



Making Schools Work

Key Practices for Technology Centers

SREB's **Making Schools Work school improvement process** is grounded in the belief that increasing student achievement begins with increasing student effort. Our school improvement framework for career and technology centers — **Technology Centers That Work** — brings teachers, counselors, center leaders and industry partners together to address five focus areas: *engaging instruction, aligned curriculum, career pathways, systems of support and leadership for continuous improvement.*

SREB has identified 10 key school and classroom practices that positively impact student effort and achievement. When implemented with fidelity, these practices provide technology center students with the purpose, direction and accelerated learning opportunities they need to graduate on time and thrive in postsecondary studies, careers and the global marketplace.

Centers use the 10 Key Practices to guide improvement. The process often begins with SREB's [Curriculum and Instruction Review](#), in which an external team of teachers, leaders and local partners assess promising practices and problems of practice in the school and recommend actions to eliminate those problems. Later, SREB's [Site Development Workshop](#) engages faculty focus teams in analyzing CIR findings, conducting research, setting bold goals for student achievement and developing plans for improvement. SREB offers [school improvement coaching](#) and [professional learning](#) to support these plans.

By combining this process with the **10 Key Practices** below, technology centers build their capacity to continuously address problems and meet clear targets for student success.

- 1. High Expectations** — Help teachers embrace school and classroom practices that elevate learning, promote a growth mindset and ensure each student has access to intellectually demanding course work and resources. (**Leadership for Continuous Improvement**)

Indicators

- A. Center leaders and teachers share and communicate high expectations that empower students to meet standards for postsecondary and workplace success.
 - B. Teachers create course syllabi that clearly outline expectations for academic and technical content standards, assignments, assessments and grades.
 - C. Teachers embed academic, technical and workplace readiness standards in challenging, real-world assignments that help students earn industry-recognized credentials.
 - D. Teachers use formative and summative assessments and effective feedback and questioning strategies to help students meet expectations.
 - E. Center leaders work with teachers to set and meet goals for increasing the number of industry and postsecondary credentials, certificates and degrees students earn.
 - F. Center leaders and teachers foster a culture of respect and rapport in which students' achievements are acknowledged and celebrated.
- 2. Programs of Study** — Ensure each student can develop and complete a high-quality program of study — a progressively intensive, nonduplicative sequence of secondary and postsecondary general and/or career and technical education courses, co-curricular learning experiences and accelerated learning options — that culminates in the attainment of recognized industry and/or postsecondary credentials. (**Career Pathways**)

Indicators

- A. Center leaders and teachers use labor market data to design and implement career pathway programs of study that lead to high-skill, high-wage jobs and align with local, regional and state economic and workforce development goals.
 - B. Center leaders and teachers collaborate with industry and postsecondary partners to design non-duplicative sequences of secondary and postsecondary courses that empower students to earn industry and postsecondary credentials without the need for remediation.
 - C. Center leaders establish procedures to gather valid and reliable school and student outcome data to meet federal and state accountability reporting requirements (e.g., Perkins).
 - D. Center leaders and teachers engage business and community partners in continuously evaluating and improving the center's career pathway programs of study.
 - E. Counselors, career coaches and teacher-advisers provide a comprehensive program of guidance and advisement that includes career interest inventories, aptitude assessments, career exploration activities and marketing materials that help students and parents understand the academic and technical requirements of available programs of study and design personalized plans of study that align with their postsecondary and career goals.
- 3. Integrated Curriculum** — Help students master the essential concepts of the state's college- and career-preparatory curriculum by teaching academic content through the lens of real-world problems and projects. (**Aligned Curriculum**)

Indicators

- A. Center leaders provide ongoing professional learning that helps teachers embed academic, technical and workplace skills and standards in their instruction and empower students to apply those skills in all of their courses.
- B. Center leaders create the time and structures needed for teams of academic and CTE teachers to co-plan and contextualize their instruction and incorporate opportunities for students to build critical thinking, problem-solving, communication and teamwork skills.
- C. Center leaders and teachers integrate career-technical student organizations into the curriculum and engage business and industry partners in supporting CTSOs.
- D. Teachers use skill-based assessments that align with industry standards and require students to apply academic, technical and workplace knowledge and skills to demonstrate their learning.

- 4. Access and Equity** — Ensure each student, including underrepresented and nontraditional students, has equitable access to intellectually challenging academic and career and technical studies that emphasize the mastery of skills needed in the workplace and further education. (*Aligned Curriculum*)

Indicators

- A. Center leaders, counselors and teachers ensure each student can access high-quality career pathway programs of study and is encouraged to achieve success.
- B. Center leaders, counselors and teachers ensure that all career pathway programs of study are inclusive and accessible and market those programs to nontraditional students and students from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- C. Center leaders, counselors, teachers and other staff participate in professional learning that helps them understand the unique challenges and barriers faced by students from diverse backgrounds.
- D. Center leaders and teachers use student and school data to identify potential barriers to success in the center's programs and develop plans to eliminate those barriers.

- 5. Student Engagement** — Use research-based instructional strategies and innovative technology practices to actively engage each student. (*Quality Instruction*)

Indicators

- A. Teachers use powerful instructional practices for [literacy](#), [mathematics](#), [science](#) and other curricular areas to engage students in authentic learning.
- B. Center leaders provide ongoing professional learning that supports teachers in developing engaging instructional strategies that model best practices in the workplace.
- C. Teachers draw upon students' individual interests to design cognitively engaging instruction.
- D. Teachers plan instruction after reviewing student assessment data and student work.
- E. Teachers use authentic [project- and problem-based learning strategies](#) to engage students in solving real-world problems.

- 6. Teacher Collaboration** — Provide teacher teams with the training, time and support they need to improve instruction, align lessons with standards, create interdisciplinary assignments and develop innovative instructional practices. (*Quality Instruction*)

Indicators

- A. Center leaders provide time for collaborative professional learning and planning, collect data during instructional rounds and observations, review student assignments and assessments, and celebrate teachers' and students' successes.
- B. Center leaders create time in the schedule and establish expectations for teacher teams to co-plan contextualized instruction and create syllabi, assessments, lesson plans and other high-quality curricular tools that help students meet or exceed grade-level standards.
- C. Center leaders find innovative ways for center teachers to collaborate with home high school teachers to co-plan contextualized instruction and review and assess student work.
- D. Teachers collaborate with student support personnel and other staff to improve and adjust instructional supports for students with Individualized Education Plans, 504 plans and other special needs.

- 7. Work-Based Learning** — Encourage each student to participate in developmentally appropriate, structured work-based learning experiences that connect the classroom and the workplace and align with students' personal interests and goals. (*Career Pathways*)

Indicators

- A. All students participate in a broad and progressively intensive array of work-based learning experiences that allow them to explore career options, such as field trips, guest speakers, career fairs, job shadows, school-based enterprises, simulated workplaces, paid or unpaid internships, and apprenticeships.
- B. Center leaders and teachers engage business and industry partners in offering work-based learning, contributing to the center's curriculum and classroom activities, mentoring students and providing opportunities for students to earn industry credentials.
- C. Center leaders use written agreements to define the roles and responsibilities of business, industry, postsecondary and community partners who offer work-based learning and make other contributions to the center's curriculum.

- 8. Guidance and Advisement** — Involve the entire center community in creating and offering personalized career guidance, advisement and social and emotional supports that empower students to pursue a full range of career and college options. **(Systems of Support)**

Indicators

- A. Counselors and teacher-advisers develop a comprehensive program of guidance and advisement that includes career interest and aptitude inventories, marketing materials and other tools that allow students and parents to explore their talents, consider their options and create personalized plans for postsecondary and workforce success.
- B. Each student is partnered with a caring adult at the center, such as a counselor or teacher-adviser, who regularly meets with them and serves as a contact between the center and the family.
- C. Center leaders, counselors and teachers establish protocols for communicating with students and parents and ensuring that students and parents annually revise their personalized plans of study.
- D. The center provides students and parents with social-emotional supports and embraces trauma-informed practices that nurture and support students who have experienced or are currently experiencing trauma.

- 9. Interventions and Enrichments** — Design tiered systems of extra help and accelerated learning opportunities that help each student to become an independent learner and complete a challenging academic and technical program of study. **(Systems of Support)**

Indicators

- A. Center leaders, counselors and teachers employ a system of tiered interventions for students who need academic, social-emotional or behavioral supports.
- B. Center leaders, counselors and teachers use early warning systems and other structures to identify and monitor students who fall behind, target struggling students with timely and effective interventions, and monitor students' progress toward completing their programs.
- C. Teachers use innovative technology tools and strategies to support learning.
- D. The center regularly shares information on available interventions and student progress with students and families.
- E. The center provides enrichment opportunities for students who are performing on or above grade level and works with postsecondary institutions to allow students to engage in early postsecondary learning.

- 10. Culture of Continuous Improvement** — Engage the whole school community in continuously analyzing data to identify problems of practice, devise action plans for solving those problems and monitoring student learning outcomes. **(Leadership for Continuous Improvement)**

Indicators

- A. Center leaders engage the whole school community in developing and communicating the center's vision and mission.
- B. Center leaders employ a distributed leadership approach to engage teams of teachers, counselors and other staff in using SREB's [problem-solving process](#) — based on Deming's Plan-Do-Check-Act approach — to strategically plan for improvement.
- C. Center leaders use school, classroom and process data to make decisions and monitor progress toward meeting bold goals for student achievement and school improvement.
- D. Center leaders align ongoing professional learning opportunities with improvement priorities and teacher evaluation data.
- E. Center leaders develop a plan to effectively support new teachers that includes mentorships, specialized professional learning and time to collaborate with other new teachers.