University of California at Berkeley

Self-Assessment Guide
for College and Career Academies

CCASN

College & Career Academy Support Network

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA · BERKELEY

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Self-Assessment Guide for College & Career Academies
Introduction and Purpose

Educators commit to working with College & Career Academies because, when implemented well, the highly effective practices in this model have been proven to significantly improve student success in school. Regular review of the set of practices incorporated into the College & Career Academy model is an essential part of the work of teacher teams, and informs action planning and program development. Such review of model components is complemented by data-based assessment and decision-making, for which we are providing an overview and suggestions in the companion piece, *Analyzing Student Data*.

The primary purpose of this *Self Assessment Guide* is to identify the Academy's relative strengths and weaknesses in order to initiate a process of reflection and improvement. Notes concerning each indicator can be included, such as what parts of the component are well implemented or need attention, and what needs to be done to improve. Comparisons can be made among the three sections and the components within each to see which features are strongest and weakest. This process is best done by a team, so teachers, administrators, and partners involved can explore options and define paths toward improvement.

The three sections in this *Self Assessment Guide*—Small Learning Communities, Curriculum and Instruction, and Partnerships with Employers, Community, and Higher Education—derive from the definition of Career Academies agreed to by the organizations working to support them nationally, the Career Academies National Standards of Practice, and are articulated with the Seven Essential Elements of High Quality Linked Learning Pathways. The requirements of California's Partnership Academies are also considered. Linked Learning pathways in California can access ConnectEd's OPTIC tool, which provides an online self-assessment that links directly to action planning tools and allows pathway leaders to upload evidence supporting their applications for certification.

To calculate a score, check the circle corresponding to the point value for each indicator and add the points. The top score possible is 100. If the Academy is not yet fully implemented,

some of the items will be inapplicable (e.g., post-secondary plan, mentor/ internship/ community service programs), the scoring can be adjusted accordingly, and action plans that address those gaps can be developed strategically.

A second purpose for this *Self Assessment Guide* is to obtain an indication of how well the Academy stacks up against national and state criteria for quality implementation. In order to assess how completely a College & Career Academy is implemented in any given site, and to connect the degree of implementation with the amount of improvement in student performance, two kinds of information are needed. The first is information on the quality of implementation, for which the Self Assessment Guide is designed, to assess how well the College & Career academy features have been established. The second is data on student performance, the kind normally kept by schools and districts, which can give a picture of who is enrolled in academies, whether their course-taking experience is consistent with the academy model, and how their performance is affected as a result of their participation in the College & Career Academy.

To support this latter type of self-assessment, this guide also contains a second, brief section on *Analyzing Student Data* that includes suggestions for compiling and analyzing commonly available data for measuring Academy effectiveness. This data can answer three kinds of questions:

- Demographics—Do Academy students represent a cross section of the school?
- Program experience—Does student course taking reflect the Academy design, preparing students for both college and career?
- Student outcomes—Are Academy students showing improved attendance, retention, credits, grades, test scores, graduation rates, and college entrance rates?

As explained in this section, these questions can be addressed by:

- Comparing snapshots over time for an individual Academy
- Analyzing year-to-year changes for individual students
- Relating program characteristics to student performance

This overview does not provide in-depth information on how to conduct such data analysis. For more information on how to do this, contact CCASN through our website: casn.berkeley.edu.

College & Career Academy Self-Assessment Guide

There are a total of 25 items in the three sections: "Small Learning Community Structures", "Curriculum and Instruction", and "Partnerships with Employers and Higher Education".   Checks can be entered in one of four "level of implementation" circles for each indicator on a continuum from 1= no implementation to 4 = full implementation. Scores should be determined using the criteria in the scoring guide.   For example, if none of the criteria listed in the scoring guide have been met, circle 1 should be checked. If all the criteria listed have been met, circle 4 should be checked. Thus a perfect score is 100.

Choices should be based on the knowledge of the Academy teachers and their sense for how fully achieved each aspect of the program is, given what is possible at the high school and how serious any problems are. For example, if there are only 90 students in the Academy across three grade levels, but this is as large as is realistically possible in the high school, this can be considered a 3 or 4. Conversely, if there is an advisory program in place for 300 students but it is poorly run, this might receive a 1 or 2.

Part 1: Small Learning Community Structures

• <u>Defined mission and goals</u>—The Academy has a written definition of its mission and goals that are available to the administrators, teachers, students, parents, advisory board, and others involved. These include expected student outcomes, a focus on increasing student achievement, raising student aspirations and motivation, and on developing post-secondary plans for education and future careers.

Level of Implementation: 1   2   3   4
                                  O   O   O   O
Notes:_____

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• <u>Student selection</u>—College & Career Academies inform students of their options at least the semester before they enter, and students enter voluntarily based on their interest in the program. Each Academy reflects the high school's demographics. Attrition removes less than 50% of the original participants by graduation.

Level of Implementation: 1   2   3   4
                                  O   O   O   O
Notes:_____

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• <u>Cohort scheduling</u>—Academy students have a minimum of two, preferably three or more classes together throughout the year, limited to the students enrolled in the program (minimally 80%), and taught by a team of teachers who work together to plan the program, coordinate their instruction, and evolve common strategies for helping students having problems.

Level of Implementation: 1   2   3   4
                                  O   O   O   O
Notes:_____

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• <u>Grade levels/ courses</u>—Themed Academies operate at a minimum of two grade levels (11-12), preferably three (10-12) or four (9-12), with teacher looping where feasible. Academies have one Career-Technical or career themed academic class each year. A written course sequence across grade levels exists. Academy students have the same options for non-Academy courses as others at the high school, including access to advanced coursework.

Level of Implementation: 1   2   3   4
                                  O   O   O   O
Notes:_____

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• <u>Teacher selection, roles</u>—Teachers choose to participate in the Academy. One teacher (sometimes two) agrees to take the lead, serving as the Academy Coordinator(s): e.g. interacting with administrators and board members, managing the budget, helping to coordinate teacher professional development, and helping to coordinate employer, higher education, and parental involvement. Teacher replacements are guided by the Academy team. A majority of Academy teachers' classes are taught in the program, and the teacher team meets regularly to collaborate on curriculum, instruction, assessment and student support.

Level of Implementation: 1   2   3   4
                                   O   O   O   O
Notes:_____

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• <u>Administrative support</u>— The district Board of Education is aware of the Academy and its mission and goals, and is on public record in support. The Superintendent publicly endorses the program and offers active support. The high school principal/ administrators are knowledgeable of the program, public advocates, and are involved in its funding, staffing and support, including release time for the lead teacher to coordinate the program, and teacher team collaboration time. This support results in adequate funding, facilities, equipment and learning materials.

Level of Implementation: 1   2   3   4
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Notes:_____

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• <u>Counselor/ scheduling support</u>—All high school counselors can explain what cohort scheduling is, and understand its importance. Master scheduling is a cooperative effort that integrates the needs and support of Academy teachers. The master schedule indicates which classes are in the Academy. All Academy classes are comprised of at least 80% program students. Counselor caseloads are assigned by Academy.

Level of Implementation: 1   2   3   4
                                   O   O   O   O
Notes:_____

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• Governance and leadership— The Academy has an advisory board with members from the district and high school administration, program teaching staff, and those involved from outside the high school (e.g., supporting employers, institutions of higher education). It may also include community representatives, and academy parents and students. The board holds meetings at least quarterly, with defined agendas and outcomes, and helps to define policies. Students have input into these policies.

Level of Implementation: 1   2   3   4
                                    O   O   O   O

Notes:_____

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• Parental involvement—Parents or guardians learn of the Academy in advance of their son or daughter joining it, endorse the student's application, and provide support to them when needed. They are involved in appropriate activities (e.g., Advisory Board, instructional support/ volunteer aides, field trips, recognition events, and so on). They meet with the Academy team when needed to resolve problems their son or daughter is having.

Level of Implementation: 1   2   3   4
                                    O   O   O   O

Notes:_____

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• Enrichment and personalization—The Academy maintains limited size, teacher teamwork, and a supportive atmosphere. There are no more than 150 students enrolled per grade level. Where possible, academy classrooms are near each other in the building. Teacher and/or peer tutoring is available for students. Student achievement is recognized publicly at least quarterly. At least one Academy social event is held per semester. At least one Academy recognition ceremony is held per school year.

Level of Implementation: 1   2   3   4
                                    O   O   O   O

Notes:_____

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• <u>A cycle of improvement</u>—Academy implementation is regularly examined. Program leaders regularly assess the Academy's functioning, studying its strengths and weaknesses. This involves gathering feedback from key stakeholders, including students. These reviews lead to plans to address any problems. Such plans include timetables and benchmarks for improvement, and refer back to the Academy's underlying mission and goals.

Level of Implementation: 1   2   3   4
                                O   O   O   O

Notes:_____

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Part 1 Score:_____(max—44)

Part 2: Curriculum and Instruction

• <u>Standards, assessment</u>— The academic curriculum is framed around state and/ or national standards. Curriculum and instructional materials in career related classes are based at least partially on an industry source; 21st century skills are incorporated and assessed; assessments are multiple and reflect current practices in the career field.

Level of Implementation: 1 2 3 4

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Notes:_____

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• <u>Academic courses</u>—Coursework reaches high levels of English and math, generally four years of each, in addition to substantial coursework in science and social studies. Graduates are qualified to attend four-year colleges. Flexibility is provided for students with special needs (e.g., English language learners, special education students, AP and IB students).

Level of Implementation: 1 2 3 4

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Notes:_____

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• <u>Career-technical courses</u>—In an Academy there is a written CTE or career themed academic course sequence across the years of the Academy; local employers from the career field help to guide the curriculum in these courses; students can demonstrate knowledge of a vertical range of careers and related educational requirements in the career field; where possible, the sequence of CTE courses enables interested students to obtain a skill certification recognized by employers.

Level of Implementation: 1 2 3 4

             O O O O

Notes:_____

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• <u>Faculty and Staff</u>—Teachers are credentialed in their field, volunteers in the Academy, committed to its mission and goals, and willing to work in a team and share the extra responsibilities involved. These include organizing and attending Advisory Board meetings, helping with student recruitment, organizing parent contacts and participating in parent meetings, and providing student counseling.

Level of Implementation: 1 2 3 4

             O O O O

Notes:_____

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• Outcome-based curriculum integration—Students are shown how their academic subjects relate to each other and apply in real world contexts. Students engage in projects requiring the application of skills and concepts from several courses; these include a senior and/or capstone project; such projects are assessed at least in part by adults outside the high school. Students are shown the relationship between their academic subjects and career theme; projects are assessed at least in part by employer partners from the career field.

Level of Implementation: 1   2   3   4
                                  O   O   O   O
Notes:_____

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• Teacher coordination of curriculum—Academy teachers have regular meeting time, at least weekly; this occurs wherever possible during a common planning period; lead teachers are provided at least one additional release period per day; compensation is provided to other Academy teachers for substantial time involvement beyond their regular teaching schedule. Teachers can identify at least one project per semester that addresses essential academy outcomes, and requires students to integrate curriculum among academic subjects and in relation to the career field. Teachers incorporate performance assessment tasks for which they utilize common rubrics to assess, monitor, and support every student's progress toward mastery of college and career ready pathway learning outcomes. Teachers are provided staff development support for these efforts.

Level of Implementation: 1   2   3   4
                                  O   O   O   O
Notes:_____

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• Professional development—Academy teachers are provided with training in: SLC structures, working as a team, outcome-based curriculum development and curricular integration, student support, cohort scheduling, and where necessary, involving experts from outside the high school. Parents are adequately prepared for their involvement (if any) as classroom aides, field trip chaperones and social event organizers.

Level of Implementation: 1   2   3   4
                                  O   O   O   O
Notes:_____

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• <u>Postsecondary plan/ links</u>—Academy students are exposed to two- and four-year colleges through speakers, visits and informational meetings; they have access to a career library and post-graduate counseling; they develop a written post-secondary plan by the end of their junior year; there are articulation agreements between the Academy and local postsecondary institutions; students have the option of earning some college credit while in the program.

Level of Implementation: 1   2   3   4
                                     O   O   O   O

Notes:_____

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• <u>Student assessment</u>—Student data are collected to describe the student body within the Academy (e.g., grade level, gender, race/ethnicity), as well as multiple outcome measures, including a variety of accepted indicators of performance (e.g., attendance, retention, credits, grade point averages, state test scores, graduation rates, college going rates). These measures are reported accurately and fairly, and show whether, and how much, the academy improves student performance. Performance assessments utilize common rubrics to assess, monitor, and support every student's progress toward mastery of college and career ready pathway learning outcomes. Measures include knowledge of the field's terminology, technical concepts, and ability to apply English, math, and other academic skills to authentic real world projects. Where appropriate, industry certification is incorporated.

Level of Implementation: 1   2   3   4
                                     O   O   O   O

Notes:_____

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Part 2 Score:_____(max--36)

Part 3: Partnerships with Employers and Higher Education

• Career field selection—The Academy career field is selected with input from local employers; a number of such employers support the Academy (e.g., as Advisory Board members, speakers, field trip hosts, mentors, and internship supervisors); the industry is growing and offers well paying career options with upward mobility; there are programs in local colleges students can advance to after graduation.

Level of Implementation: 1   2   3   4
                                   O   O   O   O
Notes:_____
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• Sophomore business speakers and field trips—At least two speakers per semester from the employer and high education partners describe their products, services, range of jobs, and related training programs; at least one student field trip per semester takes sophomores to places of employment in the academy career field or local college campuses; these experiences are linked to the curriculum and classroom instruction.

Level of Implementation: 1   2   3   4
                                   O   O   O   O
Notes:_____
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• Junior mentor program—Juniors have a volunteer employee or college representative who serves as a career related mentor; there is a process that pairs students with well matched mentors; a staff member coordinates this program; mentors receive an orientation for this role; a series of mentor/ student experiences is planned throughout the year; a mechanism is in place to deal with problems; students and mentors complete written evaluations of the experience at the end of the year.

Level of Implementation: 1   2   3   4
                                   O   O   O   O
Notes:_____
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• Junior/ senior workplace learning program—The summer following the junior year, and/or part-time the senior year, students have the option of an internship with a cooperating employer or a community service position; there is a process to prepare and match students with appropriate positions; there is a written plan to guide this experience; if an internship, students are exposed to a variety of positions in the company and learn of the related training; a staff member coordinates this program, checks on students during the experience, and resolves problems; students and supervisors complete a written evaluation at the end of the program.

Level of Implementation: 1   2   3   4
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Notes:_____

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• Dual Enrollment Options—Links are established between the academy and local colleges, especially community colleges, that allow juniors and/or seniors to take courses that build on their Academy course sequence and provide credit at both the high school and college. College representatives provide input for the academy career related course sequence so that it will dovetail with their college program. The college courses may be offered at either the high school or college, and by teachers from either level, depending on local conditions. The cost of these is borne at least in part by the college in exchange for increased enrollment in its courses. High school and college teachers work together in administering this program, with support from their respective administrations. Counselors at both levels are informed of these options and academy students are given ample opportunity to enroll in them.

Level of Implementation: 1   2   3   4
                           O   O   O   O

Notes:_____

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Part 3 Score:_____(max--20)

Part 1_____**/44**   **Part 2**_____**/36**   **Part 3**_____**/20**

Total Academy Score:_____**/100**

Analyzing Student Data

This is a companion to the *Self Assessment Guide*. The procedures described here are designed to guide the analysis of student data. The two approaches are most effective when used together.

Three kinds of information about students are especially useful for Academies to consider: 1) demographics; 2) measures of program experience; and 3) student outcomes.

1. Demographics. These provide a picture of the students enrolled in the program. Suggested categories here: age, grade level, gender, race/ethnicity, grade-point average prior Academy entry, and standardized test scores. In order to ensure that each program enrolls a reasonably representative cross-section of the school's students, the characteristics of Academy students should be compared with characteristics of non-program students at each grade level.

2. Academy experience measures. These provide information on the extent to which students are participating in the planned curriculum. Although the Academy lists a set of courses to be taken by students at each grade level, conflicts in scheduling may prevent some students from taking some of the planned courses. The proportion of intended courses that a student takes at each grade level, or over the duration of the program, is an indicator of the extent to which the student has actually participated in the intended curriculum. This proportion can be averaged across students to give a measure of curricular integrity.

Another such indicator is the proportion of students in Academy classes who are actually program members. In theory, such classes should consist entirely of program students. However, in practice the complexities of scheduling sometimes result in non-program students being included. This makes it difficult for teachers to integrate curriculum, and dilutes the effectiveness of the program. It is possible to measure the "purity" of each Academy class as the proportion of students who are members of the

program. That proportion can be averaged over program classes, giving a measure of the average purity of classes in the program.

3. <u>Outcome Measures</u>. These provide information on Academy student performance. Outcomes to be measured each year can include: attendance (percentage of days attended); both program and school dropouts (students who leave their high school may transfer to another high school, formally drop out, or simply disappear); credits earned toward graduation; grade for each course taken (and annual GPA); scores on state tests; and for twelfth graders, a) whether the student graduates on time and b) qualifies for admission to a four-year college.

Most of this information is usually available from computerized databases maintained by school districts. The only special requirements are that "flags" be attached to each Academy student, indicating the Academy to which he or she belongs, and to each program course. This information can be used in various ways. Here are three examples.

1. <u>Comparing snapshots over time, for an individual Academy</u>. All three kinds of information — demographics of students, program experience measures, and student outcomes — can be compiled each year, for each grade level. Comparing these measures from one year to the next — for instance, information on this year's twelfth graders compared to last year's — gives an indication of whether the program is improving over time. However, changes in student outcomes *may* be due to differences between this year's and last year's classes and must be cautiously interpreted.

2. <u>Comparing year-to-year changes for individual students</u>. The performance of this year's twelfth graders can be compared to their own performance in eleventh grade or across grades 9-12. This is a more valid measure of improvement in student performance, but it requires being able to link information for a student from year to year. If this can be done, the average change for students across each cohort, compared to the cohort's previous performance, can be computed each year as an

indicator of program effectiveness. This measure of students' year-to-year progress can also be compared over time for each Academy as an indicator of whether the program is becoming more effective. However, even if such data show progression over time, as hoped, the specific program features that cause these improvements may still be unclear.

3. <u>Relating Academy program characteristics to student performance</u>. The most powerful use of this information is to support a systematic process of continuous improvement. For this purpose, it is helpful to compare similar information from a number of different Academies. Correlations can be computed between students' year-to-year progress and various program characteristics, including the program experience measures described above. Statistical adjustments can be made to take account of any changes in student demographics. This kind of analysis can provide practical guidance by identifying programmatic variables that may cause student performance in some Academies to improve faster than in others.

<u>Additional Options.</u> All of these analyses can be done with information that is usually available in district databases. Sometimes additional measures can be added, such as: student disciplinary actions (e.g., detentions, suspensions, expulsions); awards; SAT/ACT scores; college applications/ acceptances; and post-graduate plans. The purpose is to see whether Academy involvement improves these. Comparisons with non-program students in the same high school, or changes over time, or better yet a combination of the two, can provide a basis for gauging program impact. Student (and teacher) questionnaires can also be used to gather information on education and career related activities and attitudes.

<u>Follow-Up Surveys of Graduates</u>. Students can be followed up at one or more points after graduation to determine whether they go on to some form of college or work, and how they do in these pursuits. Such follow-up surveys of graduates are one of the most powerful types of information by which to judge the effects of an Academy as they give a picture of the lasting effects of these approaches.