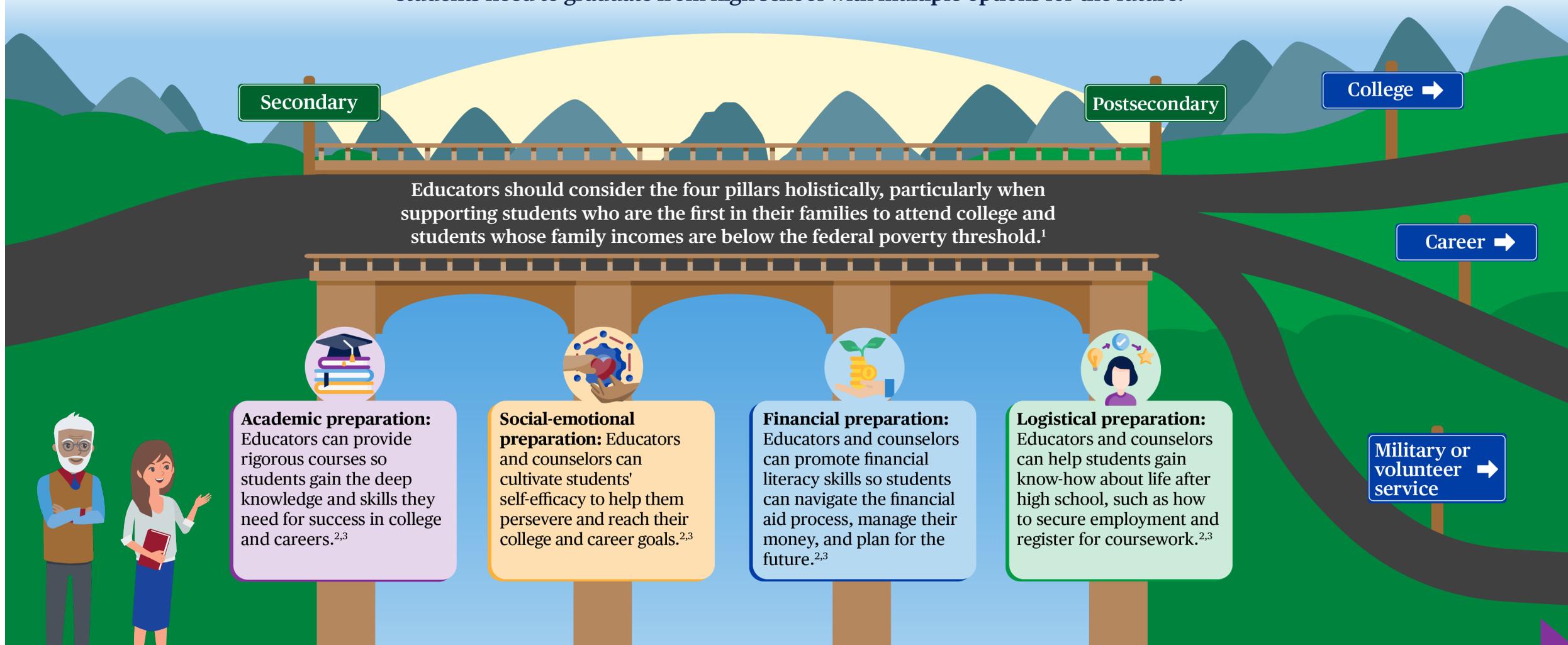


Four Pillars of Support for High School Students' College and Career Readiness

Teachers, counselors, and school leaders play a vital role in building, assessing, and strengthening four pillars of support students need to graduate from high school with multiple options for the future.



Go to the next page for reflection questions and research-based strategies, organized by the four pillars.

Questions and Strategies for Educators to Assess and Strengthen the Four Pillars of College and Career Readiness

Reflection questions	Research-based strategies
Academic preparation	
Do students in your school or district have opportunities to take advanced coursework across academic disciplines?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer a curriculum that prepares all students for college-level work and provides college-level learning opportunities.² Inform all students about academic requirements for college enrollment by the end of grade 9.²
How does your school or district measure students' progress throughout high school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use existing assessments, standards, and performance data to help educators target supports for college and career readiness.² Starting in grade 9, create a four-year personalized learning plan for each student and provide coaching to help each student succeed.^{4,5}
Social-emotional preparation	
Do students in your school or district have opportunities to surround themselves with peers or adults who help build their self-efficacy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create opportunities for students, particularly first-generation college-goers, to connect with recent high school graduates, mentors, and peers who can provide advice and serve as role models.² Engage students in hands-on career exploration, internships, and externships.⁶

Reflection questions	Research-based strategies
Financial preparation	
How does your school or district support students and families in developing financial literacy and understanding the costs of attending college?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host workshops on the affordability of different postsecondary options as well as opportunities to defray costs, such as scholarships and financial aid.² Help students gain financial literacy skills such as budgeting and debt management.⁶
Logistical preparation	
How does your school or district support students and families in completing the necessary steps for college or career entry?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help students and families search for education and training programs that match students' career interests and goals.⁵ Establish and communicate clear timelines and processes for completing applications, obtaining letters of recommendation, and taking required tests.² Encourage students to take required tests early so they have multiple opportunities to improve their scores.² Integrate college application essay requirements into coursework.⁷ Offer resources such as Internet access to help students complete college admissions forms, job applications, and other career exploration activities.^{2,6}

For more research-based strategies and tips for implementation, check out REL Appalachia's [Paving the Pathway to College and Careers: Resource Compilation](#) and the What Works Clearinghouse practice guide [Helping Students Navigate the Path to College](#).

¹ Barnett, E. (2016). *Building student momentum from high school to college. Ready or not: It's time to rethink the 12th grade*. Jobs for the Future. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED564836>

² Tierney, W. G., Bailey, T., Constantine, J., Finkelstein, N., & Hurd, N. F. (2009). *Helping students navigate the path to college: What high schools can do* (NCEE 2009-4066). U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/11>

³ Karp, M., Ackerson, S., Cheng, I.-F., Cocatre-Zilgien, E., Costelloe, S., Freeman, B., Lemire, S., Linderman, D., McFarlane, B., Moulton, S., O'Shea, J., Porowski, A., & Richburg-Hayes, L. (2021). *Effective advising for postsecondary students: A practice guide for educators* (WWC 2022003). U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/28>

⁴ Linkow, T., Parsad, A., Martinez, A., & Miller, H. (2021). *Study of enhanced college advising in Upward Bound: Impacts on where and how long students attend college* (NCEE 2022-002r). U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20194002/>

⁵ Rumberger, R. W., Addis, H., Allensworth, E., Balfanz, R., Bruch, J., Dillon, E., Duardo, D., Dynarski, M., Furgeson, J., Jayanthi, M., Newman-Gonchar, R., Place, K., & Tuttle, C. (2017). *Preventing dropout in secondary schools* (NCEE 2017-4028). U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/24>

⁶ Fein, D., & Hamadyk, J. (2018). *Bridging the opportunity divide for low-income youth: Implementation and early impacts of the Year Up program* (OPRE Report #2018-65). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/report/bridging-opportunity-divide-low-income-youth-implementation-and-early-impacts-year>

⁷ Page, L. C., & Scott-Clayton, J. (2016). Improving college access in the United States: Barriers and policy responses. *Economics of Education Review*, 51, 4-22. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2016.02.009>

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