

Pathway Certification Criteria

Version —October 2009

Purpose: This Pathway Certification Criteria document is a condensed version of the broader Pathway Certification Tool (July 2009) and lists only those essential criteria that reviewers will focus on during certification visitations. It is expected that any pathway seeking certification would adhere to the guiding principles and incorporate the core components listed below.

Guiding Principles

1. Pathways prepare students for postsecondary education and career.
2. Pathways connect academics to real-world applications.
3. Pathways lead to a full range of postsecondary opportunities.
4. Pathways improve student achievement.

Core Components

1. **A challenging academic component** prepares students for success—without remediation—in California’s community colleges and universities, as well as in apprenticeships and other postsecondary programs.
2. **A demanding technical component** delivers concrete knowledge and skills through a cluster of four or more technical courses.
3. **A work-based learning component** offers opportunities for students to learn through real-world experiences.
4. **Support services** include counseling; supplemental instruction in reading, writing, and mathematics; and other services to help students succeed with a challenging program of study.

Essential Criteria

1. PATHWAY DESIGN

1.2 Design Structure	1.2.1. Pathway theme: Pathway represents a broad theme that can appeal to and engage a student, regardless of his or her prior academic achievement and postsecondary aspirations. The theme has been thoughtfully selected based on student interest and several other criteria, which may include teacher expertise, regional workforce needs, existence of related career-technical education course sequences, articulation opportunities with nearby postsecondary institutions, and the interest of industry partners. <i>Standard VIII</i>
	1.2.2. Program of study: Pathway consists of a coherent 4-year program of study that includes core academic courses and at least one technical course at each grade level. By design, the curriculum is sequenced and coordinated. <i>Standards II, VII</i>
	1.2.5. Student recruitment and selection: Pathway’s student recruitment and selection process is formalized and ensures open access to students who volunteer for the pathway based on their interests. Pathway demographics reflect those of the school and district. <i>Standard II</i>

	<p>1.2.6. Cohort scheduling: Most pathway courses are “pure” to enable flexible use of class time and instructional methodologies that promote multidisciplinary projects. <i>Standard II</i></p>
	<p>1.2.7. Staff collaboration: School and pathway leadership nurtures a professional learning community among staff that encourages frequent and effective collaboration for purposes of program coordination, curricular integration, and resolution of student problems. <i>Standard V</i></p>
	<p>1.2.8. Postsecondary articulation: Pathway promotes a seamless transition to postsecondary education and training options through articulation agreements, dual enrollment, and other formal and informal activities. <i>Standard VII</i></p>
1.3 Governance	<p>1.3.1. Advisory board with broad representation: An active advisory board meets regularly to set policies, develop resources, and advise the program of study. It includes representation from involved employers, students, parents, higher education and community partners, pathway staff, and district and site administration. <i>Standards II, VI</i></p>

2. ENGAGED LEARNING

2.1 Academic Core	<p>2.1.1. Standards-aligned curriculum: The academic curriculum is aligned to state standards and designed to lead to student mastery on standardized tests as well as on more authentic assessment measures. <i>Standard VII</i></p>
	<p>2.1.2. College-preparatory curriculum: A demanding pathway program of study prepares students for success—without remediation—in California’s community colleges and universities, as well as in apprenticeships and other postsecondary programs. <i>Standard VII</i></p>
	<p>2.1.3. Real-world relevance: Academic core courses deliver challenging standards-based content through authentic, career-related applications. Pathways alter how core academic subjects are taught; they do not lower expectations about what is taught. <i>Standard VII</i></p>
2.2 Technical Core	<p>2.2.1. Demanding technical component: A sequence or cluster of four or more technical courses delivers basic and advanced industry knowledge and skills. The focus is on preparing youth for high-skill, high-wage employment by emphasizing industry-related knowledge and skills, using authentic applications that bring learning to life.</p>
	<p>2.2.2. Standards-aligned curriculum: A sequence or cluster of four or more technical courses is aligned to state CTE standards and/or industry standards. <i>Standard VII</i></p>
2.3 Integrated Curriculum	<p>2.3.1. Multidisciplinary integrated curriculum: Pathway students participate in multidisciplinary projects that integrate academic and technical course content. <i>Standard VII</i></p>
	<p>2.3.2. Curricular alignment: Teachers collaborate within and across disciplines and grade levels to provide to students a coordinated, coherent curriculum.</p>
2.4 Instruction and Assessment	<p>2.4.1. Project-based approach: Inquiry-based instruction enables students to experience authentic theme-based situations that require integrating knowledge and skills from several disciplines. This approach fosters communication and teamwork skills, among other habits of mind, SCANS, and 21st-Century Skills.</p>
	<p>2.4.2. Authentic assessment: To complement traditional or standardized student assessments, pathway teachers design and use a variety of assessments to gain an accurate understanding of student learning. Assessments include opportunities for students to demonstrate skills through authentic applications.</p>

2.5 Work-Based Learning (WBL)	2.5.1. Coordinated, sequenced, and scaled: Pathway offers real-world learning opportunities through a 4-year coordinated and structured sequence of work-based learning (WBL) experiences that progresses in duration, intensity, and student expectations and independence. <i>Standard VIII</i>
	2.5.2. Connected to academic and technical coursework: Work-based learning (WBL) experiences do not occur in a vacuum; they are connected to and reinforce classroom learning. <i>Standard VIII</i>
2.6 Support Services and Personalization	2.6.1. Pathway orientation and transition: The pathway provides an orientation and other transition services for incoming students. <i>Standard II</i>
	2.6.2. Supportive atmosphere: Pathway maintains personalization through limited size, teacher teamwork, and a supportive atmosphere. <i>Standard II</i>
	2.6.3. Student engagement: Pathway staff consciously and consistently works to create a culture where students are actively engaged in their learning, both in and out of the school setting.
	2.6.5. Differentiated instruction: Daily instruction is designed with the knowledge that students vary in their preferred method of gaining information and understanding ideas. Teachers use multiple methods of presenting course content to address each student’s learning needs.
	2.6.6. Academic intervention: Pathway students performing below grade level are supported by a range of services, which may include supplemental instruction, tutoring, credit recovery, before- and/or after-school programs, and academic support programs.
	2.6.7. Guidance and counseling: Pathway has a designated counselor who knows pathway students and is familiar with the unique characteristics and needs of the pathway. <i>Standard IV</i>
	2.6.8. College and career planning: Each pathway student has a multi-year college and career plan that is informed by a range of college and career planning activities, extends through high school, and guides decisions about postsecondary education, training, and career pursuits. <i>Standard VII</i>

3. SYSTEM SUPPORT

3.1 District Policies	3.1.1. Pathway choice, equity, and access: District, school, and pathway policies and procedures support student choice in their selection of pathway options, ensure equity in placement of students in pathways, and ensure that transportation issues do not preclude students from participating in the pathway of their choice.
	3.1.2. Recruitment and hiring practices: District policies and practices value the recruitment, hiring, retention, and evaluation of pathway team members, as well as the need for pathway staff stability that supports ongoing pathway maturation and sustainability. <i>Standard III</i>
	3.1.3. Accountability and autonomy: District policies hold school sites and pathways accountable for improving student outcomes, but allow for site and pathway autonomy in determining the curriculum, instructional methodologies, pacing, and scheduling that will result in reaching those student outcomes.

3.2 Leadership	<p>3.2.1. Support from school board and superintendent: The district Board of Education and Superintendent are strong proponents of a multiple pathways approach, publicly endorse it, and offer active support. <i>Standard III</i></p>
	<p>3.2.2. Support from site leadership: The high school principal and other administrators publicly advocate for the pathway and are actively involved in its funding, facilities, staffing, scheduling, and support. Site leaders have a common understanding of, vision for, and commitment to multiple pathways and their potential to reduce high school dropout rates, raise student achievement, increase high school completion and postsecondary transition, and boost students' earning power. <i>Standard III</i></p>
3.3 Professional Development	<p>3.3.1. Teacher professional development: Site and district administrators provide or help arrange training for pathway teachers in curricular integration, project-based teaching strategies, student support, and employer involvement, among other areas. <i>Standard V</i></p>
3.4 Qualified Staff	<p>3.4.1. Skilled teachers: Because a pathway's success rests on good teaching and teamwork among a cross-disciplinary group of teachers, site principals must hire and/or assign qualified and willing teachers to fulfill this role. <i>Standard IV</i></p>
	<p>3.4.2. Teacher leader/pathway coordinator: A pathway teacher has agreed to serve as the pathway leader/coordinator who is responsible for all pathway administrative and facilitative functions. Release time is provided for this role. <i>Standard IV</i></p>
3.6 Partnerships	<p>3.6.1. Active employer and community partnerships: The pathway seeks and welcomes partnerships with local employers, community groups, and individuals. Both through the advisory board and other interactions, there is evidence of a healthy partnership between the pathway/high school and its host community. <i>Standards VI, VIII</i></p>

4. EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

4.1 Student Data	<p>4.1.1. Data collection and reporting: Pathway regularly collects, analyzes, and accurately reports student assessment data including those necessary to describe pathway participants (e.g., grade level, gender, race/ethnicity), to make comparisons to the demographics of the school and district, and to report students' performance on a variety of outcome measures. <i>Standard IX</i></p>
	<p>4.1.2. Career readiness data: Lacking valid, standardized measures of career readiness, the pathway collects, analyzes, and reports on available indicators of career readiness, which may include pathway completion, occupational certification, proficiency through demonstration, completion of and grades in capstone technical courses, and end-of-course exams. <i>Standard IX</i></p>
4.2 Pathway Evaluation	<p>4.2.1. Evidence of impact: Ongoing, regular analysis of pathway data is used to make programmatic decisions and inform instructional practice. Such analysis shows whether pathways retain their students and whether, and by how much, the pathway improves student performance. <i>Standard IX</i></p>
	<p>4.2.2. Periodic review and improvement plan: Pathway staff and advisory board regularly assess the pathway's functioning. These periodic reviews result in the development of an improvement plan, whose action items refer back to the pathway's underlying mission and goals. <i>Standard X</i></p>
	<p>4.2.3. Postsecondary tracking: Pathway staff conducts a formal follow-up of students for several years after high school graduation and uses data collected for continuous improvement of the pathway.</p>