



College to Career Readiness - Stakeholder Engagement Resource

Gaining buy-in from current and potential stakeholders interested in career ready skills may be easier to gain if we start from their point of view and then make the connection to why early childhood is crucial for them to understand in order to support children and students to meet their potential. Included in this document are a draft letter that can be tailored to your specific state context, which is followed by prompts to support thinking through potential stakeholders to involve.

Letter template

Dear [recipient],

State Education Agencies increasingly recognize that academic preparation or attainment of practical skills tell only part of the story of school and work success. There is now increased attention on a set of skills, dispositions, and attitudes that begin and are cultivated during the early years and continue through the workforce years. The early years also offer the foundations of these skills.

The National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS-SDE) acknowledges the importance of social and emotional skills in promoting and developing success for all children across the Birth-20 continuum resulting in productive employment and participation in the workforce. The key points are outlined below with information specific to our state. We hope you will find this information useful in your efforts to promote the skills, dispositions and attitudes that are critical to an effective workforce.

College and Career Readiness Standards are Important

In the past few years, many state education agencies have advocated for college and career ready practices to prepare students for careers. For example, 42 states were involved in the development of the [Common Career Technical Core's career ready practices](#). The US Department of Education defines [employability skills](#) across three categories – applied knowledge, effective relationships, and workplace skills. These standards recognize that to succeed in lifelong learning, whether in college and/or career, youth need a broad range of skills beyond mastery of literacy and mathematics.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) supports *whole child* learning, which directly relate to skills identified in college and career standards. [INSERT state-specific information. For a national scan of [ESSA Draft Plans](#), click [here](#)]

These skills have foundations in early childhood education.

The skills identified in college and career readiness have their roots in early childhood. For instance, self-regulation is known to “develop(s) over an extended period from birth through young adulthood”¹ with critical intervention points in early childhood and youth.

¹ Murray, D.W., Rosanbalm, K., and Christopoulos, C. (2016). *Self-regulation and toxic stress: Seven key principles of self regulation in context* (OPRE Report #2016-39). Retrieved from



Often the terms used differ between those used referencing early childhood and those used with regard to college and career readiness (see this [glossary](#) for reference). Meanwhile, the literature typically addresses one spectrum or the other, as seen in [this resource document](#). This can lead to a lack of clarity about the deep interrelatedness of early childhood, older childhood, and youth development. Additionally, how children develop differs as these skills often have ‘age-specific manifestations’.

The underpinnings of [employability skills](#) (applied knowledge, effective relationships, and workplace skills) and [career ready practices](#) can be found throughout the five early childhood domains identified by the National Education Goals Panel:

- Approaches to Learning (e.g., curiosity, confidence, creativity, attention to task, reflection)
- Cognition and General Knowledge
- Language Development
- Physical Well-Being and Motor Development
- Social and Emotional Development

Every state has a set of early learning guidelines for young children with identified domains and standards. [NOTE: insert your state guidelines here and outcome the domains included]. Using Kansas as an example, this [comparison table](#) aligns employability skills and career ready practices with standards and concepts used in early childhood and educational ages and settings in Kansas (Kansas Early Learning Guidelines and the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework). [NOTE: can adapt this to your state’s standards)

It’s critical to support development in the early years and continue to support it as children move from early childhood to adulthood.

While the focus in this document is on early childhood and youth, these skills are not dormant in the ages in between and beyond. Supporting children throughout their education is critical to building on the skills developed in the early years so children are best able to demonstrate the skills identified as critical for college and career readiness. No matter the age, children and youth need family, educators, and community supports to reach their potential.



Potential Stakeholders`

Recipients of this outreach will differ across states. Some different categories to explore:

P-20 Councils

- Is there an active one in your state?
 - P-20 Council information, by state, is available on the ECS website, see [here](#).
- How can you identify the best person with whom to share this information?

Inside your department

- Who works on college and career readiness?
- Are there other individuals who may find this of interest?
- Are there consultants who focus on counseling? Social outcomes for older students?

Outside your department

- Are there community stakeholders whose buy-in could elevate support for making this connection and nurturing it? For instance, youth-serving organizations, police organizations, teachers, etc.
- Are there advocates for early learning who could use this clear linkage between early learning and later learning to make a stronger case for supporting and investing in early childhood?
- Are there Higher education colleagues whose buy-in could support the inclusion of the learning continuum of skills, both school readiness through career readiness and employment?