High School Supplement

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The Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) was established in 1989 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. OCCRL is affiliated with the Department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership in the College of Education. Our mission is to use research and evaluation methods to improve policies, programs, and practices to enhance community college education and transition to college for diverse learners a the state, national, and international levels. Projects of this office are support by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) and the Illinois State Board of education (ISBE), along with other state, federal, and private and not-for-profit organizations. The contents of publications do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of our sponsors or the University of Illinois. Comments or inquiries about our publications are welcome and should be directed to OCCRL@illinois.edu.

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Pathways to Results (PTR) is an outcomes-focused, equity-guided process to improve programs and policies that support student transition to and through postsecondary education and employment. PTR focuses on addressing equity gaps between diverse learner groups and continuously improving processes critical to student success, including retention, completion of postsecondary credentials, and transition to employment.

The PTR process is most effective when it begins with a strong collaboration of team members and partners focusing on the critical problems that get in the way of student success in particular programs of study. These problems are identified when the teams use student-level data to identify outcome and equity gaps in results between racial, gender, low-income and other underserved groups and special populations. Major processes are assessed to understand how contributing factors create the identified problems and impede student success. Implementation and evaluation plans are designed to create solutions that improve the quality of programs of study immediately and over time. PTR gives teams the opportunity to continuously improve programs of study and produce ever-more equitable student outcomes. When PTR is implemented fully, the opportunity to improve programs never ends.

> "An overarching goal and benefit of the PTR process is that it provides teams with the opportunity to continuously improve programs of study and produce ever-more equitable student outcomes."

Introduction

Pathways to Results (PTR) has been utilized as an improvement process in Illinois educational organizations for several years, and it emerged from efforts to improve Programs of Study (POS) through the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006. PTR emphasizes collaboration among P–20 educational partners, including community colleges, high schools, business and industry, community groups, and other key stakeholders that have vested interests in high quality academic preparation of students for college and careers. A centerpiece of PTR is a concern for outcomes and equity for all students, with an emphasis on academic success for underrepresented students.

Although high schools have been included in the PTR process in the past, most PTR teams have been led by community college educators. High school educators have played a supporting role as members of P–20 partnerships or as members of PTR teams; however, to date, few have used this process to promote teaching and learning reforms within the high school setting. This is unfortunate. PTR offers high schools an opportunity to assist their faculties in examining student outcomes, equity concerns, and identifying areas of improvement to programs of study.

This supplemental guide to the PTR modules presents additional information for high school personnel. Please do not hesitate to contact a member of the Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) staff, if you need additional assistance or explanation. The website for OCCRL is http://occrl.illinois.edu and the phone number is 217–244–9390.

A note as you engage in PTR: It should not be separated from other school improvement processes your school may be employing to address No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability mandates, such as Rising Star, AdvancED, or *High Schools That Work*. PTR should **enhance** and **not replace** your current school improvement models, so you should be able to integrate PTR into the process your school already uses. The charts on the following pages provide a crosswalk indicating how PTR aligns with other school improvement models.

It is critical for the entire school faculty to remain continually informed throughout the PTR process. Systemic organizational improvements and sustained student learning gains are not likely to occur in your school when an improvement plan is developed and implemented by only a few select individuals, without obtaining faculty input. Faculty involvement and commitment are essential for changes to become integrated into the school culture, institutional norms, and faculty practices. Thus, even though your school is represented on a PTR partnership or a team that is given primary responsibility of engaging in the PTR process, the administrators and teacher leaders of your school will need to ensure that all data collected are shared in a transparent fashion throughout the school. It is also important to consult with faculty about potential school goals and implementation plans and inform them of your progress with the process (including celebrating successes and strategizing about problems encountered along the way).

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Comparison of Pathways to Results with Other High School Improvement Models

Phase	PTR	Rising Star	AdvancED	HSTW Six Steps
1	Engagement and Commitment	SmartStart: Identify Critical Needs	Analyze Data: Gather, Record Study	Identify the Problem
2	Outcomes and Equity	SmartPlan: Assess, Review, Plan	Set Goals: Measurable, Achievable	Identify Possible Causes
3	Process Assessment	SmartAction: Implement Plan	Plan: Strategies, Resources, Actions	Set Goals
4	Process Improvement & Evaluation	SmartCheck: Evaluate, Monitor	Implement: Benchmark Deliverables	Select Strategies
5	Review and Reflection		Evaluate: Monitor Success, Adjust	Take Action
6				Evaluate Results

Integration of Improvement Processes

Phases	Crosswalk	Questions to Consider
1. Identifying Your Team	PTR Engagement and Commitment	Who is on your team? Who are your partners? Are you creating a new team or using an existing team?
2. Problem Identification	PTR Engagement and Commitment RS SmartStart: Identify Critical Needs RS SmartPlan: Assess, Review, Plan HSTW Identify the Problem	What are potential problems you see? Will data back up your problem?
3. Data Analysis	PTR Outcomes and Equity RS SmartStart: Identify Critical Needs RS SmartPlan: Assess, Review, Plan AE Plan: Analyze Data: Gather, Record Study HSTW Identify Possible Causes	What data do you need to collect? How can you disaggregate the data? What does the data tell you?
4. Goal Setting	PTR Process Assessment PTR Process Improvement RS SmartPlan: Assess, Review, Plan AE Plan: Strategies, Resources, Actions HSTW Set Goals	What are you going to do now that you know the problem and your data backs up that problem? What measurable goals can be set?
5. Implementation	PTR Process Improvement & Evaluation RS SmartAction: Implement Plan AE Implement: Benchmark Deliverables HSTW Take Action	What is your timeline? How are you going to assign roles?
6. Reflection	PTR Review and Reflection HSTW Evaluate Results AE Evaluate: Monitor Success, Adjust RS SmartCheck: Evaluate, Monitor	How did it go? How do you feel about how it went? Were your results different than you expected? What might you do different next time?

Supplemental Explanations for Each PTR Phase

This section provides additional information for the introductory section, as well as the five PTR phases.

Introduction to Pathways to Results

Most Illinois high school educators are familiar with the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education legislation, commonly referred to as Perkins IV, and they know that their high schools receive funding through this act for coursework in their schools that qualify as Career and Technical Education (CTE). However, there may be some misunderstandings among the high school faculty, as some teachers may mistakenly believe that CTE courses are relevant only for students who do not intend to enroll in postsecondary education after high school, whereas other "academic" high school courses are considered appropriate for college-bound students. Prior to engaging in the PTR process, it would be helpful for the high school teachers and administrators to discuss the Illinois Career Cluster Model and to review the 16 career clusters (available on our website at occrl.illinois.edu/projects/pos). These conversations will help to clarify any misperceptions that faculty may have about CTE and help them understand that the career clusters are designed to prepare ALL students for college and careers. Every course in the high school should be rigorous, relevant, and designed to assist students with their transition to postsecondary education and employment.

Faculty may need to review the definitions of **career clusters**, **career pathways**, and **programs of study**, so that they fully comprehend the distinctions among these three concepts. (See Definition of Terms.) The website of the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (www.careerclusters.org) can be a helpful resource, to enrich teachers' and administrators' knowledge base of the career clusters and college and career readiness.

Engagement and Commitment

As your school prepares to engage in PTR, it will be helpful to have baseline data related to the career interests of your students. Note that there may be substantial differences in PTR focus for community colleges and high schools. A community college involved in PTR may have identified a career cluster, pathway, and program of study (POS) that will be the specific focus for their PTR process, and, as a high school within the community college's district, you may be working with your community college on their PTR project. It is appropriate for community colleges to address a specific POS that is offered within their institution, but high schools may not offer a POS within their facility. Instead, the high school faculty may focus their curriculum and instructional efforts more broadly—at the **career cluster** or **career pathway** level.

If each high school student has identified one of the 16 career clusters as his/her interest area and you have collected and analyzed this data, your faculty has important information regarding your students' career interests. Using this data, you can select a career cluster that has been identified as a career interest by a high proportion of your students and

analyze the curriculum within this career cluster. Note, though, that even if you do not have data on students' career cluster interests, your faculty still can identify a career cluster for this PTR process, based upon your collective knowledge of your students' interests and the typical college majors and career choices that students select upon high school graduation. Or, you may decide to select a career cluster that you believe may need deeper analysis, so that your faculty can determine whether the courses within this cluster are appropriate, current, relevant, and rigorous, so that they are sufficient to meet the needs of students who have a career interest in this area. Once you have identified the career cluster that will be your area of focus for the PTR process, you can be more strategic in selecting individuals who will serve as members of your PTR team, because these team members should have expertise within the identified career cluster.

As was stated previously, the PTR process should not operate in isolation from other school improvement processes that you are using within your school and/or district. As your cluster team invests in this process, you should keep your school and district improvement goals in the forefront. It is essential for the PTR Improvement Goals (Part II of the *PTR Charter*) that you identify during Engagement and Commitment to be aligned with your existing school and district improvement goals.

As you identify the members of your Partnership, keep in mind that you need broad representation on this team, including high school counselors, administrators, faculty (including someone from your Building Leadership Team), community college or college faculty, and business and industry. You should include representation from your sending middle level school(s), and you also may decide to include high school students and parents in your Partnership. Although your district may not have an Institutional Researcher as is the case in community colleges and universities, you may have a School Data Team, consisting of a group of teachers who are responsible for analyzing student data. If your school does not currently have such a team in place, creating a School Data Team will be crucial to the success of the PTR process. Appointing one or more Data Team members to your PTR Team would be helpful. As you prepare for outcomes and equity assessment, ensure that you have representation for special populations and/or groups that are historically underrepresented at the postsecondary level.

Outcomes and Equity Assessment

As your PTR team utilizes your "equity lens," you should disaggregate data by a variety of student demographics, including race and ethnicity, special education, gender, English Language Learners, and socioeconomic status. Race and ethnicity is especially important to consider because of patterns of inequity that continue to be evident in academic achievement among students of color. However, some high schools may have only modest racial and ethnic student diversity, especially in rural areas, but their students demonstrate other forms of diversity such as income, language, and disabilities. Other characteristics that a school may wish to disaggregate that are known to influence college and career readiness include parental education levels (no college-educated parents vs. one or two college-educated parents) or parental residence, including the parents living with the student (single-parent homes vs. both parents living in the home).

Numerous templates have been created for high schools and are available from OCCRL by using Dropbox for your school's use, which can be accessed through the OCCRL website (www.occrl.illinois.edu). Although your team may decide not to use all of the templates from OCCRL, you should find them helpful as you determine the types of school data that you wish to examine during the Outcomes and Equity phase. For example, although you may previously have analyzed your enrollments in Advanced Placement (AP) courses, you may not have examined the proportion of various demographic student subgroups that earn scores of 3, 4, and 5 on the AP examinations, which represents the level of test scores that different colleges and universities use designate that a student is college ready and deserving of college credit.

Another element that your team may wish to consider is the success of your students in college. High school educators tend to track students only through the point of graduation and into their initial enrollment in postsecondary education. Your PTR team may decide that the metric for effectiveness of your high school curriculum is not whether students enroll in college but instead is whether they are fully prepared for success in college and ultimately graduate from college. Therefore, it may be important to determine what percentage of students who enter college earn an Associate's or Bachelor's degree, what proportion of your graduates are required to complete remedial courses in college (and what courses), and which of your graduates drop out of college and the reasons they drop out. This information can be helpful to your faculty, as you begin to analyze whether (or not) you believe your students completed a rigorous high school curriculum that prepared them for college success. This analysis may help you identify factors that have restricted students' access to and success at the postsecondary level. Having a representative from the local community college and/or university on your PTR team can be helpful, so this individual can assist the team with obtaining information related to your students' postsecondary academic performance.

Based upon the results of your Outcomes and Equity Assessment, your team may decide to revise your **Improvement Goals** (Part II of your *PTR Charter*).

Process Assessment

As your team engages in Process Assessment, consider the major processes that support student progress as they participate in career-cluster curriculum. These processes, obviously, may look different from major functional processes identified by community colleges and that are provided as examples in the PTR modules. Some ideas for major processes that your team may decide pursue include (but are not limited to) the following:

- career exploration software programs or websites, used either at the middle school or high school level;
- other career awareness activities sponsored or provided by the school, such as career fairs or field trips to colleges/universities and/or local industries;
- career counseling services, provided either through the school counselors or through a Teacher Advisory program;
- work-based learning, including internships provided through the school or employers; and/or
- honors, dual-credit, and Advanced Placement (AP) courses available to students.

Your team may also wish to examine the process your school has developed whereby students select courses for their four years of high school. For example, many schools distribute a Course Description Handbook to students and parents in early spring, asking the student to pick their preferred courses for the upcoming year, but with relatively little college and career advising to assist them with their selections other than providing a listing of required high school courses necessary for admission into public colleges and universities in Illinois. Other high schools have developed a Career Planning Handbook incorporating the career clusters. Through this handbook, students identify their career cluster and then review the recommended curriculum (developed by the high school faculty) that is designed to best prepare the students for college and career success after high school graduation. Using the provided career cluster templates when they enter their freshman year of high school, students develop a four-year Plan of Study that includes courses required for high school graduation, recommended college preparatory courses, recommended or required courses within their career cluster, work-based learning experiences, and elective courses. This Plan of Study provides students and parents with a clear guide, and it encourages them to select the most rigorous sequence of courses to fully prepare them for their intended careers. Should the student's career interests change, the Plan of Study can be revised through a collaborative meeting with the counselor or Teacher Advisor, so the student understands what course adjustments are necessary for the remainder of his/her high school years.

Schools can use the data generated by the four-year Plans of Study to project course needs for up to three years into the future. This information can be very helpful, as administrators and teachers identify students' areas of interest; note career clusters that are drawing more or less student interest; and revise, eliminate, or add courses within the career clusters based upon the emerging areas of interest of their students.

Process Improvement and Evaluation

In this phase, your team develops solutions to problems that you have identified in the earlier phases. Again—please remember that PTR should be integrated into your existing school improvement model. During the Process Improvement and Evaluation phase, your team is encouraged to use your existing planning templates to guide your implementation.

We wish to reinforce a concern stated in the PTR module that some educators engage in "deficit thinking," attributing problems to "those" students' lack of ability or motivation and/or their parents' lack of support for schooling. Data that you have collected and analyzed earlier in the PTR process should assist educators with self-examination of their personal beliefs about student ability and motivation, and it is possible that some—or many—prevailing norms and assumptions within the school will be challenged. Data transparency is critical; if only the PTR team members have access to data, other faculty members are not exposed to the data and are not granted a similar opportunity to examine the data and to reflect on their beliefs and practices. Changes in building norms and the school culture cannot occur unless the school administrators and teacher leaders actively plan opportunities for meaningful dialogue about the data—through departmental or other team meetings, Professional Learning Community sessions, and whole-faculty meetings.

When creating your school's implementation plan, ensure that you identify necessary resources, including any materials, professional development, informal coaching and support, and time for teachers to work together. Change is "resource hungry," and the implementation plan is destined to fail if the school administration does not provide adequate resources to fully support the plan. **Thus, it is critical that the principal is fully engaged and invested in the PTR process.** If the principal is not involved and is not willing to devote adequate resources to support the plan, the faculty are likely to assume that it does not have administrative support.

Another element to consider is to be certain that your faculty evaluates the effectiveness of your implementation plan. In many school systems, educators implement a strategy but simply forget to evaluate whether the implementation was successful or unsuccessful. Documenting your results (or lack thereof) is essential, so that the PTR team can determine whether the implementation plan needs to be modified.

Review and Reflection

As your team members participate in the Review and Reflection phase, consider the effects of the PTR process not only on your team's performance but also in promoting improved student learning. You may wish to obtain feedback from the entire high school faculty, because this data can provide perspectives from across the school that might not be voiced solely by the members of the PTR team. In this phase, it is important to consider how the PTR process can be sustained, and how it can remain aligned with the school improvement model regularly used by your school. Because we live in an era of educational accountability, the team needs to examine whether or not the implementation plan was successful in promoting improved student learning.

Definition of Terms

Career Clusters: Groups of occupations and industries that have in common a set of foundational knowledge and skills. There are 16 nationally recognized clusters within which are multiple career pathways.

Cluster Level Knowledge and Skills: The cluster level knowledge and skills set is built on a common core required for career success in the multiple occupations included in the cluster. This shared core consists of the following elements: academic foundations; communication; problem solving and critical thinking; information technology applications; systems; safety, health, and environment, leadership and teamwork, ethics and legal responsibilities; employability and career development, and technical skills.

Career Pathways: Multi-year programs of academic and technical study that prepare high school students for a full range of postsecondary options within each of the 16 clusters. Currently, there are 79 nationally recognized pathways, each with specific pathway level knowledge and skills.These pathways provide a context for exploring career options at all levels of education and a framework for linking learning to the knowledge and skills needed for future education and employment.

Pathway Level Knowledge and Skills: The pathway level knowledge and skills set is built on a common core of knowledge and skills required for career success in all programs of study aligned with the pathway. This core is specific to the pathway and consists of elements selected by secondary and postsecondary educators with input from business and industry and other stakeholders.

Programs of Study (POS): Sequences of courses that incorporate a non-duplicative progression of secondary and postsecondary elements that include both academic and career and technical education content. Programs of study should start no later than the ninth grade and continue through at least two years of postsecondary education. Programs of study include opportunities to earn college credit (dual credit) in high school, an industry-recognized credential or certificate at the secondary/postsecondary level, and an associate or baccalaureate degree.

*Terms taken from: http://www.ilprogramsofstudy.org/

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