determinations about indicators and measures of a student’s progress toward CCR. The statute does not prescribe a specific tool or method for measuring progress toward CCR. Districts, schools, and charter schools should select measures of progress that are appropriate for their students and report progress on the high school transcript in the method they see fit.

Workforce Opportunity Investment Act (WIOA), 2014

The goal of WIOA is to improve the quality of the workforce, reduce welfare dependency, increase economic self-sufficiency, meet the skill requirements of employers, and enhance the productivity of the state and the nation. WIOA particularly addresses resources and services for people with barriers to employment (such as people of color or people with disabilities) by aligning workforce investment, education, and economic development. Career development education is a key strategy for achieving WIOA goals.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), 2015

ESSA expects districts to promote a “well-rounded education” and explicitly identifies career technical education (CTE) as one of several important career development strategies. In addition, local educational agencies (LEAs) applying for Title I funds must describe how they will facilitate effective transitions from high school to postsecondary education, including, where applicable, coordination with employers and institutions of higher education as well as increased access to career counseling and dual or concurrent enrollment opportunities.

ESSA builds many other opportunities for career development into several programs, frequently including CTE and/or career counseling as options for spending and programming. For example, supporting experiential learning opportunities and work-based learning (WBL) are allowable uses of Title I funds. In addition, providing educators with high-quality professional development on the integration of CTE and WBL is an allowable use of Title II funds.