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# Preface

College and career readiness currently headline educational policy agendas in states across the country and at the federal level, yet the specific actions necessary to achieve this goal for a larger proportion of students are not clear. This can put great pressure on local schools and postsecondary institutions, since they are being asked to support new trajectories for a large proportion of their students, yet they are often provided little guidance about how to do so. Local and regional partnerships between high schools and colleges are being developed in communities and regions across the country to help improve students' readiness for colleges and careers, but many lack frameworks and tools to help structure the work and create new opportunities for students. In addition, many local and regional partnerships rely on funding and support from various sources with different aims, which often fragments their work and makes it challenging to have an overarching set of goals and objectives.

## **What Are Educational Partnerships and Who Is the Audience for This Book?**

A partnership, in this book, is defined as a group of representatives from, at minimum, one K–12 educational institution and at least one postsecondary institution, working together to improve college and career readiness within a community. Partnerships can also be much larger in scope and can encompass an entire region; within the region, relationships must be developed among individual school districts and postsecondary institutions. These local partnerships are also referred to throughout the book as vertical teams. These vertical teams work to transcend boundaries, increase alignment, and narrow the gaps between the secondary and postsecondary systems.

Several additional stakeholders can be included in the partnerships, including other educational institutions located in the region and community-based, philanthropic, civic/governmental, business, labor, or parent organizations from the community. This book aims to inform and support the work of K–12/postsecondary partners at the regional and local levels.

## **How Will This Book Help Educators?**

Absent clear and actionable information about how to develop and implement reforms to support student success after high school, the current rhetoric can sound hollow. This book contains resources that are designed to help equip both K–12 and postsecondary educators with strategies and tools to improve college and career readiness for all students. There is no one-size-fits-all model or template for this work, and going through the collaborative process of developing frameworks and materials is a critically important part of the development, engagement, and buy-in stages for any partnership. At the same time, these partnerships are comprised largely of volunteers who do not have the time to reinvent the wheel. An objective of this book is to provide information that can be tailored for specific partnership needs, enabling the educators involved in partnerships to use research-based information and save time by not starting from scratch. We understand that K–12 educators are often churning in a swirl of constant change, with reforms cycling in and out and often back in again. Often, the tendency is to duck and cover and wait for reforms to blow over. The research, strategies, and tools discussed in this book, while consistent with the current college and career readiness focus of many reforms, are grounded in what we know about students' aspirations (the vast majority want to continue some kind of learning after high school), their chances of earning a living wage (which are boosted by postsecondary education or training), and the realities of our disconnected educational systems. We acknowledge that there are a host of other reasons why students do not learn well in high school and in college, such as those related to personal and family issues. This book does not address those kinds of supports.

## **What Is the Basis for This Book?**

All of the conclusions, recommendations, and strategies contained in the book are based in, and supported by, research and practice. The

authors have over 40 years of combined experience working directly within the field of K–16 reform—in both policy and practice at the federal, state, and local levels and in both K–12 and postsecondary education environments. They have conducted applied research and provided technical assistance for postsecondary institutions, secondary schools, school districts, state and federal governments, national nongovernmental organizations, and national- and state-level philanthropic foundations. McGaughy has conducted several dozen partnership workshops all over the country and directed multiple statewide college and career readiness-related initiatives. In 2013–2014, Venezia was a member of Sacramento’s Pathways (P–16) Initiative—a position that provided her with a unique lens that straddled the line between researcher and practitioner. Also, her center, EdInsights, runs projects focused on conducting research on, and technical assistance for, regional partnerships, and she teaches about student supports that span K–12 and postsecondary education systems. The purpose of this book is to translate the authors’ collective research and professional experiences into actionable steps—including frameworks, examples, and techniques—to support the work that educators are doing across systems to support student success.

## **How Is This Book Organized?**

The first chapter provides information about the research behind and rationale for the work; the intent is for the references to literature and context that are presented here to be used for stakeholder buy-in, proposals, or meeting materials to help make the case for cross-system work. The remaining chapters describe components of a process, including suggested strategies, tools, and techniques, to develop and sustain local partnerships to improve college and career readiness (absent a discussion about fundraising, which, though critical, is very context specific). Chapter 2 provides a conceptual framework to organize the work to ensure a comprehensive, not piecemeal, approach. Chapter 3 describes a process for organizing a local partnership, including establishing key stakeholder involvement, creating a vision and goals, and selecting an organizational structure. Chapter 4 discusses how to measure success and provides multiple examples of indicators for college and career readiness and success. Chapter 5 details the categories of programming and activities that the partnership can implement; it also provides a mapping strategy to help ensure that all students have an opportunity to learn the knowledge

and skills and receive the supports they need to be successful beyond high school. Chapter 6 offers a step-by-step guide for how vertical teams of high school and postsecondary faculty members can collaborate to create an aligned curriculum across their systems. Chapter 7, the final chapter, addresses how to sustain partnership efforts, including examples and a discussion of how to avoid predictable barriers. Given McGaughy's extensive work at the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC), the framework for this book is based on the Four Keys to College and Career Readiness model developed by David Conley, founder of EPIC (discussed in Chapter 2).