

NCAN'S

K-12 COLLEGE
AND CAREER
READINESS

CALENDAR



This document represents a 15-month calendar of activities for K-12 districts and schools to engage in to advance college and career readiness. The table provides a category into which each activity falls, describes the activity, and notes whether practitioners should be **planning** to take that action in the given month or actually engaging in that activity. Resources are attached as appropriate for each activity. This calendar focuses predominately (but not exclusively) on work done at the high school level with an acknowledgment that systemic change to a district's postsecondary approach requires buy-in from the elementary and middle school levels.

This calendar is best utilized by a cross-functional college and career readiness team that engages district and school leadership, school counselors, teachers, parents, students, and, where possible, external groups like community-based organizations.

The National College Attainment Network (NCAN) encourages districts and schools to set college and career readiness goals on an annual basis. These goals help to solidify a vision for which practices and attitudes will change to improve students' postsecondary outcomes. These will necessarily vary across organizations. These are some directions in which districts and schools might consider moving:

- **Increase postsecondary enrollment (set specific targets)**
- **Increase Free Application for Federal Student Aid**

(FAFSA) completion (set specific targets)

- **Increase college applications and acceptances (set specific targets)**
- **Include districtwide goals for college and career readiness in any version of school improvement plans**
- **Close equity gaps for students from low-income backgrounds, students of color, first-generation students, and other student groups underrepresented in postsecondary education**
- **Enhance external partnerships with and between the district and/or school with community-based organizations (CBOs) and institutions of higher education (IHEs)**
- **Assess and ensure ample staff and financial capacity are dedicated to college and career planning**
- **Incorporate fit and match concepts into postsecondary advising practices**
- **Harness the power of National Student Clearinghouse data to guide postsecondary advising**
- **Focus on guiding students to postsecondary pathways that data show are most likely to see them succeed**



Four additional overview resources that will be particularly useful alongside this document and which should be consulted often are:

- **4 for the Fall: A Blueprint for Supporting the High School Class of 2021:** This NCAN resource offers the clearest, most concrete ways to keep students on a postsecondary pathway after they graduate high school. Approaches covered include: understanding students' postsecondary intentions and needs through survey data, obtaining and analyzing postsecondary outcomes data from the National Student Clearinghouse, increasing access to financial aid by improving FAFSA completion rates, and supporting students to matriculate successfully by combating summer melt.
- **College Readiness Indicator Systems Resource Series:** The six-part CRIS Resource Series provides guidance to schools and districts for developing and enacting effective indicator and support systems. The resources are segmented by audience (e.g., district and school administrators, community-based organizations, policymakers). The authors, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, The John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at the Stanford University Graduate School of Education, and the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research suggest that "readers may opt to review the whole series or select only those resources that apply to their particular role or interests."
- **Postsecondary Advising: Characteristics and Conditions for Expanding Access:** Bellwether Education Partners' publication "summarizes existing efforts and best practices in the college advising space. Informed by more than 60 discussions with districts, college access organizations, and funders, this comprehensive slide deck outlines conditions that must be in place to expand college advising services." The resource includes three short tipsheets offering concrete recommendations to college access organizations, districts, and funders.
- **Preparing High School Students for Successful Transitions to Postsecondary Education and Employment:** This issue brief from MDRC reviews lessons from studies of selected policies and programs designed to improve students' preparation for postsecondary pathways. Special emphasis is placed on ways to help those who traditionally face substantial barriers to success, including students from low-income backgrounds, African American and Latino students, and students with disabilities.

ALL YEAR/ONGOING

TABLE COLOR KEY

	Management & Budget
	Partnerships
	Training & Professional Development
	Financial Aid/FAFSA
	Data
	Early Awareness
	Postsecondary Advising
	Summer Melt
	Testing

Function	Planning Item or Action Item
College and career team meetings	Schedule regular (suggest biweekly or monthly) series of team meetings throughout the year for planning and implementation of college and career readiness (CCR) activities
Relationships between district/school and highest volume attended colleges and universities and/or local colleges and universities with the best outcomes for underrepresented students	Establish or strengthen partnership via regular communication, data sharing agreements and/or memoranda of understanding, invitation to serve on district college/career planning team
Relationships between district/school and external community partners or community-based organizations	Establish or strengthen partnership via regular communication, data sharing agreements, invitation to serve on district college/career planning team; monitor services provided to district and students by community partners
College and career readiness among elementary and middle school professionals	Promote buy-in among school professionals at all levels; invite an elementary and middle school representative to the college/career planning team
FAFSA completion data	Monitor throughout the year (at least biweekly), share disaggregated data with identified stakeholders and provide targeted outreach to students
College/career readiness activities	Provide regular updates to district leadership for planning, implementation, and outcomes associated with CCR activities
High-integrity/high-quality data levels	Maintain and monitor for a high-integrity/high-quality data level; secure buy-in for data input, security, and analysis that results in good, disaggregated data to drive decisions for college/career readiness
College and career awareness/exploration opportunities	Offer a menu of college and career awareness/exploration activities at all grade levels





SUMMER PLANNING



JUNE THROUGH AUGUST

TABLE COLOR KEY

	Management & Budget
	Partnerships
	Training & Professional Development
	Financial Aid/FAFSA
	Data
	Early Awareness
	Postsecondary Advising
	Summer Melt
	Testing

Function	Planning Item or Action Item
National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) StudentTracker graduates file	Update and prepare file for most recent graduating class
Summer planning meeting for college and career readiness team	Host CCR team meeting(s) – include any IHE or CBO representatives
Postsecondary readiness and outcome goals	Establish, revisit, and/or update at CCR team meetings using baseline/current data that is disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, and other student characteristics
Postsecondary readiness and outcomes measures	Review and update suggested measures and tracking sources. For example: 1. Average number of college applications per student 2. FAFSA completion percentage 3. Postsecondary acceptance rate 4. Type of institutions applied to 5. State- or district-customized measure
Federal- and state-level data	Identify/access federal and state data sources for selected measures
Internal staff and budget resources for CCR activities	Identify staff and total budget capacity to support CCR activities for upcoming academic year
Staff responsibilities and needed resources allocation	Assign staff responsible for activity implementation, data sharing, and communication. Allocate financial resources to individual activities (e.g., professional development content, student-facing materials, data sources, tracking systems, and reporting).





JUNE THROUGH AUGUST, CONTINUED

TABLE COLOR KEY

	Management & Budget
	Partnerships
	Training & Professional Development
	Financial Aid/FAFSA
	Data
	Early Awareness
	Postsecondary Advising
	Summer Melt
	Testing

Function	Planning Item or Action Item
Student-level data management system to track key postsecondary milestones/outcomes	Adopt, enhance, or update student management tracking system; provide staff training for data input and reporting; create relevant user accounts and assess user permissions
CCR programming goals for grades 9-11	Establish/review CCR goals for grades 9-11. Determine if middle school goals are desired.
Calendar/schedule for student and family events/workshops/information sessions	Establish/update annual activities calendar; communicate/publish events in annual district calendar
CCR curriculum	Identify/update any curricula to be used for CCR activities
Fit and match advising concepts	Review available NSC data; refine and come to consensus around fit and match advising practices for school counselors and community partners (if applicable)
Annual calendar of professional development events	Determine needed professional development topics to be provided internally; identify external professional development opportunities for key staff (e.g. counselor workshops or conferences)
FAFSA completion campaign/activities	Lay groundwork for campaign (partners & roles); timeline; completion assistance opportunities





JUNE THROUGH AUGUST, CONTINUED

TABLE COLOR KEY

	Management & Budget
	Partnerships
	Training & Professional Development
	Financial Aid/FAFSA
	Data
	Early Awareness
	Postsecondary Advising
	Summer Melt
	Testing

Function	Planning Item or Action Item
Standardized testing options available (SAT, ACT, PSAT)	Review standardized testing options available for students (e.g., free statewide testing, district-funded ACT/SAT/PSAT testing). Determine option for access to fee waivers from testing sources, internal resources or external partner resources. Review test site options (local district sites, area sites). Determine test preparation opportunities available externally and if any will be provided by the district.
Postsecondary and career aspirations survey (grades 9-11)	Create or update annual survey; determine administration schedule; plan for analyzing and distributing results





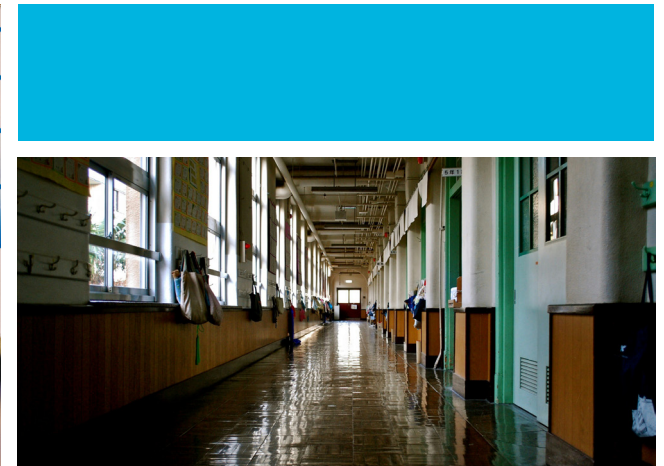
SUMMER WRAP-UP

JUNE

TABLE COLOR KEY

	Management & Budget
	Partnerships
	Training & Professional Development
	Financial Aid/FAFSA
	Data
	Early Awareness
	Postsecondary Advising
	Summer Melt
	Testing

Function	Planning Item or Action Item
NSC StudentTracker graduates file	Update and prepare file for most recent graduating class
Senior exit surveys	Review results; assign appropriate cohort to summer melt interventions; determine supports needed for other cohorts (workforce, military, undecided)
Summer melt interventions	Implement identified strategies; arrange staff support schedules
Annual review of postsecondary readiness and outcome goals	Revisit and/or update goals at CCR team meetings using baseline/current data; build continued buy-in for internal staff and external partners



JULY

TABLE COLOR KEY

	Management & Budget
	Partnerships
	Training & Professional Development
	Financial Aid/FAFSA
	Data
	Early Awareness
	Postsecondary Advising
	Summer Melt
	Testing

Function	Planning Item or Action Item
Summer melt activities	Maintain staff supports; track data to understand common issues; involve appropriate IHEs
Postsecondary readiness and outcomes measures:	Review and update suggested measures and tracking sources 1. Average number of applications per student 2. FAFSA completion percentage 3. Postsecondary acceptance rate 4. Type of institutions applied to 5. State- or district-customized measure
Summer header activities	Incorporate all start of summer activities needed to prepare for the academic year
School counselor feedback	Ask school counselors to provide written feedback/ suggestions for revisions to CCR activities/resources



AUGUST

TABLE COLOR KEY

	Management & Budget
	Partnerships
	Training & Professional Development
	Financial Aid/FAFSA
	Data
	Early Awareness
	Postsecondary Advising
	Summer Melt
	Testing

Function	Planning Item or Action Item
FAFSA completion assistance	Provide opportunities for students making late decisions to enroll in fall term
Summer access to school counselors	Designate a portion of school counselor time to assist with last-minute college transition issues
FAFSA completion campaign and provide FAFSA completion assistance	Review FAFSA completion data, campaign strategies, and activities; make needed modifications for coming year





FALL



SEPTEMBER

TABLE COLOR KEY

	Management & Budget
	Partnerships
	Training & Professional Development
	Financial Aid/FAFSA
	Data
	Early Awareness
	Postsecondary Advising
	Summer Melt
	Testing

Function	Planning Item or Action Item
Best practices for working with external partners and volunteers	Identify and implement best practices for working with external partners providing services to students. Offer training to FAFSA completion volunteers.
College application lists	Assist seniors with finalizing college research and compiling final application list. Incorporate fit and match advising strategies.
ACT/SAT/PSAT/PreACT testing	Inform and assist students with testing schedules, registration processes, deadlines, and test preparation options
Postsecondary and career aspirations survey for grades 9-11	Inform faculty/students of administration schedule and plan for sharing results. This might be administered in October or November. Wherever possible, try to integrate with any existing survey administration schedule and/or tools to reduce survey fatigue throughout the year.
Post-graduation plans survey for grade 12	Inform faculty/students of administration schedule and plan for sharing results. This might also be administered in October. Wherever possible, try to integrate with any existing survey administration schedule and/or tools to reduce survey fatigue throughout the year.
Senior demographic data	Review senior demographic data (legal name, DOB, address, phone number) for future data files and summer melt outreach
FAFSA completion campaign	Host final preparation meeting with all campaign partners. Ensure FAFSA completion tracking procedures are in place.





OCTOBER

TABLE COLOR KEY

	Management & Budget
	Partnerships
	Training & Professional Development
	Financial Aid/FAFSA
	Data
	Early Awareness
	Postsecondary Advising
	Summer Melt
	Testing

Function	Planning Item or Action Item
College information sessions for underclassmen and their families to cover topics like: • College Research and Search • Fit & Match Resources • Financial Aid, College-Going Timelines • Standardized Testing	Offer workshops according to schedule determined by CCR team; series should begin in October
Launch FAFSA completion campaign	Host launch event with student/parent involvement. Begin campaign messaging, including media options.
Hold first FAFSA completion event(s)	Share completion event schedule/assistance options; host school-based event; invite IHE financial aid personnel as volunteers
Confirm NSC graduates file is updated and ready to run (automatically) in November	Review data file prior
Early decision/early action deadlines	Ensure students with early decision plans have ample/timely support with application processing



NOVEMBER

TABLE COLOR KEY

	Management & Budget
	Partnerships
	Training & Professional Development
	Financial Aid/ FAFSA
	Data
	Early Awareness
	Postsecondary Advising
	Summer Melt
	Testing

Function	Planning Item or Action Item
Postsecondary and career aspirations survey for grades 9-11	Suggested month to administer
Career awareness/exploration opportunities	Offer a variety of activities throughout the year; kickoff may be associated with survey
FAFSA completion events	Continue to offer in-person events; virtual events if needed; one-on-one assistance
FAFSA completion data	Access, review, and share FAFSA completion data with CCR team, school leaders, and other invested stakeholders; determine outreach strategies for non-filers





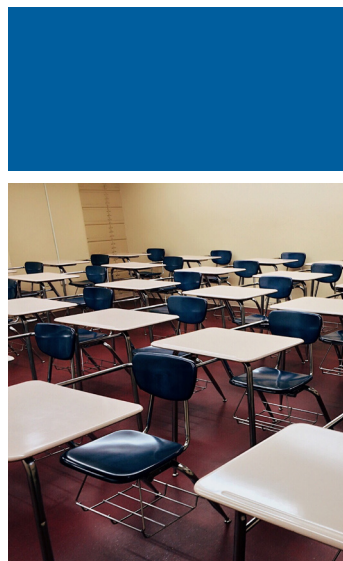
WINTER

DECEMBER

TABLE COLOR KEY

	Management & Budget
	Partnerships
	Training & Professional Development
	Financial Aid/FAFSA
	Data
	Early Awareness
	Postsecondary Advising
	Summer Melt
	Testing

Function	Planning Item or Action Item
NSC data analysis and review	Review and analyze NSC data and understand trends (disaggregated by student demographics, postsecondary institution types, and specific postsecondary institutions). Update any student demographics errors prior to spring file submission.
Postsecondary outcomes data	Share postsecondary outcomes data with appropriate staff, stakeholders, and external partners
FAFSA completion data	Continue to share FAFSA completion data
FAFSA completion events	Continue to offer in-person events; virtual events if needed; one-on-one assistance



JANUARY

TABLE COLOR KEY

	Management & Budget
	Partnerships
	Training & Professional Development
	Financial Aid/FAFSA
	Data
	Early Awareness
	Postsecondary Advising
	Summer Melt
	Testing

Function	Planning Item or Action Item
Financial aid offer (“award letter”) comparisons	Implement strategy for assisting students with financial aid offer review and comparisons; target group is early decision applicants (may be required in December as well)
College and career readiness goals check-in	Host midyear check-in with district and school leadership to determine progress toward college and career readiness goals
FAFSA completion events	Continue to offer in-person events; virtual events if needed; one-on-one assistance
FAFSA completion data	Continue to share FAFSA completion data
Senior exit survey	Update/refine senior exit survey for March administration
ACT and SAT testing for juniors	Implement testing promotion and registration activities to ensure juniors test in the spring



FEBRUARY

TABLE COLOR KEY

	Management & Budget
	Partnerships
	Training & Professional Development
	Financial Aid/FAFSA
	Data
	Early Awareness
	Postsecondary Advising
	Summer Melt
	Testing

Function	Planning Item or Action Item
Summer melt interventions	Plan summer melt intervention strategies.
	Review models: in-person, virtual/texting, hybrid.
	Determine staffing and funding needed.
	Determine series of messages to be used.
College and career decision day event	Plan event for early May
FAFSA completion events	Continue to offer in-person events; virtual events if needed; one-on-one assistance
College information sessions	Maintain schedule of workshops for students/families in grades 9-11
FAFSA verification process	Identify students selected, and assist with completing the FAFSA verification process





SPRING



MARCH

TABLE COLOR KEY

	Management & Budget
	Partnerships
	Training & Professional Development
	Financial Aid/FAFSA
	Data
	Early Awareness
	Postsecondary Advising
	Summer Melt
	Testing

Function	Planning Item or Action Item
Senior exit survey	Administer senior survey; review results and determine any assistance needed for various cohorts
FAFSA completion events	Hold wrap-up event to encourage FAFSA filing for those who have yet to file

APRIL

NSC spring enrollment data	Review and analyze NSC data and understand trends. The new key KPI is % most recent graduating class started in the first spring, which helps calculate first-year enrollment %. Review data for term to term persistence of students.
Postsecondary outcomes data	Share postsecondary outcomes data with appropriate staff, stakeholders, and external partners
Financial aid offer (“award letter”) comparison	Assist students with financial aid offer comparison and final college choice decisions
College information sessions	Maintain schedule of workshops for students/families in grades 9-11



MAY

TABLE COLOR KEY

	Management & Budget
	Partnerships
	Training & Professional Development
	Financial Aid/FAFSA
	Data
	Early Awareness
	Postsecondary Advising
	Summer Melt
	Testing

Function	Planning Item or Action Item
High-quality NSC graduates file	Build out a high-quality NSC graduates file – connecting data from SIS to graduates file
High school to college transition processes	Provide assistance to students with details related to enrollment deposits, housing, orientation, sending AP scores to colleges
Summer melt activities	Confirm contact information for summer melt activities for appropriate cohorts
Summer melt texting (if applicable)	Upload student and parent contact information into text messaging platform; determine messaging schedule; confirm staff support schedule
College and career decision day	Host a college and career decision day event



THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST IN TRANSFORMING STUDENTS' POSTSECONDARY PATHWAYS!

This calendar is a living document that NCAN will continue to update as new resources become available. NCAN is willing and able to answer questions about districts' and schools' college and career readiness activities.

CONTACT US

ZENIA HENDERSON

Chief Program Officer

hendersonz@ncan.org

BILL DEBAUN

Senior Director

debaunb@ncan.org

