



# Arizona ECAP Implementation: Administrative Toolkit



**An administrative toolkit intended to assist in achieving deeper and wider implementation of the ECAP process at the district or school level.**

**Topics include creating a whole-school ECAP culture, engaging families in the ECAP process, collaborating with business and community organizations, and best practices that may be employed to strengthen ECAP implementation.**

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## Purpose of this Toolkit

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide support, guidance, and resources to district-/site-level administrators for improving implementation of an Education and Career Action Plan (ECAP) process. The toolkit offers research-based perspectives from the national and state levels on quality Individual Learning Plan initiatives that can be modified to fit individual district and school needs.

Many districts and schools may have already implemented the recommendations included in this toolkit or are using other innovative practices not outlined here to help students receive the best ECAP guidance possible. While many schools across Arizona are making significant strides in college and career planning (see [ECAP Exemplar Schools](#)), there is always room for improvement. An ECAP process in a school or district should be continually reevaluated, and the implementation steps and best practices contained in this toolkit are proven methods that can take an ECAP process above and beyond to an exemplary level.

This toolkit has been developed to align closely with leading research on individual learning plans such as the National Collaborative on Workforce and Development's *Individual Learning Plans: A How-to Guide*<sup>1</sup>. Throughout the toolkit, you will find notes on topics of special importance and best practices in boxes set aside from the rest of the text. These boxes contain links to research that informs the practice, relevant resources, or exemplar districts and schools that have utilized the best practice outlined.

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<sup>1</sup> [Solberg, V.S., et al., 2012](#)

## INTRODUCTION TO THE EDUCATION CAREER ACTION PLAN (ECAP)

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Many students in Arizona and across the nation are currently not prepared to fill the growing skills gap employers face. Employers consistently state that over half of high school graduates are “deficient” in necessary professional skills such as communication and critical thinking.<sup>2</sup> Although nearly 70% of all jobs in Arizona will require some form of post-secondary education or training by the year 2020,<sup>3</sup> only 46.5% of Arizona graduates qualify to enroll in our public universities<sup>4</sup> and 59% of freshman at our community colleges require remediation courses.<sup>5</sup> The bottom line is that many of our high school graduates are not prepared for college and career.

On February 25, 2008, the Arizona State Board of Education adopted the use of an Education and Career Action Plan (ECAP) for each student in grades 9-12, effective for the graduating class of 2013:

*“...Schools shall develop an Education and Career Action Plan in consultation with **the student, the student’s parent or guardian and the appropriate school personnel** as designated by the school principal or chief administrative officer. Schools shall **monitor, review and update each Education and Career Action Plan at least annually**. Completion of an Education and Career Action Plan shall be verified by appropriate school personnel...”*

A copy of the board rule is available here: [R7-2-302.05](#)

The Arizona Department of Education believes that integrating a comprehensive ECAP process into all facets of the school experience can provide a student with the knowledge, opportunities, and skills necessary to make appropriate postsecondary decisions and become lifelong learners. A quality ECAP process within a district or school fosters a college and career ready environment that includes all stakeholders within a school community, engages with student families, and involves the local community at large. This ongoing, collaborative process should provide a space for students to learn about themselves and obtain the knowledge needed to construct an attainable plan to reach their individual career aspirations. To ensure that an ECAP process does not consist of simply checking boxes, but is an effective tool for students to become career literate and make a quality postsecondary plan, an honest evaluation and assessment of the district or school ECAP process implementation plan is necessary.

Arizona ECAP implementation survey results indicate that assistance is needed in achieving whole-school buy-in, family engagement, and community engagement in the ECAP process.<sup>6</sup> This

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<sup>2</sup> [Symonds, W.C., et al., 2011](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Carnevale, A.C., et al., 2013](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Arizona Board of Regents High School Eligibility Study, 2014](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Complete College America, 2012](#)

<sup>6</sup> [WestEd West Comprehensive Center, 2014](#)

toolkit will specifically address those areas, as well as provide general suggested steps and best practices for implementation of a quality ECAP process.

### **The Benefits of an ECAP Process**

Research on individual learning plans like an ECAP indicates that they are an effective strategy for preparing students for college and career.<sup>7</sup> Integrating a quality ECAP process into school culture benefits students, families, schools, and local communities in multiple ways:

➤ **Student Benefits:**

- Provides learning experiences in setting and attaining goals
- Encourages personal responsibility and involvement in choices and decisions about education and career pathways
- Provides relevance between course work and career goals, resulting in more rigorous course selection
- Increases in-class motivation and academic self-efficacy
- Records better grades and attendance

➤ **Family Benefits:**

- Provides families increased opportunities to be involved in their children's education
- Increases communication between school personnel and students' families
- Informs decision making for life choices
- Increases student success

➤ **School Benefits:**

- Improves course enrollment patterns and encourages students to select more rigorous courses
- Increases student achievement
- Improves relationships between students, parents, schools and the community
- Increases student attendance, motivation and engagement
- Increases extracurricular activity participation
- Increases the number of students meeting postsecondary entrance requirements

➤ **Community Benefits:**

- Develops a more qualified and motivated workforce
- Promotes opportunities to partner with education
- Provides resources for internships, mentoring programs, and job shadowing opportunities

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<sup>7</sup> [Solberg, V.S., et al., 2014](#)

## **Individual Learning Plans: A National Movement**

In the last decade, research has emerged that identifies Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) as a promising practice for driving college and career readiness efforts.<sup>8</sup> Research commissioned by the US Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) and conducted by the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) shows that participating in activities associated with quality ILPs improves student outcomes and that these efforts are perceived positively by educators and families of students. As of 2016, 33 states mandate ILPs in their schools and 10 have ILPs in use without a mandate.<sup>9</sup>

Dr. Scott Solberg, a national leader in ILP research from Boston University, is working closely with the state of Arizona to assist in the development of the ECAP initiative. His research reveals three critical steps a student takes in the process of creating an ILP:<sup>10</sup>

### **1. Self-Exploration: *Who am I?***

In order to develop career goals, students first need to develop self-exploration skills. Having a sense of self-awareness can help young adults to identify career goals that are consistent with their skills, interests and values. This step can take the form of interest assessments, skills inventories, personality evaluations, reflective writing, etc.

### **2. Career-Exploration: *What are my options?***

Once students have identified what their skills, interests, and values are, they need access to activities that allow them to explore career pathways consistent with what they’ve discovered. Students should develop knowledge of the skills and qualities required to be successful in various careers and the secondary and postsecondary education and training necessary to pursue their careers of interest. Additionally, an understanding of current labor market information is important, as it may impact a student’s career pathway choice.

#### **\*Best Practice\***

Students note that **work-based learning** opportunities such as apprenticeships, internships, community service, job-shadowing, etc. are the most effective way for them to explore different careers.

*-ILPs How-to Guide,*

*NCWD/Youth*

*-City High School*

### **3. Career Planning and Management**

After students have identified potential career paths, they should begin building their capacity to reach their career goal. This process consists of learning the skills necessary to navigate the professional world, such as job search skills, professional skills and financial literacy. This step ensures that a student will have the skills and habits needed for lifelong maximized employability.

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<sup>8</sup> [Solberg, V.S., et al., 2014](#)

<sup>9</sup> [ILPs Across the US Map](#)

<sup>10</sup> [National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability, 2013](#)

***What is Financial Literacy?***

- According to the National Financial Educator’s Council, a student is financially literate if they have acquired the “skills and knowledge on financial matters to confidently take effective action that best fulfills an individual’s personal, family and community goals.”
- A student has researched and compared the cost effectiveness of different college and certificate programs
- A student understands the financial consequences of remedial courses, changing majors, taking out school loans, out-of-state vs. in-state tuition, private vs. public institutions, etc.

*-National Financial Educators Council*

***What are Arizona’s Professional Skills Standards?***

- Complex communication
- Critical thinking and innovation using problem solving
- Virtual and in-person collaboration
- Professionalism in behavior and appearance
- Initiative and self-direction
- Intergenerational and cross-cultural competence
- Legal and ethical practices
- Ability to function within an organizational culture
- Financial practices

*-AZ Professional Skills*

**The Process**

The ECAP process should begin in middle school and continue as a lifelong strategy for setting and attaining personalized goals. This planning process, which allows families, educators, and students to work together, teaches the student how to access, research, and plan his/her choices for career and educational experiences which will eventually lead to a living-wage career. It is an ongoing, collaborative effort that ensures a student’s post-high school success for college, career, and beyond. It brings relevance to appropriate high school and postsecondary coursework and out-of-school learning opportunities.<sup>11</sup> Career literacy is developed over time – throughout the entire ECAP *process*.

**Some key elements for a quality ECAP process are:**

- **Parent or family engagement** is critical during this process. Research shows that active family involvement supports postsecondary outcomes for youth and that high family aspirations have a direct impact on students’ aspirations for themselves.<sup>12</sup>
- **A caring adult** who supports or mentors the student should guide this process. The primary advisor can be a professional school counselor, a teacher, a community member, a coach,

<sup>11</sup> [Solberg, V.S., et al., 2014](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Patrikakou, E., 2004](#)



a volunteer mentor or another supportive adult. However, the entire school culture should be supportive of a college and career exploration and planning process for each student.

- **Reflection** is an important element of a successful ECAP process. Reflecting on personal learning, career exploration, interest or skills assessment results, and community service or civic opportunities help students develop their career, college and life pathways.

### The Plan

The Education and Career Action *Plan* is a tangible way to represent and reflect the exploration and planning completed during the ECAP process. This plan is a portfolio, either electronic or hard copy, containing artifacts that reflect an ECAP process. The plan should be built upon each year and follow students if they transfer schools so that the work is not lost. The plan should be reviewed by the student and designated school personnel at least once per year. It is important that the construction of this plan involve consultation with each student's family.

**\*Best Practice\***  
An **electronic format** for ECAP portfolios allows for easier transfer between schools and is more efficient for recording assessments that occur online.  
*-ILP How-to Guide,*

***An Education and Career Action Plan shall, at minimum:***

- Allow students to enter, track and update information on the four attributes at least annually
- Be reviewed by school personnel at least annually
- Include family involvement

### Templates:

- The Arizona Department of Education provides a sample plan that can be used to collect information from the ECAP process during high school: [Sample ECAP Planning Guide](#)
- A Middle School version is also available: [Middle School ECAP Plan Template](#)
- More templates and examples from schools around the state are available on the ECAP website in the Counselor and Educators section: [More Examples](#)

***NOTE ON ACCOUNTABILITY***

The Arizona Department of Education requests ECAP accountability documents each year from all schools serving grades 9-12. A sample student plan with all identifying information redacted may be required for submission. Updated accountability information can be found on the ECAP website at <http://www.azed.gov/ecap/ecap-education-and-career-action-plan/accountability/>.

### The Four Attributes of an ECAP

The four attributes of an ECAP are: **academic, career, postsecondary, and extracurricular**. We suggest that students identify a career goal based upon their interests, passions, skills, and values.

Then, students can begin planning high school courses and exploring postsecondary options that align to their identified career goal. Information and artifacts included in a student's ECAP portfolio for each attribute should be as rich as possible but, at minimum, should include the following:

**Academic**

- Plan for high school coursework that meets graduation requirements
- Documented postsecondary education goals
- Review of academic progress, including needed interventions or advisements
- Standardized and college admissions test scores
- Documentation of academic achievement or awards
- Record of participation in dual credit courses, honors placements, AP courses, etc.

**Career**

- Documented career goal and needed educational requirements
- Identified career options based on interests, values and skills
- Documented career exploration through research and out of school opportunities
- Demonstrated understanding of Arizona workforce projections and labor market index
- Record of participation in available Career and Technical Education courses
- Record of participation in work experiences, internships, and/or job-shadowing

**Postsecondary**

- Demonstrated understanding of admissions requirements for technical schools, community colleges, universities, and standardized college readiness exams (SAT, ACT, etc.)
- Comparison of postsecondary institute offerings
- Record of completed and submitted applications
- Financial assistance plan with evidence of Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion
- Personal résumé for college and employment

**Extracurricular (documentation for participation in):**

- Clubs, organizations, Career Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs)
- Athletics
- Recreational activities
- Fine arts opportunities
- Civic and community service or volunteer activities
- Work experiences, internships, job-shadowing, apprenticeships, etc.
- Leadership opportunities
- Other activities the student might wish to note

**Resources available for an in-depth look at ECAP's four attributes:**

- [ECAP Attributes Checklist](#)
- [ECAP Attributes by Grade Level](#)

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## STEP 1: GETTING STARTED

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### Forming an ECAP Leadership Team

The best way to start developing or improving the ECAP process at your school is to create a leadership team made up of representatives from key stakeholder groups. These stakeholders include, but are not limited to:

- Classroom educators
- School counselors
- Career and Technical Education
- Special Education
- Students
- Parents or guardians
- Business and community leaders

**\*Best Practice\***

An effective professional learning community:

- Develops shared definitions and a collective understanding of ECAPs
- Focuses on improving student learning outcomes
- Participates in reflective dialogue
- Collaborates among stakeholders

*[-ILP How-to Guide, NCWD/Youth](#)*

A quality ECAP process does not “live” with any particular department of a school. Often times, school counselors take the lead on providing college and career advisement for students, however, a truly effective ECAP process will incorporate college and career readiness into the culture of the entire school. To guarantee all students and staff are included in the process, Special Education, CTE, and any other special populations your school may serve, need to be actively engaged in ECAP development and have a representative on the ECAP Leadership Team.

Representatives on the ECAP Leadership Team will provide input and logistical support for both the development and implementation of an ECAP process and serve as a professional learning community. The purpose of this team is to produce meaningful discussion about the scope of the curriculum content that each group will deliver and the sequence in which it will be delivered for each grade. Development of an ECAP implementation plan through a grassroots process such as this ensures that all voices are included in this process.

### **Guiding questions that can be used during the formative period of the leadership team:**

- ✓ What other successful initiatives could inform our district/school’s ECAP process?
- ✓ How will this work advance student learning and outcomes?
- ✓ What are some foreseen obstacles or common misunderstandings that need to be addressed?
- ✓ How will we expose all students to multiple postsecondary pathways within our ECAP process?

### **Establishing Common Vision and Language**

It is important to have continuity and clarity around the ECAP process for all stakeholders. Use your leadership team to tap into the viewpoints of stakeholders within and outside of your school community to develop a common ECAP vision and implementation plan for your district or school.

- **Establish a clear rationale on why this process is valuable for students** and how it supports the district/school's varied improvement efforts (reducing course failures, increasing student attendance and graduation rates, increasing college going & completion rates, etc.)
- **Initiate meaningful and open discussions with your leadership team** to transform the norms and culture of your district/school that support an ECAP process for all students and school personnel.
- **Develop a collaborative ECAP process definition and vision for your community.** Establishing a common definition and language helps to streamline efforts and eliminate confusion between multiple programs.

#### **Resources for developing common college and career language:**

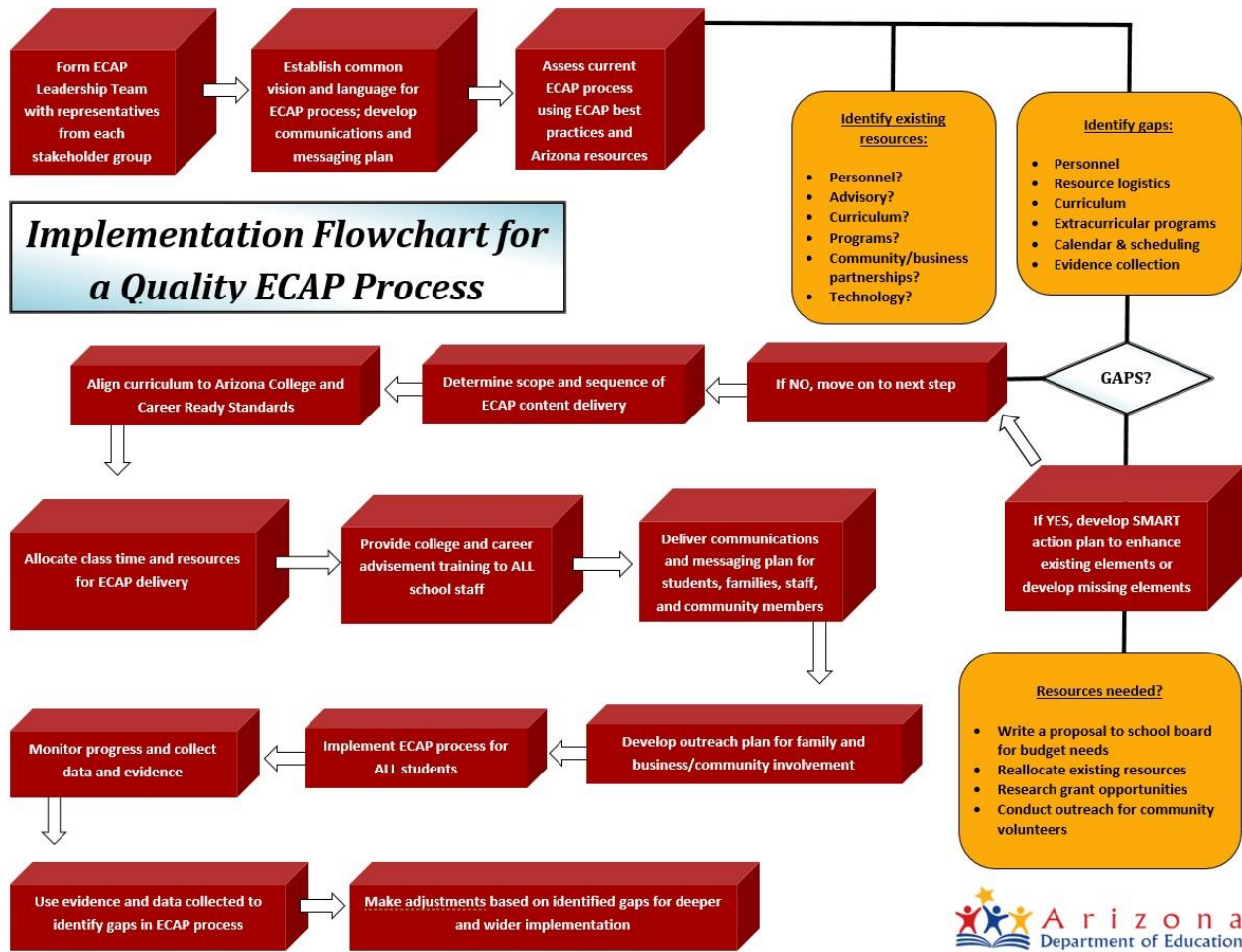
- [iSeek Career and College Readiness Glossary](#)
- [Arizona Career Leadership Network Glossary](#)

### **Communications and Messaging Plan**

The ECAP Leadership Team should develop a clear communications and messaging plan for each stakeholder group that reflects the rationale behind an ECAP process and the shared vision the team has established.

#### **Resources for developing communications or messaging:**

- [ECAP Brochure](#)
- [ECAP At a Glance](#) is a communications piece that provides a brief overview of ECAP information and can be distributed to school staff, students, families, or business and community leaders
- [Letter to Families Template](#) explains the ECAP process and the need for parent and family involvement. A Word version is available on the [Templates, Samples, and Tools page](#) of the ECAP website that can be modified to fit your district or school needs.



## STEP 2: ECAP ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING

### Identifying Strengths and Gaps

Next, the ECAP Leadership Team should begin evaluating and assessing the strengths and gaps of the existing ECAP process in your district/school. The goal is to create an ECAP process that is meaningful and useful for all students – to provide them with all the tools and knowledge necessary to embark on their postsecondary journeys with well-developed and personalized plans. An honest diagnosis of the services your school provides is necessary to strengthen your district’s or school’s ECAP process. Refer to the *Implementation Flowchart for a Quality ECAP Process* above for a list of factors to be considered when identifying strengths and gaps.

Assessment can take the form of a collaborative discussion between leadership team members or a more formal assessment that uses a standardized method to evaluate all facets of the process. Arizona provides an assessment tool that outlines the characteristics of a quality ECAP process in

multiple categories and allows your district or school to score your existing ECAP process to note the areas that need improvement.

Access the [ECAP Implementation Site-Assessment tool](#) here or on the ECAP website's accountability page.

### **Creating a Strategic Action Plan**

Once a thorough assessment of your ECAP process has taken place and the strengths and gaps have been identified, discuss why your district/school scored the way it did and identify gaps in your ECAP implementation process. It is now time to start planning. The ECAP Leadership Team should develop a site action plan using SMART goals that will enhance existing elements and develop missing elements of your district/school's ECAP process. Consider the many logistical areas that will need to be addressed to make sure the leadership team's vision of a quality ECAP process will be attainable.

### **Personnel**

Often, the school counselor is responsible for the bulk of the ECAP process. However, the ability to provide the full depth of their expertise is limited due to high [student-to-counselor ratios](#). Students can receive more personalized guidance if the entire school staff is focused on college and career planning services in their respective areas. *(See Step 3 for a more in-depth explanation of how to involve all school staff in the ECAP process.)*

#### **Guiding questions to consider when planning for personnel responsibilities:**

- ✓ Who will manage the ECAP process?
- ✓ Who can/should be responsible for delivering ECAP guidance?
- ✓ Does staff have the professional development needed to provide ECAP activities in their classrooms? Who will support staff to deliver these services?
- ✓ Do roles and responsibilities need to be reallocated?

### **Resource Logistics**

Providing a quality ECAP process for your students will require resources. The logistics of these resources need to be determined by the leadership team.

#### **Guiding questions to consider for resource logistics:**

- ✓ Does college and career readiness professional development need to be incorporated into the budget?
- ✓ Do we have the space, computers, labs, and/or devices needed to work on the ECAP process?
- ✓ Do we have a clear understanding of the resources provided on the [ADE ECAP website](#) and [Content Management System \(CMS\)](#)? *(Refer to the Resources section at the end of this toolkit for more information on these resources.)*

- ✓ Do we have the bandwidth, computer availability, and IT support to provide the online [Arizona Career Information System \(AzCIS\)](#)?
- ✓ Do we have a budget to provide an alternative online system such as Naviance or Career Cruising?
- ✓ If we choose to use technology to implement our ECAPs, how will we include families without access to technology?

**NOTE ON AzCIS**

The Arizona Career Information System (AzCIS) is a resource provided free of charge to K-12 schools in Arizona. The system was developed to provide a sequential, electronic ECAP process in which students can complete assessments, research Arizona colleges and careers, reflect on their classroom and extracurricular learning, and much more. Most modules are also available in Spanish.

The [ECAP Checklist using AzCIS](#) is available by clicking the link or accessing the modifiable Word doc version on the [ECAP website](#). The checklist is separated by grade level and ensures students have met the requirements for their four attributes as determined by the Board Rule. Refer to the *Appendix* section at the end of this toolkit for more information on the AzCIS tools.

**Classroom Lessons and Extracurricular Activities**

A quality ECAP process will embed college and career planning guidance and activities into the curriculum of the district or school. Determine how to align ECAP activities to [Arizona College and Career Ready Standards](#).

**Guiding questions to consider when aligning the ECAP process to your district/school’s curriculum:**

- ✓ How will our district/school provide elements of self-exploration, career exploration, and career planning and management within our curriculum?
- ✓ Who will develop and prepare curriculum that includes the ECAP process?
- ✓ What is the scope and sequence in which the curriculum will be delivered?
- ✓ Which curriculum will specific departments and grade levels be responsible for?

**\*Best Practice\***  
Establish a clear understanding of the **number of classroom periods that will be devoted to ECAP activities** in each grade level before planning where in the curriculum or school day students will work on their ECAPs.

[-ILP How-to Guide, NCWD/Youth](#)

Activities and programs in your district/school that promote the ECAP process and are not classroom curriculum should also be considered. These can include the work-based learning, volunteer service and civic engagement opportunities you connect your students to or school-wide programs such as college and career fairs, informational interviews, mentoring programs, etc.

**Guiding questions to consider when developing extracurricular opportunities supporting the ECAP process:**

- ✓ Is there a college and career ready culture within our district/school that includes all students and values all pathways?
- ✓ Do students know where to go to get information on work-based learning and civic engagement opportunities? Who will be in charge of distributing this information?
- ✓ Are there any existing partnerships between local businesses and community organizations to provide work-based learning opportunities?
- ✓ Is there a plan for reaching out to local businesses and community organizations to get them involved in the ECAP process? *(See Step 3 for tips on engaging your local community with the ECAP process)*

**Calendar**

Setting aside time in a school calendar for ECAP activities can be challenging. However, if the ECAP process is a priority for your district/school, then the school calendar should include time for students to participate in ECAP activities. *(See Step 3 for tips on creating a calendar that includes ECAP).*

**Guiding questions to consider when planning a school calendar:**

- ✓ How will we allocate and schedule work time within our school year for students to complete ECAP activities?
- ✓ How frequently will we provide time to work on ECAPs? (daily, weekly, monthly, etc.)

**Sample calendars:**



- Arizona's [Sample High School ECAP Calendar](#) demonstrates one way to organize a school calendar to incorporate broad categories of the ECAP process.
- Additionally, [My Road Trip to College, Career and Life](#) is a readiness checklist for grades K-12 that provides a suggested college and career preparation activities throughout a student's entire school career.
- Additional sample calendars from Arizona schools are available on the ECAP website's [Samples, Templates and Tools](#) page.

### Collecting Evidence and Evaluating

A successful ECAP process needs to be tracked, monitored, and evaluated. Data and evidence about your district/school's ECAP process should be collected in order to continue to improve the college and career planning guidance provided.

#### Guiding questions for a conversation about evidence collection and evaluation:

- ✓ What do parents, students, and teachers want to know about the outcomes of an ECAP process?
- ✓ What evidence needs to be collected annually to determine the level of success in our ECAP process? Process data, perception data, student outcome data, etc.
- ✓ How often will we revisit our ECAP process assessment discussion or tool to reevaluate our strengths and gaps?

#### Assessment and evaluation resources:

- Revisit the [ECAP Implementation Site-Assessment tool](#) regularly
- [Sherlock](#) is a very low cost, customizable tool that provides assessment, reports, communications, and evaluation. Sherlock syncs to the AzCIS.

### Accountability

Your district/school's leadership team should construct an accountability plan for your ECAP process which guarantees that all educators are providing quality college and career planning guidance to students. The Arizona Department of Education's yearly accountability expectations may vary, but will generally require submission of documents that indicate a fully-implemented ECAP process. You may be asked to provide artifacts as evidence of this process. Up to date information on accountability requirements can be found on the [ECAP website's Accountability page](#).

## STEP 3: QUALITY ECAP IMPLEMENTATION

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In 2013 and 2014 the Arizona Department of Education distributed a [survey](#) to public schools serving grades 9-12 to assess levels of ECAP implementation. Using this data, Arizona has identified three areas in which implementation of the ECAP process can be improved:

- **Achieving a school-wide ECAP culture that includes all stakeholders**
- **Increasing parent or guardian participation in the ECAP process**
- **Engaging business and community partners in the ECAP process**

### **Achieving a School Wide ECAP Culture**

A quality ECAP process will engage all departments and staff in a school community as mentors and supporters for providing students with in-depth and individualized guidance in college and career preparation.

In order to avoid the perception that improved ECAP implementation is an additional initiative, which may make school staff weary, it is important to highlight the alignment between a quality ECAP process and existing school-wide improvement goals. Use your [Communications and Messaging guide](#) for school staff to convey the connection between the ECAP process and benefits such as student engagement in pursuing rigorous coursework, increased attendance, increased classroom motivation, and developing the skills encompassed within the Arizona College and Career Ready Standards.<sup>13</sup>

### **Creating a Whole-School ECAP Schedule**

The scheduling approach your district/school develops to implement the ECAP process should be unique to the needs of your staff and students. Involvement from the entire school community is facilitated by designating time to work on the ECAP process. Below is a list of innovative practices for scheduling ECAP in a way that engages all school staff.

#### ➤ **Embedding ECAP Activities into Curriculum**

Research shows that one of the most effective ways to implement a quality ECAP program that includes the entire school community is to embed ECAP activities into classroom curriculum. This requires a shift from purely content based curriculum to curriculum outcomes that prepare students to be successful in college or in seeking living-wage career pathways. Representatives of each stakeholder group on the ECAP Leadership Team can determine the scope of curriculum content that should be delivered within each area and the sequence in which it will be delivered by school calendar and grade level. Ample professional development

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<sup>13</sup> [Solberg, V.S., et al., 2014](#)

and support should be provided to allow the creation of lesson plans that include ECAP activities.

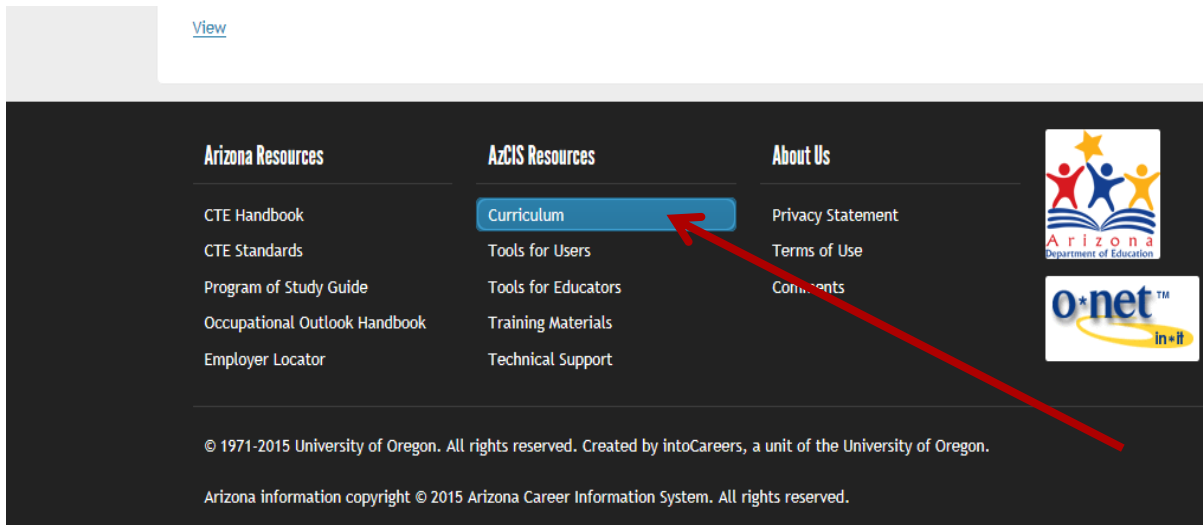
Integrating ECAP with the [Arizona College and Career Ready Standards \(AzCCRS\)](#) allows for classroom educators to be fully involved in the process. It also reinforces the importance of the activities to students, who may take a lesson they are being graded on more seriously than an information session that doesn't include a grade.

For example:

- **AzCCRS Language Arts Persuasive Writing:** Ask students to use labor market information, personal interest and skill inventories, and potential economic returns to write a persuasive essay for their top choice for a career
- **AzCCRS Mathematics:** Ask students to compare different postsecondary education costs and debt accumulation to make an informed decision on which education or training pathway is the most cost-effective choice

**\*Best Practice\***  
Student focus groups reported that working on ECAPs everyday was too frequent, but once a month was not enough time. **Completing ECAP activities two times per week during an advisory period** was the preferred frequency.  
*-ILP How-to Guide, NCWD/Youth  
-Lake Havasu High School  
"Knight Time" twice a month*

Emphasizing career literacy in classroom activities allows students to spend meaningful time and energy on their ECAP process and understand the real-world application for classroom knowledge. These skills can then be translated into postsecondary work experiences. Classroom educators can meet their academic standards while engaging students in valuable postsecondary activities.



You will find hundreds of [lesson plans and activities for grades 5-12 in AzCIS](#) that can be filtered to fulfill individual AzCCRS requirements. Access these documents by clicking the link above, or by scrolling to the black dashboard at the bottom of the AzCIS homepage. Under the second column, “AzCIS Resources,” click the first option, “Curriculum.”

### ➤ **Advisory Periods and Homerooms**

Another successful way to establish full school collaboration is to use an advisory or homeroom course to deliver ECAP guidance and activities. These classroom periods can vary in length and frequency depending on the needs of your school.

This method provides all classroom educators the opportunity to engage in the ECAP process and to mentor a smaller group of students. Another benefit of this method is that it creates a “cohort” of students that are experiencing the exploration and planning process together. A smaller group setting leaves space for peer mentoring and collaboration.

Some schools use regular mentoring sessions as a way to deliver ECAP activities and guidance. These sessions can be done during or after school, but should provide the student with individualized support for college and career exploration and planning in addition to their school counselor’s advisement. Quality mentoring programs have a consistent, supportive adult partnered with students throughout their time in high school. This mentor can be a classroom educator, a club advisor, a coach, or a community volunteer, but the relationship should be formalized and regular.

### ➤ **Providing Course Credit for Completing ECAPs**

In interviews and focus groups with students, families and classroom educators, it was recommended that establishing a credit value for ECAP completion helped to “legitimize” the process and increase student engagement.<sup>14</sup> This method also ensures that sufficient time and personnel resources are dedicated to the ECAP process.

### ➤ **School Counselor ECAP Lessons in Classrooms**

The most widely used method of scheduling ECAP activities is to allocate a classroom period for school counselors to facilitate the process. Departments within the school designate varying numbers of class periods per semester dedicated to ECAP advisement, information, or needed activities. This can be an effective way to deliver necessary information and allow students to complete ECAP activities. Many Arizona schools have found it useful utilize their school counselors as “substitute teachers” when a regular classroom teacher is absent. Counselors will then administer an ECAP guidance lesson with the students during that class period.

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<sup>14</sup> [Solberg, V.S., et al., 2014](#)

This method requires school counselors to be the primary source of ECAP guidance, which makes individualized and frequent advisement more difficult due to high student to counselor ratios. Using school counselor lessons as a more in-depth *supplement* to regular classroom ECAP activities is a more effective way to ensure personalized ECAP guidance.

**\*Best Practice\***

Using a **tiered approach** to ECAP guidance will allow you to further personalize student planning. Spend additional time individually with at-risk students, create small groups for students with attendance problems, and use classroom lessons for all students.

*-Winslow High School*

**Including Special Education and CTE Students in the ECAP Process**

In the state of Arizona, *all* students in grades 9-12 must participate in the ECAP process to ensure postsecondary success. This includes special education students with an IEP-transition plan or career technical education students with a Program of Study Plan.

**Special Education**

Special education high school students have an Individual Education Plan (IEP)-transition plan, which is a requirement established by [Federal IDEA legislation](#). Most of the information required for an IEP is a subset of the range, intensity, and quality of the ECAP process; however, some of the information required for an IEP is confidential and should not be included in the ECAP. The ECAP is a way for Special Education Coordinators to document compliance with [IDEA indicators 13 and 14](#). While there is overlap between these plans, they should be seen as *complementary*, not identical.<sup>15</sup>

**Resources for including Special Education Students in the ECAP process:**

- Arizona has developed an [ECAP and IEP Crosswalk Guide](#) detailed overlay
- Yearly professional development opportunities are provided by Arizona Department of Education
- Additional information about IEPs is available on the Arizona Department of Education’s [Exceptional Student Services Homepage](#)

**Career and Technical Education (CTE)**

The [Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 \(Perkins IV\)](#) requires states to create sequences of academic and CTE coursework to help students attain a postsecondary degree or industry-recognized certifications. The CTE college and career readiness model, Programs of Study (POS), identifies the importance of career guidance to enable students to create a secondary and postsecondary course sequence necessary to reach their career aspirations. Developing self-awareness through skills and interest inventories and activities that highlight individual values and goals, empowers students to make educated choices for their CTE pathway. Choosing an appropriate career pathway that accurately represents their interests and choices saves time and money.

<sup>15</sup> [Solberg, V.S., et al., 2012](#)

**Resource for including Special Education Students and CTE:**

Arizona has created an [IEP, ECAP, POS Crosswalk](#) that outlines the three plans' overlays.

***NOTE ON INCLUDING ALL STUDENTS IN THE ECAP PROCESS***

When planning for or implementing an ECAP process in your district/school, consideration should be given to the diversity of background and culture within your student population. Postsecondary pathways vary depending on a student's life experience and family values, so **the inclusion of all world views and traditions should be privileged in the ECAP process.** Be sure to provide appropriate guidance and opportunities to your district/school's diverse populations such as ELL students, refugee and migrant students, Native American students, and students in military families.

**Achieving Family Engagement**

A key element of a quality ECAP process is involving students' families in a way that moves beyond a signature on a plan and becomes a continued discussion on pathway planning at home. Student achievement has been shown to improve as communication between the parent or guardian and the school increases. Furthermore, students and families reported higher aspirations for future career goals and more meaningful conversations around postsecondary planning when the parent or guardian was involved in the ECAP process.

***NOTE ON COMMUNICATING WITH FAMILIES***

Families communicate in different ways, so it is important to provide information about the ECAP process in multiple formats. For example, a family may not have the technology to access an electronic system or a student may not deliver informative letters sent home with them to their families. Be sure to communicate ECAP updates via email, standard mail, mass texting, and telephone messages. Include an ECAP information booth at your school's parent nights, career fairs, and college fairs and reserve space in your student handbook for an overview of the ECAP process.

Establishing awareness about ECAP is the first step to cultivating a dialogue between school, family, and student. Arizona has drafted a modifiable letter to parent/guardians that can be used to brief student families about the ECAP process and why their engagement is critical to student success: [Letter to Parents Template](#)

Once families are aware of the ECAP process, your district/school should have policies and procedures in place to ensure that the ECAP process for students includes input and guidance from their families. Including a parent or guardian representative on the ECAP Leadership Team is the best way to create strategies that will involve their perspective. Below are additional promising practices for engaging student families in the ECAP process:

- **Student-Led Parent-Teacher Conferences:** This strategy yielded the most positive results for engaging families in the ECAP process in which parents reported increased aspirations for their child’s future career and life goals and higher esteem for their child’s educators.<sup>16</sup> The structure of this conference would allow a student to highlight and reflect on results from self-exploration activities, career exploration activities, and career planning and management activities. Parents or guardians can review artifacts that demonstrate the college and career readiness skills their student has developed. Students should be sure to discuss their career interests, the school courses and extracurricular opportunities that will help them pursue their interests, and the postsecondary training or education they plan on completing to attain their career goals. City High School has achieved great success using this strategy for their [Student Roundtables](#).
  
- **Provide a “Syllabus” of ECAP Activities to Families:** The ECAP Leadership Team can develop a “syllabus” of sorts that outlines the grade level and calendar schedule for your district/school’s ECAP activities. This enables parents to have an awareness of the type of activities their child will be doing and when they will happen. Families can support these activities by continuing the college and career readiness conversation at home and seeking out opportunities that will enhance their child’s exploration and planning process.
  
- **Provide Families with Access to the Electronic Career Information System:** AzCIS and most other commercial electronic information systems allow for student families to have their own accounts. Parents or guardians can view their child’s progress and learn more about the assessments and information available on the system. This is a convenient way for families to stay up to date on the ECAP process and communicate with the school or student if they have questions or input. Encourage parents to use the system during parent information nights and in correspondences with them.
  
- **Survey Families on the ECAP process:** Part of your district/school’s evaluation and assessment plan for the ECAP should be to survey families and collect data on their perception of the process. Leave room for input and feedback, as they may have valuable insight on the impact of the ECAP process on students outside of the classroom. Ask parents or guardians how the district/school can improve their communication and outreach to increase involvement from students’ families.
  
- **Initiate a Family Volunteer Mentor Program:** Using students’ families for a volunteer mentor program will not only increase family engagement in the ECAP process, but will also provide valuable college and career advisement from the people who know your students the best. Include ECAP training and logistical support for volunteers to ensure that they are delivering quality guidance to students.

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<sup>16</sup> [Solberg, V.S., et al., 2012](#)

- **Administer Family Service-Learning Projects:** This strategy has proven particularly effective for students in ELL or migrant families. Service-learning projects are an effective way for students to build professional skills, gain interest in career pathways, and will motivate students to engage in their coursework. Including families in the research, planning, action, and reflection steps of a service-learning project increases communication between the family and the school and engages parents/guardians and students in important conversations about civic engagement and skill development.<sup>17</sup>

**Resources for family engagement:**

- Arizona Department of Education’s [Parent Webpage](#) contains resources and tools that families can use to help prepare their children for college and career, educate themselves on Arizona College and Career Ready Standards and AzMERIT, send their feedback, and more.
- The [Family Engagement Initiative Webpage](#) is another Arizona Department of Education effort to build and strengthen partnerships between families, schools, and communities.
- The [National Center for Families Learning](#) website provides interactive tools and literature that help families to engage with their child’s education and college and career preparation. Many materials are also available in Spanish.
- [\*Understanding the New Vision for Career Development: The Role of Family\*](#) is a brief by the National Collaborative for Workforce and Disability that introduces career development skills to families.
- [\*Families and College and Career Readiness: What Schools Can Do to Engage Families in the Individualized Learning Plan \(ILP\) Process\*](#) outlines suggestions from youth and families about actions schools can take to improve family engagement with the ECAP process. This brief is also published by the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability.

**Achieving Community Engagement**

Engaging with the local community to support your district/school’s ECAP process is one of the most beneficial ways to ensure your students have sustainable college and career readiness support from all sides. Local government, nonprofits, postsecondary institutions, and business and industry all have a vested interest in a prepared workforce and should have a part in your students’ ECAP process. Creating partnerships with these entities will enable your district/school to provide students with a wide range of work-based learning opportunities, volunteer and civic engagement opportunities, and comprehensive information on postsecondary education and training opportunities in your community.

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<sup>17</sup> [Cramer, J., 2015](#)



This step of implementation can be difficult because it requires going outside of the school community, but is necessary for a quality ECAP process. The main objective is to build relationships with partners and raise awareness about the importance of the ECAP process to the local economy and community development. These relationships will take time and energy to develop; however, forming community partnerships will ultimately provide more opportunities to students and increase district and school resources that support a quality ECAP process.

**\*Best Practice\***  
It may be advantageous to **appoint a member or a subset of the ECAP Leadership Team to conduct outreach** to the local community in support of the ECAP

Create an outreach strategy as an ECAP Leadership Team that will effectively utilize different stakeholder voices to promote the importance of the ECAP process in local economic growth, job creation, and workforce development. Use the [ECAP At a Glance](#) to highlight key talking points and convey the importance of community involvement in helping local students in the ECAP process. Below are additional strategies for engaging with your community:

➤ **Provide Work-Based Learning Opportunities**

Work-based learning opportunities such as apprenticeships, internships, job-shadowing, entrepreneurial enterprises, etc., fulfill each step of the ECAP process. They engage students in self-exploration by letting them try out different skills and talents to see what they excel at and enjoy; they allow for career-exploration by showing students what a day-in-the-life of various careers may be and which ones spark their interests; and they build the professional skills necessary for lifelong success. Allow students to receive course credit for these opportunities and promote them throughout your school community.

Initiate discussions with local business and industry about the critical importance of offering work-based learning opportunities to students during the school year and throughout the summer.<sup>18</sup> This [Talent Pipeline Management Video](#) from the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation communicates the mutually beneficial nature of these types of partnerships.

The Arizona Department of Education Career and Technical Education's Work-Based Learning Handbook is a useful tool for understanding the benefits and logistics of Work-Based Learning.

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<sup>18</sup> [National Academy Foundation, 2011](#)

➤ **Align Curriculum to Industry Standards and Labor Market Information**

Ensure that coursework in your district/school is relevant to the real world by aligning curriculum to industry standards and current Arizona labor market information.<sup>19</sup> This alignment will allow for a seamless transition from secondary school to on-the-job training, technical schools, or college. Consult with local businesses, industry leaders, and government officials to obtain up-to-date information and desired skill sets. Ask them to review your existing curriculum to identify areas needing improvement.

➤ **Host a Career Camp with Local Community Partners**

Developing career camps for your district or school primarily consists of building relationships with the local community. Success depends on postsecondary institutions, non-profits, and businesses playing an integral role.

Distribute a district-wide or school-wide survey to determine the career paths your students are interested in. Pick the top choices and identify teacher champions to represent each career path. Then, begin assembling a Career Camp Leadership Team made up of key staff and representatives from the community. Design curricula for individual career camps that combine teacher knowledge and industry standards to provide hands-on learning, mentorship, and exploration activities. Set aside time for students to reflect on their experiences and add them to their ECAP portfolios. Document the career camps through pictures and videos that demonstrate student engagement and knowledge-building. Thank your community partners by promoting them in newsletter distributions and presentations to parents, school staff, and neighborhoods in the district.

**\*Best Practice\***

The key to successful career camps is having **passionate Teacher Champions**. Try to carve out funding from 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers or other sources to incentivize their efforts with a small stipend.

*-Osborn Elementary School  
District*

➤ **Start a Mentoring Program with Local Leaders or Volunteers**

Mentoring is a good way for students to receive career and college advisement from leaders in business, nonprofit, or government or trained volunteers. Having a supportive adult to oversee ECAP activities can enhance a student's learning experiences and possibly provide them with a reference or network to jumpstart a postsecondary pathway. This partnership benefits mentors as well because they have a chance to give back to their community and potentially find local talent they may want to include in future hiring.

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<sup>19</sup> [Opportunities and Options, 2014](#)

➤ **Host Speakers from the Community**

Develop partnerships with government, non-profits, and business leaders to deliver speeches and provide question and answer sessions. This allows students to start thinking about career pathways or postsecondary opportunities they may not have previously considered.

➤ **Create a Volunteering Partnership with a Local Nonprofit**

Partner with a local nonprofit to develop and administer a volunteering program for your students. Volunteer service is a great way for students to explore careers and develop professional skills. Engaging in service helps to develop a sense of self-efficacy and the confidence that results from positively impacting one's community.<sup>20</sup> These activities can also be included in students' résumés or college applications.

➤ **Organize Local Career Fairs**

Invite local businesses to participate in a youth career fair in your district/school. Students will gain knowledge about opportunities and businesses can recruit talent from within their community. Including parents in this event will provide free advertising for the businesses and increase family engagement with their students' career exploration and planning.

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<sup>20</sup> [Raskoff, S.A., Sundeen, R. A., 2000](#)

## **STEP 4: EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT**

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Just as a student's ECAP is a living document that grows and changes over time, the ECAP process in your district/school should continue to change and improve. Regular evaluation and assessment will guarantee that the college and career planning guidance your students are given is high-quality and up-to-date. Labor markets and technology are changing rapidly and many of the careers educators are preparing students for do not even exist yet, so it is important to adjust to changes in relevant economic and workforce data.<sup>21</sup> Revisit the assessment and data collection plan that your ECAP Leadership Team develops on a regular basis and improve your ECAP process to reflect the gaps identified.

### **Establishing a Professional Learning Community**

Having regular meetings with the ECAP Leadership Team is key to creating a sustainable ECAP process in your district or school.<sup>22</sup> Over time, this team will become the leaders of your district's/school's Professional Learning Community to provide guidance throughout the process to all stakeholders. The team can gather feedback from the school community and the outside community to determine the successes and areas needing improvement for your process.

Coordinate small group discussions for individual stakeholder groups to gather perception data about the process and its outcomes. Identify areas of resistance to change, outline resource needs, refresh communications plans, brainstorm and share innovative practices, determine professional development needs, etc. Make the conversation around pathway planning a continuous conversation that is part of your district's/school's identity.

### **Tracking ECAP Progress and Outcomes**

Collecting data and evidence on your ECAP process will enable you to make data-driven decisions about your ECAP process and target adjustments and improvements to areas where it is most needed.<sup>23</sup> This data will also help garner buy-in from school staff, student families, and local business and community members about the efficacy of the ECAP process.

Most commercial career information and college readiness systems offer tracking as a part of their system. Learn about the resources available on your system and designate someone on the ECAP Leadership Team to collect ECAP-specific data.

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<sup>21</sup> [US Department of Labor, 1999](#)

<sup>22</sup> [Solberg, V.S., et al., 2012](#)

<sup>23</sup> [Ibid.](#)

***NOTE ON THE ECAP TRACKER AVAILABLE IN AZCIS***

Beginning this year, a new report tool is available for users of AzCIS. With the **ECAP Tracker**, site administrators can determine which activities and documents comprise a complete student portfolio at each grade level. Administrators can then create custom reports that may be used to track students' completion of these components. To access this free tool, log in as site coordinator or staff and select **ECAP Tracker** under **Reports** ⇒ **Planning Tools**.

**Resources for outcome data collection**

- Utilize the information available on the Arizona Department of Education's [Accountability & Research](#) page to track indicators about your school and compare them to the state averages
- Use the [Career and College Readiness Indicator Self-Report Spreadsheet](#) to report schools' A-F CCRI points earned.
- The [National Student Clearinghouse](#) contains data about the college success of your district's students
- You can view FAFSA completion data by school or district on the U.S. Department of Education's [Federal Student Aid](#) website.
- The [Sherlock](#) program is a very low cost, customizable tool that provides assessment, reports, communications, and evaluation for student data. Sherlock also syncs to AzCIS.

## APPENDIX

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### State and National Resources

Additional resources for students, families, and business and community members are posted on the ADE ECAP website.

- Arizona Department of Education Resources
  - ECAP
    - [ECAP Implementation Site-Assessment Tool](#)
    - [Student ECAP Checklist by Grade Level](#)
    - [ECAP Attributes Checklist](#)
    - [Sample ECAP Planning Guide](#)
    - [Sample High School ECAP Calendar](#)
    - [Sample Middle School ECAP Guide](#)
    - [ECAP At a Glance handout](#)
    - [ECAP Brochure](#)
    - [Letter to Families Template](#)
  - College and Career Readiness
    - [Arizona Department of Education College and Career Ready Center](#)
    - [Arizona School Counselors](#)
    - [Arizona Career and Technical Education](#)
    - [My Road Trip to College and Career](#)
    - [Arizona Professional Skills](#)
    - [Arizona Graduation Rates](#)
    - [Arizona Dropout Rates](#)
- AzCIS Resources
  - [Arizona Career Information System Homepage](#)
  - [ECAP Checklist Using AzCIS](#)
- Local Associations and Organizations
  - [Arizona School Counselors Association](#)
  - [Arizona College Access Network](#)
  - [Expect More Arizona](#)
  - [Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education](#)
  - [Arizona GEAR UP](#)
  - [Center for the Future of Arizona](#)
  - [AZTransfer](#)
  - [Arizona Business Education Coalition](#)
- National Associations and Organizations
  - [American School Counselors Association](#)

- [American Counseling Association College and Career Counseling Tools](#)
- [FAFSA Financial Aid Toolkit](#)
- [College Access Affinity Group](#)
- [National Center for Education Statistics](#)
- [Federal Student Aid, an office of the U.S. Department of Education \(FAFSA\)](#)
- Helpful Links
  - [ILPs Across the US Map](#)
  - [Higher Education Data, Lumina Foundation](#)

### **Research Supporting Individual Learning Plans**

American Institutes for Research. (2013). *Are Personalized Learning Environments the Next Wave of K-12 Education Reform?* Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research. [Online version](#)

Phelps, A., Durham, J., & Wills, J. (2011) Education Alignment and Accountability in an Era of Convergence: Policy. Insights from States with Individual Learning Plans and Policies. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 19 (31) [Online version](#)

Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy. (2011). *Student Learning Plans: Supporting Every Student's Transition to College and Career*. Cambridge, MA: Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy. [Online version](#)

Solberg, V.S., Allen Phelps, L., Haakenson, K.A., Durham, J.F., Timmons, J. (2012) The Nature and Use of Individualized Learning Plans as a Promising Career Intervention Strategy. *Journal of Career Development*, 39 (6). [Online Version](#)

Solberg, V.S., Wills J. & Osman, D. (2012). *Promoting Quality Individualized Learning Plans: A "How to Guide" Focused on the High School Years*. Washington, DC: National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, Institute for Educational Leadership. [Online version](#)

Solberg, V.S., Wills, J. Redmond K., & Skaff, L. (2014). *Use of individualized learning plans as a promising practice for driving college and career readiness efforts: Findings and recommendations from a multi-method, multi-study effort* (ISBN: 1-93493-46-1). Washington, DC: National Collaborative on Workforce and disability for Youth, Institute for Educational Leadership. [Online version](#)

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