

Career Readiness Collaborative (CRC)

The Career Readiness Collaborative helps states implement the recommendations of CCSSO's seminal 2014 paper: *Opportunities and Options: Making Career Preparation Work for Students*, to which 46 state chiefs signed on. CRC will focus on implementation of the three recommendations in the report: (1) engaging employers, (2) high-quality career pathways, inclusive of work-based learning, advising and counseling for young people, and postsecondary articulation, and (3) accountability for career readiness for all. CRC is unique in that it not only supports state education leaders such as deputies overseeing career pathways, but also convenes career and technical education state directors, state business and industry leaders, as well as representatives from higher education to provide access to high-quality career pathways and opportunities that culminate in a credential, degree, or set of knowledge/skills that are highly-valued by the labor market. This group will build on career readiness advances in states leading in this space and New Skills for Youth (NSFY) states.

2018-2019 Highlights:

In its first year, CCSSO supported CRC states at three substantive meetings and provided supports to CRC states around the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century (Perkins V) Act.

- CRC states created career readiness cross-sector teams, which include business and industry, higher education, labor and commerce departments, workforce development, and other sectors to ensure long term success of state career readiness work.
- All CRC states completed a career readiness needs assessment, ensuring all cross-sector team members were involved in an honest reflection of the career preparation system as it stands, pinpointing the areas of state success and opportunity.
- Already states have experienced great successes, including a broad cross-sector approach in their Perkins planning, using the CRC strategic plan to lead the effort across state agencies.

2019-2020 Goals

CCSSO is committed to helping states create multiple pathways for each student to successfully transition into, through, and beyond the K-12 system. CRC pushes this work forward by supporting states to provide students access to high-quality career pathways and opportunities that culminate in a credential, degree, or set of knowledge/skills that are highly-valued by the labor market.

CCSSO will ensure that in CRC's second year states and partners continue to work closely to close gaps for historically underserved and underrepresented students in the area of career preparation. In order to do so, CCSSO will support states as they:

- Form 2-3 workgroups on timely, high-priority topics to states in career readiness, all with the through line of providing all students equitable access, participation and completion in high-quality career pathways;
- Work to define high-demand, high-skill career pathways and develop an actionable plan to disaggregate access, completion and competency data across demographic groups; including a plan to mitigate areas of inequity;
- Work with partners and national experts to develop concrete recommendations for strategy, policy, and program to develop and sustain stronger, more seamless career pathways for students;

- Continue to implement tried and true successes, while also identifying areas of opportunity to push the field;
- Respond to the opportunity Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century (Perkins V) Act provides to advance career preparation in their state.

Anchor documents

- [Opportunities and Options: Making Career Preparation Work for Students](#)
- [Destination Known: Valuing College AND Career Readiness in State Accountability Systems](#)
- [New Skills for Youth State Success Stories](#)

Biography of Advisor:

Najmah Ahmad is the Program Director of the Career Readiness Initiative at CCSSO. Najmah has been working in education and youth development for 12 years; this includes experiences at Institutes of Higher Education, Non-profit organizations, and at the K-12 district level. Najmah earned her Bachelor's degree in Sociology and Gender & Diversity Studies from Xavier University and her Master's degree in College Student Affairs from Nova Southeastern University. During her time working in college student affairs at Miami Dade College, Trinity Washington University and New York University; Najmah created and led programs and initiatives to ensure that first generation college students received the social emotional supports needed to thrive and persist at the secondary level. Najmah transitioned to the non- profit space, joining Urban Alliance as the Director of Curriculum outreach; developing youth employability skills trainings, delivering workshops and managing youth employment programs for over 4,000 youth throughout Washington, DC, Northern Virginia, Baltimore and Chicago. Seeing the need to connect these out of school experiences to what students are learning in the classroom, Najmah joined DC Public Schools to lead the career readiness work for the district. During her time at DCPS, Najmah created the Career Ready Internship program that grew to employ over 1,200 youth in internships connected to their career education program of study. Najmah developed employer partnerships with over 200 industry leaders. She also wrote the Tenacity Employability Skills Curriculum which incorporated workforce development and social emotional learning models. With a desire to expand equitable access to postsecondary opportunities, Najmah created the DCPS Career Bridge program which worked with seniors, at-risk of not graduating, in a year-round mentoring/ career coach initiative. This experience culminated in an industry certification, entry into an apprenticeship program, direct employment or admittance into a higher education pathway. Najmah is excited to continue this work at the national level and to share with states best practices to ensuring that all students are career ready.

2018-19 State Members Included:

DoDEA, IL, ME, MI, MS, NJ, SC, SD

2018-19 Partners Included:

AIR, HumRRO, NWEA, RTI



