

COLLEGE READINESS INDICATOR SYSTEMS



RESOURCE
SERIES

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Menu of College Readiness Indicators and Supports

The John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities

This *Menu of College Readiness Indicators and Supports* is the product of an extensive review of the research examining factors that predict students' readiness for college,¹ conducted by the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities. The Menu consists of valid, reliable, and actionable indicators of the three dimensions of college readiness that college readiness indicator systems advance—**academic preparedness, academic tenacity, and college knowledge**—organized at the **individual** (student), **setting** (school), and **system** (district and partners) levels.

- **Table 1** presents a summary of college readiness dimensions and constructs.
- **Table 2a** presents *individual-level* indicators that track students' personal progress toward college readiness. In addition to traditional measures such as courses and credits, individual-level indicators in the CRIS Menu include knowledge about college admission requirements and students' goals for learning.
- **Table 2b** presents *setting-level* indicators that monitor whether schools are making progress toward the goal of postsecondary success and track the conditions, resources, and opportunities for students afforded by their schools.
- **Table 2c** presents *system-level* indicators, focusing on district policy and funding infrastructure that have an impact on the availability of college readiness supports, including guidance counselors, professional development for teachers, and resources to support effective data generation and use. System-level indicators are crucial in that they signal the extent to which district-level resources are in place to carry out an effective college readiness agenda. Some of the setting- and system-level indicators are aggregate measures of individual-level indicators, and others are standalone markers such as availability of Advanced Placement classes.
- **Figure 1** represents an abbreviated version of the CRIS Menu meant to be used for quick reference.
- **Figure 2** is a worksheet that districts can fill out during the process of selecting their target indicators from the CRIS Menu.
- **Table 3** presents a summary of supports and interventions identified by our literature review that, if present, increase the chances that students are ready for college by the time they finish high school. In some cases, supports target students (e.g., tutoring program and workshop on how to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid), and in others they target adults (e.g., professional development and capacity building for teachers around data use and college readiness).








These indicators are connected with supports through a Cycle of Inquiry process. Ultimately, indicators, supports, and cycles of inquiry do not exist in a vacuum but are rather embedded in a given context (community, higher education, and local and state policy) which imposes conditions that can have a positive or negative influence on students' chances to become college ready. Please consult *Beyond College Eligibility: A New Framework for Promoting College Readiness* for a detailed account of the interrelated elements and strategies needed to sustain an effective college readiness indicator system.

By selecting indicators that are directly relevant to their own context, districts construct an indicator system that is evidence-based and attuned to their unique goals and priorities (see *Selecting Effective Indicators* and *A Technical Guide to College Readiness Indicators*).

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TABLE 1 College Readiness Dimensions and Constructs

 ACADEMIC PREPAREDNESS	
Level	Construct
 Individual	Student has the academic knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in college-level courses.
 Setting	School provides access to curriculum and instruction that support academic knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in college-level courses.
 System	District/state allocates sufficient resources and supports to provide access to academic knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in college-level courses.
 Individual	Student uses key cognitive strategies necessary to succeed in college-level courses; strategies include problem solving, intellectual openness, and analysis.
 Setting	School provides opportunities to develop key cognitive strategies necessary to succeed in college-level courses.
 System	District/state allocates sufficient resources and supports to develop key cognitive strategies necessary to succeed in college-level courses.







 ACADEMIC TENACITY	
Level	Construct
 Individual	Student has beliefs, attitudes, and values that prioritize success in school and drive student engagement and work.
 Setting	School provides opportunities to develop beliefs, attitudes, and values that prioritize success in school and drive student engagement and work.
 System	District/state allocates sufficient resources and supports to develop beliefs, attitudes, and values that prioritize success in school and drive student engagement and work.
 Individual	Student exhibits behaviors of active participation and perseverance through adversity.
 Setting	School provides opportunities to develop behaviors of active participation and perseverance through adversity.

TABLE 1 College Readiness Dimensions and Constructs (continued)








 System	District/state allocates sufficient resources and supports to develop behaviors of active participation and perseverance through adversity.
COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE	
Level	Construct
 Individual	Student has the knowledge, skills, and behaviors apart from academic content that allow him or her to successfully access college .
 Setting	School provides opportunities to develop knowledge, skills, and behaviors apart from academic content that allow students to successfully access college .
 System	District/state allocates sufficient resources and supports to develop knowledge, skills, and behaviors apart from academic content that allow students to successfully access college .
 Individual	Student has the knowledge, skills, and behaviors apart from academic content that allow him or her to succeed once in college .
 Setting	School provides opportunities to develop knowledge, skills, and behaviors apart from academic content that allow students to succeed once in college .
 System	District/state allocates sufficient resources and supports to develop knowledge, skills, and behaviors apart from academic content that allow students to succeed once in college .



TABLE 2A Individual-Level Indicators




ACADEMIC PREPAREDNESS

Construct	Individual-Level Indicator	How Measured?
1 Academic knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in college-level courses	Participation in college-level coursework/ college-prep curriculum (Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Honors, etc.)	School records
2 Knowledge, skills, and behaviors apart from academic content that allow students to succeed once in college; key cognitive strategies necessary to succeed in college-level courses	SAT/ACT score	School records (compare to benchmarks that ACT and others have already developed across content areas)
3 Academic knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in college-level courses	Performance on high school exit and benchmark exams	School records
4 Academic knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in college-level courses	GPA	School records
5 Academic knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in college-level courses; behaviors of active participation and perseverance through adversity	No failures in core subjects	School records
6 Academic knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in college-level courses; behaviors of active participation and perseverance through adversity	Maintaining level of achievement in transition years	School records
7 Academic knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in college-level courses; key cognitive strategies necessary to succeed in college-level courses	Completion of X-level math and science courses	School records



TABLE 2A Individual-Level Indicators (continued)

 ACADEMIC TENACITY		
Construct	Individual-Level Indicator	How Measured?
1 Beliefs, attitudes, and values that prioritize success in school and drive student engagement and work; behaviors of active participation and perseverance through adversity	Attendance	School records
2 Behaviors of active participation and perseverance through adversity	Self-discipline	Survey
3 Behaviors of active participation and perseverance through adversity	Disciplinary infractions	School records
4 Beliefs, attitudes, and values that prioritize success in school and drive student engagement and work; behaviors of active participation and perseverance through adversity	Mastery orientation	Survey; school records


 COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE		
Construct	Individual-Level Indicator	How Measured?
1 Knowledge, skills, and behaviors apart from academic content that allow students to successfully access college	SAT/ACT participation	School records (compare to benchmarks that ACT and others have already developed across content areas)
2 Knowledge, skills, and behaviors apart from academic content that allow students to successfully access college	Knowledge of admission criteria, application process, and financial requirements for college	Survey
3 Knowledge, skills, and behaviors apart from academic content that allow students to successfully access college	Completion and submission of application to college(s) that constitute a good match	School records
4 Knowledge, skills, and behaviors apart from academic content that allow students to succeed once in college	Independent study skills (e.g., notetaking and effective time management)	Survey
5 Knowledge, skills, and behaviors apart from academic content that allow students to successfully access college	Meeting with college adviser and/or having post-graduation plan	Survey; school records (collected by college advising staff)



TABLE 2B Setting-Level Indicators



 ACADEMIC PREPAREDNESS		
Construct	Setting-Level Indicator	How Measured?
1 School provides access to curriculum and instruction that support academic knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in college-level courses	Availability of college-level coursework/ college-prep curriculum (Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Honors, etc.)	School records
2 School provides access to curriculum and instruction that support academic knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in college-level courses	Teacher effectiveness/quality	School records; school climate survey; testing agencies' records
3 School provides access to curriculum and instruction that support academic knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in college-level courses; school provides opportunities to develop behaviors of active participation and perseverance through adversity	Trends in individual-level indicators of academic preparedness	School records
4 School provides access to curriculum and instruction that support academic knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in college-level courses; school provides opportunities to develop behaviors of active participation and perseverance through adversity	Dropout rates (or high school completion rates)	School records
5 School provides access to curriculum and instruction that support academic knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in college-level courses	Consistent grading policy	Teacher reports



TABLE 2B Setting-Level Indicators (continued)


 ACADEMIC TENACITY		
Construct	Setting-Level Indicator	How Measured?
1 School provides opportunities to develop beliefs, attitudes, and values that prioritize success in school and drive student engagement and work; school provides opportunities to develop behaviors of active participation and perseverance through adversity	Consistent attendance policy	School records
2 School provides opportunities to develop beliefs, attitudes, and values that prioritize success in school and drive student engagement and work	Perceived safety of school	School climate survey
3 School provides opportunities to develop behaviors of active participation and perseverance through adversity	Trends in individual-level indicators of academic tenacity	School records; school climate survey
4 School provides opportunities to develop beliefs, attitudes, and values that prioritize success in school and drive student engagement and work; school provides opportunities to develop behaviors of active participation and perseverance through adversity	Consistent disciplinary policy	Teacher reports
5 School provides opportunities to develop behaviors of active participation and perseverance through adversity	Instructional scaffolding	Teacher reports; school climate survey
6 School provides opportunities to develop behaviors of active participation and perseverance through adversity	Academic press	Teacher reports; school climate survey
7 School provides opportunities to develop behaviors of active participation and perseverance through adversity	Support for autonomy	Teacher reports; school climate survey


**COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE**

Construct	Setting-Level Indicator	How Measured?
1 School provides opportunities to develop knowledge, skills, and behaviors apart from academic content that allow students to successfully access college	Trends in individual-level indicators of college knowledge	School records
2 School provides opportunities to develop knowledge, skills, and behaviors apart from academic content that allow students to succeed once in college	High school college-going culture	School climate survey; policy documents



TABLE 2C System-Level Indicators

 ACADEMIC PREPAREDNESS		
Construct	System-Level Indicator	How Measured?
1 District/state allocates sufficient resources and supports to provide access to academic knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in college-level courses	Level of district/state curricular requirements	Policy documents

 COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE		
Construct	System-Level Indicator	How Measured?
1 District/state allocates sufficient resources and supports to develop knowledge, skills, and behaviors apart from academic content that allow students to succeed once in college	Alignment of high school graduation requirements and college entry requirements	Policy documents
2 District/state allocates sufficient resources and supports to develop knowledge, skills, and behaviors apart from academic content that allow students to succeed once in college	Policies that target the development of early college awareness and the skills to navigate the college and financial aid application process	Policy documents


 ACADEMIC PREPAREDNESS, ACADEMIC TENACITY, AND COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE		
Construct	System-Level Indicator	How Measured?
1 All system-level constructs (see pp. 3–4)	Resources allocated to efforts to promote college readiness	Policy documents
2 All system-level constructs (see pp. 3–4)	Monitoring system for schools' college attendance rates	Policy documents
3 All system-level constructs (see pp. 3–4)	Communication between district office and school personnel regarding college readiness	Policy documents

FIGURE 1 CRIS Abbreviated Menu: Individual-, Setting-, and System-Level Indicators




Indicators	Academic Preparedness	Academic Tenacity	College Knowledge
 INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▣ GPA ▣ No failures in core subjects ▣ Completion of X-level math and science courses ▣ Maintaining level of achievement in transition years ▣ Performance on high school exit and benchmark exams ▣ Participation in college-level coursework/college-prep curriculum (Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Honors, etc.) ▣ SAT/ACT score 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▣ Attendance ▣ Disciplinary infractions ▣ Mastery orientation² ▣ Self-discipline³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▣ Knowledge of admission criteria, application process, and financial requirements for college ▣ Completion and submission of application to colleges that constitute a good match⁴ ▣ Meeting with college adviser and/or having post-graduation plan ▣ Independent study skills (e.g., notetaking and effective time management) ▣ SAT/ACT participation
 SETTING-LEVEL INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▣ Trends in individual-level indicators of academic preparedness ▣ Teacher effectiveness/quality ▣ Dropout rates (or high school completion rates) ▣ Availability of college-level coursework/college-prep curriculum (Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Honors, etc.) ▣ Consistent grading policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▣ Trends in individual-level indicators of academic tenacity ▣ Consistent attendance policy ▣ Consistent disciplinary policy ▣ Perceived safety of school ▣ Instructional scaffolding⁵ ▣ Academic press⁶ ▣ Support for autonomy⁷ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▣ Trends in individual-level indicators of college readiness ▣ High school college-going climate
 SYSTEM-LEVEL INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▣ Level of district/state curricular requirements ▣ Alignment of high school graduation requirements and college entry requirements ▣ Resources allocated to efforts to promote college readiness ▣ Monitoring system for schools' college attendance rates ▣ Communication between district office and school personnel regarding college readiness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▣ Resources allocated to efforts to promote college readiness ▣ Monitoring system for schools' college attendance rates ▣ Communication between district office and school personnel regarding college readiness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▣ Policies that target the development of early college awareness and the skills to navigate the college and financial aid application process ▣ Resources allocated to efforts to promote college readiness ▣ Monitoring system for schools' college attendance rates ▣ Communication between district office and school personnel regarding college readiness

FIGURE 2 CRIS Menu Worksheet








Academic Preparedness	Academic Tenacity	College Knowledge
Academic knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in college-level courses	Beliefs, attitudes, and values that prioritize success in school and drive student engagement and work; behaviors of active participation and perseverance through adversity	Knowledge, skills, and behaviors apart from academic content that allow students to successfully access college
<div> INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL INDICATORS</div>		
<div> SETTING-LEVEL INDICATORS</div>		
<div> SYSTEM-LEVEL INDICATORS</div>		

TABLE 3 College Readiness Supports

 ACADEMIC PREPAREDNESS	
Levels	Supports
 Individual	Afterschool academic programs
	In-school tutoring
 Setting	Curricular supports
	Instructional strategies that foster critical thinking and contextual skills (e.g., project-based learning, differentiated instruction, heterogeneous grouping, and academic vocabulary building)
 System	Advanced Placement-prep programs
	SAT/ACT-prep programs
	Basic/remediation courses
	Multiple pathways approach (e.g., applied learning and academic-technical integration)
	Bridge and dual enrollment programs
	Weekend/summer school
	Financial incentives for students to enroll in Advanced Placement and other college-prep classes











  ACADEMIC TENACITY AND COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE	
Levels	Supports
 Individual	College advisement
	Begin college planning in middle school
 Setting	Financial aid application assistance programs
	Parental/family involvement and outreach programs
 System	External partnerships with community and colleges/universities
	Offer extracurricular programs on site
	College visits
	Mentoring programs and relationship-building
	Effective communication among school personnel and parents/students regarding students' progress toward college readiness

TABLE 3 College Readiness Supports (continued)

   ACADEMIC PREPAREDNESS, ACADEMIC TENACITY, AND COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE	
Levels	Supports
 Setting  System	Create district/statewide graduation standards that are explicitly linked to college entry courses
	Data systems to track student progress
	Link data to targeted interventions/supports for students
	Link data to developing and utilizing assessments that gauge students' college readiness
	Professional development and capacity building around data use and college readiness
	Examining data with students and parents to create actionable steps
	Restructuring into small learning communities to increase capacity to provide students more individualized attention
	Resources allocated to efforts to promote college readiness
	Teacher training
	Positive behavior supports system
	Anti-gang programs

Endnotes

- Kless, L., Soland, J., & Santiago, M. (2013). *Analyzing evidence of college readiness: A tri-level empirical and conceptual framework*. Retrieved from <http://gardnercenter.stanford.edu/resources/publications/collegereadinesslitreview.pdf>
- Mastery orientation*, also known as *learning orientation*, refers to the desire to develop competence and improve one's skills.
- Self-discipline* is the ability to forgo more appealing choices at the service of a higher goal.
- Colleges with a selectivity level at or above the highest selectivity of a college the student would likely be admitted to given his or her qualifications.
- Instructional scaffolding* consists of providing students with assistance so that they can complete challenging tasks and activities.
- Academic press* refers to pushing students to work hard and to think hard.
- Autonomy* is a sense of control over the course of one's life. Students are more successful when the adults in their lives support their need for autonomy rather than giving them little choice about how to think or behave.

The CRIS Research Partners



The Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University (AISR) is a national policy-research and reform support organization that focuses on

improving conditions and outcomes for all students in urban public schools, especially those attended by traditionally underserved children. AISR conducts research; works with a variety of partners to build capacity in school districts and communities; and shares its work through print and web publications. <http://annenberginstitute.org>

john w. gardner center for youth and their communities

The John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities and Their Communities at the Stanford University Graduate School of Education (Gardner Center) is a center for rigorous research, deeply rooted in the principles of community youth development. Its interdisciplinary team focuses on questions raised by its community partners about issues that matter to youth, and its collaborative approach is supported by three broad research strategies: the cross-sector Youth Data Archive, implementation and evaluation research, and community engagement and policy research. <http://jgc.stanford.edu>



The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research (UChicago CCSR) conducts research of high technical quality

that can inform and assess policy and practice in the Chicago Public Schools. CCSR seeks to expand communication among researchers, policymakers, and practitioners as we support the search for solutions to the problems of school reform. <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu>