



Supporting Career and College Readiness in Minnesota

Preparing all students to be career and college ready is one of five goals of Minnesota's [World's Best Workforce](#) (WBWF) legislation, passed in 2013. Faced with an aging workforce and schools that have some of the nation's largest racial and economic opportunity and achievement gaps, the state passed the bill to help ensure competitive workers and leaders for the future.

Under the legislation, each district in Minnesota must implement a plan that addresses the five WBWF goals: school readiness, literacy, closing achievement gaps, career and college readiness, and high school graduation. Districts have great leeway in how they structure their WBWF plans, but this flexibility has left many district leaders in need of more guidance, particularly around career and college readiness. What exactly does it mean for Minnesota students to be career and college ready? What programs and strategies support and strengthen this readiness, and how do districts measure progress?

Our Work

To provide this much-needed guidance, the [Minnesota Department of Education](#) (MDE) is collaborating in an ongoing partnership with the [Midwest Comprehensive Center](#) (MWCC) and the [College and Career Readiness and Success Center](#) (CCRS Center), both funded by the U.S. Department of Education. The collaboration identified the following aims:

- Establish a cohesive **vision** of career and college readiness and success for students in Minnesota, including key elements and examples
- Develop a **Career and College Readiness (CCR) Resource** to guide districts in improving student-centered CCR programming, choosing strategies to meet the goals of WBWF and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), and identifying indicators to measure progress
- Plan statewide **technical support** to build districts' understanding of the state's CCR vision and how to use the CCR Resource to develop and implement CCR planning

MDE is spearheading the team and overseeing development of the CCR Resource. MWCC and the CCRS Center are providing content and technical expertise, thought leadership, evidence-based resources, and facilitation and support for planning meetings, stakeholder work group and feedback sessions, and events.

CCR Visioning Forum. To kick off the project, the team held a CCR Visioning Forum in March 2017. MDE convened education, business, and community stakeholders from across Minnesota to develop a common understanding of the key elements of career and college readiness. Staff from MWCC and the CCRS Center facilitated activities and shared resources and research-based recommendations. One resource that proved particularly useful was a scan of other states' CCR definitions, policies, and tools. Compiled by the CCRS Center, this state scan enabled the group to explore a range of approaches and discuss which might work best in Minnesota.

“ We want to shift the paradigm in how we view career and college success and what that means. [The Midwest Comprehensive Center and the College and Career Readiness and Success Center] are providing research and expertise where we have limited capacity. They conducted a scan of each state's career and college readiness resources and policies. That would have been monumental for us to do. ”

– Division director,
Minnesota Department of Education

CCR Resource. Development of the CCR Resource began in June 2017. To ensure the inclusion of diverse voices and perspectives, the team formed a Career and College Readiness Work Group. This group consists of representatives from diverse Minnesota constituencies across Grades K–12 and higher education, business and industry, and the community, including parents and staff from a variety of school districts.

To gain a better understanding of specific gaps in CCR knowledge at the district level, the team also asked staff from [Regional Educational Laboratory \(REL\) Midwest](#) to present their review of approximately 200 Minnesota WBWF plans. This review underscored the need for, and further informed the development of, the CCR Resource.

Meant to be expanded over time, the resource will provide guidance for CCR planning and implementation at the school and program levels, including strategies for using data and [personal learning plans](#) to support and measure students' CCR and provide ESSA accountability. The aim is to help districts develop CCR programming that reflects the diverse students in Minnesota, addresses opportunity gaps, and supports each student's aspirations—with a balanced focus on career and college tracks.

Throughout this process, MWCC served as a critical thought partner; allocated management, content, and communications specialists to support the work; identified seminal resources to inform and shape the concepts covered in the resource; and helped organize and facilitate more than a dozen stakeholder work group and feedback sessions, including providing key procedural structures and intellectual supports that led to the four domains and competencies that serve as the foundation for the CCR Resource.

“It's great having access to those resources, particularly looking across the nation. What are other school districts finding? And rural is a little different, so it's nice being able to know what other rural districts are doing.”

– Superintendent,
rural district in Minnesota

THE RESULTS

The partnership is already seeing results. MDE staff report that the expertise and resources provided by MWCC and the CCRS Center have strengthened the agency's capacity to develop and improve CCR policies and support districts in their development of CCR programs.

District-level staff report that their participation enabled them to learn from other states and districts and refocus how they view CCR and what it means for their students and communities. Districts are making changes, including aligning their CCR policies and programming; incorporating more experiential and work-based learning; using technology to support students' career planning; and partnering with businesses and universities. One district even set aside a day for teachers to go on a career crawl to local businesses to learn about the skills employers are seeking.

Next Steps and Timeline

In 2018, the project expanded beyond career and college readiness to encompass [district guidance for all five WBWF goals](#). The team anticipates the CCR Resource will be released in fall 2018, with training on its use to follow. During this phase, the team will continue to solicit and integrate perspectives from an array of stakeholders and ensure the CCR Resource and training reflect the values, context, and needs of educators, students, families, and communities in Minnesota.



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