# College and Career Readiness Toolkit

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**Dear Out of School Time Program Providers;**

We know that when you design your before and after-school, weekend, holiday and summer programs that you have specific goals and objectives in mind. Often these goals are focused on the here and now - building concrete social and emotional learning skills, getting students on track for reading or math, broadening knowledge within specified content areas, fostering creativity and problem solving. These goals are excellent interim outcomes for our larger and broader goals of helping students become successful in life and in seeking education, training beyond high school and eventually embarking into careers.

Unfortunately too many students don't get enough exposure through school to the broad array of possibilities and tracks for additional education and careers that inspires students to reach high and follow passions. Too many students don't get introduced to the steps along the pathways they need to follow to achieve their dreams. Intentional career and college readiness often isn't brought down to Middle School where the choices students need to make really begin. Once they reach High School, schools often can't cover all the bases alone. According to the American School Counselor Association there should be a student to counselor ratio of 250 to 1. Maryland has an average of 369 to 1 and in Baltimore City the ratio is just 1 counselor to 900 students.

Given the need for more caring and informed adults to provide guidance to young people, OST programs can and should play a critical role in starting early and continuously incorporating career and college readiness activities, culture and mindset. Research indicates that OST programs are effective and play an important role in building 21stcentury skills. We have built this toolkit to provide practical how-to's, activities, and additional resources for you to help bridge the information, awareness and opportunity gap for students. These opportunities can make the difference for the long term outcomes and quality of life, not just for the students you serve, but for families and communities.

Students who end their education at high school are more at risk for experiencing poverty and less likely to earn living wages than students who pursue skilled trade or college degrees. Students who earn bachelor's degrees have a 3.5 times lower poverty rate than those who earn only a high school diploma. Skilled trades often offer another path, with fewer years required to achieve degrees and often less debt encumbered, many trade paths also offer well paying jobs. The National Association of College & Employers estimates the average starting salary for a college graduate in 2019 was $55,280. The average technical and trade school graduates will make $49,002, often starting their earnings earlier than a 4 year degree earner and will likely spend less for their degree or certificate. In contrast a high school graduate who is in the workforce in Maryland will earn $41,543 a year annually and those without advanced certifications or degrees are much more likely to be unemployed.

Of even greater concern is the inequity in earning for Baltimore City high school graduates at all levels of educational attainment. According to the 2018 Baltimore Education Research Consortium Study, Launching into Adulthood:

> The median income for all graduates after six years was $15,093. For those who had completed a bachelor's degree, it was $18,968, and for those with an associate's but no bachelor's degree, $22,060. Among graduates who enrolled in college but had not completed a degree, median income was $15,604. For those who never enrolled in college, it was $13,374. In contrast, the livable wage threshold — the minimum annual amount one adult needs to cover basic household expenses — was $27,622.

The BERC study recommends additional counseling for middle and high school students to align with student interests and to provide detailed information and support for the kinds of choices students need to make to proceed on their chosen career pathways. Additionally, they recommend educating students on the definition of liveable wages and how to determine the earnings potentials for a variety of career pathways.

Our goal is for you to use this toolkit to make the difference for youth participating in your programs by opening up options to them ***as early as possible;*** increasing the quality and frequency that students are exposed to career and college readiness; and having more opportunities to practice and apply the necessary skills.

We hope that as you utilize the toolkit in your program you will provide feedback to the Maryland Out of School Time Network on what works and what we can improve. We will continue to update the toolkit and make it available free and available online along with any additional training and professional development opportunities we make available at www.mostnetwork.org and you can provide direct feedback to info@mdoutofschooltime.org.

Thank you for all you and your programs do to support young people in Maryland!

Sincerely,

Ellie Mitchell
Executive Director, Maryland Out of School Time Network

# _Introduction_

Many of us may remember playing the board game Life as a child. The game is supposed to provide an understanding of the many decisions and opportunities life presents along the road and provides a relatively simplistic cause and effect formula of failure and success. Unfortunately for too many students the real game of life provides more roadblocks, potholes, and off ramps than ever imagined by the game designers at Hasbro.

The pathways toward careers and college can be complex to navigate. Some pathways require early decisions in coursework (for instance completing certain levels of math in middle school). College and other post-secondary choices are directly related to family finances, planning, eligibility for different types of aid, and accessibility of completing financial aid forms. Financial challenges are just part of the list of barriers facing first generation college goers including racial disparities, unfamiliarity with college going cultures, and lack of broader support networks. Immigrant and English Language Learners face similar challenges with the additional burden of language barriers and illegal immigrants are left with even fewer options and closed directions. Understanding and being aware of these concerns when guiding the diverse and varied student populations served by afterschool programs is critical to opening the roadways.

With 80% of a young person's life spent outside of the school day and school year, afterschool programs can play an important role in providing guidance, support and even inspiration for students' career and college pathways — helping to remove barriers and open new avenues. Afterschool: A Path to College & Career Readiness a brief created by Ignite Afterschool in partnership with the Asia Society identifies three main roles of out-of-school time program can play:
1. Raising college & career aspirations
2. Fostering 21st Century skills
3. Connecting youth to workforce - particularly STEM careers

Betsy Brand, of the American Youth Policy Forum, goes further to say that out-of-school time programs help connect learning to college, career, and future plans by offering opportunities to develop and apply skills in teamwork and through complex projects, real world challenges  and connecting students directly to work experiences like internships.

There is a great need to begin earlier than high school with these connections because on-time graduation and avoiding drop-out is rooted to engagement and academic success in middle school. In a study of middle schoolers, less than 1 out of every 4 students with at least one "off-track indicator" graduated high school in five years or less. Beginning with elementary school, students should be on a pathway of learning about work, learning through work, and learning for work — all the time differentiating these experiences based on students interests.

Our toolkit provides practical resources, information and activities for out-of-school time programs to move through this continuum, starting with foundational skills, career and college readiness culture building, and awareness. As students move closer to high school graduation, the toolkit offers

**"Afterschool Programming as a Lever to Enhance and Provide Career Readiness Opportunities."**
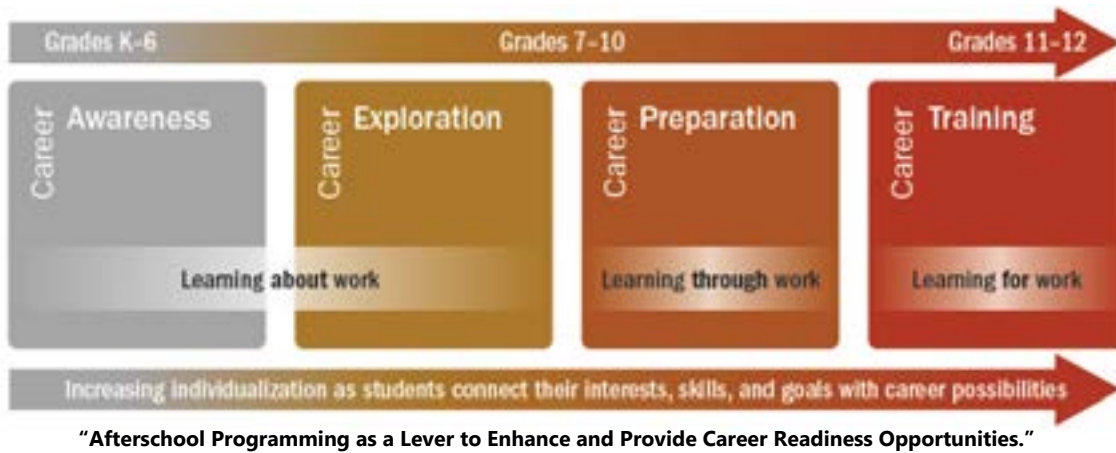
how-to's on building partnerships with colleges and industry to make the transition to applied learning that prepares students for the next steps.

## *Toolkit Overview & How to Use*

Each section of the toolkit will begin with an overview of the area of focus including any relevant research. Throughout the toolkit there will be adaptations to the material to be age appropriate for middle school and high school. Following the overview, each unit will include some combination of the following resources:

**Knowledge Sharing**
- Offers the reader with basic information that provides important background for all program providers to know in order to best serve a diverse population of students.

**How-To's**
- Provides step by step approaches for helping your program design learning opportunities, implement innovations, build new partnerships, and access new information.

**Activities**
- Details specific interactive activities that can be incorporated into your program anytime with descriptions of learning objectives and the time and materials needed.

**More Links to Explore**
- Lists additional resources you can explore online to extend and deepen learning in this topic area.

**This toolkit can be used to:**
- Design your program model and create curriculum.
- Make the case for your program in applying to career and college readiness grants by utilizing the research and best practices.
- Provide resources and training to staff.
- Share with potential career and college readiness partners to build new opportunities for your students.

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**The Career and College Readiness Toolkit is an initiative of the Maryland Out of School Time Network. To learn more and find more resources, visit www.mostnetwork.org/initiatives/CCR.**