



## SECTION VI

### COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS INITIATIVES

Each year the number of educational initiatives expands with new initiatives added that are dedicated to improving student achievement. Many of these initiatives help students begin planning for their futures and education beyond high school. The initiatives encourage students to take an earlier, more active role in the educational process through exploring career interests and setting of career goals.

According to the U.S Department of Labor, in 1950 60% of the U.S. jobs fell into the unskilled category, 20% of the jobs required a 4-year college or university degree, and 20% of the jobs required skilled labor. At that time, manufacturing fueled the economy, providing jobs for this large group of workers. According to ACTE, citing Bureau of Labor Statistics, "...by the year 2020 it is estimated that 75% of all U.S. jobs will require two-year or four-year and higher degrees, or special postsecondary occupational certificates or apprenticeships." (*Techniques*, September 2009) With this continual decline in employment opportunities for the unskilled, however, there has not been a corresponding increase in the skilled workforce. Although jobs are available, there are not enough highly skilled workers to fill them.

Our country has become a highly technical, globally competitive society that requires well-trained, technologically literate workers. Jobs that offer interesting challenges and the potential for growth in earnings require a working knowledge of mathematics, science, principles of technology, and communication skills. If the United States is to compete in a global economy, it must have an intelligent, highly skilled workforce. The goal of current restructuring and reform initiatives is to prepare people with these important prerequisites. Everyone is a winner in these initiatives: the individual worker becomes more employable, the business world becomes more competitive, and the country becomes stronger.

The Missouri Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program provides a foundation to support initiatives emphasizing career exploration planning and decision making. As the primary implementer of comprehensive guidance and counseling programs, school counselors become important partners/collaborators in the educational process. The career development grade level expectations that are present in the Missouri Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program can be used to facilitate career awareness, exploration planning, decision making, and preparation.

In an effort to ensure opportunities for students, school counselors need to be aware of current college and career readiness initiatives. By being aware of these initiatives, school counselors work with classroom teachers, parents, and administrators to help students understand the importance of planning their career development as well as better understanding themselves.

## Current College and Career Readiness Initiatives

Many of today's initiatives recognize the importance of an educational system that incorporates rigorous and relevant learning within a caring environment. Creating strong academic foundations coupled with meaningful career education experiences for all students is a key goal of many of these initiatives. Below is a brief summary of initiatives in which Missouri is currently involved, and in which guidance and counseling plays key roles.

### Top 10 x 20

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has launched *Top 10 by 20*, a major improvement effort that aims for student achievement in Missouri to rank among the top 10 states by 2020. Comprehensive guidance and counseling programs support this initiative by helping to advance the academic, career, and personal/social development of all students. Additional information can be found on DESE's website: [Top 10 by 20](#)

### Carl D. Perkins

#### Career and Technical Education Act of 2006

The Perkins Act called upon states and local education agencies to create secondary-to-postsecondary sequences of academic and career education coursework that lead students to attain a postsecondary degree or industry-recognized certificate or credential. These Programs of Study are the foundation for developing the Personal Plan of Study that will guide students through their high school years. Developing, reviewing, and revising as necessary is one of the key functions of the individual planning process.

### Career Clusters and Programs of Study

The Career Clusters Initiative builds on the career path concept that has been a part of Missouri's career development process since the initiation of Tech Prep programs. Career Clusters provide greater depth for exploration and they provide knowledge and skill statements that describe the attributes necessary for success in particular clusters. Career Clusters are the foundations for locally developed Programs of Study that outline the content and course sequence necessary for success in any given Career and Technical Education (CTE) or academic program. Helping students understand how they can use Career Clusters and Programs of Study to make meaningful educational and career decisions is an important part of the individual student planning process and a key activity within a comprehensive guidance and counseling program. Information about Career Clusters can be found at the [Career Clusters national website](#), and information about programs of study can be found at the website of the [Missouri Center for Career Education](#).

### High Schools That Work (HSTW)

The Southern Regional Education Board established *HSTW* as a school-improvement initiative. *HSTW* offers a framework of goals and key practices that may be implemented to raise student achievement. *HSTW* seeks to form a partnership with students, parents, and the community to improve the way all high school students are prepared for work and further education. This initiative began in Missouri in the 2001-2002 school year and it has continued to grow. The goals of the *High Schools That Work* initiative are to accomplish the following:



## Missouri Connections

Missouri Connections is an educational and career planning website that is available to all schools free of charge. It is a resource that can be incorporated into a district's comprehensive guidance and counseling program. Additional information can be found at [www.missouriconnections.org](http://www.missouriconnections.org).

- Increase significantly the mathematics, science, communication, problem solving, and technical achievement of more students to the level of the national average and above
- Blend the essential content of traditional college-preparatory studies, consisting of mathematics, science, and language arts, with quality vocational and technical studies, by creating conditions that support school leaders, teachers, and school counselors in conducting key practices
- Advance state and local policies and leadership initiatives necessary to sustain a continuous school-improvement effort

One of the Key Practices of the *HSTW* Initiative is for all schools to have a "Guidance and Counseling System" in place. As defined by *HSTW*, the "Guidance and Counseling System" incorporates key components of the Individual Student Planning Process associated with the Missouri Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program. Additional information about the [High Schools that Work](#) program can be found at its website.

## The A+ Schools

The *A+ Program* is unique to Missouri and is designed to provide high school students with an exciting and rigorous program of academic and technical education that leads to community college and workplace skill development. The Outstanding Schools Act of 1993 (Senate Bill 380) established the A+ Schools program to provide grant awards to Missouri's public secondary schools to

- Reduce the dropout rate
- Raise academic expectations and eliminate "general track" courses
- Provide better "career pathways" for all students
- Work more closely with business and higher education leaders

Again, a school's comprehensive guidance and counseling program is key to a successful A+ program. School counselors need to work with students to ensure that they are pursuing a rigorous and relevant personal plan of study appropriate for their educational and career goals; they need to provide appropriate interventions and/or be a team player to help reduce the drop-out rate; and they need to help students understand how their interests and abilities relate to a career path and or cluster.

## Collaborating to Enhance Education Through College and Career Readiness Initiatives via the Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program

The Missouri Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program provides the opportunities students need in order to respond to the profound changes in our society and to develop over time the positive attitudes and pertinent knowledge necessary to make informed career choices. School counselors, in partnership with classroom teachers, can present interesting and effective career planning and development lessons throughout students' school experiences so that students have the chance to think about and solidify feelings of self, community, work, and career. Beginning with the "learning about" stage in elementary school, students progress through "understanding," "exploring," and eventually to "applying" career competencies in the decision-making process during high school.

What is the relationship of the Missouri Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program with the Perkins Act, A+ Schools, High Schools That Work, and Missouri Connections? Simply stated, the career development focus of the Missouri Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program supports and facilitates these initiatives. Students' success depends upon being allowed to learn about the changing world and their role in it, to explore career paths and career clusters, and develop rigorous and relevant personal plans of study around school based programs of study that lead to successful post-secondary transitions.

With proper guidance and counseling, students will recognize the need for ongoing training and skill development after high school with an emphasis on lifelong learning. Thus, as practitioners of the Missouri Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program, all school counselors are also performing the comprehensive guidance and counseling function that complements Tech Prep, A+ Schools, and *High Schools That Work*. And, Missouri Connections becomes a valuable resource for counselors to assist students in their career and educational planning and decision making.

It is important for school counselors and teachers to work together in developing innovative and exciting curricula that include career planning and a rigorous focus on academics. Successful collaboration can result in a rigorous and yet meaningful educational program for students in which a strong academic foundation tied to meaningful work-based learning experiences and other co-curricular activities will help lead to successful post-secondary experiences.

A flexible and dynamic school staff is a key ingredient in the success of college and career readiness initiatives such as Top 10 by 20, the Perkins Act A+ Schools, and High Schools That Work. Educators must be willing to use different teaching strategies, infuse new materials into courses, and set high standards for students. Educational restructuring and reform is an ongoing process that will not end with the initiatives and issues presented here. It is essential for administrators, teachers, and school counselors to be cognizant of and involved in current and future college and career readiness initiatives in order to provide maximum educational opportunities for all students.