
POSTSECONDARY TRANSITIONS



SCHOOL REOPENING TOOLKIT: POSTSECONDARY TRANSITIONS

The purpose of the Postsecondary Transition Toolkit is to assist districts and schools in planning, executing, and monitoring key actions and metrics to ensure students stay on track for postsecondary success during this extraordinary time. For clarity and coherence, the initial draft will focus on three cohorts: recent 2020 graduates, rising seniors, and rising juniors. The guidance in this document is built on the assumption that it will be necessary for districts and schools to shift numerous services from traditional in person courses to a virtual distance learning format or hybrid approach at the beginning of the school year or in response to a potential future closure.

All information in the document is non-regulatory guidance issued for general informational purposes only. This document is not intended to constitute legal advice. Because local school board policy and unique facts make dramatic differences in analyzing any situation, the Tennessee Department of Education advises each school district to consult with the local school board attorney for specific legal advice regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on school operations.

The Postsecondary Transition Toolkit is intended to support anyone involved with the oversight or involvement of academics and counseling at a district level or who is the primary or sole academic leader or counselor in a high school. It is also assumed that the user for this toolkit has some responsibility for setting goals and monitoring metrics and has some authority to influence staff practices/responsibilities. The intention of this document is to provide guidance while also acknowledging districts and schools have ultimate decision making at the local level to best accommodate their students.

II. Recommendations and Best Practices

District Level

- The district has assessed and addressed the technology and course material needs of the students they serve related to availability of resources for courses pertaining to postsecondary (e.g. access to internet, appropriate devices, school-based platforms, and materials).

- The district has established memorandums of understanding with partnering postsecondary institutions to provide Early Postsecondary Opportunities such as Dual Enrollment courses with expectations set forth regarding enrollment and exceptions for students who may not have met the original requirements such as the ACT.

- The district has established plans with business, industry, and community partners to provide career and/or military focused learning opportunities such as career-exploration and work-based learning, including virtual, simulated, and on-campus experiences.

- The district has a communications platform or application that can be readily accessed by all families and training, support, and translation services are available for families, students, and staff. This communications platform would convey information such as upcoming deadlines, scholarship opportunities, college and career readiness events, etc.

- ❑ The district has plans and personnel in place at the district level to lead the professional development and guidance for educators to address the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students.
- ❑ The district has established communication with Vocational Rehabilitation for the provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services and shared plans for schools re-opening, including how Pre-ETS can best support students with disabilities in receiving transition services. Regional contact information can be [found here](#).
- ❑ The district has a plan in place to guide school administrators, counselors, teachers, and staff to incorporate college and career planning activities into instructional and non-instructional time. Examples may include High School 101, College Night, College Week activities, ACT Boot Camps, AP tutoring sessions, Early Postsecondary Opportunities Night, etc.
- ❑ The district has clearly defined how roles and responsibilities must change when/if school is online or a hybrid of online and in-person regarding the expectations for ensuring students receive information and advising for postsecondary readiness.

School Level

- ❑ The school has established a process and procedure to ensure each enrolled student has access to the necessary resources, materials, and/or technology such as distribution of one to one devices.
- ❑ The school has reviewed the memorandums of understanding with postsecondary institutions and devised a plan for Early Postsecondary Opportunities such as dual enrollment courses. This may include identifying the instructor as a school employee or college professor, financial expectations, completion of paperwork for potential students, and ensuring students enrolled for the course have completed the postsecondary requirements such as GPA, ACT, or another identified indicator of readiness.
- ❑ The school has reviewed plans to provide career and/or military focused instructional opportunities such as career-exploration and work-based learning, including virtual, simulated, and on-campus experiences. This may include identifying instructors to complete Work-Based Learning Coordinator certification or recertification training, establishing on-campus, in-district, and/or virtual WBL experiences, and implementation of career aptitude and interest assessments.

- ❑ The school has worked with the district to link the district communications platform to be readily accessed by all families, students, and staff. This communications platform would convey information such as upcoming deadlines, scholarship opportunities, college and career readiness events, etc. both at the district and school level. Appoint school-level personnel to monitor and update the school-based website and links regularly to ensure consistency and accuracy.
- ❑ The school has a plan to send representatives to attend any trainings or professional development offered from the district level related to guidance for educators to address the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students. The school provides additional train the trainer sessions through faculty and staff meetings to ensure school level personnel feel equipped with tools to support the needs of the whole child. The school seeks additional opportunities based upon the needs of the educators and students in the building.
- ❑ The school has a plan in place on how to partner with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services to students with disabilities and to also ensure, where appropriate, potential referrals are made to VR to increase the odds of a seamless transition to postsecondary.
- ❑ The school has a plan in place to incorporate college and career planning activities into instructional and non-instructional time. Examples may include High School 101, College Night, College Week activities, ACT Boot Camps, AP tutoring sessions, Early Postsecondary Opportunities Night, etc. District level activities should be communicated and promoted as well as additional opportunities at each high school.
- ❑ The school has a plan to assign seniors to a school-based mentor such as a teacher who has frequent conversations with the student to ensure their needs are being met with goal-planning for college or career.

Communication

- Establish consistent communication cadence and platforms to deliver information to students and parents (e.g., SMS texting, social media, phone calls, school information system portals, etc.)

- For video chat and virtual meetings, establish a consistent virtual communication platform (e.g. Zoom, Skype), norms, and basic training for staff, students, and families
- Use multiple platforms to share information and offer assistance: Call, text, video chat, social media and actual social networks (i.e. peers and friends) to connect with students and see if they are on track or need support.
- Offer specific kinds of support. For example, ask “Can I help you complete an application or review your financial aid package? Do you need a laptop or internet access apply for college or a job?” Students are often afraid to acknowledge what they don’t know so specific questions will help lead them along.

Staffing

- Identify staff beyond school counselors—including teachers, non-certified staff, non-profit partners, and volunteers—who can support students to complete the milestones listed below. For example, home room teachers or individuals identified as personal mentors to students.
- In order to make major tasks manageable, assign a small group of students to every available staff member and manage the contacts made, notes, and student needs in a shared digital platform such as a Google doc. For instance, assign small groups of seniors among all senior teachers, counselors, and assistant principals and outline weekly action steps and metrics of success.
- Differentiate your support in order to align resources with needs. Students who are the first in their families to attend college are more vulnerable to not transitioning to postsecondary than peers who can rely on parents or family to answer questions. If you have limited staff capacity, prioritize students who are likely to benefit the most from a friendly nudge from a known educator. Think creatively about including classified personnel known to have the capacity and relationship building skills to mentor students.

Alternative Funding Sources

Transitioning to online and/or hybrid models of education can be most disruptive for economically disadvantaged students. Identifying separate funds and resources to ensure all your students have access to the same resources for schooling can be difficult. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) could be a separate funding stream for district officials to pursue. WIOA funds for in-school youth are dispersed by the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development through Local Workforce Development Boards (WFDB) and American Jobs Centers.

Leverage WIOA funds by:

- Designating one district and one school-based person to oversee coordination with the WFDB and local American Job Center
 - Tennessee Pathways [Regional Coordinators](#) can facilitate this coordination with the respective Regional Director from the Department of Labor.
- Identifying student eligibility requirements and approved educational expenses covered by WIOA funds
- Developing a list of students who qualify for approved educational expenses and the expenses you would like covered for each student
- Working with the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development through Local Workforce Development Boards (WFDB) and American Jobs Centers to assist students in applying for funds.

III. Checklist for Districts and/or Schools by Cohort

The bulleted checklists below identify research-based milestones and supports that students need in order to successfully transition from high school graduation to college and career. The checklists are not exhaustive but are intended to help prioritize and monitor the most important milestones.

Recent 2020 Graduates

Students who have recently graduated have increased risks based upon implications from COVID-19. Students who may have received additional assistance with financial aid, college applications, additional opportunities to increase ACT scores, or just received extra encouragement from trusted educators may have been left with deficits related to postsecondary readiness. Also, students may have altered family circumstances as a result of the pandemic or chosen other paths such as full-time employment. It is important for these recent graduates to still feel supported during this crucial time of transition.

The following checklist and metrics are focused on recent high school graduates with goals aimed at:

- Reducing “summer melt” – the phenomenon a decline in the number of students who seamlessly enroll in college compared with the number who graduates who intended to enroll over the summer between high school graduation and college enrollment in the fall
- Helping students complete the college enrollment process
- Providing students an opportunity to know that support is still available

Action Items

- Send out a senior exit survey in order to understand and track the postsecondary intentions of recent graduates
- Identify students at risk for “summer melt” (e.g. students who face structural challenges like lack of transportation, financial resources, or strong academic readiness) and follow up with them individually
- Ensure submission of transcripts and other documentation required by postsecondary institutions have been sent and received
- Ensure all students have completed the necessary steps for:
 - Financial aid
 - Enrollment
 - Orientation
 - Placement testing
- Communicate and remind students of important deadlines (e.g., registering for orientation, signing up for classes, completion of volunteer requirements for Tennessee Promise)
- Meet with enrollment or admissions representatives from campuses most attended by your graduates to:
 - Share information
 - Discuss opportunities to reduce summer melt
 - Identify key campus individuals that students can contact regarding questions or concerns

- ❑ Identify students with logistical barriers to postsecondary education (e.g., technology devices, internet access, transportation, books, etc.) and provide information and support on available resources

- ❑ Identify students planning to enter the military or seeking full-time employment after graduation and offer support on locating opportunities and completing application and enlistment materials

The key metrics listed below will allow for the monitoring of progress toward successful completion of action items. Having this data will ensure an accurate picture of where students are in the process and how best to allocate limited time and resources. It will also help administrators identify potential trends with this group of students.

Metrics	Frequency of measure	Data Source
The percentage of students engaging with reminders and nudges	Weekly	Response rates from outreach
The percentage of students with sufficient access to technology, internet, and transportation	Monthly	Student survey and/or calls/texts to family and/or student
The number of students that have attended orientation	Monthly	Student survey and/or calls/texts to family and/or student
The number of students with missing enrollment documents	Weekly	Tracker updated weekly by appropriate staff
The number of students fully enrolled in postsecondary	Monthly	Tracker updated weekly by appropriate staff
The number of students that have secured full time employment or military enlistment	Monthly	Student survey and/or calls/texts to family and/or student

Seniors

The following checklist and metrics will help ensure that seniors are able to:

- Successfully prepare for and take a college entrance exam (ACT/SAT) and/or career assessment (industry certification, ASVAB, etc.)
- Complete necessary coursework to ensure on-time graduation
- Determine a clear postsecondary plan aligned to their career aspirations, including financial planning
- Apply for and be admitted to a postsecondary option that is aligned with their career aspirations
- Apply for and secure adequate financial aid to support postsecondary plan

Action Items:

- Identify students who are at-risk for failing courses needed for graduation and assign teachers and other staff to support the coursework of these students through texting and/or scheduled video conference calls with the student and their families
- Assign staff to ensure students have tools and structured plans to prepare for the college entrance exam (ACT/SAT) in October (goal score, identifying potential second testing opportunity, determining if postsecondary schools require ACT/SAT or not) and career assessments (industry certification, ASVAB, etc.) as school scheduling allows
- Ensure students' course schedule for their senior year aligns with their college and career plan (exceeding minimum requirements)
- Determine student financial and other needs related to EPSOs (AP exams, books, other supplies or materials) and provide guidance on opportunities for financial support
- Contact all your postsecondary partners offering dual enrollment and local dual credit to understand updated eligibility requirements for these courses as well as student supports the postsecondary institution has in place for virtual and/or hybrid learning
- Work with your postsecondary partner and/or the high school teacher of record to identify open education resources for students to use during the implementation of virtual and/or hybrid learning models

- ❑ Provide individual support to students around finalizing college application lists (Including likely, target, and reach schools, those that fulfill student's match and fit factors, and those that align with student's career aspirations)
- ❑ Provide whole class and individualized support to students around college application completion (letters of recommendation, personal essay, resume building/updates, transcript requests, etc.)
- ❑ Provide resources and support to students with Tennessee Promise application
 - Share important information about TN Promise application process, meetings, requirements and deadlines with students and families by communicating through multiple channels
 - Ensure all students have applied for TN Promise (as a primary or secondary option)
 - Support students with identifying volunteer opportunities they can engage with to keep TN Promise eligibility
- ❑ Provide resources and support to students around FAFSA application
 - Ensure FAFSA is completed by TN Promise deadline

Spring:

- ❑ Establish structures and processes for tracking and celebrating students' college application submissions and results
- ❑ Provide resources and support to students around researching scholarships, determining scholarship eligibility and completing scholarship applications
- ❑ Support students and parents/guardians with reviewing financial aid options and academic outcome data of the postsecondary institutions to which they were admitted and determining best college option

Metric	Frequency of Measure	Data Source
The percent of seniors at-risk of not graduating on time	Start of school year; Weekly	Online learning platform attendance and/or tracker refreshed daily by teachers
The percent of seniors who have a touchpoint with a teacher each week if schooling is virtual	Weekly	Tracker refreshed daily by appropriate staff
The percent of seniors who have already taken the ACT/SAT and/or have registered to take the ACT in October	Weekly	Tracker refreshed daily by appropriate staff
The percent of seniors in EPSO courses that have a device and reliable internet	Start of the school year; quarterly	Student survey; calls/texts to family and/or student
The percent of seniors in EPSO courses that are engaging with content if schooling is virtual	Daily (by teachers) Weekly (by administrators)	Online learning platform attendance and/or tracker refreshed daily by teachers
The percent of seniors who have applied to 0-3 colleges (at-risk), 4-6 colleges (medium risk), 7 or more colleges (above and beyond).	Weekly	Tracker refreshed daily by appropriate staff
The percent of seniors who have completed each core component of the college application process (letters of recommendation, personal essay – if required, transcripts, resume, etc.)	Weekly	School portal/ Tracker refreshed daily by appropriate staff
The percent of seniors who have applied for TN Promise	Weekly	TN Promise e*GRandS Report Instructions

The percent of seniors who have completed the FAFSA	Weekly	FAFSA by high school e*GRandS Report Instructions
The percent of seniors who have been accepted to a college, university, or TCAT	Weekly	School portal/ Tracker refreshed daily by appropriate staff
The percent of seniors who have been accepted to a college, university, or TCAT that is a TARGET or REACH school for them	Weekly (in the Spring)	School portal/ Tracker refreshed daily by appropriate staff
The percent of seniors/senior guardians with whom a counselor has had a virtual or in person conversation to discuss financial aid options and academic outcome data of postsecondary institutions to which the student has been admitted	Weekly (in the Spring)	School portal/ Tracker refreshed daily by appropriate staff
The percent of seniors who have committed to their postsecondary institution, secured full-time employment, or military enlistment	Weekly (in the Spring)	School portal/ Tracker refreshed daily by appropriate staff

Juniors

The following checklist and metrics will help ensure that juniors will be able to:

- Stay on track for high school graduation
- Stay on track to meet postsecondary admission requirements
- Bank postsecondary credits
- Prepare to take a college entrance exam (ACT/SAT)

Action Items:

- Ensure all students taking EPSO courses have access to internet and technology to continue coursework virtually or in a hybrid school model
- Ensure all students at-risk of not graduating on time have access to internet and technology to continue coursework virtually or in a hybrid school model
- Identify students who are at-risk for failing courses needed for graduation and assign teachers and other staff to support the coursework of these students through texting and/or scheduled video conference calls with the student and their families
- Identify or create a virtual ACT/SAT prep and career exploration program for all juniors to utilize
- Monitor progress and incentivize the ACT/SAT prep and career exploration curriculum
- Contact all your postsecondary partners offering dual enrollment and local dual credit to understand updated eligibility requirements for these courses as well as student supports the postsecondary institution has in place for virtual and/or hybrid learning
- Work with your postsecondary partner(s) and/or the high school teacher of record to identify open education resources for students to use during the implementation of virtual and/or hybrid learning models
- Support with fees or needs related to EPSOs (AP exams, books, other supplies or materials)

Metric	Frequency of Measure	Data Source
The percent of students in EPSO courses that have a device and reliable internet	Start of the school year and then quarterly	Student survey and/or calls/texts to family and/or student
The percent of students in EPSO courses that are engaging with content if schooling is virtual	Daily (by teachers) Weekly (by administrators)	Online learning platform attendance and/or tracker refreshed daily by teachers
The percent of students at-risk of not graduating on time that have a device and reliable internet	Start of the school year and then quarterly	Student survey and/or calls/texts to family and/or student
The percent of students at-risk of not graduating on time that are engaging with content if schooling is virtual	Daily (by teachers) Weekly (by administrators)	Online learning platform attendance and/or tracker refreshed daily by teachers
The percent of students engaging daily with your ACT/SAT prep program	Weekly	Online learning platform attendance and/or tracker refreshed daily by teachers
The percent of families who have a touchpoint with a school staff member each week	Weekly	Tracker refreshed daily by appropriate staff
The percent of students who have a touchpoint with a teacher each week if schooling is virtual	Weekly	Tracker refreshed daily by appropriate staff

IV. Resources

- [ACT Resources for Students, Teachers, Schools and Workers Impacted by COVID-19](#)
 - [ACT Testing Updates](#)
 - Press Release: [ACT to Offer Students Summer ACT Test Date Options and ACT Test Online at Home](#)
 - [Free ACT Resources](#) – This two-page document includes test prep resources, fee waiver instructions, and more.
- [Free Practice for the SAT Provided by College Board](#)
- [Electronic Transcript Exchange](#)
 - [Student Clearinghouse Guidance PDF](#)
- [Milestones for College & Career Readiness](#)
- Student & Family Communications - Sample Text-based “Nudging” Platforms
 - [Signal Vine](#)
 - [Remind](#)
 - [Possip](#)
 - [SendHub](#)
- [THEC Path to College Resources](#)
- [THEC/TSAC Virtual Financial Aid Resources](#)
- [Association for Career & Technical Education \(ACTE\) High-Quality CTE: Planning for a COVID-19 Impacted School Year](#)
- [Work-Based Learning](#)
 - [Apprenticeship TN](#)
 - [Youth Apprenticeship](#)
 - [ACTE Work-Based Learning Resources](#)
- [Supporting Students with Disabilities with Pre-Employment Transition Services](#)
 - [Transition TN](#)
 - [VR Transition Services](#)

Guides from other organizations

- [American School Counselor Association Planning for Distance Counseling Document](#)
- [National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships \(NACEP\) Coronavirus Resources & Guidance](#)
- [NCAN Virtual Advising Recommendations](#)
- [NIET Planning Guide](#)

Student College & Career Planning Resources

- Collegefortn.org
 - [College Planning](#)
 - [Career Planning](#)
- Free Career Aptitude Assessments:
 - [Kuder Navigator \(Grades 6-12\) – Tennessee College and Career Planning System](#)
 - [College Board Career Finder and BigFuture](#)
 - [Princeton Review Career Quiz](#)
 - [ASVAB](#)
- [The NEXT Guide](#)
 - [NEXT Guide: A Guide for Tennessee Sophomores](#)
 - [NEXT Guide: A Guide for Tennessee Seniors](#)
- Scholarships:
 - [Scholarship Search and Application Tips](#)
 - [Sites to kick-off scholarship Search](#)