

Exploring Key Traits and Practices to Build Exemplary Career Pathway Systems

Fall 2021

Career pathways and credentialing are rapidly developing topics across K-12 education systems in New Hampshire and nationwide. Over the past five years, there have been new advancements at the state and local levels, as well as among key stakeholders around requirements and administrative frameworks. With the passage of SB 276, the *Drive to 65 Act* in 2019, and SB 148, the *Career and Technical Education Omnibus Bill* in 2021, the state is beginning to construct plans for a statewide career pathway network. In the meantime, the advancements around pathways in secondary, postsecondary, and career spaces have led to ambiguity around the definitions, criteria, and elements of meaningful and rigorous pathway systems.

This study, released by the New Hampshire Alliance for College and Career Readiness, provides a dive into research-based practices and advancements in other states, as well as an overview of the legislation and administrative rules in New Hampshire, in order to offer clarity and guidance to the various discussions of career pathways.

8 Traits of Exemplary Secondary to Post-Secondary Career Pathways



Rigorous & Flexible

Career pathways are both rigorous and flexible. They include challenging, high-quality core academic and career coursework and immersive experiences, are responsive to the diverse needs of students, and are adaptable. They have clear, actionable steps to obtaining a credential. Ex: Students can enroll in a diverse range of learning opportunities.



Integrated

Career pathways are rooted in cross-sector partnerships and aligned student experiences:

- Sequencing of high-quality coursework, enrichment programs, and work-based learning opportunities is meaningful to students, and optimizes their time both in and out of the classroom.
- Break down silos across stakeholders (employers, educators, higher education, state agencies, and other community partners)



Immersive

Career pathways include work-based learning opportunities for workforce immersion that connect education with career and technical knowledge and skills while building students' social capital. Examples of immersion include Extended Learning Opportunities (ELOs), internships, job shadowing, apprenticeships, and work-study programs.



Build Skills

Career pathways provide opportunities for students to develop and display foundational and professional skills that lead to success in the workplace, the classroom, and adulthood. Examples of these skills include conflict resolution, critical thinking, communication, and resourcefulness.



Meaningful & Valuable

Each student's strengths, passions, and talents are honored and transferred into a meaningful career pathway that leads to a postsecondary or industry-recognized credential, licensure, degree, or skill set that is aligned with current and future workforce needs.



Attainable

Career pathways recognize students' aspirations and break down barriers to help students meet their academic and career goals. They are available and accessible to students, and allow every child the opportunity to dream big.



Guided

Career pathways provide strong guidance from a counselor and mentor, and instill a navigation skillset in students. Together, school-based counselors and workplace or industry mentors support students on their chosen pathway and help to build students' own career navigation skills over time.



Foster Strong Connections

Career pathway systems recognize students, families, educators, support staff, employers, social services, and other community partners as essential stakeholders in the process.

Definitions (NH RSA 188-E:2, "The Drive to 65 Act")

A Career Pathway System:

- Connects and integrates secondary and post secondary learning opportunities.
- Focuses, honors and encourages BOTH academic and career coursework/experiences.
- Is supported by strong models of advising and counseling.
- Promotes equity by expanding access to new opportunities.
- Access involves BOTH participation and successful completion.
- Concludes with credentials (post-secondary degrees, certificates, industry credentials), licensure within and across fields, and technical skills acquired through training and/or education.

A Career Readiness Credential is defined in two ways within SB 276:

1. It can be an assortment of learning experiences available to students. These experiences can be combined to create unique pathways to a credential.
2. It can be a statewide system that recognizes students have, at minimum, met state or national metrics for career readiness.

During the 2021 legislative session, the NH State Board of Education is required to adopt rules that establish requirements for a "career readiness credential."

Career Readiness Pathways: A series of courses and experiences that culminate in a credential.

Work-Based Learning (WBL): Opportunities that reinforce and enhance the learning that occurs in a classroom, are career focused, and enable students to showcase skills in real settings. WBL is supported by both educator and workplace mentors.

State and Local Exemplars

- Colorado Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR)
- Workplace Readiness Skills (WRS) for the Commonwealth Assessment (Virginia)
- Minnesota Career Fields
- The Evolution and Potential of Career Pathways, US Department of Education
- Hinsdale High School ELO Program
- Salem CTE Center and Work-Based Learning Program
- Rochester NH and Great Bay Community College
- Mount Washington Valley CTC
- Pelham High School Career Pathways Program

Sources

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NEW HAMPSHIRE  **About The NH Alliance for College and Career Readiness**
FOR COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

The Alliance is comprised of members who represent K-12 education, post-secondary education, business, industry, and nonprofit sectors. We are actively working to expand membership to include students, parents, and a broad-range of community organizations to improve college and career readiness across the state.

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