



## **COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READINESS**

ACADEMIC PREPARATION • ACCESSIBILITY • ASPIRATION

Ohio Appalachian Collaborative  
College- and Career-Readiness

# **Strategic Plan**



# Situation Analysis

All students deserve access to a high-quality education that maximizes their potential for future success. Responding to this and other challenges, Battelle for Kids (BFK) and a collaborative of 21 Appalachian Ohio school districts have joined forces to create and implement a comprehensive approach to transform rural education and improve student outcomes. At the conclusion of this multi-year initiative, the ultimate goal is to implement a successful rural education improvement collaborative that can be scaled across rural Ohio and the country.

All school districts, regardless of geography or demographics, are faced with the need to adapt the way education is designed and delivered to meet the needs of a rapidly-changing global economy. At the same time, there are unique challenges facing rural communities and school districts. Information highlighting educational opportunities and attainment for the Appalachian Ohio region underscores the need for transformational reform to prepare students with the knowledge and skills to be future ready upon high school graduation. Such information includes:

**Educational attainment:** According to the Appalachian Regional Commission (2010) Ohio's Appalachian region has historically lower college-going, college completion, and educational attainment rates than the rest of the state and the nation. Less than 12 percent of the adult population in most Ohio Appalachian counties has completed college, which is well below the overall national Appalachian rate of 17.6 percent and the U.S. rate of 24.4 percent.

**Access to rigorous curriculum:** The average percentage of high school graduates in Appalachian Ohio participating in the 2008-09 Advanced Placement (AP) test was 16 percent compared to 34 percent for non-Appalachian Ohio. Five of the 21 districts in the OAC report that no 2009 graduating seniors participated in an AP exam. (Battelle for Kids, 2011).

**College-Going and Readiness Rates:** According to five-year trend data from the Ohio Board of Regents (2003-2007):

- College remediation rates for reading or mathematics on average were approximately 46 percent for Appalachian Ohio districts, compared to the state average of 39 percent.
- Fifty-nine percent of Appalachian Ohio students are exposed to a less than minimum college preparatory curriculum, compared to a state average of 48 percent.
- The average college-entrance rate for OAC districts is nearly 40 percent, compared to the state average of 45 percent.
- ACT profiles of graduating seniors show the average (by district) percentage of graduates participating in 2008-09 ACT college entrance exams in Appalachian Ohio was 56.7 percent, compared to 63.7 percent in non-Appalachian Ohio districts.
- The mean ACT score (2008-2009) for Appalachian Ohio districts was 20.6, and for non-Appalachian Ohio districts was 21.6.

Based upon the most current labor market information from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (November 2011), eight of 11 OAC counties have unemployment rates exceeding Ohio's statewide unemployment rate of 8.5 percent. Additionally, five OAC counties have unemployment rates above 10 percent. All OAC counties have per-capita personal income levels below the state and national levels (Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, 2011b).

The mission of the Ohio Appalachian Collaborative (OAC) is to strengthen and leverage educator effectiveness to accelerate college- and career-readiness (CCR) for every student and ensure they have access to future opportunities to enhance their quality of life.

**On the job front:** In 2011, the state of Ohio published the "Buckeye Top 50: 2008-2018: Ohio's High-Wage Occupations in Demand." This list of the 50 high-wage occupations in Ohio that are in demand, and projected to stay in demand, includes the educational requirements for each job. Sixty percent of the top 50 jobs required a postsecondary vocational award or better. Thirty-nine require an associate's degree or better (Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, 2011a).

**Brain Drain:** While rural schools can be a source of unity in many communities, there is also a distinct tension between schools and the Appalachian community because of a phenomenon known as "brain drain." Schools often inadvertently feed the brain drain of rural areas, as many talented rural students leave their respective Appalachian communities in search of better opportunities. This can lead to hostility and even a class distinction within these rural areas. As Courge (2011) notes, those at one end of this hierarchy feel "a sense of alienation from and hostility toward schools, while those on the other end see education as the only path to success."

**Focus on 9-14 Education:** In his book, *College and Career Ready in the 21st Century: Making High School Matter*, Stone (2012) notes that more than half of ninth grade students in the United States will never complete a college degree. Thus, schools as well as state and federal policymakers are discussing the need for high schools to do more than just prepare some students for college. Schools must prepare all American youth for productive lives as well as continued learning beyond high school. Therefore, schools are asked now to shift the focus of high school reform efforts from "college for all" to "careers for all." This includes developing a framework for career and technical education, stemming dropout rates, and making the transition to higher education institutions more seamless. The framework for high school education has become a 9-14 framework and not simply a 9-12 framework, with a specific eye to helping students transition to postsecondary lives.

**College Education Costs and Payoff:** According to *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, America's higher education system enterprise has become a \$375 billion industry (Blumenstyk, 2008). The higher education industry and college affordability is becoming a greater issue with regard to national policy and legislation. In fact, a poll conducted by the National Education Association showed that 70 percent of parents and 65 percent of students said making college affordable was an important issue for them during election time. Therefore, with the rising costs of college, the question looming large in the Appalachian community is, "what is the payoff?" Parents, students, and communities must weigh the cost (and subsequent debt) of college versus the potential for lifetime earnings that comes with attending college. While the National Center for Education Statistics notes that the average lifetime earnings of a college graduate is \$1 million more than those without a degree, prospective students cannot ignore the question of short term affordability and debt. This question can create a barrier to students attending both 2-year and 4-year institutions.



## A Research Definition of College- and Career-Readiness

In order to fully understand such challenges and needs, the OAC must focus on defining an overall vision of college- and career-readiness. In *Something in Common*, a book that outlines the in-depth development of the Common Core State Standards, Robert Rothman defines college- and career-readiness as “the ability to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing, academic college courses and in workforce training programs...For college, that meant enrolling in either a two-year or four-year institution; for workforce training, that meant enrolling in programs that prepare students for careers that offer competitive, livable salaries, that offer opportunities for career advancement, and that are in growing or sustainable industry” (Rothman, 2011, p. 80).

For the purposes of this initiative, the OAC will frame its definition of college- and career-readiness as outlined by Rothman. Further, the OAC will build upon this definition by defining the Three Pillars of College- and Career-Readiness.

## Three Pillars of College- and Career-Readiness

There is significant research dedicated to college- and career- readiness. For the purposes of the OAC, we have organized our review of college- and career-readiness under three pillars to provide a framework for further review and development in district-based initiatives. These pillars include:

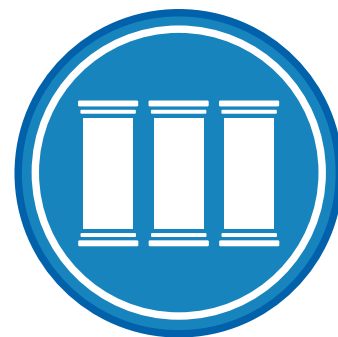
### Academic Preparation • Accessibility • Aspiration

**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.

The following Strategic Plan was developed to help address the college- and career- readiness of the OAC, driven by the Three Pillars of College- and Career-Readiness. This plan was developed through a College- and Career-Readiness Think Tank, comprised of OAC district members, community members, higher education partners, and experts from around the state of Ohio (see Appendix B for complete description of the think tank).







# Pillar 1: Academic Preparation

This pillar seeks to identify the key components of academic preparation for college- and career- readiness. The Common Core State Standards initiative and research regarding the gap in student preparation for postsecondary success fit in the discussion around this pillar. **Key questions to answer around this pillar include:**

- How are districts promoting alignment and transition to the Common Core State Standards?
- What other K-12 academic and curriculum components should be included with regard to academic preparation for college- and career-readiness (i.e. STEMM (science, technology, engineering, math, and medicine), math, science, service-learning, internships, entrepreneurship, etc.)?

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## Outcome Data for Pillar 1

- Decreased college remediation rates.
- Increased ACT participation rates and composite scores.
- Development of college- and career-readiness curriculum that addresses personal readiness, life skills, and workforce skills.
- Increased student achievement scores in statewide assessments across all subgroups.

## STRATEGY 1:

Offer rigorous PreK-12 curriculum that involves college- and career-readiness opportunities, along with academic requirements, to meet student goals.

### 1.1 Promote understanding of the Common Core State Standards curriculum that allows for successful implementation school districts.

- 1.1.1 Embed formative instructional practices and assessment tools in district practice to accommodate students in their learning and self-assessment.
- 1.1.2 Embed data analysis and best practices using value-added data in district practice to accommodate students in their learning and self-assessment.

### 1.2 Develop programming that outlines CCR activities and skills to be completed by grade level.

- 1.2.1 Involve counselors, classroom teachers, staff, and administrators collaboratively in interdisciplinary and discipline-specific teams to develop the district's secondary and postsecondary learning goals.
- 1.2.2 Identify the necessary targeted skill set for CCR that comprise personal development, college-readiness, and workforce skills. Develop activities for each grade level that align to these identified skills (i.e. employment and college visits, character education lessons, etc.).

### 1.3 Connect with community resources to begin to examine job trends and needs in the community, as well as resources to accomplish this tactic.



## Pillar 2: Accessibility

In an increasingly competitive global economy, yet struggling economic climate, access to viable college and career choices for students is crucial.

**Key questions to answer around this pillar include:**

- How do increase awareness and culture of college and career access from grades K-12?
- What are the barriers to college and career access for all students? How do we eliminate such barriers?

### STRATEGY 2:

**Leverage community assets to help students and families access college and career preparation programs.**

#### **2.1 Connect students with the college- and career-readiness curriculum that promotes real-life application of knowledge and skills, including:**

- 2.1.1 Dual enrollment opportunities
- 2.1.2 Community internships and service learning opportunities
- 2.1.3 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, including the development of analytical, communication, and technology skills through project-based learning opportunities
- 2.1.4 Online learning opportunities
- 2.1.5 Credit flexibility programming in courses that meet students' goals
- 2.1.6 STEMM programming and opportunities

#### **2.2 Convene a community stakeholder organization, or a "core team," with K-12 schools to develop a community analysis to understand community assets for college and career paths (i.e. P-20 Council, regional body, etc.).**

- 2.2.1 Utilize the core team to develop a plan tailored to each community. Draw on existing connections, and capture best strengths to implement, sustain, and communicate the plan. The plan would be compatible with current plans around college- and career-readiness and work to further the academic and social preparation of the community's students.
- 2.2.2 Utilize churches and other trusted community organizations to build capacity around sharing information, building awareness, and helping students and families understand "the how" of the college application process (i.e. FAFSA, scholarships, completing applications, understanding deadlines, essay writing, etc.).
- 2.2.3 Develop strategies to explicitly address affordability and resources available to help students attend colleges and postsecondary training programs to achieve their college and career goals (i.e. scholarships, career pathway education, etc.).

#### **2.3 Develop two-way channels of communication between businesses, community organizations, and schools to outline workforce needs and create workforce development connections.**

**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.

### Outcome Data for Pillar 2

- Increased participation in dual enrollment, postsecondary enrollment options (PSEO), and/or Advanced Placement (AP) programming.
- Increased college enrollment and graduation rates, particularly in first-generation college-goers.
- Increased numbers of career and technical credentials earned.
- Increased participation and completion of STEMM and distance learning coursework.
- Increased student participation in credit flexibility programming.
- Existence of a partnership agreement between business, community, and educational organizations in the community.
- Development of a career advising program.



## Pillar 3: Aspiration

The topic of college and career aspiration often surfaces when discussing rural or Appalachian schools. The issues include addressing the challenges of “brain drain” and leaping economic hurdles, as well as, changing long-standing community cultures with regard to college attendance and perception. **Key questions to be addressed in this pillar include:**

- What are the barriers to students’ college and career aspirations?
- What resources are available to increase student awareness of postsecondary options?
- Self-efficacy and self-esteem are also variables linked to college attendance. How do we build such efficacy in students in the K-12 setting so that they develop appropriate college and career aspirations?

### Outcome Data for Pillar 3

- Increased high school graduation rates.
- Increased college and business on-site visits for students grades K-12.
- Increased numbers of students who have developed Personal Postsecondary Plans in elementary, middle, and high school.
- Increased utilization of OCIS and other life planning assessments.
- Increased internships, mentorships, and service-learning opportunities.

### STRATEGY 3:

Facilitate the development of students’ realistic visions for their futures.

- 3.1 Create a district culture that promotes and emphasizes the fact that students can succeed and postsecondary education is critical and attainable.**
  - 3.1.1 Identify standards and essential learning which students must demonstrate to graduate, and post these throughout the district.
  - 3.1.2 Proactively connect students to ACT, SAT, PSAT, PLAN, or Explore opportunities, registration, and preparation.
  - 3.1.3 Ensure students have a strong voice in the culture and are regularly surveyed regarding their needs, goals, and input to the system.
- 3.2 Connect with alumni from the school/region to develop and share success stories. Develop an alumni career network for college and career conversations.**
  - 3.2.1 Develop a purposeful advisory program for students that supports a positive CCR culture.
  - 3.2.2 Partner with local universities to create programs for first-time college-goers. Have college professors come to school districts to talk about gaps they see in the knowledge and skills needed for first-year college students.
- 3.3 Offer courses in high school for students to develop postsecondary readiness. Include curriculum that addresses career readiness, “College 101,” and personal skill development.**
  - 3.3.1 Engage educators in helping students become aware of their strengths, through using data and student projections.
  - 3.3.2 Engage students in developing Personal Postsecondary Plans, reflective of their individual learning styles, histories, and interests that allow each student to take ownership of his/her education.
  - 3.3.3 Utilize appropriate assessments for students to develop Personal Postsecondary Plans (i.e. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Interest Assessments, OCIS, etc.).

### STRATEGY 4:

Engage stakeholders around college- and career-readiness standards.

- 4.1 Engage community partners in after-school programs and summer programs such as 4-H, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, YMCA, United Way, and local youth programs to support the CCR plan.**
  - 4.1.1 Develop grade-appropriate activities to help students develop a viable vision for their futures.
  - 4.1.2 Develop a communication plan and toolkit around CCR for districts to utilize in building awareness and engaging stakeholders.
  - 4.1.3 Establish a forum where students’ families and community stakeholders can be engaged as partners in student education, especially through encouraging postsecondary aspiration.

## Appendix A: Works Cited

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## Appendix B: The Ohio Appalachian Collaborative College- and Career-Readiness Think Tank

The Ohio Appalachian Collaborative College- and Career-Readiness Think Tank was formed in the winter of 2012, with the purpose of better defining college- and career-readiness for OAC member districts. The think tank is comprised of OAC district representatives, local community organizations, higher education partners, and college- and career-readiness experts from around the state of Ohio. As a result, the think tank produced the OAC's Strategic Plan.

Though the think tank members acknowledge that there are a myriad of strategies for school districts to better address college- and career-readiness with their students, the high-yield strategies outlined by this Strategic Plan are tailored specifically for OAC districts and the unique challenges and opportunities of Appalachian districts.

The Think Tank convened twice in 2012 to produce this document, and will continue to convene in subsequent years to further the college- and career-readiness work of the OAC.

### Thanks to the following OAC Think Tank members who helped designed this plan:

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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.

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