

Pathways



DEVELOPING LEADERS. STRENGTHENING SCHOOLS. CHANGING LIVES.

Our mission is to change the lives of students in under-resourced communities around the world by developing leaders and teachers who strengthen schools and improve student outcomes.

With deep gratitude to our partners for all we've learned from and with you over the years.

Introduction: Pathways

We believe that the ultimate aim of education reform is to empower children to have a brighter future and lead a life of choice and opportunity. Preparing students to make informed choices about their expanded opportunities in life – whether going to college, joining an internship, doing an online training course, or finding employment – is the final goal that schools should strive for with their students.

This toolkit outlines the steps schools and organizations can take to equip and support all students – whether top-performing candidates or those who have struggled – to make informed decisions on the pathways available to them after their secondary education.

The purpose of this toolkit is to help schools and organizations – as well as parents, caregivers, and students themselves – navigate options as students graduate secondary school and transition to further education, work, or other programs.

We see three key elements of Pathways:

- 1 Expand Student Options
- 2 Personalize Data
- 3 Resource Strategically



Element #1: Expand Student Options



Students thrive when they are exposed to varied examples of employment and coursework available to them from a young age. Expanding exposure is both about identity and a knowledge: students need to be exposed from a young age to various interests so that they can discover what they enjoy and are interested in.

They also need to be equipped with soft and hard skills to transition from a student to an adult who is equipped to expand and refine their pathways over the course of their lives.

INTRODUCING ABUNDANT CHOICES & MULTIPLE JOURNEYS

How do we help our students see and navigate an expansive set of options for what they can do after graduating secondary school?

How do we ensure that our students understand that there is not one high-stakes opportunity to build a career the year after school, but that building a future will require an adaptive attitude with shifts over time?

BROADENING STUDENT IDENTITY & KNOWLEDGE SET

What kind of exposure and experiences will help our students build a clear vision of themselves as a successful adult?

What skills, knowledge and attitudes would help our students most in integrating into the world beyond school?

INTRODUCE ABUNDANT CHOICES AND MULTIPLE JOURNEYS

Students need to access a rich network of information that is applicable to their context which provides them with an understanding that opportunities are broad, varied and adaptable.

Students should be able to experience and understand that a career choice is not made once, but multiple times across a lifetime as careers shift, as job security is sometimes prioritized over passion, and sometimes vice versa, as they may discover options to specialize or adapt their profession later.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

STUDENT	SCHOOL	ALUMNI
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where do our students have opportunities to cultivate and express interests in what they want to become?• How do families talk with students about their dreams, aspirations and their future?• How can our students access (in person or over curated media sources) role models - especially of similar backgrounds (cultural, racial, economic) who openly discuss pathways?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How and where in our curriculum are students exposed to different career options?• How does our school communicate that exit exams are important but not final for a career journey?• How and when does our school introduce students to people in careers different to their immediate surroundings?• When and how does our school involve parents in early-stage conversations about careers and further education for students and expectation-setting?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How does our school bring in alumni, role models, and industry examples to speak to students about the experience of careers?• When are our alumni invited back to share their stories digitally or in person about their journey to their career?• How are our alumni tracked? Which years do we check for different career moves, or changes to their first degree option?

EXPAND STUDENT IDENTITY AND BROADEN KNOWLEDGE SET

Student identity develops over time: a 10-year-old might know that they enjoy nature, a 14-year-old might understand they want to do something in environmentalism, a 16-year-old may know they like being outdoors more than behind a computer, and an 18-year-old may choose a conservation ranger training program in their local park that comes with a small allowance. A 21-year-old may then go study ecological science to expand into research on national parks. The role of a school in this journey is to provide appropriate support at these various stages.

Once students can visualize an identity as a successful adult, they should also have the concrete ability to attain it. This requires building skills and attitudes: the ability to write motivation letters or conduct interviews with confidence, time-management and organization skills to submit documents or records correctly and on time, resilience to apply for alternatives when a choice falls through, independence, optimism and confidence.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

STUDENT	SCHOOL	ALUMNI
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do our students articulate a concept of themselves as a successful adult that aligns to their interests and personality?• Where can we see our students exhibiting characteristics such as planfulness, independence, resilience which suggests that they have internalized the skills needed to succeed beyond school?• How do our students envision a life for themselves that extends beyond their immediate surroundings?• When do our students talk comfortably about their futures?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How does our school conduct interest tests, aptitude tests, or other opportunities for students to reflect on their interests?• Who in our school team is responsible for building soft skills in students and where in the timetable is that prioritized?• How does our school analyze alumni data to check that we are cultivating the most needed skills and addressing the most common misconceptions in our current students?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do we track alumni data to identify unique and interesting choices which may be helpful to current students?• How are our alumni surveyed about the skills that they found hardest and most valuable to learn?• When Are our alumni with inspiring, popular or interesting career choices invited to share their stories in person or over digital media?



Element #2: Personalize Data

Towards the end of school, a student should have a broad sense of what direction they may want to head in. Matching student interest with actual opportunities requires moving from general career guidance for a grade or class to personalization for the individual student. The broader the exposure has been at earlier stages, the more versatile the personalization stage will be.

The critical success factor here is data: matching student results with the real options available to them allows the personalization component to be precise and predictable. Sharing that information as it becomes available empowers students to make choices early with the best information at hand.

CONTEXTUALIZE OPPORTUNITIES

What are the opportunities in the region that best match the broad student body that we serve? Which unique opportunities are a great match for our specific students even if it's not an immediately obvious choice?

LEVERAGE DATA TO GUIDE & ASSESS SUCCESS

How does our student data tell us that students are neither over- nor under-estimating their ability to gain entrance into their chosen programs? What is required to course-correct if students are off track?

INFORM STUDENTS OF THEIR OPTIONS

How are we making sure that our students have a realistic understanding of what impact their current subject-choices and grades have on their future pathways options?

CONTEXTUALIZE OPPORTUNITIES BASED ON STUDENT POPULATION

Student context makes pathways options sticky: variables such as proximity to home or transport routes, quality of program, financial aid, likelihood of employment, local industry need, interest, and support programs all merit consideration.

School context is another important variable: an urban area with multiple universities, colleges, apprenticeship programs may employ a different strategy to a rural area, where digital learning programs, student housing, or a single large local industry may create more opportunities for students.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

STUDENT	SCHOOL	ALUMNI
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When do we ask students about their needs for programs, housing, finance and career opportunities? How do we use that information?• How do we check whether our families have specific needs which create constraints on student populations such as family care, transportation burden, cultural stigma of leaving home etc.• How are specific student needs like emotional maturity, disabilities, family responsibility taken into consideration?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How has our school matched the needs of the students with the best available opportunities in the region to the student population?• When does our school host meetings with parents and students where needs assessed.• How does our school integrate information on context into its guidance provided to students?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When are our alumni interviewed and/or surveyed on which contextual factors were most important to their career success over time?• How do we identify when and whether there is a pattern of our alumni dropping out from certain institutions because of contextual constraints such as housing, transportation or social support?

LEVERAGE STUDENT DATA TO GUIDE & ASSESS SUCCESS

Student data grounds future ambitions in present reality. Tracking student data ensures schools and students are neither over nor underestimating their ability to gain entrance into certain programs. Paying attention to student data from the perspective of pathways means that schools can better predict and close gaps that might impact student success.

Data is important throughout a students' schooling years. Identifying which data points - such as transition between school phases, grades where subjects are chosen, certification and exit grades and grades where turnaround in certain subjects are more possible, are all good intervention points. If replicated over years, predictive data patterns emerge which allows schools and students to make even more targeted choices.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

STUDENT	SCHOOL	ALUMNI
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When do our students have opportunities to take assessments that inform and prepare them for future college or careers?• How are our students kept informed about the value and importance of assessments?• Who ensures that our students matched with assessments that align with the pathways they want to pursue?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How does the data tracked at school match up to the assessment standards used by institutions to assist in predict admissions?• How is the school conducting trend analysis on academic data in critical intervention points?• When and how is the school setting up regular data meetings to match and personalize student data?• Who ensures data is available in time to make necessary adjustments?• How does the school track critical intervention points in addition to exit exam data?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where does our alumni data show a pattern of 'best fit' institutions in terms of acceptance, retention and satisfaction for the student population?• Where does alumni data indicate a frequent mismatch between admissions and school results?• Where does the data show that alumni change in the middle of their first degrees because their choice wasn't a good fit?• Where do alumni take longer to complete a degree or drop out because they did not choose an appropriate pathway based on their results?• How does alumni data provide important secondary information such as which degree options lead to better employability?

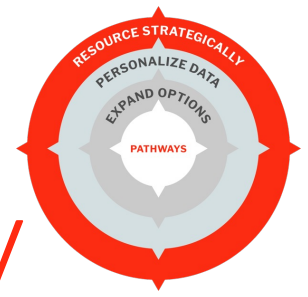
SHARE DATA WITH STUDENTS TO PLAN OPTIONS

Students should be the first to find out what their results mean for their future. Students should be informed about the implications of their marks so that they can make informed choices. These conversation should start early to give students ample time to adjust, work towards a set goal or research more options.

For instance, A 17-year-old might be a little careless with her biology homework until she finds out her entrance to her preferred marine conservation course requires her to have a 5% higher biology grade in her final year. If she finds out early enough, it's the motivation she needs to be more focused that term.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

STUDENT	SCHOOL	ALUMNI
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who ensures that our students are consulted regularly and in time on what their grades mean for their pathways?• How are our students guided on how to improve their academic results to improve their chances at their chosen career?• When are our students informed of the implication of subject choice on their career options?• When are our students informed about how grades and specific subjects are viewed in their applications?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How is student academic data presented to them?• Who oversees changes that need to be made at the school-level based on the pathways data?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How is alumni data shared with with students?• How do alumni have a platform or an opportunity to share data and experiences with each other?



Element #3: Resource Strategically

Pathways is often a special program that extends beyond the ordinary business of running a school. School management needs to carefully consider how to allocate the resources required and fit that into the existing demands on the school. Early planning ensures that staff and students feel empowered to meet application demands and deadlines ahead of time.

Pathways programs also create immense opportunities for schools to build a prestigious alumni body and helpful partnerships that connect to an ever-expanding network of advice, support, and resources for current students.

MAP OUT TIME, MONEY AND PEOPLE REQUIRED

How much time, with how many applications per student, with what amount of dedicated resources in the program do we have to complete application targets? What project calendars, application deadlines and competitive programs have hard deadlines?

CREATE PARTNERSHIPS

Which universities, fellowships, local colleges, job and skilling programs, support services, non-profits are working in this area? How can we create partnerships with them to support our students?

INVOLVE AND LEARN FROM ALUMNI

How often are alumni contacted? How can they be involved to support students on campuses, to mentor, to provide support or exposure? How are we communicating and celebrating alumni success in the school and with stakeholders? Which alumni pathways led to the greatest success for students and how does that help inform our work with current students?

MAP OUT TIME, MONEY, AND PEOPLE REQUIRED

A resource map allows a pathways program to fit within the ordinary needs and existing budget of the school. In the first years, it's a good idea to start conservatively and prioritize the most important commitments to student pathways. Conduct a review each year to see if any additional resources could be added to add more options, to involve younger grades, or train more staff. Be aware of where on the continuum the commitment is made, and what is outside of that commitment to manage time and resources responsibly.

Once the resource parameters are mapped out, the responsible team can then backwards plan the time, money and people required to achieve those goals. The ideal project plan will include a full year budget and calendar with a set number of commitments to student applications with a generous amount of time and resources planned to allow for mid-year adjustments or extra opportunities that may arise.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

STUDENT	SCHOOL	ALUMNI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much contact time will a student receive in their pathways program? • Who ensures that a student receives individual or group counselling to help guide their decision making about their future? • How are students supported in time to meet all hard deadlines? • When are families and students made aware of any administrative resources they need to provide such as identity documents, details of family income or household composition? • How are families and students made aware of any application costs that they may incur? • How are families and students made aware of the ongoing costs of further education? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who makes the final decision in the school on the targets, parameters and resources available to the pathways program? • How will staff be expected to incorporate this work into their regular work, or who in the school will be responsible for setting up a dedicated program? • How has the pathways time commitments been incorporated into the school and staff calendars? • How is the project calendar for the pathways program for the school designed? • Who is tasked with the responsibility to ensure that all deadlines are met? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do alumni receive placement support once they graduate? • How many years after school are alumni able to ask the school for advice or support? • How are alumni involved in supporting student applications (for examples by providing information or any other kind of support on specific institutions or programs that they have attended or are attending)? • How many years of alumni cohorts are tracked? • When are alumni contacted? Who ensures it happens consistently and ideally at the same time of the year? • Who decides whether alumni are contacted through general surveys or whether further resources allocated to conduct phone interviews, on-site visits or invitations back to school will be provided?

CREATE PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships allow for the successful implementation of all components of a pathways program even where a school or organization does not have the resources or technical skill in house. Once the available resources are mapped out, it becomes much clearer to see what can be done directly, and what should be done in partnership.

Organizational partnerships can improve exposure for students through career days, talks, shadowing opportunities etc. Institutional partnerships can also improve applicant success through helping to support applications, clarify the process for students and provide helpful information on housing, accommodation and other needs. Technical partnerships that provide decision-making algorithms, large databases or centralized and automated applications can improve efficiency.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

STUDENT	SCHOOL	ALUMNI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which partnerships have the school created that provide students with expanded access and opportunity in terms of exposure, admission chances or ongoing support? • Where are students able to access resources they wouldn't have otherwise like databases or automated applications through services? • Which individuals do students have access to that they can contact outside of the school for pathways help because of partnerships? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has the school mapped out what will be done internally and what components will be managed through partnerships? • Who is responsible for researching, cultivating and maintaining partnerships in the school? • Which institutions are the best fit for partnerships in terms of local context, support provided and quality of service? • Which partnerships would most improve the pathways opportunities of students? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which partnerships have been most helpful in terms of admission and ongoing support to alumni? • How are alumni involved in supporting new incoming students to institutions they are attending or have attended? • Who checks whether there are any school partnerships that could potentially also benefit students as they become alumni?

INVOLVE AND LEARN FROM ALUMNI

Alumni are one of the most valuable resources created by a successful pathways program. Alumni should be a source of celebration and prestige for the school, as well as a resource to draw on, to showcase real examples for the current student population of what they can become. Alumni can also help new graduates settle into life after school and provide helpful information on how to improve chances for certain opportunities as well as discover study or career pathways outside the norm which the school had not considered.

Alumni and alumni data can also teach a pathways program to get better by looking at which applications don't often succeed, which academic or subject-choices in the school weaken student options, which skills are not developed enough in students, which institutions are hard for students to settle in, and which programs students most frequently drop out from.

Involving alumni as role models, ambassadors, mentors and a friendly face on campus creates a community and network for the entire student population. By learning from the strengths and weaknesses coming from the alumni data, a pathways program can self-reflect and strengthen its program in iterative cycles.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

STUDENT	SCHOOL	ALUMNI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are students informed of where the alumni of the school end up in their careers? • How do individual students get an opportunity to get to know individual alumni? • How are channels of communication on social media or otherwise where students can reach out to alumni set up and managed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has the school created an alumni communications plan to include aspects like tracking, database management, and communication with alumni? • How does the school communicate to its stakeholders - parents, governing bodies, authorities, funders, about successful alumni? • When does the school invite alumni to be involved in the school and with the student body on pathways? • How are alumni celebrated in the school? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In which programs do alumni thrive? How can we make this an accessible route for more current students? • Where do alumni struggle or drop out? How can these choices be mitigated or avoided for other students? • What do alumni teach us about how to meet the real aspirations, needs and futures of current students?