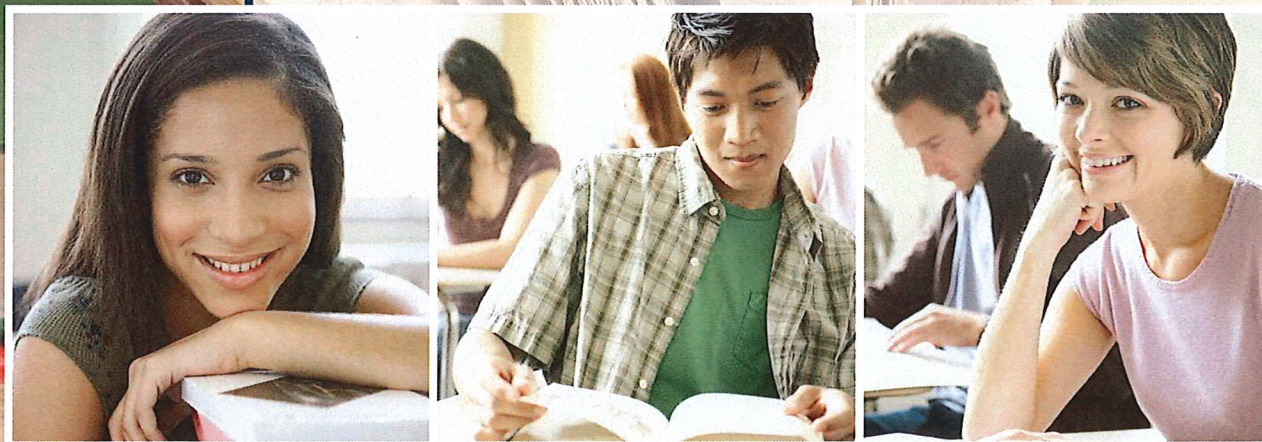
The background of the cover features a stack of books on the left and an open book on the right, with a soft, blurred background. A vertical blue line runs down the center of the page.

South Carolina College & Career Readiness Toolkit



*Prepared by the Educational Policy Improvement Center on Behalf
of the Center of Excellence for College and Career Readiness*

About the Center of Excellence



In 2014, the Center of Excellence for College and Career Readiness (the Center) was established at Francis Marion University in Florence, South Carolina. The Center is a professional development initiative funded by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education under the auspices

of the Education Improvement Act (EIA) Centers of Excellence Grant Program and is designed to work with teachers and students to improve students' readiness for postsecondary opportunities.

In its inaugural year, the Center partnered closely with teachers, students, and administrators from two local school districts to offer a special readiness course for teachers and a summer readiness academy for rising ninth graders. The Center will provide expanded professional development opportunities to teachers throughout the state, leverage and expand the work of the South Carolina Course Alignment Project, and serve to coordinate and facilitate relationships among P–20 initiatives throughout the state. The Center is codirected by Dr. Meredith Love and Dr. Matthew Nelson, both from the English Department at Francis Marion University.

Dr. Meredith Love is a Professor of English at Francis Marion University. She has overseen curriculum development, assessment, and professional development of the university's first-year composition program for the past ten years. Additionally, she has codirected a GEAR UP Summer Institute, developed the Connections mentoring program in Marlboro County, and coordinated the university's University Life 100, a program that helps freshmen develop skills, strategies, and study habits that will enhance their ability to succeed in their degree programs. Dr. Love has been an active participant in the SC Course Alignment Project since 2011.

Dr. Matthew Nelson is an Associate Professor of English at Francis Marion University. He serves as Director of the Swamp Fox Writing Project, a local affiliate of the National Writing Project professional development network. As part of this work, he has planned and facilitated professional development workshops for teachers from across grade levels and subject areas, with a focus on helping them become better teachers of writing. Dr. Nelson has served as President of the South Carolina Council of Teachers of English, and he has been an active participant in the SC Course Alignment Project since 2008.

This document was produced as part of a grant from the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education under the auspices of the EIA Centers of Excellence Grant Program.

Why Is Improving College and Career Readiness Important?

- By the year 2020, 65% of all jobs in the United States will require some postsecondary training beyond high school.¹ For all students to remain competitive and for South Carolina to meet its future workforce needs, more students must graduate ready for postsecondary education.
- Historically, secondary and postsecondary educational systems have operated independently, creating gaps and misalignment between the two systems.
- The proportion of students going on to postsecondary education has steadily increased over the past 100 years and will likely continue to increase.
- Students in the U.S. must negotiate the world's most complex system of admission to higher education.
- Today's young people will need to be better educated and prepared as the U.S. continues to move toward a knowledge-based economic model.
- National educational policy is emphasizing college and career readiness in addition to basic skills instruction.
- Nearly four out of five jobs eliminated by the recession were held by workers with a high school diploma or less.²
- South Carolina's development of English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics standards in 2015 provides a timely opportunity to implement data-driven college and career readiness initiatives.
- Despite recent improvements, there remains an achievement gap among students in South Carolina. For example, in 2014, 12% of white students received a score of *F* or *failing* on the Biology 1/ Applied Biology 2 South Carolina End-of-Course Examination, while 35.3% of African American students scored in this lowest performance category.³ This achievement gap directly affects college indicators, such as degree attainment. In 2013, 23.2% of African American adults in South Carolina aged 25–64 held an associate degree or higher, as compared to 41.5% of their white counterparts.⁴

How can I use this information?

We are all facing this challenge together. Students, educators, families, community leaders, employers, and more—everyone has a contribution to make in building successful educational pathways that span early childhood to adulthood. You can use these talking points to avoid the “blame game” that too often surfaces when communities discuss challenges in schools and the education system. By moving away from fault-finding and instead emphasizing the need for shared responsibility, you can help shape constructive conversations that pave the way for student and community success.

1 Carnevale, A., Smith, N., & Strohl, J. (2013). *Recovery: Job growth and education requirements through 2020*. Retrieved from https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Recovery2020.ES_Web_.pdf

2 Carnevale, A. P., Jayasundera, T., & Cheah, B. (2012). *The college advantage: Weathering the economic storm*. Washington, DC: Georgetown Public Policy Institute, Center on Education and the Workforce.

3 South Carolina Department of Education. (2014). 2014 high school assessment program test scores. Retrieved from <http://ed.sc.gov/data/hsap>

4 Lumina Foundation. (2015). *A stronger nation through higher education*. Retrieved from http://www.luminafoundation.org/files/publications/stronger_nation/2015/south-carolina-brief-2015.pdf

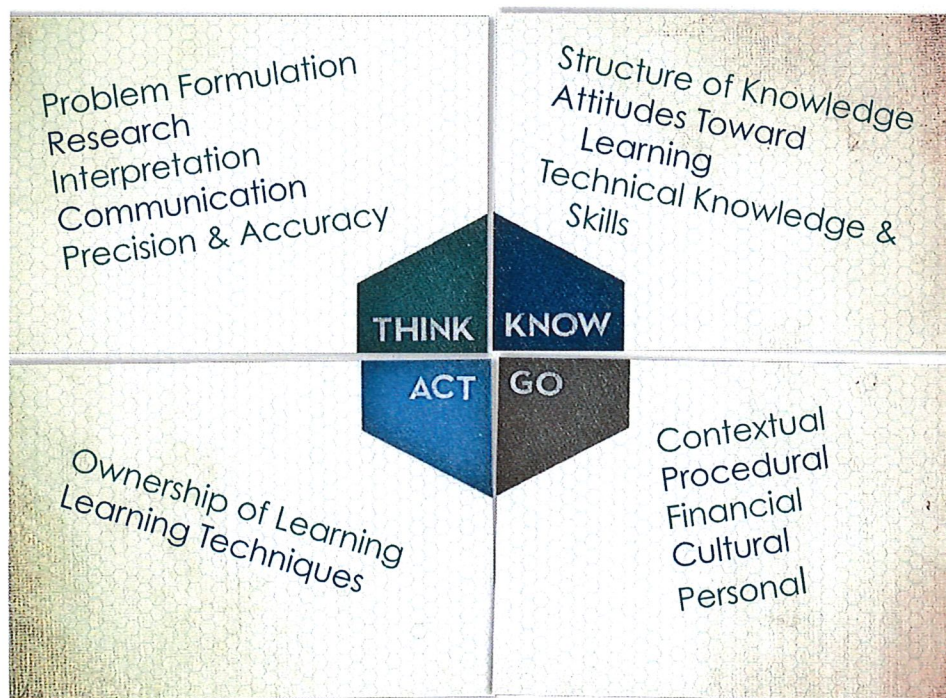
What Is College and Career Readiness?

The measure of a sufficiently prepared student is one who has the knowledge and skills to keep learning beyond secondary school, first in formal settings and then in the workplace throughout their careers, so that they are capable of adapting to unpredictable changes and new economic conditions and opportunities.⁵ A crucial distinction is that college eligibility is not the same as college readiness. Historically, many high schools have emphasized eligibility—getting students accepted into college, with a heavy focus on meeting criteria for admission.

College and career preparation extends beyond just eligibility and emphasizes what students need to know in order to graduate from a postsecondary program. College and career readiness is a multifaceted concept that includes factors both internal and external to the school environment.

Based on extensive research, Dr. David T. Conley and his colleagues at EPIC developed an operational definition of college and career readiness that goes beyond course titles, grades, and test scores.⁶ This model, termed the *Four Keys to College and Career Readiness*, includes Key Cognitive Strategies (THINK), Key Content Knowledge (KNOW), Key Learning Skills and Techniques (ACT), and Key Transition Knowledge and Skills (GO). Although there are certainly other factors that influence college and career readiness, these are the ones that can be most directly affected by schools and for which schools can be reasonably expected to take primary responsibility.⁷

Four Keys to College and Career Readiness



How can I use this information?

Share this definition with secondary and postsecondary colleagues. Use the Four Keys as a framework to discuss and guide conversations about teaching. Sharing common language and a framework is critical to effective, comprehensive planning. Without a comprehensive approach, efforts to prepare students for their postsecondary experiences may be fragmented, duplicative, or otherwise insufficient.

5 Conley, D. T. (2013). *Getting ready for college, careers, and the Common Core: What every educator needs to know*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

6 Conley, D. T. (2007). *Redefining college readiness* (Vol. 3.). Eugene, OR: Educational Policy Improvement Center.

7 Conley, D. T. (2013). *Getting ready for college, careers, and the Common Core: What every educator needs to know*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

The Four Keys to College and Career Readiness

Key Cognitive Strategies

Problem Formulation

- Students develop hypotheses independently, solve problems that have more than one right response, and select strategies to solve a problem from among multiple possibilities.

Research

- Students collect information from multiple sources and evaluate the quality of the sources.

Interpretation

- Students organize, analyze, and evaluate information adeptly.

Communication

- Students develop products through a variety of media, with audience in mind.

Precision and Accuracy

- Students complete multiple drafts and review work for high quality.
- Students apply subject-specific rules for precision and accuracy.

THINK

Key Content Knowledge

Structure of Knowledge

- Students develop ways of knowing that help them retain information and generate ideas.
- Students apply foundational knowledge in novel and non-routine ways.

Attitudes Toward Learning

- Students approach learning content knowledge with an effort-based mindset.

Technical Knowledge and Skills

- Students can apply foundational knowledge in other disciplines.

KNOW

Key Learning Skills and Techniques

Ownership of Learning

- Students connect assignments to their interests.
- Students seek help when needed.
- Students set and pursue goals effectively.
- Students think about the learning strategies they are using.
- Students accurately assess their own learning.
- Students persist when given challenging tasks.

Learning Techniques

- Students manage their time.
- Students prepare and study efficiently for tests, alone and in groups.
- Students take notes using a variety of formats.
- Students consciously monitor their learning effectiveness.
- Students use a variety of strategies to memorize key material.
- Students use technology effectively.
- Students read strategically.
- Students work collaboratively with diverse partners.
- Students consciously monitor their learning effectiveness.

ACT

GO

Contextual

- Students engage in planning for the future by aligning college and career choices to their interests and aspirations.

Procedural

- Students know about college and career options and have the knowledge necessary to apply to programs that align with their aspirations.

Financial

- Students are familiar with the admission process for college and financial aid options, and the cost differences of community colleges, state universities, and private institutions.

Cultural

- Students are aware of the benefits they will gain from their college and career pathways.

Personal

- Students know how to advocate for themselves proactively and strategically within organizations—both in colleges and their careers.

Key Transition Knowledge and Skills

The Four Keys in the Classroom

Secondary instructors can use the following examples to adjust their assignments and classroom practices to align more closely with college and career readiness expectations. For example, a college- and career-ready student can

- read with understanding a range of nonfiction publications, textbooks, and technical materials;
- independently complete an extended assignment, such as a three- to five-page research paper structured along a cogent, coherent line of reasoning; and
- create and maintain a personal schedule that includes a prioritized “to do” list.

Mini Diagnostic

Completing the Mini Diagnostic activity will generate a brief but actionable report that summarizes where a high school falls in terms of postsecondary student preparation.



Answer Key

1 = Not at all like my school 2 = A little like my school 3 = Somewhat like my school
4 = A lot like my school 5 = Very much like my school DK = Don't know .

Key Cognitive Strategies (THINK)

Educators in my school:	1	2	3	4	5	DK
intentionally discuss or assign problems in class that have more than one right answer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
expect students to use evidence to support opinions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
encourage students to review their work before turning it in so that they catch common mistakes, omissions and errors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
link course content with problems or issues in other subjects or beyond the classroom.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
emphasize multiple modes of communication, including speaking and listening.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
require a research project that includes collecting evidence, constructing an argument, and rewriting at least one draft.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

TOTAL SCORE FOR KEY COGNITIVE STRATEGIES _____

Key Content Knowledge (KNOW)

Classes in my school:	1	2	3	4	5	DK
have a curriculum that emphasizes the structure of knowledge in each subject area.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
emphasize the value of academic achievement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
have real world applications of content knowledge.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
have syllabi that identify explicitly prerequisite knowledge and skills necessary for success in each course.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
emphasize multiple modes of writing including expository, descriptive, and analytic, in addition to narrative writing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
emphasize individual effort over aptitude.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

TOTAL SCORE FOR KEY CONTENT KNOWLEDGE _____



Answer Key

1 = Not at all like my school 2 = A little like my school 3 = Somewhat like my school
4 = A lot like my school 5 = Very much like my school DK = Don't know

Key Learning Skills and Techniques (ACT)

Students in my school:	1	2	3	4	5	DK
are aware of how they learn successfully.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
seek help when they need it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
identify possible strategies for solving problems rather than expecting teachers to give them the strategy or answer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
know the expectations in each course for tests, assessments, and assignments.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
learn specific strategies for memorizing and retaining key facts, dates, vocabulary, and terminology.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
set goals for themselves and create plans for how they are going to achieve them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

TOTAL SCORE FOR KEY LEARNING SKILLS _____

Key Transition Knowledge and Skills (GO)

Adults in my school:	1	2	3	4	5	DK
have a publicly stated vision or goal to promote college and career readiness for all students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
see that all students complete a practice college application by tenth grade.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
begin providing college financial information to all students and parents immediately upon enrollment and yearly thereafter.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
encourage teachers to invite speakers who help students learn about careers and workplace expectations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
publicize college acceptances and career choices of seniors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
emphasize going to college by encouraging staff to decorate public spaces in ways that support college-going.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

TOTAL SCORE FOR KEY TRANSITION KNOWLEDGE _____

TOTAL OVERALL SCORE: _____

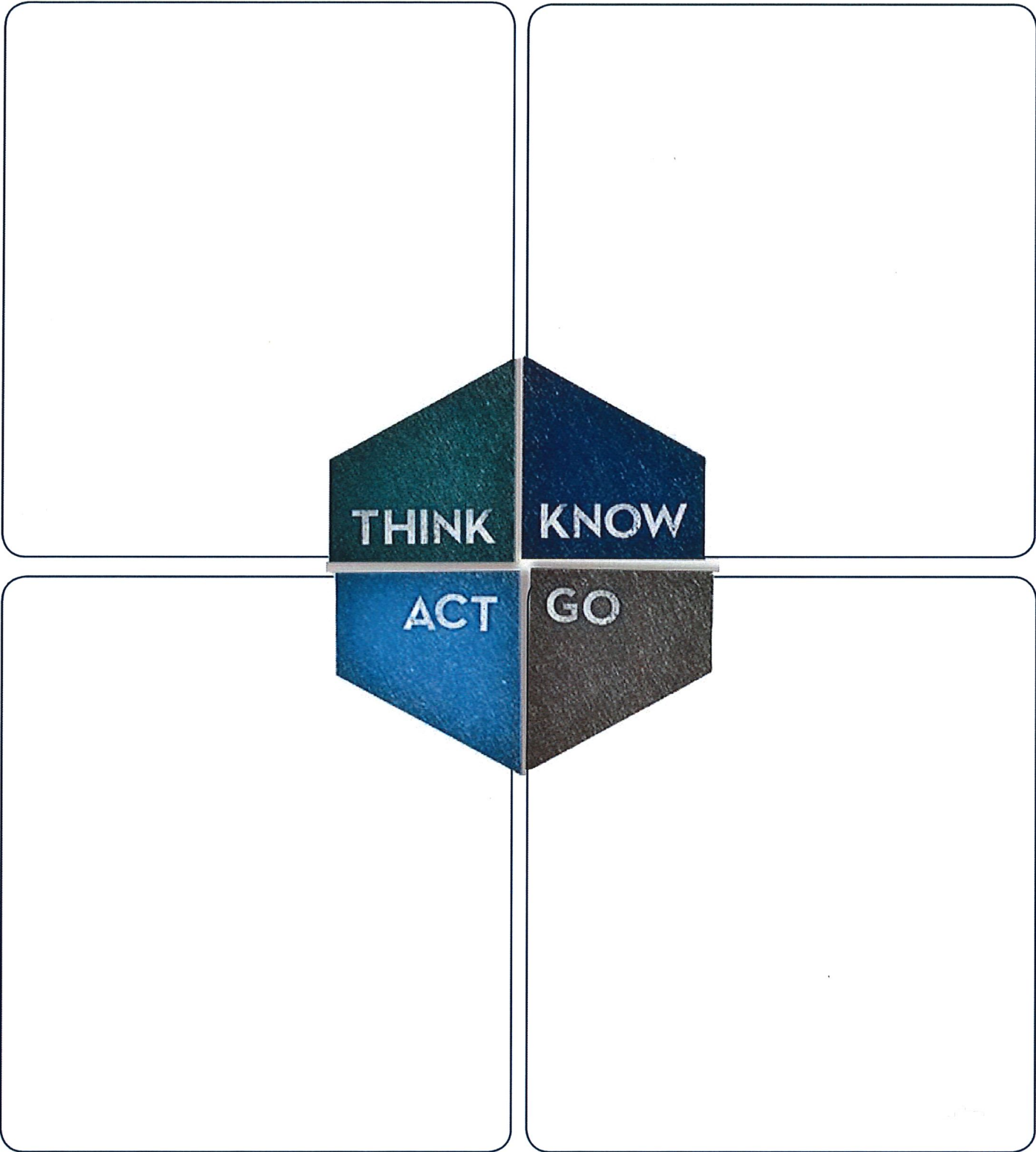


Score Key

120-97	=	HIGHLY COLLEGE AND CAREER READY
96-73	=	STRONG, WITH ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT
72-49	=	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT
< 49	=	CHALLENGED

Mapping Your Context

Think about the current college and career readiness practices, initiatives, and efforts in your local educational setting. Map these efforts to the Four Keys categories: THINK, KNOW, ACT, and GO.



Seven Principles of College and Career Readiness

In 2007, EPIC received a grant to study the programs and practices of high schools that demonstrated greater-than-expected success in preparing students for college and careers. Researchers participated in thorough site visits at a sample of 38 schools nationally, where they held interviews, conducted classroom observations, and gathered an extensive collection of documents. Based on what they learned from these visits, EPIC researchers synthesized seven principles that describe what successful educators and administrators do to prepare their students for college and career readiness.

- 1.** Create and maintain a college and career readiness culture in the school.
- 2.** Create a core academic program aligned with and leading to college readiness by the end of 12th grade.
- 3.** Teach key self-management skills and academic behaviors and expect students to use them.
- 4.** Make college and careers real by helping students manage the complexity of preparing for and applying to postsecondary education.
- 5.** Create assignments and grading policies that more closely approximate college and career expectations each successive year of high school.
- 6.** Make the senior year meaningful and appropriately challenging.
- 7.** Build partnerships with and connections to postsecondary programs and institutions.

How can I use this information?

Faculty members, counselors, and administrators can use each principle to begin conversations about improving school performance. Postsecondary institutions should take particular note of Principle 7 and consider how they can contribute to such partnerships.