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Enabling Strategic Early Postsecondary in Youth Apprenticeship

A Planning Checklist

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What is Youth Apprenticeship?

Youth apprenticeship is a form of work-based learning through which young people ages 16-24 complete paid, formal on-the-job training combined with aligned in-person or virtual classroom instruction. Most youth apprenticeship programs are designed to start when young people are in high school. Youth apprentices build industry-specific knowledge and skills and earn job-related credentials, including degrees.

Though there is no national definition of youth apprenticeship, in 2018, Jobs for the Future (JFF) and Partnership to Advance Youth Apprenticeship (PAYA) developed a [set of standards](#) that could be used to define a high-quality youth apprenticeship. Many U.S. providers of youth apprenticeship programs have adopted these standards, which include the recommendation that all youth apprentices complete their apprenticeship with postsecondary credit.¹

This resource is designed to help youth apprenticeship stakeholders understand and enhance the role of early postsecondary opportunities in their programs.

What Are Early Postsecondary Opportunities?

Early postsecondary opportunities integrate college coursework with high school, including career and technical education (CTE).² The best early postsecondary opportunities expand options for learners by allowing them to earn transferable credit toward a recognized college degree or credential while building skills and knowledge that are valuable in their local labor markets.³ There are many forms of early postsecondary opportunities.

Table 1: Types of Early Postsecondary Opportunities

Dual Enrollment	Courses that allow learners to earn secondary and postsecondary credit simultaneously. Dual enrollment courses can be taught at the high school by high school faculty, at the high school by adjunct college faculty or college faculty, at the college or university, or sometimes through online courses or distance education.
Concurrent Enrollment	A subset of dual enrollment, college-level courses taught by high school teachers who are approved by the postsecondary institution awarding the credits.

Early College High School	A high school designed to support learners in earning up to an associate’s degree at no cost while completing their high school diploma.
Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH)	A specialized early college high school where learners earn a high school diploma and a postsecondary credential in a STEM field over six years while completing work-based learning.
Articulated Industry-Recognized Credentials (IRCs)	Postsecondary credit awarded to learners who complete an industry-recognized credential, usually culminating in a formal assessment.
College Level Examination Program (CLEP)	A College Board program where learners can earn college credit by passing standardized tests.
Statewide Articulated Credit Agreements	State-level agreements that align high school and postsecondary curricula to make it easier for learners to earn college credit earlier and avoid duplicating coursework.

Advance CTE, College in High School Alliance, *The State of CTE: Early Postsecondary Opportunities*, 2023, https://careertech.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/StateofCTE_EPSO_032022.pdf.

Strategic Early Postsecondary Matters

While the evidence is clear that participation in dual enrollment leads to greater academic success in both high school and college—including high school achievement, high school graduation, and college entry and persistence—not all dual enrollment courses meet the unique needs of youth apprenticeship.⁴ Youth apprenticeship practitioners can align their early postsecondary opportunities with **promising credentials**—postsecondary credentials that lead to careers that are in-demand, offer a family-supporting wage, and provide opportunity for growth within an industry.⁵ Two kinds of dual enrollment courses are especially helpful to this end:

- **Door-opener courses:** These are postsecondary courses that provide foundational industry exposure and connect to the greatest number of pathway options for learners—for example, medical terminology courses in a health care industry pathway. Door-opener courses are ideal for students who are not yet sure of their specific career path within an industry.
- **Accelerator courses:** Accelerator courses fulfill requirements for promising credentials—credentials that have the highest earning potential in the local labor market. For example, a human anatomy course might relate to multiple promising credentials in

the health care industry like an associate of applied science (AAS) in healthcare management as well as a licensed practical nursing (LPN) certificate.

Getting Started: A Planning Checklist

Regardless of whether early postsecondary is a totally new component to the youth apprenticeship design, or stakeholders are interested in continuous improvement of existing offerings, there are some fundamental elements to consider when looking to embed more door-opener or accelerator courses in a youth apprenticeship program.

<p>WHY</p>	<p>Specific goals you hope to achieve by initiating or improving strategic postsecondary within youth apprenticeship</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close equity gaps • Create a new occupational pathway • Improve overall academic success • Contribute to high school diploma or equivalent credential completion • Open new funding streams to power related technical instruction (RTI) • Add technical expertise or capacity to the existing instructional team • Open multiple promising pathway options to apprentices • Ensure that apprentices have more thorough exposure to an entire industry or sector • Meet employer needs for apprentices with industry recognized credentials • Align apprenticeship programs with minimum qualifications for hiring or advancement from employers
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WHO	Key stakeholders who should be involved in planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people and their families • Employers • College officials • High school and/or career and technical education (CTE) administrators and faculty • Intermediary leaders
WHAT	Data and inputs for the planning process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer insights on credentials of value in the local labor market • Labor market information (LMI) • Current program of study maps for high school or CTE students • Career pathways maps for industries and occupations of interest • Course catalog data from colleges • Current related technical instruction (RTI) plans for existing youth apprenticeship programs
HOW	Strategies to ensure that planning maximizes impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess your program's overall alignment to PAYA's quality principles with a self-assessment tool • Align changes to labor market demand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Labor market data, including trends and hiring data from the last 12 months ○ Industry partner validation of trends in the data • Identify and prioritize door-opener and accelerator courses • Invest in partnerships and connections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared governance and planning structures formalized in agreements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shared data and performance indicators

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate location and configuration of courses (i.e., at the school, at the work site, scheduled at appropriate times) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Plans for covering out-of-pocket costs with relevant funding streams and financial aid ○ Program of study analysis to ensure that prerequisite skills are embedded in the program of study • Assess postsecondary credits to ensure transferability through articulation agreements • Consider access, navigation, and support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inclusive eligibility measures that support readiness ○ Advisor/guidance counselor training to support navigation ○ Family communication and engagement ○ New or improved advising systems to track student success ○ Wraparound supports to meet participants' needs, including referrals to partner providers ○ Individualized coaching and/or case management
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More Resources

For more in-depth reading on elements of this topic, consult these publications and examples from JFF, PAYA and partner organizations.

- [Self-Assessment and Planning Tool for Youth Apprenticeship Programs](#) [JFF/PAYA]
- [Sample Early College MOU](#) [Alamo College]
- [Promising Credentials Report](#) [JFF]
- [Early College in YA](#) [College in High School Alliance/PAYA]

- [Model Programs of Study Guides](#) [Education Systems Center]

Led by New America, the Partnership to Advance Youth Apprenticeship (PAYA) is a multi-year, multi-stakeholder initiative that aims to assist innovative organizations around the country in developing robust youth apprenticeship programs that are scaled and replicated to serve students, employers and communities alike. PAYA is comprised of seven National Partner organizations: Advance CTE, CareerWise Colorado, Charleston Regional Youth Apprenticeship, Education Strategy Group, JFF, the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity, and the National Governors Association. PAYA is supported by funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Carnegie Corporation of New York, JPMorgan Chase & Co., Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, Siemens Foundation, Smidt Foundation, and the Walton Family Foundation.

Endnotes

¹ New America. "Five Principles of Youth Apprenticeship." Last modified April 15, 2022. <https://www.newamerica.org/center-education-labor/partnership-advance-youth-apprenticeship/about/our-principles/>.

² Advance CTE. "The State of Career Technical Education: Expanding Pathways to Success for Each and Every Student." 2023. Accessed May 6, 2024. https://careertech.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/StateofCTE_EPSO_032022.pdf.

³ JFF, "Secondary-Postsecondary Integration," accessed May 6, 2024, <https://www.jff.org/idea/framework/secondary-postsecondary-integration/>.

⁴ What Works Clearinghouse. "Dual Enrollment Programs: The Effects of Dual Enrollment Programs on Students' Postsecondary Success." February 2017. Accessed May 7, 2024. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/InterventionReports/wwc_dual_enrollment_022817.pdf.

⁵ Jobs for the Future. "Promising Credentials for Columbus High School Graduates: How the Columbus City Schools are Preparing Students for College and Careers." September 2023. Accessed May 7, 2024. https://www.jff.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/GL_Columbus_HS_Promising_Credentials_FINAL.pdf.