



GUIDED PATHWAYS: An Academic and Career Journey Map for Idaho's Students

INTRODUCTION

The goal of this white paper is threefold:

- To provide background about the formation and mission of the team tasked with creating a “systematic student-centered guided pathways program” for students from kindergarten to career.
- To provide an overview of some of the solutions that other states are pursuing to better support students and industry. Also included are some “Idaho solutions” that could be scaled up to serve as a foundation for our “Guided Pathways Program.”
- To provide a conclusion about next steps in creating a Guided Pathways Program tailored to Idaho.

THE TEAM AND THE GOAL

In the closing days of the Idaho Legislature, Sen. Dean Mortimer convened a meeting to discuss the possibility of creating a state-supported “systematic student-centered guided pathways program” for students from kindergarten to career.

Attending the meeting were Sen. Mortimer, Matt Freeman, executive director of the State Board of Education, Dwight Johnson, director of the Division of Career and Technical Education, Bob Lokken, chair of Idaho Business for Education, and Rod Gramer, President and CEO of IBE.

The over-arching goal of a Guided Pathways Program is to help the state achieve its goal of having 60 percent of its workers hold a postsecondary credential that creates the kind of workforce Idaho needs for the 21st Century.

The Guided Pathways program will support this goal by engaging students and their families early in their K-12 educational journey, continuing this engagement through their successful completion of postsecondary education and end with a student obtaining a meaningful career in the Idaho workforce.

Checking with the **Education Commission of the States**, we found that no state has created such a comprehensive program. Doing additional research, however, we found that many

states had adopted “best practices” that had proven effective in preparing students for postsecondary education and careers.

So instead of having one comprehensive “system” Idaho could borrow from another state to achieve our goal, we may need to borrow a mosaic of proven solutions that taken together create a reliable “Guided Pathways Program” that gives students and those who support them an “Educational Journey Map” to follow starting in kindergarten.

The other thing we learned is that any Guided Pathways Program should focus on both career-technical education (CTE) and other academic and career pathways. Otherwise, the focus would be too narrow and not address the demand for highly educated and skilled workers that industry demands.

One recommendation of this white paper is that the Guided Pathways Program Idaho creates be focused on the broad spectrum of academic achievement and careers.

The intent of this white paper is not to suggest that we adopt all these best practices. Rather, the idea is we pick which of these solutions best fit Idaho and can be incorporated into a comprehensive, systematic and student-centered “Guided Pathways Program.” A program that helps students discern their academic and career future, a path that leads to the educated and skilled workforce our employers need.

A Guided Pathways Program is an integrated and collaborative approach toward ensuring that students successfully navigate the long and sometimes complicated journey from kindergarten through post-high school education and training. The key to an effective Pathways Program is the engagement and shared responsibility for student success by key stakeholders - parents, guardians, teachers, advisers, education leaders, mentors, business leaders, and policymakers.

In short, the best practices to accomplish this fall into the following categories: Parent engagement; Individual Academic Plans; Academic and Career Advising; Work-based learning; early and urgent intervention; community engagement; and technology.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

The road to student success begins with parental and guardian engagement. Research shows that the greatest influence on whether students obtain the education they need for a meaningful career starts with the family. This view is also supported by Amanda Ripley, author

of “The Smartest Kids in the World,” who found that those countries where parents are engaged in their kids’ education have the highest student achievement.

It is essential for parents and guardians to be actively engaged in every step of a student’s educational journey. These adults must understand the importance of education for their

student's future, support their academic performance along the way and help ensure that they receive the post-high school education and training required to obtain a meaningful career.

Three best practices emerge to support the importance of family engagement: Checklists for parents; college academies for parents; and leveraging annual "continuous improvement" strategic planning to garner parental involvement and ownership for student outcomes.

JOURNEY MAP CHECKLIST FOR PARENTS

One idea to create a systemic approach toward parental involvement is to create a digital "checklist" for parents and students. The "checklist" would include those rights and responsibilities of parents so they can be full partners in their children's education. Starting in kindergarten and continuing through high school, parents would have a semester-by-semester checklist of their role in helping their children succeed academically.

The checklist would include everything from scheduled parent and teacher conference guidelines to how parents can help their students with that semester's curriculum.

One way to launch the parents' checklist is through the next idea – a College Academy for Parents.

COLLEGE ACADEMY FOR PARENTS

A program that has had success is the College Academy for Parents operated by the University of Arizona in partnership with the Sunnyside Unified School District in Tucson. CAP is a 12-week program that engages elementary school parents regarding the importance of their children's education and the importance of post-high school education. The program engages parents and their children with on-campus visits, exposure to key academic opportunities and helps parents start planning their student's post-high school future. The 12-week program culminates with a "graduation" ceremony where parents, with their children watching, receive a framed certificate for finishing the program.

Working with Idaho's higher education institutions, we could build on the College Academy for Parents by including information regarding how they can engage in their student's learning, how to interact with teachers, how they can help their student learn at home and during the important summer months, how to set up education savings accounts and other key skills they need to be effective partners in their student's educational success.

The College for Parents program could also teach parents how to navigate and use the Journey Map Checklist to become engaged partners in their children's education.

USE THE ANNUAL "CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT" PLANNING ACT TO ENGAGE PARENTS

Author Steve Constantino believes that family engagement begins with policy. Parents must be "an integral part of school reform and improved student achievement," he says. "Meaningful and actionable policy at the school district level can bring about the levels of family

engagement that have often eluded and frustrated schools and districts, especially when trying to engage all types of families.”

Idaho already has a great tool to engage parents and make them full partners in their children’s education. It is the Annual Continuous Improvement Planning Act which the Legislature passed in 2015. That law requires every school district in Idaho to produce an annual strategic plan that contains measurable goals that drive student academic growth and achievement.

Each school district could devise meaningful ways to make parents full partners in determining which goals the schools should pursue each year and developing tactics to achieve student academic growth and achievement. For example, the Kuna School District has a Parents’ Advisory Council comprised of 20 parent volunteers who advise the Superintendent Wendy Johnson and her board on what student achievement goals to pursue. Oregon law requires each school to have elected parents who advise the principal on school policy and operations.

This kind of engagement gives parents a deeper and more meaningful stake in the success of their local schools and students. It would also give them a strong understanding of the challenges facing schools and a better understanding of the critical role they play in this endeavor.

In short, if parents are there for the “takeoff,” they will be there for the “landing.”

INDIVIDUALIZED CAREER AND ACADEMIC PLANS

As a foundational tool, many states are putting a stronger emphasis on students developing Individualized Career and Academic Plans (ICAP). States are requiring that these plans are developed starting in middle school. Kentucky requires development of a plan by 6th Grade and requires that it is updated by 8th Grade. Arizona requires that a student have an “Education and Career Action Plan” as a requirement for high school graduation.

In Idaho, we require a “Student Learning Plan” developed by students no later than the end of 8th Grade. The learning plans must also be parent-approved. By law the learning plans shall be reviewed annually, and students “can” update their plan at “any time.” **Trouble is Idaho schools and/or students often don’t update their plans and sometimes parents don’t even know that these plans must be developed and have no input into them.**

Even the title of Idaho’s policy puts an emphasis on “learning,” while other states place an **equal emphasis on both learning and career exploration.** Other states also require that parents and school personnel play a strong role in the development of the plans, while in Idaho the emphasis is on the student developing the plan, with “assistance” from parents and “advice” school personnel.

In fact, in Iowa *parents must sign off* on their student’s Individualized Career and Academic Plans. This can engage parents and help them become partners in their children’s education.

We know from research that parents are the number one “influencer” of whether students go on. Let’s make them participate in the development of their students’ academic and career plan so we can properly leverage their positive influence.

Idaho’s law could be strengthened by requiring a co-emphasis on “career planning” and require that the plan is updated at important intervals on a student’s academic journey. One idea is to have the first plan developed in 6th Grade, updated in 8th Grade and updated again by the 11th Grade. Idaho could also have the parent or guardian sign off on any plan and make it a requirement for high school graduation. In high school, the plan could also be used as the foundation of a “senior project.” A senior project, comprised of a written report and oral presentation, is currently a graduation requirement.

CAREER AND ACADEMIC COACHES

Kentucky funds what it calls “Career Guidance Coaches.” These “coaches” must dedicate 100 percent of their time to working with students on their career and academic future.

Their responsibility is to:

- Develop student, parent, and teacher understandings of career pathways
- Advise students on academics and careers
- Assist students in developing their Individualized Career and Academic Plans
- Assist teachers

Most importantly, these are academic and career coaches - not school counselors. The money Idaho has appropriated over the past two years seems inadequate to building an army of “career guidance coaches” across the state’s educational system and we further dilute our funding by allowing school districts to use the money to augment or expand their traditional school counselor programs

[Note: Idaho Code §33-1212A(1) provides that “College and career advising and student mentoring ... provide all students with an early opportunity to identify academic strengths, areas in need of improvement and areas of interest for the purpose of making informed choices and setting postsecondary education and career goals. The focus of college and career planning is to help students acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve academic success and to be college and career ready upon high school graduation.”

Districts and schools have been instructed by legislators and Office of the State Board of Education that the monies received for college and career advising are neither to supplement nor supplant traditional school counselor activities (e.g. making schedule changes, personal/social development, discipline, etc.) Rather, the intended purpose for these funds is exclusively for segregated college and career advising activities.

The development and updating of Individualized Career and Academic Plans, combined with dedicated “career guidance coaches” would be a powerful way of helping Idaho’s students plan their career and academic futures.

WORK-BASED LEARNING

Some states are developing systematic ways to connect students, educators and businesses to create “work-based learning” opportunities for students and teachers alike.

Iowa and Colorado are leaders in this area and Idaho has one example to draw from as well.

COLORADO

Colorado has created a “Business Experiential Learning Commission” to develop, evaluate and implement systematic solutions for integrated work-based education and training to meet the needs of Colorado’s economy.

This commission has three main focuses:

- Engaging business involvement in educating and training students and workers in partnership with the K-12 system
- Creating electronic access for students, interns, apprentices and workers to document skills and share curriculum development
- Leveraging existing resources to create a “portal” of information to students, job-seekers, employers and civic agencies

IOWA

Iowa has created what it calls the “Iowa BEST” program. BEST stands for “Business Engaging Students and Teachers.” The main thrust of the BEST program is to connect students and teachers with business and industry.

The BEST program has two main focuses:

- First, to create internships, apprenticeships and job-shadowing opportunities for students so they can explore careers and experience work-based learning.
- Second, to create “externships” for teachers so they develop relationships with Iowa businesses and industry and find out what skills the state’s businesses need from students entering the workforce. Teachers can also use their externship program to get credit from the state for professional development.

To administer this program, Iowa has created a “Statewide Work-based Learning Intermediary Network” that can provide state funding to regional work-based networks. This funding can be matched by local funds and in-kind services. To date Iowa has funded 18 BEST partnerships and plans to launch 10 more this year.

Each school district and industry BEST partnership receives \$25,000 from the state and that is matched with cash or in-kind contributions by the partner industry.

Iowa law says: **“The purpose of the (BEST) program shall be to prepare students for the workforce by connecting businesses and the education system and offering relevant, work-based learning activities to students and teachers.”**

The Iowa BEST program focuses on these industries: manufacturing; information technology; bioscience (agriculture/health/medicine); and finance. In Idaho, we could also focus on industries like forestry, fish biology and food science and processing.

IDAHO’S WORK-BASED LEARNING EXPERIMENT

Idaho’s own Clark Fork High School has already implemented a work-based learning program that operates much like Iowa’s BEST. Each Friday Clark Fork students go into the local community and work with professionals in such fields as hospitality, nutrition, medicine, forestry, natural resource management and technology. Monday through Thursday students focus on their core curriculum: math, science, English and social studies.

This experience gives Clark Fork students exposure to real-world industries, helps them explore career opportunities and builds a stronger bridge between the school system and local businesses.

EARLY AND URGENT INTERVENTION

Bishop Kelly High School in Boise uses early intervention to help struggling students. This early and intensive intervention supports students as they work through their learning challenges and keeps them on track with their academic goals. In 2017, 100 percent of Bishop Kelly’s graduating seniors are planning to attend college in the fall.

USING TECHNOLOGY TO GET RESULTS

Some states are using technology to support students. For example, Utah’s “Talent Ready Utah” has created an app to connect teachers with work-based learning information. Iowa’s BEST program also uses technology to connect students with work-based learning opportunities and to have teachers apply for externships.

To address the “summer melt” issue, some states connect with students regularly on their smart phones, sending messages to remind them to stay on track toward entering post-secondary classes in the fall. This technology could readily be used by Idaho to help students stay on track and not fall off the rails in the critical “summer melt” months.

Idaho’s P-TECH program successfully uses distance mentoring to support students and this could be expanded into Idaho’s pathways program.

Idaho Business for Education and the State Board of Education staff are working on a searchable data base that students can use to “explore” their academic and career options. This data base, **FutureFindr**, will be available to students, parents and mentors starting the summer and fall of 2017.

AVID PROGRAM – A PROVEN ACADEMIC MENTORING SYSTEM

The Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program is used in five Idaho school districts - Boise, Emmett, Homedale, Mountain Home and Vallivue. It will soon be adopted by the West Ada School District. Other districts have expressed an interest in adopting it.

Avid combines instruction in organizational skills and note-taking with a rigorous curriculum, and leadership-building skills. It also teaches the students life skills like grit, confidence, time management, and a strong work ethic.

Avid is aimed at students who are the first generation to attend postsecondary who have GPSS ranging from 2.0 to 3.3.

The program very successfully intervenes with students who otherwise might not go on and obtain the post-high school skills that lead to a good career. **In 2015, the go-on rate for the Avid students in the Boise School District was 75 percent – nearly 30 percentage points higher than the state average and ahead of the Boise district’s overall go-on rate of 61 percent.**

Avid is not an easy program. The students take advanced placement and dual credit classes that earn postsecondary credit. They meet daily with their peers to go over academic questions that come up in their classes and spend a great deal of time on focused and sustained reading. They also hear regularly from former Avid students who come back to talk about what it is like to attend postsecondary education.

The Avid program starts in 7th Grade and continues through high school.

Avid is expensive, but its results are great, and money spent on Avid may have a higher return on investment than other programs we are spending money on and are not working.

INDIANA’S 21ST CENTURY SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Indiana has an innovative program – 21st Century Scholars - that keeps students on track academically and socially and helps them fund their postsecondary education. The program is targeted toward economically disadvantaged students – the ones most likely to struggle academically and ill-afford the cost of postsecondary.

Starting as early as 7th Grade, but no later than 8th Grade, students can apply to the 21st Century Scholars program. If accepted, the students sign a pledge to perform certain tasks each year. If they succeed, the state will pick up most, if not all, of the cost of their postsecondary education.

Here is the pledge students must sign: "I pledge to graduate with a minimum of a core 40 diploma from a state-accredited Indiana high school. I will complete the Scholar Success Program that helps me stay on track for college and career success. I will achieve a cumulative high school GPA of at least 2.5 on a scale of 4.0. I will not use illegal drugs or alcohol or commit a crime or delinquent act. I will apply for admissions to an eligible Indiana college my senior year and apply on time for student financial aid. As a college student, I will complete at least 30 credit hours each year to stay on track toward earning my degree on time. I am to succeed."

A HIGHER EDUCATION SOLUTION: POSTSECONDARY CAREER AND ACADEMIC ADVISING

Idaho can't be successful in creating the workforce it needs for the 21st Century if students don't obtain a post-high school credential that qualifies them for one of the many high-demand careers that Idaho employers need.

Trouble is only 46 percent of Idaho's high school graduates go on to postsecondary and nearly half of those drop out before they obtain a credential.

Research by the Treasure Valley Education Partnership and the McClure Center show that seniors have high "aspirational" plans to attend a postsecondary institution. But very few of them show up at school in the fall. We call this "summer melt."

The problem in Idaho is there is not a strong "hand off" between secondary and postsecondary institutions. We must find a way to build a "bridge" for students from May to September so that their actions meet their aspirations.

HIGHER PRIORITY AND FOCUS ON ACADEMIC AND CAREER ADVISING BY COLLEGES

Many 2- and 4-year colleges are upgrading their career advising programs by integrating them with their academic advising, enrollment management, alumni relations and advancement programs. The person in charge of these integrated programs are being named vice presidents and many are reporting directly to the college president and not through other vice presidents or deans. This signals to all that this is an important and high priority for the college.

Seattle University, the University of Chicago, and the University of Richmond are but a few institutions following this path.

In any case, Idaho's State Board of Education must ensure that a seamless transition exists between secondary and postsecondary institutions. The responsibility for students going on and obtaining a post-high school credential rests with both the secondary and the postsecondary institutions.

Secondary education leaders cannot think that their job is finished on graduation day, while postsecondary leaders cannot believe that their job only starts when a student shows up on campus in the fall.

A GUIDED PATHWAYS PROGRAM FOR WORKING ADULTS

As we develop our Guided Pathways Program, Idaho should not forget the importance of also helping working adults with some college and no degree to finish their education.

There are approximately 60,000 Idahoans with 24 or more college credits but no degree. Only 15% of those students stopped with a GPA of less than 2.0. Idaho will not be able to reach its 60% attainment goal without bringing these adults along to earn a degree or certificate.

TENNESSEE RECONNECT

“Tennessee Reconnect is an initiative to help more adults enter higher education to gain new skills, advance in the workplace, and fulfill lifelong dreams of completing a degree or credential.” Communities are being engaged to help their adult learner population through grants from Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) awards to Tennessee Reconnect Community centers. These centers “function as connecting-places; engaging higher education institutions, local employers, local organizations, and adult learners alike. This initiative, based on the national Graduate! Network’s (TGN) proven model for improving outcomes for adult learners, will provide adults with advising, support, a personalized path to and through college, and provide a space to connect the stakeholders in larger statewide degree-attainment efforts. THEC will award grants to communities that identify the readiness, commitment and community partnerships to implement this proven model to significantly improve outcomes for their adult learners. Grant recipients will receive intensive technical assistance from THEC and TGN in developing these services, as well as start-up funds for their first year of work.”

MISSISSIPPI’S COMPLETE TO COMPETE

Mississippi has implemented a “Complete to Compete” program that helps working adults with some college, but no degree to qualify for associate degrees. This program is tailored for adults who don’t have enough credit hours to qualify for a bachelor’s degree, but have enough credits to qualify for a two-year associates’ degree.

IDAHO’S PROPOSED COLLEGE COMPLETION SCHOLARSHIP

Gov. Butch otter has proposed a College Completion Scholarship to help Idaho’s 225,000 working adults with some college, but no degree go back and finish either their associates or bachelor’s degree. Financial restraints are often the reason these working adults dropped out of school in the first place or blocked them from going back to complete their credential. This scholarship would help these adults finish their education and gain the skills needed to be more productive for their employer and help the Idaho economy. This scholarship program would also help Idaho achieve its 60 percent goal.

A Guided Pathways Program could help these working adults create a plan for going back and finishing their postsecondary education.

CONCLUSION

There is no silver bullet to ensuring that Idaho students successfully navigate the education system from K-12, through postsecondary education and into a meaningful career. It's not as easy as hiring more "advisers." There must be a systemic approach toward ensuring student success. This white paper was intended to lay out some "best practices" that are working in other states and in Idaho. A combination of these best practices implemented effectively could create the systemic student-centered Guided Pathways Program that we have in mind.