

THE STATE OF CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION:  
**CAREER ADVISING  
AND DEVELOPMENT**

**NEW SKILLS FOR YOUTH**

JPMORGAN CHASE & Co.

**ADVANCE** > CTE  
State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work

**CCSSO**  
Council of Chief State School Officers

**ESG** | Education Strategy Group

**AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION**

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## ABOUT THE NEW SKILLS FOR YOUTH INITIATIVE

In January 2016, JPMorgan Chase & Co. launched New Skills for Youth, a \$75 million, five-year initiative, aimed at strengthening career-focused education, starting in high school and ending with postsecondary degrees or credentials aligned with high-skill jobs.

As part of this initiative, JPMorgan Chase, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), Advance CTE and Education Strategy Group (ESG) have partnered on a multi-year state competition to:

- Dramatically increase the number of students in the U.S. who successfully complete career pathways that begin in secondary school and culminate in postsecondary degrees and/or industry credentials with labor market value; and
- Catalyze transformational approaches to the design and implementation of programs and policies to increase students' career readiness in a cohort of leading states and disseminate lessons learned to the rest of the country.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The national conversation and momentum to advance career readiness for all learners continue to grow. Increasingly, stakeholders and advocates are focusing on how to best leverage career advising and development systems and programs as part of their career readiness reforms. The student supports provided by effective career advising and development are essential for helping learners understand their career choices and make the best decisions for their futures. Unfortunately, not enough is known about effective state-level or school-level strategies for career advising and development across the country.

Advance CTE, as part of the New Skills for Youth initiative, partnered with the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) to conduct survey research with three questionnaires. Advance CTE surveyed State Career Technical Education (CTE) Directors, and ASCA sent separate surveys to a selection of school counselors and to State School Counseling Directors in states where that role has been specifically identified. In total, responses were received from 45 State CTE Directors, 10 State School Counseling Directors and 647 school counselors. The school counselors represent all 50 states and the District of Columbia, as well as all grade levels, with 54 percent of respondents working at the elementary school level, 22 percent at the middle school level, and 24 percent at the high school level. Some of the key findings include:

- Across the board, states are not overly confident in the effectiveness of their career advising and development systems. Fifty-eight percent believe they are only somewhat effectively serving K–12 students, and 55 percent believe they are either only somewhat effective or not effective at serving postsecondary CTE students.
- States, on average, are supporting a multitude of strategies at the K–12 level for career advising and development (an average of 5.7 strategies), yet they report mixed levels of effectiveness for both the individual strategies and collectively.

- Similarly, school counselors also employ many strategies (an average of 5.8) in their career advising and development work and generally feel more optimistic about the effectiveness of their strategies than states do about state-level strategies.
- School counselors who connect students with CTE coursework and career pathways find it an effective career advising and development strategy, but relatively few school counselors are able to make these connections:
  - o Only 27 percent of middle school counselors report that they connect students with CTE coursework or career pathways, even though this strategy is rated one of the more effective among those who use it, with 87 percent of the school counselors who use it in middle school labeling it as effective or extremely effective; and
  - o Sixty percent of high school counselors use connecting students with CTE coursework and career pathways as a career advising and development strategy, and 91 percent of those find it effective or extremely effective, with a full 50 percent labeling it extremely effective.
- School counselors struggle with balancing their heavy workloads and other counseling responsibilities, and they want more professional development and community conversations around career readiness to support their students more effectively.

In light of these findings, Advance CTE and ASCA developed four overarching recommendations for states to improve their career advising and development systems:

- Provide more effective professional development and resources to school counselors and establish feedback loops to ensure that the professional development is having its intended impact;
- Ensure that career advising and development is a school- and community-wide effort, with effective coordination between school counselors and school administration and active participation from classroom instructors and community organizations;
- Explore partnerships between secondary and postsecondary systems and institutions to both gather more data on existing strategies and implement new strategies as appropriate, including collaborating with postsecondary student success teams to incorporate career advising and development strategies; and
- Examine and improve current career advising and development strategies so that they are all part of one broad, cohesive strategy designed to guide all learners effectively to the careers of their choice.

# INTRODUCTION

In 2016, Advance CTE, its members and partner organizations launched *Putting Learner Success First: A Shared Vision for the Future of CTE*, a document that establishes a bold vision for all of education and Career Technical Education's (CTE) role in achieving that vision. The second principle of this vision advocates for the development and implementation of a career advising and development system that empowers all learners and allows them to be successful in a career pathway of interest.

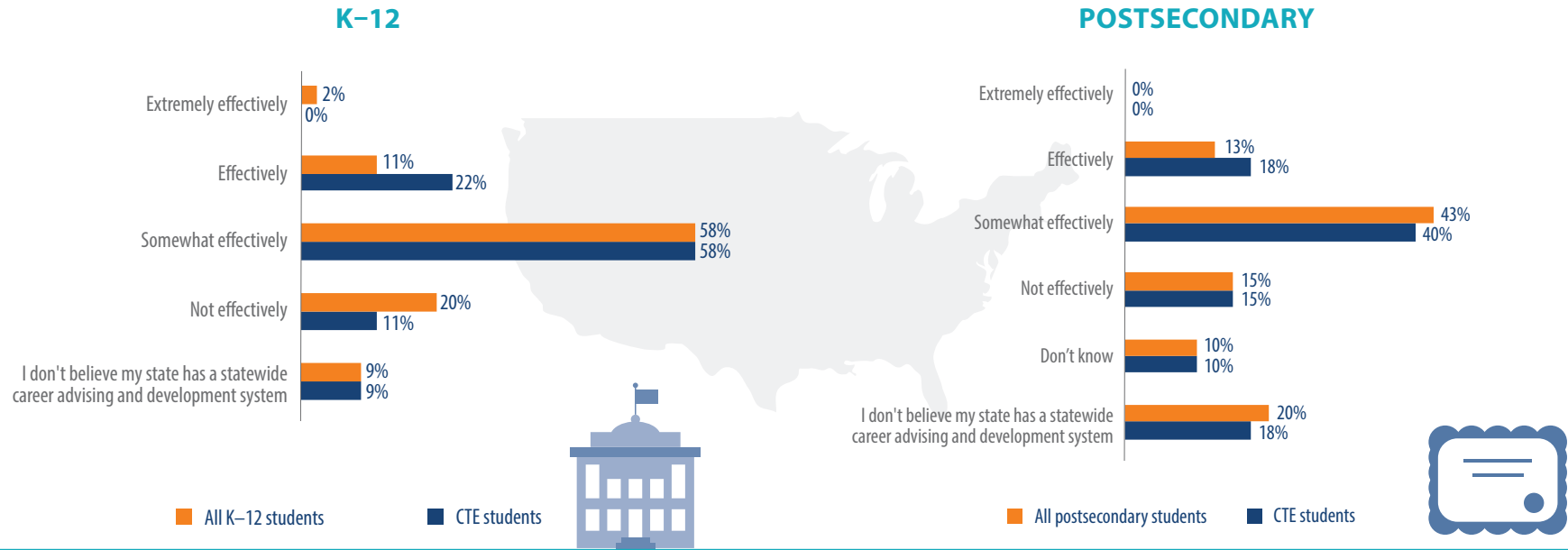
As articulated in this vision, a successful career advising and development system must respond to learners' interests and provide career awareness and exploration for all — not just those enrolled in CTE. It must encompass a range of career pathways, regardless of the availability of programming in a given school, college or community, to provide the most options to learners. Such a system must seamlessly span the full career advising and development continuum from elementary through postsecondary and include wraparound services, accelerated learning strategies, guided pathways and connections with local employers to ensure smooth transitions into the labor market. This system must be supported at the state level and have effective implementation at the local level.

Elementary school students should begin career exploration and awareness as soon as possible, including learning about the multitude of careers and how to thrive in the economy. In middle school, students should continue to explore the world of work and begin planning for the education and training required in the types of careers in which they are interested. By ninth grade, when a student is choosing his or her elective courses and deciding whether or not to participate in a career pathway, he or she should be fully informed about the choices available and the reasons for choosing them. Academic and career plans should be updated regularly as students continue their educations and experiences, and by the time they graduate high school, students should be well on their way to a rewarding career. Whenever they enter postsecondary, they should receive ongoing career and academic advising and development that helps them stay on track in terms of credits and experiences and allows them to complete their program on time.

However, today too few learners are experiencing this type of career advising and development system, and many states and national organizations have been working to rectify this situation. Career advising and development, for example, has been a key focus of the New Skills for Youth (NSFY) initiative, a partnership of the Council of Chief State School Officers, Advance CTE and Education Strategy Group, generously funded by JPMorgan Chase & Co. NSFY has provided funding to 10 states to transform their career readiness systems, and all 10 participating states have strategies in place to improve their career advising and development activities.

Unfortunately, these national efforts are hindered by a lack of awareness of what strategies are being employed at both the state and local levels and how effective those strategies are. To address this challenge, Advance CTE, as part of the NSFY initiative, partnered with the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) to conduct three surveys. Advance CTE surveyed State CTE Directors, and ASCA sent separate surveys to a selection of school counselors and to State School Counseling Directors in states where that role has been specifically identified. The surveys provided invaluable insight into what is happening related to career advising and development at the state and local levels and revealed some interesting barriers and promising strategies for states to explore further.

## HOW EFFECTIVELY DO YOU BELIEVE YOUR STATE'S CAREER ADVISING AND DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM SERVES LEARNERS?



## OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF CAREER ADVISING AND DEVELOPMENT SYSTEMS

Ninety-five percent of State CTE Directors agree or strongly agree that building and supporting an effective career advising and development system is a high priority in their state. However, across secondary and postsecondary, State CTE Directors tend to feel their career advising and development systems are not as effective as they could — or should — be. Most states believe their career advising and development system serves secondary and postsecondary students only somewhat effectively, and states tend to believe their career advising and development system serves CTE students only slightly more effectively than it does all students.

Moreover, 11 percent of State CTE Directors believe that their statewide system is not effectively serving K-12 CTE students, and 15 percent believe the statewide system is not effectively serving postsecondary CTE students. Nine percent of states do not believe their state even has a secondary statewide career advising and development system, and the percentage doubles when discussing postsecondary.

# STATE-LEVEL FINDINGS: K–12 CAREER ADVISING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Despite the fact that most states believe their state systems are only somewhat effective, states, on average, are doing quite a lot to support career advising and development. When presented with 10 different state-level strategies and initiatives, states say they employ an average of 5.7 strategies to support career advising and development.

States say they employ an average of **5.7 strategies** to support career advising and development.

At the top of the list is the funding and/or provision of innovative professional development models for school counselors — a strategy used by 73 percent of states. **Arkansas**, for example, has expanded its Career Development program by adding staff at the state level to provide professional development on career pathways at the secondary and postsecondary levels, as part of a statewide career education initiative. Additionally, 64 percent of states develop and/or provide innovative professional development models specifically around the use of individual learning plans (ILPs) or similar tools.

The least used strategy, at 42 percent, is the certification of individuals with the primary responsibility for career advising and development, such as career coaches or work-based learning coordinators. In **Colorado**, for example, the state has developed a CTE specialist credential for school counselors, as well as a work-

based learning coordinator credential for any professional staff member.<sup>i</sup> These two certifications allow school counselors and other school professionals to focus on career advising and development specifically, with support from the state.


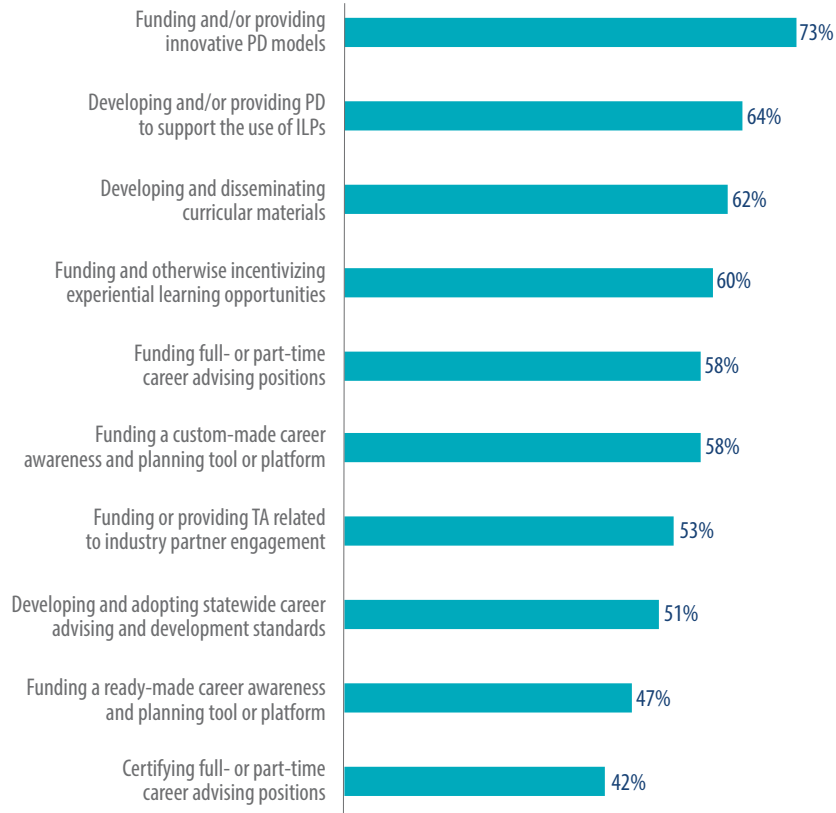
While all states use multiple strategies, and even the least used strategy is employed by close to half of the states, the grade level at which these strategies are implemented varies. Career advising and development activities should begin as early as elementary school, with activities and curriculum that encourage career exploration and awareness and introduce learners to the concept of work and the economy. Learners should see a clear line through their education from career awareness to exploration to planning, and this clarity can occur only if strategies and initiatives are aligned across grade levels.

Unfortunately, very few states believe their systems are fully aligned throughout K–12. While states may define their “advising and development system” in different ways, only 4 percent of states believe career advising and development are closely aligned across the elementary, middle and high school levels, and only 9 percent feel even middle and high school efforts are closely aligned. About half of states believe there is at least some alignment across grade levels.

On the other hand, states do generally consider their career advising and development strategies to be integrated or aligned with other career-related efforts. Sixty-six percent of states describe their state career advising and development system as either very aligned or moderately aligned with other state CTE initiatives, such as programs of study or work-based learning, with only 4 percent saying that these efforts are not aligned at all.



## WHAT K-12 STATE-LEVEL STRATEGIES AND/OR INITIATIVES EXIST TO SUPPORT CAREER ADVISING AND DEVELOPMENT IN YOUR STATE?

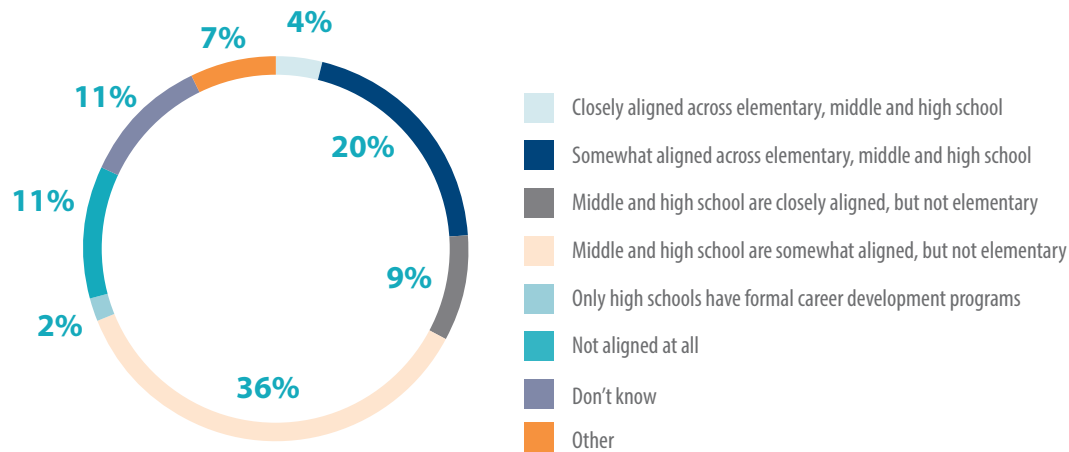


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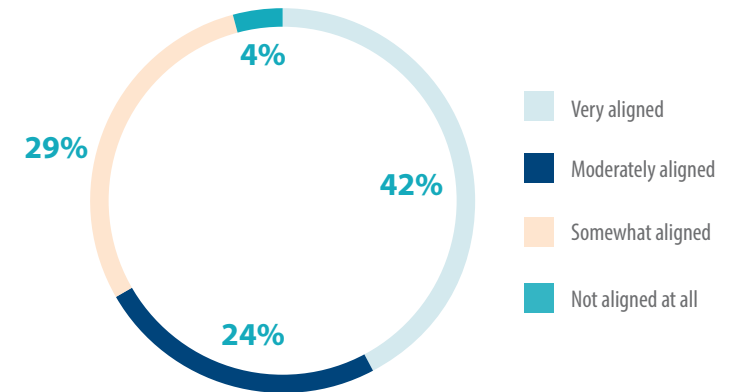


## HOW CLOSELY ALIGNED

are career advising and development at the  
**ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL LEVELS?**



are state career development initiatives aligned with  
**OTHER CTE AND CAREER READINESS INITIATIVES,**  
such as those related to CTE programs of study,  
work-based learning and dual enrollment?



South Carolina's Education and Economic Development Act (EEDA), passed in 2005, establishes the state's Personal Pathways to Success program. Under the program, every high school student — including those planning to continue their education at a postsecondary institution — is required to declare a “major” aligned with one of the nationally recognized 16 Career Clusters®. Students are expected to take career-focused courses through their elective graduation requirements, and districts are required to offer a standards-based academic curriculum organized around a Career Cluster system that provides students with individualized education choices.

What is notable about South Carolina's approach is that the EEDA articulates a framework for career advising and development that spans the entire education continuum. Under the law, school districts are required to offer career exploration in elementary school. At the high school level, districts are required to provide at least one school counselor for every 300 students.

Given the level of alignment that states report, it is not surprising that strategies beginning at the high school level do not often find their way down to the elementary

schools. Interestingly, **84 percent of school counselors who work in K-5 say that career advising and development is part of their school counseling program**, indicating that strategies are being used at the elementary level but that the state may not be directly involved in designing or supporting programs and activities. These activities are likely designed and implemented instead by local districts, institutions, or more likely the school counselors themselves.

As seen in Table 1, relatively few strategies are deployed at the elementary school level, and no strategy is deployed only in elementary schools. If a strategy has been implemented in elementary schools, it also exists at the middle and high school levels, and the survey data do not indicate that many, if any, activities are starting in elementary schools with objectives specific to those grade levels. Career advising and development efforts are much more common at the high school level and somewhat more in middle schools, where programs have been developed specific to those grade levels and the needs of those students. Funds provided by the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 cannot be used in elementary schools, and many State CTE Directors may see this restriction as a barrier to implementing career advising and development activities at that level.

**TABLE 1. PERCENTAGE OF STATES WHO UTILIZE CAREER ADVISING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AT THE ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL LEVELS**

	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Funding and/or providing innovative professional development models	11%	51%	73%
Developing and/or providing innovative professional development models and tools to support the use of individual learning plans	4%	58%	62%
Developing and disseminating curricular materials	13%	51%	62%
Funding and otherwise incentivizing experiential learning opportunities	9%	24%	60%
Funding full-time or part-time positions for individuals with the primary responsibility for career advising and development	0%	31%	58%
Funding the creation and use of a custom technological tool or platform	16%	49%	53%
Funding or providing technical assistance related to industry partner engagement	2%	20%	51%
Developing and adopting statewide career advising and development standards	24%	47%	49%
Funding the purchase and use of a ready-made technological tool or platform	9%	40%	47%
Certifying full-time or part-time positions for individuals with the primary responsibility for career advising and development	0%	20%	42%

The **Maryland** State Department of Education (MSDE) has developed a strategy for career advising and development that spans elementary through high school in a deliberate and coordinated way. The State CTE Program Manager sits within the Division of Career and College Readiness at MSDE, and she and her team coordinate closely with the Division of Student, Family and School Support/Academic Policy to implement the career advising and development system. The state works with school counselors, their supervisors and school staff to design their yearly comprehensive school counseling plans in line with MSDE's and the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) goals related to career advising and development — beginning in middle school. The ASCA domain for Career Development strives to help students understand the connection between school and work and to plan for a successful transition from school to postsecondary education and/or the world of work and from job to job across their life span.<sup>1</sup>

Short, episodic career awareness activities, such as career days, rarely resonate or leave a lasting impact on students, particularly at the elementary level. Therefore, for elementary school students, the state focuses on building career awareness through repeated

and integrated activities and curriculum. One unit that some elementary school students experience is called BizTown,<sup>2</sup> which was developed in partnership with the non-profit organization Junior Achievement. Students prepare for an in-person trip to BizTown, which is a simulated town, by learning about the jobs available and preparing resumes and job applications. Once they arrive at BizTown, the students work in their assigned jobs, which include bank manager, mayor and other positions. The students learn not just about various career options but also early skills in financial literacy, such as writing checks and using debit cards, as well as the role of citizens in their state economy.

MSDE also works with local school systems to provide professional development to teachers on how to incorporate career awareness activities within their classrooms so that the responsibility for career advising does not fall solely on the shoulders of the school counselors but rather on every professional within the schools. In addition to professional development, the Division of Student, Family, and School Support/Academic Policy facilitates an open network of best practice sharing among the supervisors of school counseling in their respective local education agencies to help further support career advising and development efforts across the state.

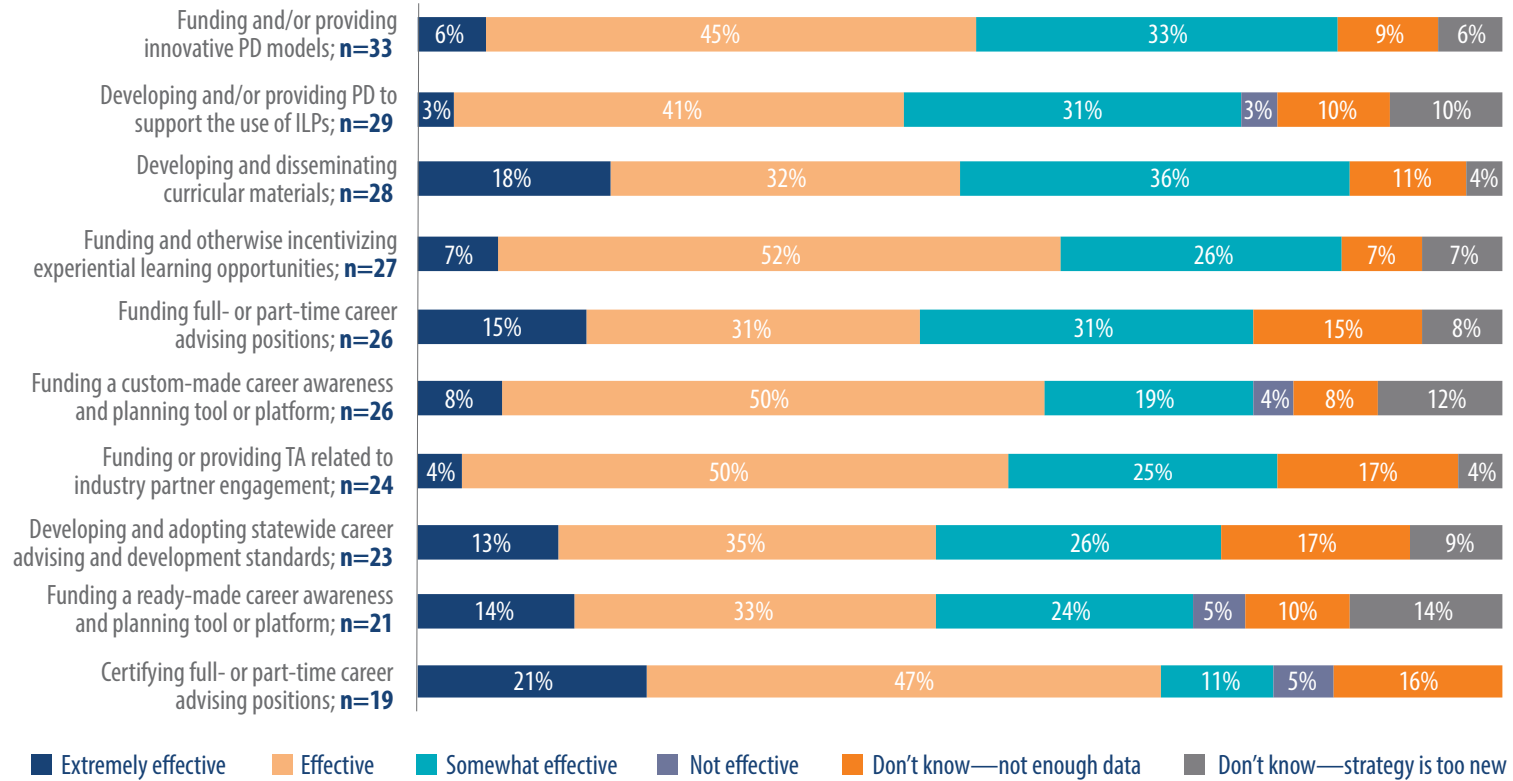
Despite states investing in and supporting a multitude of strategies, the effectiveness of the strategies is a mixed bag. Of note, the least used strategy, certifying positions for individuals with the primary responsibility for career advising and development, is actually considered to be the most effective among those states supporting such efforts, with 69 percent of those who use it labeling it extremely effective or effective. These positions may exist at the local or the state level and can take on a number of forms, such as school counselors focused solely on career advising and development, career coaches or work-based learning coordinators. This strategy is likely more resource intensive than some of the others discussed here, which may be why fewer states employ it. Additionally, while these intermediary roles may be separate from the school counselor role, their focus may be mainly on CTE students, particularly if they also serve as work-based learning intermediaries. Therefore, if more states choose to employ this strategy, it is important that they coordinate with school counselors and are a part of the comprehensive school counseling program to ensure that all students are being served.

The most used state strategy, funding and/or providing innovative professional development models, is less effective. Generally, about half of the states that use this strategy find it either effective or extremely effective, but 33 percent of those that use the strategy deem it only somewhat effective.

Although few State Directors label any strategy as not effective, it is worth keeping in mind that overall 58 percent of states rate their state systems as only somewhat effective in their career advising and development efforts. This finding may indicate that the combination of strategies being used leaves opportunities for growth, the level of investment in the more effective strategies could be strengthened, or more attention needs to be paid to ensuring effective implementation at the district and school levels.

The least used strategy, certifying positions for individuals with the primary responsibility for career advising and development, is actually considered to be the most effective among those states supporting such efforts, with **69%** of those who use it labeling it extremely effective or effective.

## HOW EFFECTIVE ARE YOUR STATE'S K-12 STATE-LEVEL STRATEGIES AND/OR INITIATIVES AT SUPPORTING CAREER ADVISING AND DEVELOPMENT?



# SCHOOL COUNSELOR-LEVEL FINDINGS: K-12 CAREER ADVISING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

School counselors also employ multiple strategies related to career advising and development in addition to state initiatives. In fact, the average number of strategies used by school counselors is 5.8, which is on par with the average number of state-level activities (5.7). The most used strategy is conducting inventories with students to identify their interests, skills and abilities and aligning them with Career Clusters and postsecondary career pathways, while the least used is conducting mock job interviews with students.

On average, school counselors feel more positive about the effectiveness of strategies they employ than do State CTE Directors. At least 45 percent of respondents rate every strategy as effective or extremely effective, with relatively very few school counselors rating any strategies as not effective. At the top end, 82 percent of school counselors who say they are connecting students with CTE programs of study and coursework cite it as effective or extremely effective. Providing students with experiential (or work-based) learning opportunities is a very close second in terms of effectiveness, with 80 percent of school counselors labeling it as an effective or very effective strategy. While all of the strategies receive fairly positive ratings, it is notable that these two are seen as the most effective for career advising and development efforts, particularly since the school counselors surveyed serve all K-12 students and not just CTE students.

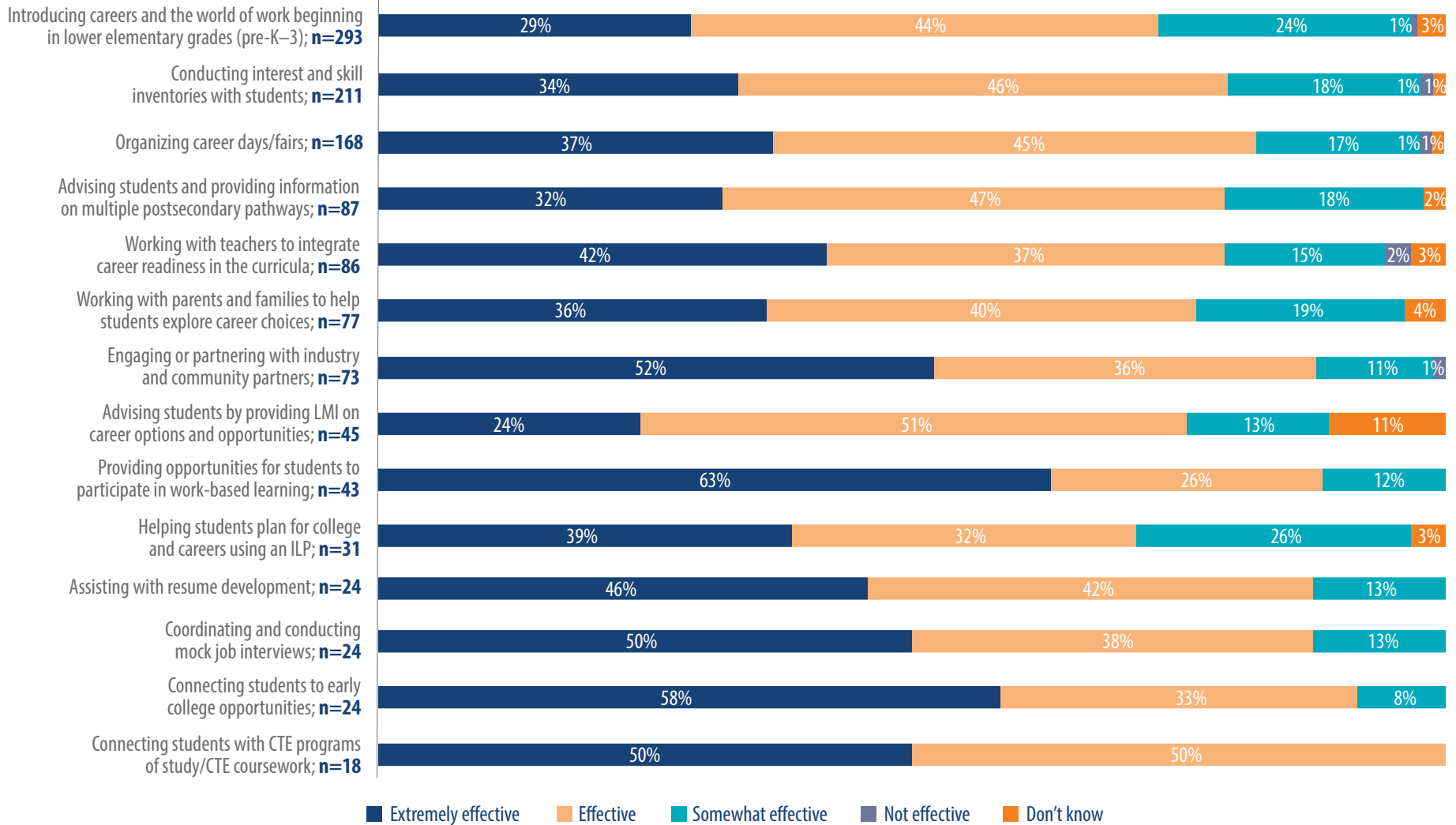
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When asked about the level of involvement of state education agency leaders in career advising and development initiatives, nearly one-third of school counselors note that state leaders are involved or extremely involved in efforts, setting policy across the state while allowing for varying levels of flexibility in implementation at the local level. However, nearly 50 percent state that they do not know the level of involvement of state leaders in these initiatives. Relatively few school counselors (only 5 percent) believe that the state has no involvement in career advising and development initiatives.

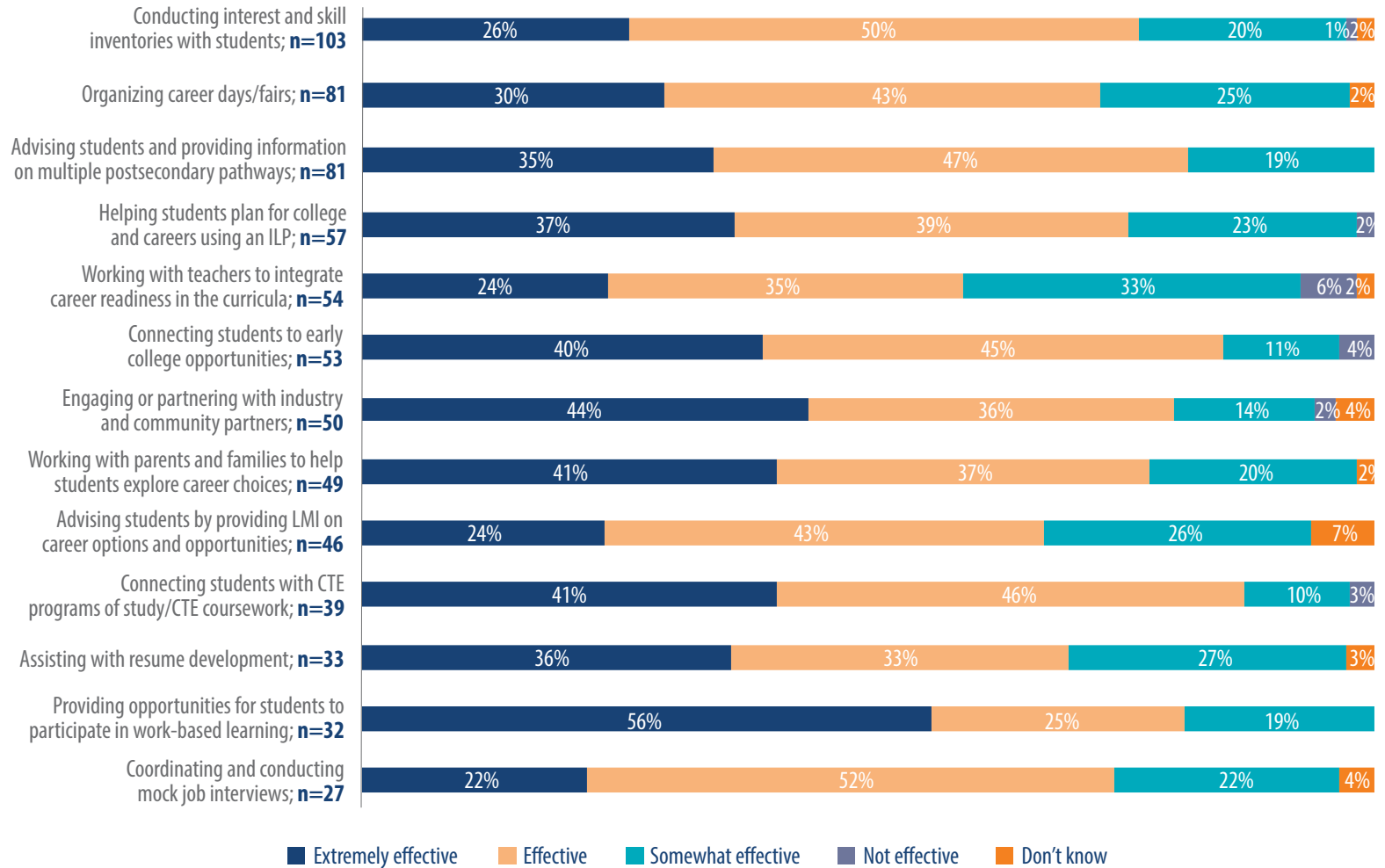
## ELEMENTARY-LEVEL ACTIVITIES

When examining responses only from school counselors who serve students in grades K-5, the most used strategy is introducing careers and the world of work in K-3, with 80 percent of elementary school counselors reporting doing this work. Of those who employ that strategy, 74 percent label it as extremely effective or effective for preparing K-5 students for careers after high school. The next most used strategy at the elementary level is conducting inventories with students to identify interests and skills that connect with Career Clusters and postsecondary career pathways (58 percent), with 80 percent of those who use it finding it extremely effective or effective.

**HOW EFFECTIVE ARE THE STRATEGIES THAT YOU, AS A SCHOOL COUNSELOR, USE AT SUPPORTING CAREER ADVISING AND DEVELOPMENT AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEVEL?**



## HOW EFFECTIVE ARE THE STRATEGIES THAT YOU, AS A SCHOOL COUNSELOR, USE AT SUPPORTING CAREER ADVISING AND DEVELOPMENT AT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL?





## MIDDLE SCHOOL-LEVEL ACTIVITIES

School counselors serving students in grades 6–8 are also most likely to conduct inventories with students (78 percent) and provide students with experiential opportunities (55 percent). Additionally, 57 percent of school counselors for grades 6–8 organize career days and job fairs for the students, and 57 percent say that they provide students with information on multiple postsecondary career pathways. Only 27 percent of middle school counselors report that they connect students with CTE coursework or career pathways, even though this strategy is rated one of the more effective among those who use it, with 87 percent of the school counselors who use it in middle school labeling it as effective or extremely effective. Additionally, while only 23 percent of middle school counselors provide or facilitate work-based learning opportunities for students, 56 percent of those who do find it to be an extremely effective strategy. As these options both already exist in schools and districts, making connections between them and career advising and development activities is a relatively simple way to increase effectiveness for school counselors.

Only **27%** of middle school counselors report that they connect students with CTE coursework or career pathways, even though this strategy is rated one of the more effective among those who use it, with **87%** of the school counselors who use it in middle school labeling it as effective or extremely effective. Additionally, while only **23%** of middle school counselors provide or facilitate work-based learning opportunities for students, **56%** of those who do find it to be an extremely effective strategy.

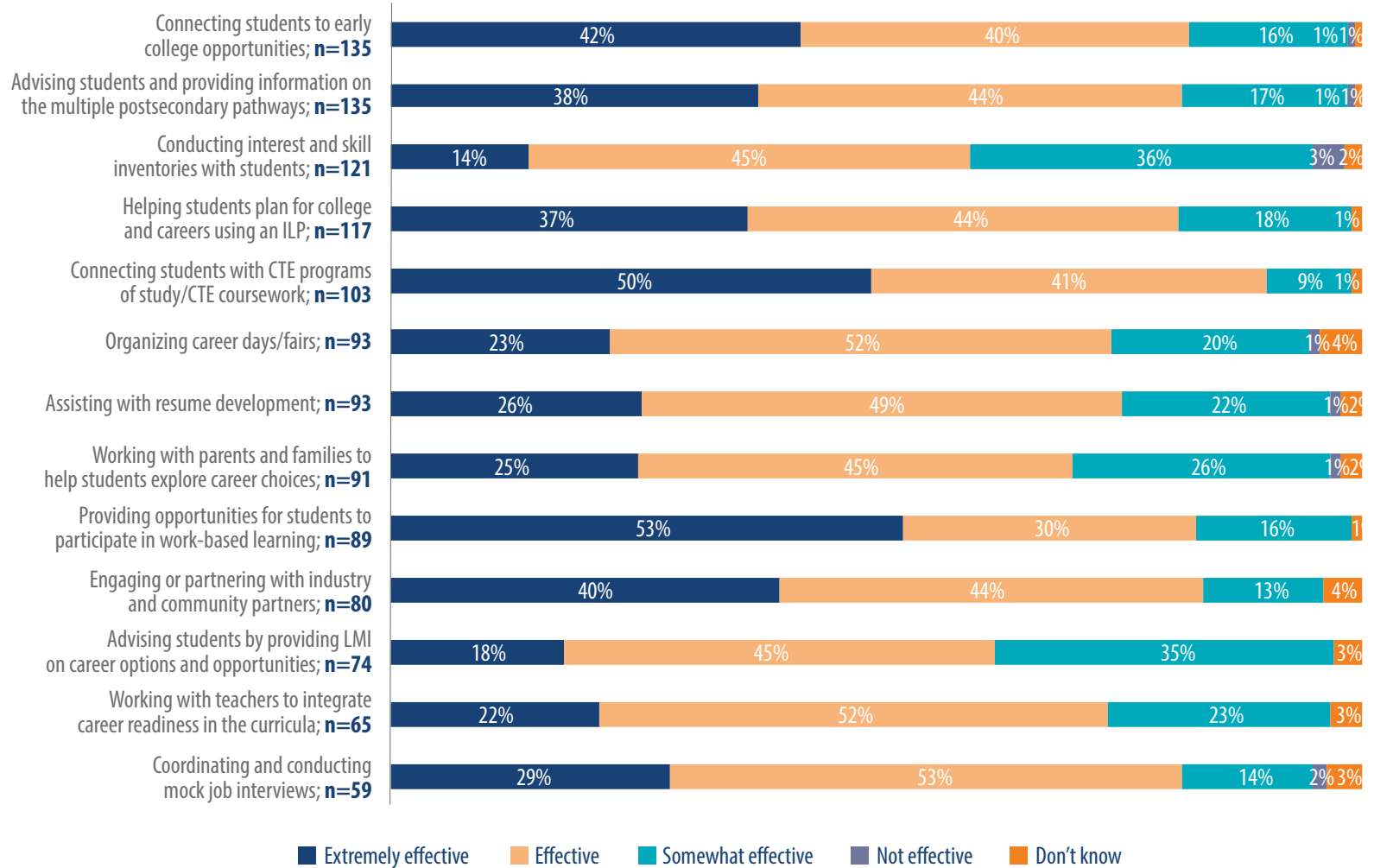
## HIGH SCHOOL-LEVEL ACTIVITIES

In grades 9–12, the most used strategies by school counselors are providing students with information on multiple postsecondary career pathways (78 percent) and connecting students with early college opportunities (79 percent). Additionally, 70 percent conduct skill and interest inventories with students to identify career pathways, and 67 percent work with students to complete an ILP or similar tool. While all of the strategies used at the high school level have at least 55 percent of the school counselors who employ them citing them as effective or extremely effective, the most effective strategies are not the four most used, mirroring the state-level findings.

**60%** of high school counselors use connecting students with CTE coursework and career pathways as a career advising and development strategy, and **91%** of those find it effective or extremely effective, with a full **50%** labeling it extremely effective.

Sixty percent of high school counselors use connecting students with CTE coursework and career pathways as a career advising and development strategy, and 91 percent of those find it effective or extremely effective, with a full 50 percent labeling it extremely effective. Additionally, only 51 percent of high school counselors provide or facilitate work-based learning experiences for students, but of those who do, 83 percent find it an effective or extremely effective career advising and development strategy, with 53 percent finding it extremely effective. These ratings suggest that it would be worth it for more school counselors to employ these strategies with all students, particularly since much of the information related to CTE pathways and work-based learning opportunities likely already exists and is regularly shared with CTE students. Employing these strategies will likely require states and school leaders to play a role in supporting and facilitating them.

## HOW EFFECTIVE ARE THE STRATEGIES THAT YOU, AS A SCHOOL COUNSELOR, USE AT SUPPORTING CAREER ADVISING AND DEVELOPMENT AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL?



## SUPPORTS FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS

School counselors report using various resources to inform their career advising and development work. The most commonly used resources are the results from inventories of students' skills and interests, though only 47 percent of school counselors report using it. Additionally, resources provided by ASCA and similar organizations are used by 38 percent of school counselors in their career advising and development work, and about one-fifth of school counselors use locally provided professional development and curricular resources.

In open-ended responses, numerous school counselors report using internet searches and other free online resources that they have been able to find on their own or from other school counselors. Interestingly, only one-fourth of school counselors state that they use labor market data on job demand and career salaries. State CTE Directors were asked how often most school counselors use labor market data, and almost 60 percent report that most of the school counselors in their state use labor market data at least some of the time, with another 36 percent not knowing whether school counselors use these data at all. **This disconnect between state belief and what is actually happening on the ground deserves a closer look from state**

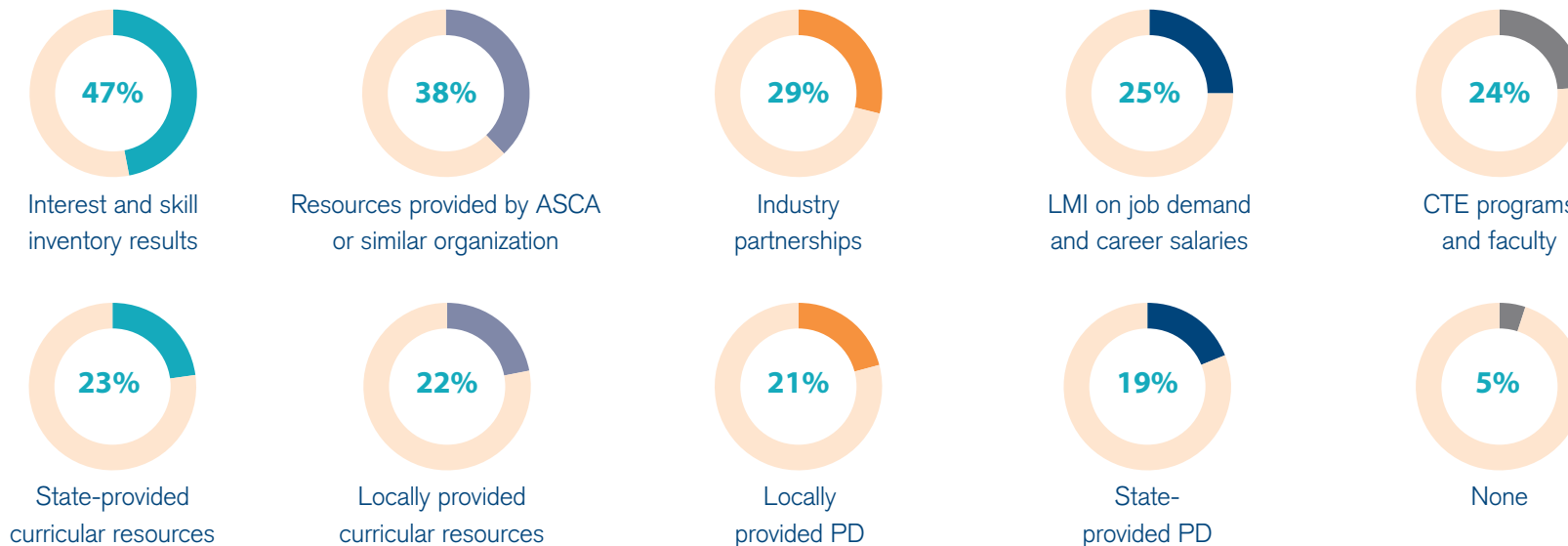
**leaders as well as those who analyze and disseminate labor market data for other people, including school counselors, to use.**

In **Hawai'i**, the University of Hawai'i Community Colleges developed a website that includes labor market data and other information on career pathways and Career Clusters to provide learners with more information on their career options.<sup>iv</sup> Similarly, **Washington** state developed Career Bridge, which provides real-time data on labor market conditions paired with associated training providers all in one place.<sup>v</sup>

Only about one-quarter of school counselors report using CTE programs and faculty as a resource, and 29 percent use industry partners to serve as mentors and/or offer work-based learning. Given the effectiveness discussed earlier that school counselors report seeing when using CTE coursework and work-based learning in their career advising and development strategies, using these resources more fully could be a relatively simple way to increase effectiveness at providing students with the career advising and development support they require.

When asked what supports or resources that are not currently available would be most helpful, 39 percent respond that professional development in career advising

### WHAT RESOURCES DO SCHOOL COUNSELORS USE TO SUPPORT CAREER ADVISING AND DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS?



## SCHOOL COUNSELORS' ROLE IN COMMUNICATING ABOUT CTE

Advance CTE, with support from the Siemens Foundation, conducted research in 2017 to find out what message parents and students find most compelling, and would convince them that CTE is a good option for their education. A separate national survey of 1,700 parents and students found that one message resonated across the board for parents and students alike:

### CTE prepares students for the real world:

CTE gives purpose to learning by emphasizing real-world skills and practical knowledge.

Students receive hands-on training, mentoring, and internships from employers in their community. They also learn how to develop a resume and interview for a job. These additional tools and experiences make school more relevant, and ensure students are ready for the real world.

This message was found to be more compelling than other themes, such as “CTE is a smart investment” and “CTE allows learners to explore possibilities.”

This research, released in *The Value and Promise of Career Technical Education: Results from a National Survey of Parents and Students*, also identified school counselors as critical messengers and champions, with over 80 percent of parents and students identifying them as trusted sources of information about CTE and education pathways.<sup>i</sup> So how are school counselors communicating about CTE today?

Out of the 243 school counselors working at the middle and/or high school level who completed the section of the career advising and development survey on messaging and communications, 63 percent report using “prepare for the real world” with students and 60 percent with parents. However, school counselors were most likely to use “exploring possibilities” as a message with students (69 percent) and equally likely with parents (61 percent). About nine percent did not use any message with parents or students about CTE.

Importantly, school counselors did agree with parents and students that “prepare for the real world” does the best job of making CTE sound like a good option, with 38 percent ranking it as the most compelling message, followed by 26 percent who believed that “exploring possibilities” does the best job — demonstrating a disconnect between the messages being used and those identified as the most effective.

Advance CTE is continuing its partnership with the Siemens Foundation to build out resources and tools for school counselors to arm them with the information and strategies they need to be more effective champions for CTE.

<sup>i</sup> The Value and Promise of Career Technical Education: Results from a National Survey of Parents and Students, <https://careertech.org/resource/value-and-promise-of-cte-results-from-a-national-survey>

and development strategies and tools for students and families would be helpful, and 33 percent feel that school and/or community conversations about local workforce needs would help as well. While only 19 percent of school counselors respond that state messaging and materials would be helpful, it is worth noting that state leaders can and likely should drive the provision of these other, more needed, supports.

**Missouri** has recently focused its efforts around professional development, with a new system being implemented in the 2017–18 school year. Nine part-time school counselor advisers and seven career pathways consultants provide career advising and development through nine regional professional development centers across the state, focusing on helping students with personal plans of study as well as the implementation of programs of study.

In open-ended responses, numerous elementary school counselors cite a need for elementary resources with built-in curricula, echoing the earlier finding about the lack of state-level career advising and development strategies happening in elementary schools. Because 84 percent of K–5 school counselors see career advising and development as a part of their school counseling program, it is important that states and national organizations commit resources and supports to them in addition to those provided at the middle and high school levels.

**Texas** has recently devoted considerable effort to building and maintaining career advising and development resources for school counselors. As a part of the implementation of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins), the Texas Education Agency (TEA) worked with state universities to build course resources and supports for professional development. In 2017, TEA decided to consolidate all of the available resources and professional development content into one website, the Texas CTE Resource Center.<sup>vi</sup> The site currently contains links to information about CTE programs of study, college and career planning guides in each Career Cluster, graduation requirements, and how to discuss these issues with students. TEA is currently working with focus groups of school counselors to gather feedback about the available resources and determine the best way to build out the supports going forward.

TEA also offers direct in-person supports to school counselors in the form of Professional School Counselor Academies,<sup>vi</sup> which are funded through Perkins. The first academy began several years ago in Austin, but it has since expanded to two additional locations each year. This year the two extra conferences were held in El Paso and Spring, TX. Each academy serves around 60 school counselors at a time and takes place in three phases. The first phase is an in-person symposium held in the fall, during which school counselors hear from experts about career advising and development as well as CTE options. Then, school counselors complete online learning modules throughout the school year and work on an independent action-learning project, which they will discuss at a second in-person symposium held during the summer.

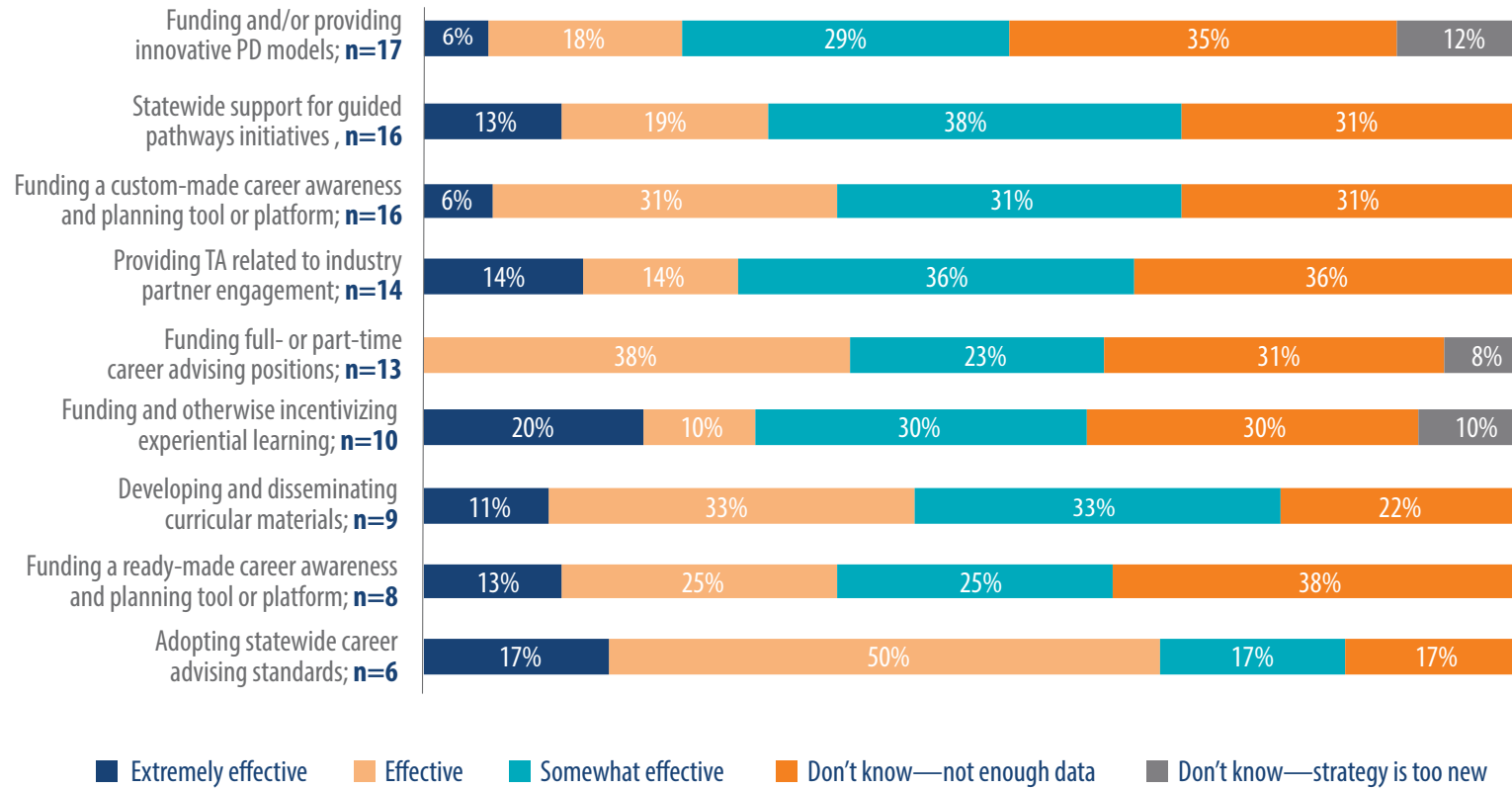
# STATE-LEVEL FINDINGS: POSTSECONDARY CAREER ADVISING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Compared with secondary systems, state leaders report employing fewer state-level strategies at the postsecondary level, with an average of 3.7 per state. Eight percent of states actually report that they employ no strategies related to career advising and development in postsecondary. However, this number does not mean that career advising and development efforts are not taking place in those states, only that the state may not have the authority or levers to implement them statewide. Due to the varying governance structures across post-secondary, career advising and development efforts likely happen and are supported more at the institutional level. This conclusion is supported by the use of statewide career advising and development standards at the postsecondary level in only 15 percent of states.<sup>viii</sup>

That being said, of the strategies that are employed by states, the most used in postsecondary is the same as in secondary: funding and/or providing innovative professional development models (45 percent). The second most used is the creation and use of a custom technological tool or platform for career advising and awareness (43 percent), followed closely by statewide support for guided pathway initiatives (40 percent). State Directors tend to be less certain about the effectiveness of these strategies compared with those efforts employed in K–12; for example, more than 10 percent of states cite that they do not have enough data to make a judgment on a number of the strategies. This finding may be another symptom of implementation depending so heavily on individual institutions, as data collection may be limited. No strategy is labeled as not effective, however.

Recently, the **New Jersey** Department of Education (NJDOE) partnered with the New Jersey Center for Student Success — an initiative run by the state's Council of County Colleges, which is the coordinating organization for the 19 community colleges in New Jersey — to hold a career advising and development training conference for both secondary and postsecondary career advising and development professionals. The Center for Student Success is one of many success centers across the country focused on expanding access and equitable outcomes for postsecondary students. The event, with planning led by the Center for Student Success, took place in March 2017 for a sold-out crowd of 250 practitioners and featured speakers from NJDOE, the state's Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the New Jersey Career Assistance Navigator website and individual community colleges. NJDOE plans to continue the partnership with the Center for Student Success by working together on future conferences, as well as collaborating on and coordinating efforts for aligning career advising and development initiatives across secondary, postsecondary and adult education.

**HOW EFFECTIVE ARE YOUR STATE'S POSTSECONDARY STATE-LEVEL STRATEGIES AND/OR INITIATIVES AT SUPPORTING CAREER ADVISING AND DEVELOPMENT?**



# INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLANS AS CAREER ADVISING AND DEVELOPMENT TOOLS

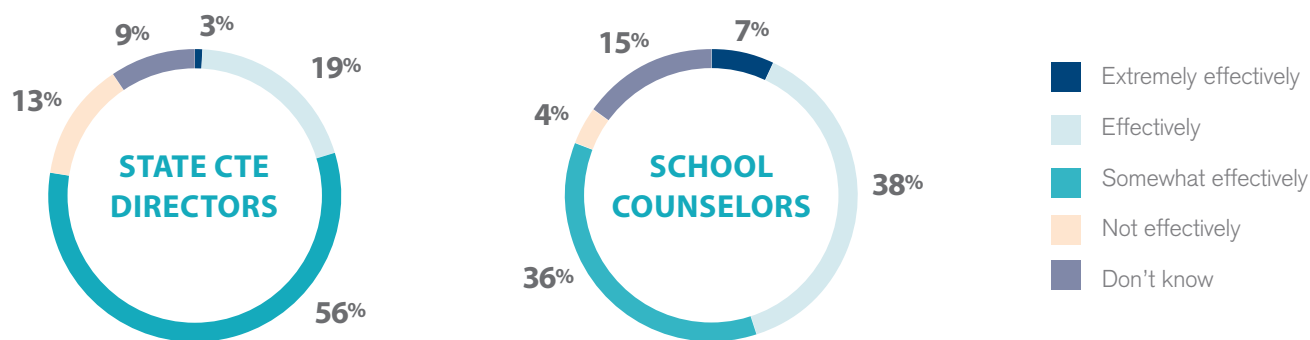
Individual learning plans (ILPs), also known as academic and career planning tools or individual graduation plans, have been a popular strategy for college and career advising and development, with 80 percent of State Directors saying that the state requires students to complete an ILP, and 71 percent saying that the ILP is used as a career advising and development tool. It is worth clarifying here that State Directors may have not distinguished in their responses between the state requiring a plan and simply having one available. According to data from the United States Department of Labor, as of fall 2016, 38 states use ILPs, but only 21 mandate their use with all students.<sup>ix</sup> However, the effectiveness of ILPs as career advising and development tools varies according to both State Directors and school counselors.

Excluding K-5 school counselors, who likely do not have much interaction with ILPs, nearly one-quarter of school counselors do not know if their state's ILP is meant to serve as a career advising and development tool. Of the school counselors who believe their state's ILP functions as a career advising and development tool, only seven percent feel that the ILPs are extremely effective for career advising and development, and 40 percent believe they are only somewhat effective or not effective. State Directors have similar views, with more than half saying the ILPs are only somewhat effective as career advising and development tools.

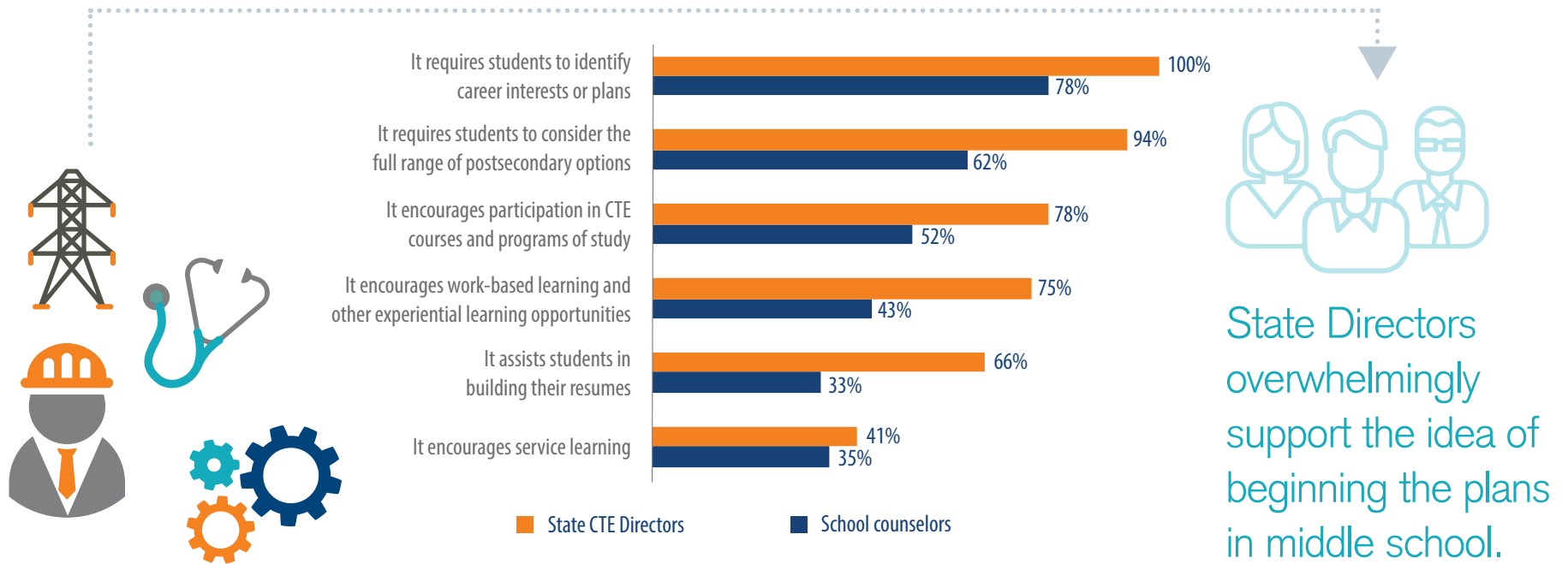
Nearly one-quarter of school counselors do not know if their state's ILP is meant to serve as a career advising and development tool.

All of the states that are using ILPs as career advising and development tools require students to identify career interests or plans, and 94 percent require students to consider the full range of postsecondary options. However, the ILPs may cover these areas only briefly, or students may be less aware of the supports available to explore careers and postsecondary options, given the low effectiveness ratings for ILPs. Around three-fourths of the plans encourage participation in CTE courses and work-based learning, which is a promising number given the effectiveness school counselors experience when using those options as career advising and development strategies in general.

HOW EFFECTIVELY DOES YOUR STATE'S INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLAN FUNCTION AS A CAREER ADVISING AND DEVELOPMENT TOOL?



## IF YOUR STATE'S INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLAN IS USED AS A CAREER ADVISING AND DEVELOPMENT TOOL, HOW DOES IT SERVE THAT PURPOSE?



Unfortunately, school counselors across the board are less likely to believe that ILPs are being used for career advising and development purposes, indicating a disconnect between plan design at the state level and its implementation at the local level. As an example, if, as discussed earlier, only 27 percent of middle school counselors and 60 percent of high school counselors are currently connecting students with CTE pathways, the ILPs are not having their intended effect when they mention CTE programming, since many school counselors are not focused on those options. However, these plans are designed at the state level, and effectiveness ultimately depends on local implementation and the preparation of practitioners using and helping to create these plans.

In **Colorado**, the state worked with ASCA to develop *Meaningful Career Conversations* as part of its ILP process.<sup>x</sup> These conversation starters are used by school counselors and also by classroom instructors, special education

specialists and school administrators. In this way, the ILP is a schoolwide effort and does not fall solely on the shoulders of individual school counselors.

When asked what would make ILPs more effective, State Directors overwhelmingly support the idea of beginning the plans in middle school, as well as integrating the plan creation with other college and career readiness activities. All of the State School Counseling Directors also say that beginning ILPs in middle school would increase their effectiveness. Engagement with parents and guardians, as well as teachers, is also seen as a key part of the effectiveness of these plans. In open responses, several State Directors stress the importance of integrating these plans with other initiatives and efforts so that they are not standalone documents but rather integral pieces of a wider career exploration and development process for students.



In 2013, the **Wisconsin** Legislature passed a law providing funds to implement academic and career planning statewide for all middle and high school students. From this legislation, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) created the Academic and Career Planning (ACP) process,<sup>xi</sup> which goes beyond requiring students to complete an ILP to help schools and school counselors use the ILPs to start conversations with students about their future career possibilities.

ACP begins with helping students explore their interests and strengths and then guides them through career exploration and planning, with regular check-ins throughout middle and high school to recalculate plans as needed. Districts have been given flexibility in how they implement ACP, but DPI provides regular guidance and training, as well as numerous support materials. DPI first piloted the implementation and training process during the 2015–16 school year, and statewide implementation occurred during the 2017–18 school year.

4–Year Plan (Traditional)	ACP (The Vision)
Product-based	Process-based
Some or select students (CTE, Special Ed)	All Students
Acts as a 4–year plan of courses	Acts as a navigational tool for students grade 6–12 and beyond
Career application in elective CTE classes	Career application in all classes
Career development in elective courses or not at all	Career development infused throughout all courses
Student "on own" for its development	Student-driven with collaboration (mentor and parents)
HS Graduation = End point	HS Graduation = Check point
Career development is only the school counselor's job	Career development is a systematic, whole-school responsibility

## NEW SKILLS FOR YOUTH (NSFY) IN ACTION: RHODE ISLAND'S NSFY AMBASSADOR

In January 2017, **Rhode Island** was one of 10 states selected for a second phase of funding through the NSFY grant. The cross-sector team began working on a multi-pronged approach to transform the state's career readiness system. This approach included naming practitioners as ambassadors for the effort — local professionals who would contribute meaningfully to the work and help create feedback loops between the state and locals. Additionally, ambassadors were charged with helping build local capacity to implement career readiness reforms.

In June 2017, Rhode Island named Stacy Haines-Mayne, a school counselor from the Chariho Regional School District, as one of six ambassadors. Haines-Mayne, who had previously served as the president of the state's school counseling association,

had collaborated with state leaders previously on workforce issues. In her role as an ambassador and as part of the state's Prepare RI plan, she immediately began work on the ongoing process of revamping Rhode Island's ILP process, which had begun in October 2016. This revamp included holding focus groups with school counselors to discover what works and what needs improvement with the current system and then creating Requests for Proposals for new ILP platform vendors. Haines-Mayne worked with the others on the state's cross-sector team to create new options for school counselors and planned to begin offering trainings on those options in early 2018. She noted that school counselors are an integral part of career readiness efforts and is excited that Rhode Island recognizes that importance and is focused on providing more supports and tools for school counselors to be effective.

# BARRIERS

## TO EFFECTIVE CAREER ADVISING AND DEVELOPMENT SYSTEMS

Although the data show that states and school counselors employ multiple strategies related to career advising and development, numerous barriers remain to having an effective or extremely effective career advising and development system that serves all learners. For school counselors, the most prevalent barriers relate to capacity, with 45 percent saying that other social-emotional and academic counseling responsibilities receive higher priority, and 44 percent saying that other competing priorities, including proctoring and scheduling, pull them away from career advising and development work and appropriate school counseling work. This information is not surprising to school counselors, who are well aware of the need for more capacity to implement effective comprehensive school counseling programs, an issue that has been a regular advocacy effort by ASCA and related organizations.

Additionally, 27 percent of school counselors cite a lack of quality resources and materials, and 20 percent admit to a lack of understanding on how best to support career advising and development efforts. Both of these barriers align with the potential supports school counselors would find the most useful, including more professional development and more opportunities to engage with their communities and peers to strengthen their career advising and development activities.

State CTE Directors similarly point to capacity challenges as their main barriers. Each State Director was asked to rank 10 barriers in terms of the challenge they pose, with one being the most significant barrier and 10 being the least. When examining the responses, the three barriers directly related to capacity (lack of capacity to support and scale efforts at the local level, lack of capacity to support and scale efforts at the state level, and other counseling domains receive higher priority) receive the most first- and second-place rankings. Interestingly, a lack of quality resources and materials generally ranks as a less significant barrier for state leaders. Since this is the third most listed barrier for school counselors, states should examine if the materials are reaching school counselors in the way they were intended and if they are supporting school counselors in the most effective way. States should ensure that consistent feedback loops are in place to regularly gauge what supports school counselors require and if current supports are meeting those needs.

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## WHAT BARRIERS DO YOU FACE IN SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE CAREER ADVISING AND DEVELOPMENT AT THE STATE LEVEL?

Please rank your responses, with 1 being the biggest barrier and 10 being the smallest (State CTE Director responses)

### BIGGEST BARRIERS

1

Lack of capacity to support and scale efforts at state level

1

Other counseling domains receive higher priority

2

Lack of capacity to support and scale efforts at local level

3

Career advising begins too late

4

Lack of understanding among school counselors

### SMALLEST BARRIERS

6

Lack of buy-in and support from other stakeholders

8

Lack of industry involvement

8

Geographic barriers

9

Lack of quality resources and materials

10

Technological barriers

# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Career advising and development is a clear priority among state leaders. And as one of the three main domains, along with academic and social-emotional, of a comprehensive school counseling program, it is a priority among the counseling community. Given this priority level and the increased focus on career readiness, it should come as no surprise that a lot is happening at the state and local levels to support career advising and development. Yet, despite the multitude of activities and efforts, they are not adding up to an overall effective career advising and development system that supports both CTE and non-CTE learners at all levels of their educational pathways.

If states are committed to providing all learners with effective support in career awareness, exploration and planning, leaders must work with their state governments and their local administrators and school counselors to ensure that there is a genuine statewide system of career advising and development, beginning in elementary school and continuing through postsecondary, so that strategies can be coordinated and monitored in a deliberate way to increase effectiveness. Additionally, states should consider the following, more specific suggestions for improving career advising and development throughout the state:

## **Provide more effective professional development and resources to school counselors and establish feedback loops to ensure that the professional development is having its intended impact:**

- Examine current feedback loops with school counselors and administrators to determine what information and resources school counselors are using and how effectively and to determine the impact of state strategies;
- Build capacity within schools by increasing the number of school counselors as well as the number of positions that support and work with school counselors, such as work-based learning coordinators and career coaches and mentors; and
- Ensure that school counselors have up-to-date information on CTE pathways and programs of study available in their schools and communities, as well as information on work-based learning opportunities.

## **Ensure that career advising and development is a school- and community-wide effort, with effective coordination between school counselors and school administration and active participation from classroom instructors and community organizations:**

- Develop career awareness strategies specifically for elementary school students that are embedded in students' daily experiences;
- Align efforts happening at the elementary, middle and high school levels so that learners experience seamless progression from career awareness and exploration to career advising and development; and
- Facilitate community-wide conversations that provide opportunities for community and industry partners to engage directly with school counselors so they can better understand career options and the world of work.

## **Explore partnerships between secondary and postsecondary systems and institutions to both gather more data on existing strategies and implement new strategies as appropriate:**

- Collaborate with postsecondary student success teams to incorporate career advising and development strategies; and
- Identify and scale opportunities for secondary school counselors and postsecondary counselors/career advisers to share best practices and resources.

# METHODOLOGY

## **Examine and improve current career advising and development strategies so that they are all part of one broad, cohesive strategy designed to guide all learners effectively to the careers of their choice:**

- Improve the effectiveness of ILPs by scaling up innovative practices, including having students begin them in middle school, encouraging more participation in CTE and other career exploration activities, and working with school counselors to ensure that ILPs are integrated into a broader career development process;
- Examine if and how school counselors are using labor market data, making sure that the data are easily available to school counselors and that school counselors are well prepared to use them; and
- Take stock of the variety of strategies being supported and employed at the state level, how they currently intersect with each other, and where opportunities exist for strong coordination and alignment.

This report employed a mixed-methods approach that included the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data from several sources. The quantitative aspect of this study involved a survey of the State Directors in August and September 2017, requesting responses to a series of questions about their state's secondary and postsecondary career advising and development systems. Forty-four states and the District of Columbia, or 88 percent, responded to the survey request.

Although full participation was not met in this survey, the response rate was substantial enough to warrant interpreting its results as representative of overall national trends. Follow-up phone interviews were then carried out with a select group of State CTE Directors.

Additionally, ASCA sent separate surveys to a selection of school counselors and to State School Counseling Directors in states where that role has been specifically identified. In total, the surveys received responses from 10 State School Counseling Directors and 647 school counselors. The school counselors represent all 50 states and the District of Columbia, as well as all grade levels, with 54 percent of respondents working at the elementary school level, 22 percent at the middle school level, and 24 percent at the high school level.

An extensive review of existing literature on career advising and development was conducted as well as interviews with national experts.

State Directors predominantly are based in state departments of education, but most have a postsecondary counterpart and often a close working relationship. Although many State Directors engaged their postsecondary counterpart directly for the survey, it was not a requirement to respond.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## ENDNOTES

- i For more information, see <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprof/cteworksheets/specialist>
- ii For more information, see <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/home/MindsetsBehaviors.pdf>
- iii For more information, see [https://www.juniorachievement.org/web/ja-usa/ja-programs;jsessionid=39A320A7EB41816A91F113702CAE371C?p\\_p\\_id=56\\_INSTANCE\\_abcd&p\\_p\\_lifecycle=0&p\\_p\\_state=maximized&p\\_p\\_mode=view&p\\_p\\_col\\_id=ja-maincontent&p\\_p\\_col\\_count=1&\\_56\\_INSTANCE\\_abcd\\_groupId=14516&\\_56\\_INSTANCE\\_abcd\\_articleId=19361](https://www.juniorachievement.org/web/ja-usa/ja-programs;jsessionid=39A320A7EB41816A91F113702CAE371C?p_p_id=56_INSTANCE_abcd&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=maximized&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=ja-maincontent&p_p_col_count=1&_56_INSTANCE_abcd_groupId=14516&_56_INSTANCE_abcd_articleId=19361)
- iv For more information, see <http://uhcc.hawaii.edu/workforce/index.php?state=HI>
- v For more information, see <https://careertech.org/resource/putting-LMI-right-hands-guide>
- vi For more information, see <https://txcte.org/counselors>
- vii For more information, see <http://cte.tamucc.edu/for-counselors/counselor-academy-austin/>
- viii Because ASCA's membership largely consists of counselors in secondary schools, Advance CTE and ASCA were unable to survey any individual career advisers at the postsecondary level.
- ix For more information, see <https://www.dol.gov/odep/pdf/2014-ILP-Map.pdf>
- x For more information, see <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/school-counselors/publications-position-statements/career-conversation-starters>
- xi For more information, see <https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/acp/DPI%20Guide%202016%20FINAL%20web.pdf>





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