



NEW SKILLS READY NETWORK
EVALUATION: STRATEGY BRIEF

Strengthening Pathway Navigation and Transitions

December 2025



NEW SKILLS
READY NETWORK

The *New Skills Ready Network* (NSrn) sites helped students navigate new and expanded pathways systems by strengthening supports for their transitions across education levels. Given the growing number of options available to high school students, the sites primarily focused on college and career advising. Their strategies included developing and implementing advising frameworks, building the capacity of advising staff through trainings, and connecting advisors across education levels. In addition, postsecondary partners instituted automatic admission policies and enhanced student supports to assist students' transitions across education levels.



Site Examples

The following are examples of how sites designed pathways systems that supported student transitions:

Defined career advising processes. Several sites developed and implemented frameworks to incorporate career readiness and to connect advising services across secondary and postsecondary education levels. In Nashville, the team developed a flexible college and career readiness advising framework to establish consistent advising expectations and processes district-wide. Implementation of the framework also highlighted the need for more advisors, which the district addressed by creating a college and career readiness coach role at each high school to assist students with exploring their post-high school options and obtaining relevant work-based learning opportunities.

About the NSrn Evaluation

From 2020 to 2025, JPMorganChase supported the *New Skills Ready Network* initiative, led by the Education Strategy Group and Advance CTE. RTI International conducted a mixed-methods evaluation of NSrn to examine changes in career pathways system policies, practices, and student experiences in the six participating U.S. metro areas. The six sites were: Boston, MA; Columbus, OH; Dallas, TX; Denver, Co; Indianapolis, IN; and Nashville, TN.

About the NSrn Briefs

This brief is one of five that highlight findings and examples of the following key strategies for systems change that were identified by the evaluation:

- Deepening collaboration
- Designing pathways using a systems perspective
- Strengthening pathway navigation and transitions
- Improving equity and the learner experience
- Amplifying and influencing state policy

These strategy briefs, along with a brief on data and reporting, are housed on the [NSrn evaluation website](#).

Hosted advising summits. Sites increased staff capacity to provide advising support through trainings on career advising strategies and by connecting secondary and postsecondary advisors across education levels. Five sites hosted Seamless Advising Summits that connected middle school, secondary, and postsecondary advising staff and offered professional development on cross-education level advising practices. Boston’s first Seamless Advising Summit in 2023 provided training on various topics, including using data systems to support college and career readiness, understanding students’ education transition experiences, and connecting students with summer jobs. Based on the event’s success, further Seamless Advising Summits were held in subsequent years, with participation increasing from approximately 140 participants in the first year to more than 400 in the third. The Boston summit served as a model for other sites, with four others hosting their own Seamless Advising Summits during the initiative.

Aligned pathways across education levels. Sites expanded partnerships with postsecondary institutions, including 4-year colleges and universities, to smooth transitions across education levels. The Columbus team created an applied information technology (IT) pathway that extended from Columbus City Schools to Columbus State Community College (CSCC) and the Ohio State University (OSU). Faculty from all three institutions worked together to align curriculum and develop pathways in which students can earn an applied associate’s and bachelor’s degrees. The team also developed 2+2 programs in advanced manufacturing and construction management to improve transfer processes from CSCC to OSU.

Streamlined admission policies and processes. Four sites initiated changes to postsecondary admissions policies and processes to make it easier for students to transition into postsecondary institutions. This included simplifying postsecondary application and registration processes, as well as revamping entrance requirements to partner institutions. In Indianapolis, Indiana University (IU) launched a new automatic admissions initiative with Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) where students with a 3.0 GPA or higher can opt in to be automatically admitted to IU’s University College, without going through the usual application process. Since the initiative launched, IU has reported a surge in IPS enrollments.



Other Navigation and Transitions Strategies

The examples above describe key strategies used across all sites to strengthen pathways navigation and advising systems. Other strategies were also observed in some sites, including the following:

- **Middle grades advising.** To help students make informed pathways choices in high school, sites began introducing middle school students to available pathways programs and facilitating career exploration activities. For example, Dallas implemented the Education Open Doors curriculum, which introduces middle school students to available high school pathways programs and facilitates career exploration activities.
- **Postsecondary work-based learning experiences.** As sites aligned pathways curriculum across education levels, they also explored opportunities to connect secondary and postsecondary work-based learning experiences. Such aligned opportunities allowed students to more deeply engage with their programs of study and continue to gain relevant work experience, including through internships and apprenticeships.
- **Involvement of leadership and day-to-day contacts across education levels.** Sites noted that effective partnerships between secondary and postsecondary institutions required staff engagement at two levels—leadership and program administration—to provide the necessary oversight and vision for pathways and to coordinate implementation logistics.

To learn more about the NSrn evaluation findings, see the other briefs and evaluation reports at <http://nsrn-evaluation.org>.