

Career Advising Toolkit



Office of Graduate Success

April 2025



**Department of
Education &
Workforce**

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS	1
CAREER ADVISING TOOLKIT	2
Introduction	2
PARTS OF THE TOOLKIT	4
Part 1	4
CAREER CONNECTIONS OVERVIEW AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF CAREER ADVISING	4
Part 2	4
EVALUATING CURRENT CAREER ADVISING PRACTICES.....	4
Part 3	4
MAKING A PLAN.....	4
Part 4	5
SUSTAINING A PLAN	5
CAREER CONNECTIONS OVERVIEW AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF CAREER ADVISING	6
Career Connections	6
Foundations of Career Advising	6
CAREER ADVISING ACROSS THE CAREER CONNECTIONS FRAMEWORK.....	6
Career Advising	7
Career Connection Framework	7
NATIONAL CAREER CLUSTERS	9
A DEEPER LOOK AT THE CAREER ADVISING POLICY	11
This is Ohio's Career Advising Policy in a 3-step process	11
THE 8 FACTORS OF CAREER ADVISING	13
CAREER ADVISING IN STUDENT SUCCESS AND GRADUATION PLANS	15
EVALUATING CURRENT CAREER ADVISING PRACTICES.....	17
MAKING A PLAN.....	18
Activity 1	18
Activity 2	19
Activity 3	19
SUSTAINING A PLAN	20
Activity 4	20

Career Advising Toolkit

INTRODUCTION

The foundational framework of career advising in Ohio is designed to support students in developing a vision and realistic plan for their futures across the K-12 spectrum. Its purpose is to give students opportunities to discover their interests and explore academic and career pathway options through relevant classroom instruction, career-related learning experiences, and consistent counseling and advising.

The Ohio Career Advising Toolkit includes tools and resources to support schools, districts, and educators in understanding the importance of career advising and the factors within that impact and help shape the lives of the students, families, and communities they serve. Further, the toolkit provides schools, districts, and educators:

- Engagement activities for strategizing and developing comprehensive career advising plans informed with a student-centered lens across each section of the career connections framework.
- A Career Advising Plan Template. This resource is designed to complement the engagement activities in Part 3 and 4 of the Career Advising Toolkit.
- [Career Advising Gap Analysis Tool](#).
- [Student Success Plan Template](#).
- [Graduation Plan Template](#).
- Supporting resources through INFOhio's OpenSpace [Career Exploration collection](#).
- Cost savings post-secondary education and program options [resources](#).

The toolkit helps districts:

- Develop a foundational understanding of what career advising is and its application across Ohio's K-12 landscape through the Career Connections Framework.
- Identify and understand the requirements of career advising found in the Ohio Revised Code.
- Recognize the significance of educational parity and utilize the outcomes of the Career Advising Gap Analysis Tool.
- Acquire an understanding of career awareness, exploration, and planning within career advising through the career connections framework.
- Develop an understanding of the 8 factors of career advising across the core Career Connections Framework.
- Design intentional strategies for the implementation of policies and practices that reflect the needs of all students served.
- Develop a career advising plan using the Career Advising Plan Template.
- Identify resources and strategies for student success and graduation plans.
- Design strategies for sustainability and monitoring of practices established within career advising plans.

- Utilize strategies and tools outlined in the toolkit to inform district career advising policies.

Intended audience:

The Career Advising Toolkit is designed for multiple audiences, including district-level staff and board members (administrators, career readiness leaders, business advisory council members), school-level leaders and staff (superintendents, principals, career and community resource coordinators, counselors, career readiness educators, and individual teachers).

Materials needed when using the Career Advising Toolkit:

- [Career Advising Plan Template](#).
- Documented outcomes of the [Career Advising Gap Analysis Tool](#).
- Copy of the district Career Advising Policy.
- Information on local student success and graduation plan elements.
- Any additional local or district level information in support of career advising planning.

Parts of the Toolkit

PART 1

Career Connections Overview and the Foundations of Career Advising

This part will provide definition to, and correlation across career connections and career advising. In addition, it outlines the legislative requirements of career advising.

PART 2

Evaluating Current Career Advising Practices

This part supports districts, schools, and educators in understanding the significance parity plays in developing policies and practices that reflect the needs of all students served. Further, this section will define the [Career Advising Gap Analysis Tool](#) and the components within that will support the design of local career advising strategies.

PART 3

Making a Plan

This part of the toolkit will require districts, schools, and educators to collaborate and analyze current career advising policies, outcomes of the [Career Advising Gap Analysis Tool](#) and if available, local student success and graduation plan elements. Districts, schools, and educators will develop an understanding of career advising and the factors of career-connected engagement across the core Career Connections Framework (Awareness, Exploration, and Planning). Districts, schools, and educators will then apply knowledge and resources and design intentional strategies of implementation using the [Career Advising Plan Template](#).

PART 4

Sustaining a Plan

Policy Redesign, Implementation, and Monitoring - During this phase, districts, schools, educators, and stakeholder partners will co-design a common vision for career advising that encompasses student-centered goals and strategies that support the needs of all students and provide pathways for post-high school success. Further, identifying the 5 initial “actionable” steps required to proceed in the implementation of the plan and the stakeholders to fulfil those steps. Lastly, participants will identify current or create progress monitoring strategies and tools to help track the progress and impact of the career advising plan. Individual teachers and school counselors may monitor their own progress or their students’ progress that stem from formal or informal career advising activities.

Career Connections Overview and the Foundations of Career Advising

CAREER CONNECTIONS

Career advising is "an integrated process that helps students understand how their personal interests, strengths, and values might predict satisfaction and success in school and related career fields, as well as how to tie these interests and strengths to academic and career goals" (Gordon, V.N. 2007). The framework in which career advising occurs is defined as Career Connections. The [Career Connection Framework](#) is designed to support students in the development of a vision and realistic plan for their futures - during K-12 and beyond through career advising.

FOUNDATIONS OF CAREER ADVISING

Career advising is mandated by [Ohio Law](#) and is a comprehensive process that spans the educational system. It involves helping students discover their interests and explore academic and career options through classroom instruction, career-related learning experiences, and consistent counseling from K-12.

Effective career advising plans enhance the student experience by offering accessible and engaging career exploration and planning journeys. Through hands-on learning, personalized advising, and mentorship, students gain the knowledge, confidence, and skills needed for informed future decisions.

Career Advising Across the Career Connections Framework



Career Awareness

Career Exploration

Career Planning

The Career Advising Toolkit is organized using the Career Connections Framework. The [Career Connections Framework](#) is a planning tool for districts to provide students with opportunities to develop a vision and realistic plan for their futures. This framework aligns the many efforts around college and career readiness to support students in becoming productive and

engaged citizens. This framework is organized around three sectors (Career Awareness, Career Exploration, and Career Planning).

While the career connections framework is naturally linear in time frame, each phase is a building block for the next, providing students with a personalized career track preparing them for the transition beyond being a student. Through the career connections framework, we strive to prepare students to discover unexpected career paths and opportunities.

CAREER ADVISING

The world is rapidly changing, and the days have passed where we see education and career readiness as two separate paths. It is of critical importance that we instead align these two paths to create a prepared and well-rounded student.

Career advising is an intentional process of looking at each student's goal or desired pathway post high school. Educators can begin the K-12 career advising experience and start instilling ideas about what careers are and why they are important.


CAREER CONNECTION FRAMEWORK

The Career Awareness phase starts in kindergarten and goes through grade 5. Students become more familiar with careers through learning that connects classroom instruction to future work. Career awareness strategies show students various types of careers and stimulate interest in future work.

The Career Exploration phase sees students exploring their career interests through embedded activities, and happens in the middle school grades, 6-8. Career exploration strategies are opportunities for students to discover work environments and understand the various aspects of the workplace. Students start plans for their future with career information and postsecondary education data.

While students are continuing to explore career paths, the focus of this stage is career planning. Activities provide advanced experiences that offer hands-on opportunities in the workplace. Career Planning strategies focus on making clear links between career options and educational decisions.

The process ultimately culminates in high school where student-led decision making aligns student interests, learning styles, work values and aptitudes with their goals and aspirations. It is critical that educators have a full comprehension of the structure of the workforce so that they can be positive successful mentors through a students desired pathway. In the end, the career advising process is not about graduating high school but rather graduating to successful post high school choices.



Districts, schools, and educators are encouraged to utilize the Career Connections Framework in relation to their role and position within the development and implementation of career advising to help determine access points within the Career Advising Toolkit. The parts of the Toolkit are defined on the following page.

National Career Clusters

Here we see the 16 national career clusters as maintained by The United States Department of Labor.

Agriculture, food & Natural Resources	Architecture & Construction	Arts, A/V Technology & Communications	Business Management & Administration
Education & Training	Finance	Government & Public Administration	Health Science
Hospitality & Tourism	Human Services	Information Technology	Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security
Manufacturing	Marketing	Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics	Transportation, Distribution & Logistics

What is a career cluster? A career cluster is a grouping of career pathways and occupations requiring similar skills. For example, underneath the Finance cluster there are career pathways like “Accounting” and “Insurance”. Under “Accounting” there are specific occupations like auditor or accountant. This categorization is maintained through all 16 of the nationally recognized clusters.

What is an occupation? An occupation is a set of activities or tasks that employees are paid to perform. An industry is a group of businesses or organizations with similar activities, products, or services. Employees occupation has a mix of specialized knowledge, skills, and abilities. Once a student has identified one or several occupations that they are interested in, they may

begin identifying the specific education required to enter that occupation. A single occupation, for instance, an accountant; can be an occupation in many different industries. An accountant can work in the oil industry, the air transportation industry, or the sports industry, while still having the same set of task and skills. Educators should help prepare students on a personal level to help ensure students are prepared to transition into occupations after graduating, while not necessarily preparing them for a specific industry.

Often, when students take some sort of career interest survey or profiler, such as the career cluster inventory within the [OhioMeansJobs K-12](#) website, the results are a score hierarchy representing potential student interests in these clusters. As such, the results help students discover their interests and passions while empowering them to choose a career pathway that will ultimately lead to success.

A Deeper Look at the Career Advising Policy

THIS IS OHIO'S CAREER ADVISING POLICY IN A 3-STEP PROCESS

Step 1. Each city, local, exempted village, and joint vocational school district must adopt a policy on career advising. This policy must address how the district will provide the eight components, which will be described here shortly.

Step 2. Once the policy is adopted, the district must then post the policy in a prominent area of their website so that it is available for all students, families, and the community.

Step 3. The final step is for the district to schedule a local review once every two years to review the adopted Career Advising Policy.

There are eight components of the Career Advising Policy, with 3 common topics: Pathways, Individualized Planning, and Student Learning. Each school and district's individual policy must address the following eight components.

Component 1 Career Connections learning strategies, requires schools to provide grade level examples that link student's schoolwork to one or more career fields. Schools are encouraged to develop their own strategies but are more than welcome to use the Ohio Department of Education's model curricula strategies provided on their website.

Component 2 requires schools to provide Career Advising to all students grades 6-12. Schools are to determine the frequency and type of Career Advising activities based upon student needs. It is strongly recommended that advisors meet with students at least once a semester to monitor and plan academic and career goals.

Component 3 required schools to come up with their own system to identify "at-risk" students (those that look close to dropping out) and provide a process of intervening and career advising for them. An example of this is the Student Success Plan that can be created with students.

Component 4 requires employee training on how to advise students on career pathways. This training must include helping students discover career interests, exploring and researching education options, and supporting the development of their student success plan. There are several tools available to help with this training, including the [OhioMeansJobs K-12](#) website, as well as the newly developed Career Advising modules.

Component 5 says that districts must develop multiple academic and career pathways through high school that students may choose to earn a high school diploma. The department provides simple pathway documents that help align education and training to related careers. These documents may be customized according to what current school

offering are available, as well as individual student plans for high school and beyond. These pathways need to be made available to students so they can cater their learning to their career aspirations.

Component 6 schools must provide course options to students for academic and Career-Technical credits, such as through credit flex, that align to the new graduation requirements and allow students to customize their experiences. It is required to make these courses readily available and known to students, so they are informed of what options are available.

Component 7 districts must provide documentation on career advising for each student. This can be done through several tools, such as OhioMeansJobs K-12.

Component 8 requires support to be provided for students to transition successfully from high school to their postsecondary choice. This includes interventions and services for students in need of remediation in Mathematics and English language arts. The approach to this component will vary depending on student need. Districts may recognize there is a need to enhance existing supports with targeted interventions. This approach will ensure that the resources for students to prepare for college and career are available, inclusive of ways students may offset the cost of post-secondary education options and programs. Districts may also need to expand resources and options to meet the needs of advanced learners. Examples include increasing course offerings and enhancing wrap around services, to support the most critical transition points for students such as entering and exiting high school.

The 8 Factors of Career Advising

Self-Awareness: Self-Awareness skills refer to individuals gaining the ability to identify their interests, skills, and work values. Self-awareness includes understanding one's own mastery level of career readiness (employability) skills. This enhanced self-awareness paves the way to effectively explore careers and identify personal career goals with the best fit.

Academic Support: Academic Support refers to a wide variety of instructional methods, educational services, or school's resources provided to students to help them be successful in their learning process. It is a practice that encompasses a broad array of educational strategies including tutoring sessions, supplemental courses, summer learning experiences, before/after school programs, teacher advisors, mentors, as well as alternative ways of grouping, advising, and instructing students.

Advising: Advising is vital to student success. Students should receive individual advisement from counselors, advisors, and/or teachers to feel supported in academic and career planning. Students need to be challenged to take rigorous coursework, and they need regular and ongoing communication with counselors and advisors to ensure they are aware of academic and career-based opportunities and expectations.

College and Career Exposure: Defining "college and career options to include all varieties of postsecondary education and training" is essential as students begin their career journey. In our current economy, it is important to dispel the myth that everyone must take the same path to career success. All options are a way to learn and gain skills. Different career goals require different preparation.

College Application and Enrollment: College application and enrollment refers to the knowledge and skills that enable students to successfully transition into post-secondary education. Students and families will know the options they have to help fund their education, how to determine college fit, financial aid requirements, including how to complete a FAFSA, admission criteria and application processes. Students and families will have the knowledge they need to make informed decisions after graduation from high school.

Family Knowledge and Engagement: Family support is an integral part of student success; therefore, it is important to link family engagement to student learning. Family knowledge and engagement should be purposely designed as a core component of educational goals such as school readiness, academic achievement, graduation rates, college readiness, career exploration and more.

Military Enlistment: Having a clear understanding and being knowledgeable of the array of career and academic opportunities within the military will help expand student options for post high school success.

Professional Development: The OhioMeansJobs-Readiness Seal* is a formal designation a student can earn by demonstrating the professional skills that are required for success in the workplace. The student can earn the OhioMeansJobs-Readiness Seal by asking three or more mentors to validate that the student demonstrated the professional skills valued by Ohio businesses.

References:

Iowa Gear Up: Framework for Student Success

<https://gearupiowa.gov/sites/default/files/document-library/GEAR UP Iowa Framework full version.pdf>

Nebraska Career Development Toolkit

<https://www.education.ne.gov/nce/careerdevelopment/>

Career Advising in Student Success and Graduation Plans

The fourth component of the Career Advising Policy is a Student Success Plan. Beginning in the 2015-2016 school year, [Ohio law](#) requires local boards of education to adopt a policy on career advising, part of this being creating a Student Success Plan. This is a student-focused process that addresses academic and career goals and resources of individual students that are at risk of dropping out. However, national research and best practices will support that all students benefit from having focused, individualized plans for their futures that recognizes the role of various educational options, resources, and goals for high school and beyond. Student Success Plans are vital in ensuring a student achieves their post-high school goals. With the addition of the graduation plan, students are one step closer to making these goals a reality.

In accordance with [Ohio law](#), each school board and governing authority must adopt a policy regarding students who are at risk of not qualifying for a high school diploma, no later than June 30, 2020. This policy requires districts or schools to develop a graduation plan for each student in grades 9 through 12.

The graduation plan:

- Must be developed by the student and a representative of the district or school and updated each school year in which the student is enrolled in the district or school until the student qualifies for the high school diploma. The district or school must invite the student's parent, guardian, or custodian to assist in the development and updating of the graduation plan.
- Must address the student's academic pathway to meet the curriculum requirements specified by the district or school and satisfy graduation conditions.
- Documents the student's progress and/or deficiency in meeting the terms of a graduation plan.
- Must be used as both a criterion and a procedure for identifying at-risk students in the district or school's policy on identifying students at-risk of not qualifying for a high school diploma (outlined below). Supplements and enhances a school district's policy on Career Advising. May be a student's individualized education program (IEP) in lieu of a separate graduation plan under the above criteria if the individualized education program contains academic goals substantively similar to a graduation plan.

Not only are these graduation plans useful for identifying students at risk of not graduating, but they can also be used as a career advising tool. In the graduation plan, students are asked to identify their post-high school goals as well as the support they will need to achieve these

goals. Teachers and counselors should be engaging students in making these graduation plans and encouraging the students to take an active role in their post-high school plans.

Harvard's Graduate School of Education Redesign Lab is implementing Student Success Plans in 8 school districts. These plans are unique to each student and cover everything from student goals to student hardships - a plan concerned with supporting the whole child.

Student Success Plans work. In an article published by NPEC, they concluded that student success in postsecondary education starts in a student's early years through the influences of their teachers and counselors. These educators have the most direct effect on students' postsecondary success. When a student receives these supports in high school, they can see a clear path to success to their future goals.

Resources: https://nces.ed.gov/npec/pdf/synth_Hearn.pdf
<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/ed/19/08/whats-plan>

Evaluating Current Career Advising Practices

As educators, appreciating the strengths and abilities of each student and tailoring our advising practices to highlight these assets is transformative in advancing systemic processes. This perspective is crucial when aiming to turn policy into actionable, locally driven, student-centered practices

In fostering an educational environment that supports every student, districts can utilize the [Career Advising Gap Analysis Tool](#) to assess local career advising policies and practices. This gap analysis tool highlights 3 components:

- Family & Community Engagement
- Student-Centered Learning
- Student Access

Through the Gap Analysis Tool, districts and schools will analyze how:

- Students are receiving individualized supports for success through meaningful partnerships;
- Schools are fostering asset-based practices in teaching environments;
- Schools and teachers provide each student with instructional experiences based on student interest, strengths and needs;
- Schools and teachers are allowing each student to be co-authors and take greater ownership of their learning, and;
- Schools provide each student with a well-rounded education that prepares them to be successful beyond PK-12 schooling.

The Career Advising Gap Analysis Tool was developed as an adaptation of the work of [Westat](#) and the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce in 2021. Westat is a research company who focuses on improving outcomes in health, education, social policy, and transportation. In coordination with Westat, local districts from around Ohio, including Akron City, Chillicothe City, Fairfield City and Hilliard City, contributed to the development process of the original Gap Analysis Tool through focus prototyping.

Making a Plan

ACTIVITY 1

The following prompts are designed to leverage the discoveries from reviewing local career advising processes and gap analysis to identify opportunity for development or expansion of current practices and policy. In response, participants shall consider how each factor below is integrated across the career connections framework: Awareness (K-5), Exploration (6-8), Planning (9-12).

Self – Awareness:

What quality self – exploration activities are outlined in local career advising policy/plans? How do they help students become aware of their aptitude, interest, skills, and values that guide subsequent career exploration efforts?

Academic Support:

How do local career advising policy/plans support students in building a rigorous academic foundation and develop academic behaviors essential to preparing for post-secondary pathways?

Advising:

How do local career advising policy/plans provide students with the information they need to graduate high school, enroll in post-secondary education, and explore career opportunities?

College and Career Exposure:

What options/experiences are outlined in local career advising policy/plans that help students build awareness and aspirations about post-secondary options including college and careers?

College Application and Enrollment:

What options/experiences are outlined in local career advising policy/plans that provide students with the knowledge necessary to successfully transition into post-secondary education?

Family Knowledge and Engagement:

How are students and families engaged in the development of a comprehensive support system that contributes to the students' academic success and future career planning?

Military Enlistment:

How do local career advising policy/plans provide students with the information and resources necessary to successfully transition into the military?

Professional Development:

What activities/experiences are defined in local career advising policy/plans that help students develop the non-cognitive skills that are critical to their academic, career, and personal success?

Are students actively engaging in the [OhioMeansJobs-Readiness Seal](#), and what has been successful or been a hurdle in supporting students in achieving the Seal designation?

ACTIVITY 2

Identify 2-3 strategies/lesson plans currently being used or from the resources identified within the [Career Connections collection](#) to explore further or implement that each factor across the Career Connections Framework explored in activity one.

ACTIVITY 3

Evaluating Current Career Advising Practices - Using the outcomes of the Gap Analysis Tool and identify at least four areas from activity one to implement thoughtful actions.

Sustaining a Plan

ACTIVITY 4

Policy Redesign:

During this phase, districts, schools, educators, and stakeholder partners will co-design a common vision for career advising that encompasses goals and strategies that support the needs of all students and provide pathways for post high school success.

Implementation First Steps:

It is important to think deeply about who needs to be at the table to support and generate immediacy in implementing the Career Advising Plan framework developed in this toolkit. In this portion of the sustainability step identify the 5 initial “actionable” steps required to proceed in the implementation of this plan and the stakeholders to fulfil those steps. Next, list the core 5 stakeholders/institutions needed to fulfill the identified action steps and describe the role(s) each stakeholder/institution plays in the action steps supported.

Monitor:

Districts, schools, educators, and stakeholder partners will develop or leverage current progress monitoring strategies and tools to track the progress and impact of the career advising plan. Individual teachers and school counselors may monitor their own progress or their students’ progress that stem from formal or informal career advising activities.