

Aligning on College and Career Advising Expectations



Spotlight Collaboratives

Texas

- The Effective Advising Framework
- Statewide College and Career Planning and Resource Hubs

Effective Advising Framework



Mississippi

- Statewide College and Career Readiness Course
- Master Teacher of College and Career Readiness Training Course and Resources
- Statewide Advising Support



Kentucky

- Investments to Support College and Career Advising
- Statewide Professional Development Opportunities
- Statewide Resource and Professional Development Hub



ALIGNED ADVISING OVERVIEW

Aligned Advising provides a model in which high-quality advising is an expectation for every student, not just a select few. This approach ensures that such support is an integral part of both high school and postsecondary education and training. It is grounded in deep collaboration between K–12, postsecondary, and workforce partners to ensure that students have access to a wide range of services and supports as they transition to college, career, and life. In our research, we consistently found that the connection across these systems is insufficient, and replicates silos that lead to inequitable access and outcomes for students, particularly those who have been marginalized in our education and workforce systems. Examples of these gaps include a lack of attention and resources toward supporting career development and a hesitance to clearly define roles across student support experts, leading to misaligned advising practices across college and career planning staff. State policymakers have a critical role to play in addressing these gaps, and ensuring that all students have the support necessary to navigate the maze from high school to college and career.

WHY ALIGNMENT MATTERS

In high schools across the country, students have inconsistent experiences with college and career advising. Only a third of public high schools have a dedicated counselor for college advising, compared to 68 percent of private schools, and students in rural communities face additional challenges.¹ This discrepancy is further exacerbated by the after-effects of the pandemic, with school counselors increasingly focusing on social-emotional learning and course scheduling, and dedicating less time to postsecondary admission and career advising.² As a result, many students are facing a critical gap in their preparation for life after high school, underscoring an urgent need for more structured and aligned advising strategies. Effective advising is critical in bridging the gap between high school, higher education, and the workforce. It plays a pivotal role in guiding students through the complexities of college and career pathways. However, without clear standards and strong accountability mechanisms, the quality and impact of advising can vary greatly, leading to disparities in student outcomes.

The states featured in this case study have prioritized college and career readiness by taking a comprehensive approach to improving their advising systems. This includes prioritizing state-specific frameworks, clear

¹ Gewertz, C. (2018, November 13). College Advising Is in Short Supply in U.S. High Schools, Study Finds. Education Week. <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/college-advising-is-in-short-supply-in-u-s-high-schools-study-finds/2018/11>
² JP. (2023, October 4). The Counselor Perspective. National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC). <https://www.nacacnet.org/nacac-eab-search-and-enrollment-survey/>

graduation requirements, advising capacity, and equity-focused programs. These efforts have enhanced college and career readiness and success through innovative state-level strategies, leading to more consistent and impactful student experiences. Ultimately, these strategies not only facilitate better access to postsecondary and career opportunities but also ensure that students are well-prepared for success in their postsecondary endeavors.

PAVING THE WAY

TEXAS

In alignment with the state’s higher education strategy plan, [Talent Strong Texas](#), Texas has leveraged a range of resources and tools to empower educators, students, and families with the essential information and resources necessary to advance college and career readiness. Two of the most prominent efforts that have fostered statewide alignment on college and career readiness expectations, and consequently bolstered student success, are Texas’ [Effective Advising Framework](#) and Texas’ intentionally designed resource hubs for [educators](#), [students](#), and their [families](#). These valuable resources share a common goal: to improve the quality of advising and support services for students. The framework establishes the guiding principles and practices for building effective advising systems, while [Texas OnCourse](#) serves as a practical tool and resource hub for educators. Additionally, [My Texas Future](#) assists students in navigating the complexities of college and career planning, offering tailored guidance, the latest information, and interactive tools to help them make informed decisions. [Tomorrow Ready Texas](#) equips parents with the information and resources to best support their student’s current academic and career interests and needs. Collectively, these initiatives highlight Texas’ commitment to enhancing college and career readiness to further student success across the state.

The Effective Advising Framework: Texas’ [Effective Advising Framework](#) (EAF) is a comprehensive guide for building successful advising programs, focusing on [five key levers](#). These include 1) Strong program leadership and planning for strategic direction; 2) Cultivating effective and supported school counselors

and advisors; 3) Fostering an internal school culture for advising; 4) Forming effective external partnerships; and 5) Adopting high-quality advising materials and assessments.

This framework details essential commitments and actions at district and campus levels that are critical to strong advising programs. Texas regional education service centers, who are working towards EAF Coach Designation or Designation with Distinction, provide coaching support to districts. Part of this support includes access to additional resources and tools, including the EAF Diagnostic and Gap Analysis Tool. Initially piloted in the 2021–2022 school year, the framework allowed districts that met all requirements of the Effective Advising Planning Pilot to apply for the [EAF Implementation Grant](#). This grant provides districts technical assistance and guidance from EAF coaches from the regional education centers, who support district leaders in ensuring faithful implementation and assist leadership in strategic planning of each district’s individual student planning systems. Regional centers apply for continued EAF Planning Grants to train and designate new EAF coaches while guiding more districts in planning and implementing the framework. This phased approach is a key step towards ensuring students across Texas consistently receive high-quality advising, regardless of where they are in the state.

Statewide College and Career Planning and Resource Hubs: Texas has intentionally designed three platforms aimed at equipping educators, students, and their families with helpful tools, information, and resources to bolster college and career readiness statewide. [Texas OnCourse](#) serves as a comprehensive resource hub for advisors and counselors. It offers training in best practices in college and career advising through online courses, networking opportunities, and resources. The platform has seen active participation from over 18,000 educators across the state. [My Texas Future](#) caters to K–12 students and adult learners, providing an array of tools and resources to support students in discovering their interests and achieving their college and career goals. This includes career and program exploration tools, financial aid resources, and transitional planning support. For parents, [Tomorrow Ready Texas](#), offers a dedicated and family-centered website. This resource is designed to provide families with the ultimate

toolkit where they can access resources that are tailored to their student’s academic needs, find specialized resources for students with disabilities, and explore a variety of postsecondary options, including workforce entry and independent living. This work was done in deep partnership with the [Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative](#), a collaborative initiative involving the Texas Education Agency, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the Texas Workforce Commission working to better align education and workforce development within the state.

MISSISSIPPI

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) has carried out many new initiatives aimed at improving college and career readiness in the state. Central to these efforts is the implementation of new graduation requirements, including a mandatory College and Career Readiness (CCR) course. This course supports the state’s goal to enhance [postsecondary attainment](#) by equipping students with vital skills and knowledge for life beyond high school. To ensure effective course delivery, MDE has invested in professional development for teachers. These training programs are tailored to ensure that educators are well-equipped and supported to teach these courses effectively. Additionally, the state has recognized the need for increased advising capacity in schools, leading to investment to increase the number of career coaches in schools across the state. Taken together, these measures will help prepare Mississippi’s students for the challenges and opportunities of college and career.

Statewide College and Career Readiness Course: MDE, in collaboration with core partners including Get2College, Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL), the Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB), and the Mississippi Council on Economic Education (MCEE) developed and approved a mandatory [College and Career Readiness course](#) for high school students. It encompasses critical topics such as college selection, financial aid application procedures, internship readiness, digital literacy, financial literacy, and more. This course, aligned with MDE’s vision of preparing all high school graduates for college and career, outlines the essential knowledge and skills required for a successful transition to postsecondary education and the workforce.

Master Teacher of College and Career Readiness Training Course and Resources: In partnership with Get2College and the Mississippi Council on Economic Education, college and career readiness teachers have access to [high-quality training and resources](#) to support the implementation and instruction of the courses. Teachers are provided with incentives such as a \$250 stipend and opportunities to earn continuing education units. This support is crucial, as CCR teachers typically face limitations in time and resources to develop comprehensive curricula and tools for their students. Since fall 2022, over 88 teachers have successfully completed the course. The unique partnership not only enhances the quality of instruction but also ensures that the course effectively aids in improving transitions for students and aligns advising efforts.

Statewide Advising Support: In 2023, Mississippi made a substantial investment of \$12 million to further expand and sustain the [AccelerateMS Career Coach Program](#). The primary mission of AccelerateMS Career Coaches is to support students in effectively exploring their postsecondary options and equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills for in-demand jobs that align with their individual interests and abilities. The program has shown significant growth in recent years, with the number of career coaches increasing from 25 coaches to a current total of 150 coaches statewide. Coaches have facilitated over 30,000 one-on-one student conversations and continue to engage in meaningful conversations with students to help further their college and career goals. There is also an increasing number of Career Coaches who are collaborating with counselors and College and Career Readiness teachers who instruct the College and Career Readiness Courses to align on shared objectives, creating a unified approach in guiding students through their educational and career pathways.

KENTUCKY

Kentucky is committed to strengthening the quality of student advising by providing practitioners with the essential tools and knowledge needed to holistically advise students. The state has implemented several statewide efforts to expand advising capacity and align advising expectations. These initiatives involve statewide collaboration across various sectors, the coordination of training opportunities for those

directly supporting students, and state-level investments in quality advising resources. The [Kentucky Advising Academy](#) (KAA), an initiative of the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE), plays a central role in leading various statewide initiatives aimed at building advising capacity and improving student advising experiences. They offer valuable financial resources and professional development opportunities to student support providers across K-12 and postsecondary education, enhancing their capacity to provide effective advising to students. In many ways, Kentucky is actively working to provide holistic and impactful advising experiences for all its students.

Investments to Support College and Career Advising:

The Kentucky Advising Academy serves as a central resource for advisors across the state and has recently introduced [mini-grants](#) of up to \$5,000 to Kentucky K-12 public schools and area technology centers to enhance post-high school career exploration and advising for students. These grants aim to expand access to postsecondary opportunities that lead to successful career paths. Schools are encouraged to focus on postsecondary advising, with an emphasis on areas such as college and career exploration, college preparation, early postsecondary opportunities, and/or critical skills needed to ensure student success. Additionally, schools are required to partner with postsecondary institutions, employers, or community-based organizations to support these initiatives. This demonstrates Kentucky’s commitment to providing comprehensive and effective student advising through strong cross-sector partnerships.

Statewide Professional Development Opportunities:

The KAA not only provides grants, but also offers a wide range of professional development opportunities for counselors and advisors. These include podcasts, in-person workshops, interactive webinars, and a quarterly newsletter, allowing educators to choose learning experiences that best meet their needs and schedules. They also offer face-to-face mentoring and support. Many of these learning experiences cover topics such as college advising, financial aid, and career guidance. All events are free, and educators can earn training credits recognized by the Kentucky Department of Education. This comprehensive set of learning resources and opportunities showcases Kentucky’s dedication to building the capacity of advisors across the state.

Statewide Resource and Professional Development

Hub: The Kentucky Advising Academy has developed a comprehensive statewide advising [toolkit](#) for advisors across the commonwealth continuum. The toolkit covers various aspects of advising, including college and career guidance, student development, and guidance for leveraging data. It also provides specially curated “Quick Guide” documents for advisors to easily share information with students and offers answers to common student and family questions. The toolkit is a valuable and up-to-date resource for practitioners, students, and families, offering guidance on a wide range of advising topics in an accessible manner.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

There is a growing need to prioritize consistent and comprehensive college and career advising for every student, particularly those from under-resourced communities. Texas, Mississippi, and Kentucky are a few states that are demonstrating a commitment to enhancing college and career readiness and success through innovative state-level support for advising and counseling. To improve college and career readiness and align on advising expectations, states should consider the following strategies:

- 1 Establish state-specific frameworks and resources to improve advising quality.
- 2 Develop and implement clear graduation requirements focused on college and career readiness.
- 3 Increase advising capacity within schools, as discussed in our [Building Capacity case study](#), by coordinating training opportunities across K-12, higher education, and workforce systems. Simultaneously, implement state-level investments to ensure consistent access to quality advising resources, and identify bright spots that can be codified and shared to scale best practices across systems.
- 4 Prioritize equity by tailoring programs to support historically underrepresented student groups.