

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
WORK & LEARNING

EDUCATION & CAREER PLAN

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE FOR HIGH
SCHOOL NAVIGATORS





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ECP IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE FOR NAVIGATORS

To plan effectively for both college and careers, all young people need help navigating the process. This guide is a resource for **Navigators** — the teachers, counselors, advisors, youth workers, mentors, and other advocates who guide youth through the twists and turns on the road to becoming college and career ready. Whether playing a formal or informal role, these college and career readiness Navigators are critical for helping young people map out their journeys toward the futures they want for themselves. If you're reading this, welcome to the role of Navigator!

To help students maximize their college and career readiness journeys, FHI 360 has developed an easy-to-use tool called the **Education & Career Plan (ECP)**. This is a digital resource that students can use for all their exploration and planning needs. There are four versions of the ECP, designed to support students on different paths: high school, certificate program, 2-year college, or 4-year college or university. The ECP should be used in partnership with you, as the student's Navigator, and can be shared with parents/guardians and others.



High School ECP

This ECP is designed for students in grades 9–12. Additional resources and information pertaining to postsecondary applications, testing, and financial aid are included.



Certificate ECP

This ECP is designed for students enrolled in a certificate program.



2-Year College ECP

This ECP is designed for students who are enrolled in a 2-year technical or community college. It includes information related to 2-year plans, resources, and considerations for transfer.



4-Year College or University ECP

This ECP is designed for students enrolled in a 4-year college or university. Like the 2-year ECP, this version includes information for course planning and career exploration, as well as campus resources and other organizational tools.

EDUCATION & CAREER PLAN (ECP) OVERVIEW

What, Exactly, Is The ECP?

The Education & Career Plan (ECP) is a shared tool that helps students integrate their college- and career-readiness preparation in one organized document. The **High School ECP** consists of four sections that focus on: (1) goal setting, (2) academic progress and accomplishments, (3) career exploration, and (4) postsecondary readiness. You will learn more about each section as you read further in this guide.

The ECP is a **live document** that should be shared with the essential or main Navigator(s) in a student's life. Each student will have a main Navigator (most likely at school) but may also have a family member or afterschool teacher or coach who serves as an additional Navigator(s). It is important for students to work with their main Navigators, with input from others as they find helpful, and update their ECPs regularly—at least twice a year—to reflect their accomplishments and changing goals. That means whenever your student meets with you as their Navigator, they should be ready to talk about their ECP. Students should also be sure to make use of the Additional Reading & References section of the ECP, as well as the Resources Roadmap provided. Here, they will find additional resources and helpful links to use as they learn about and navigate postsecondary planning and requirements.

Once students get started, they will see that the ECP is an easy-to-use tool to help them plan and track their progress toward college and career readiness. By connecting college and career plans, the ECP can help high school students:

- Identify career interests and goals
- Connect career goals with specific qualifications, education, and training required for entry into those careers
- Outline a course plan for high school that helps them meet their postsecondary education and career goals
- Record activities and accomplishments in both college readiness and career readiness

Your primary responsibility is to guide your student as he or she:

1. Explores options and plans for potential career choices and opportunities
2. Develops the knowledge, skills, and abilities to succeed in their chosen postsecondary path

Remember, you do not need to be an expert in college and career readiness; rather, your goal is to develop a trusting relationship with your student(s) as a facilitator in using the ECP to document, reflect, and plan. For more on being an effective Navigator, see Information and Tips for Navigators and at the end of this guide.

Getting Started

The first step in working on the ECP is simply to access the ECP together with your individual student(s). Depending on your role in a student's life, you may be the one who supplies the link so your student can access/create the ECP (e.g., if you are a teacher or guidance counselor and the ECP was supplied to you by your district), or you might assign it as a task through your school's

learning management system (e.g., Google Classroom). On the other hand, if you are a parent, coach, mentor, employer, etc., you will likely receive access to your student’s ECP when he or she sends you an invite via Google. Each student you work with should have a personal copy of the ECP template. So, if you are a Navigator for multiple young people, you will have access to multiple copies of the ECP. Once you access the ECP link for a student, you will be taken to a shared Google sheet where that student’s ECP “lives.” This is where the fun begins!

THE BASICS

Each student should complete the general background information with the names and contact info for themselves and their identified Navigator(s) (Rows 5–7). If you are the primary Navigator, your name should appear in Row 7. Additional Navigators can be added to the ECP by simply adding more rows after Row 7.



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1									
2		EDUCATION & CAREER PLAN (ECP)							
3		Welcome to your ECP! You will get to know this interactive tool very well as you utilize it over the next few years and prepare for education with your navigators to track your progress in acquiring the knowledge, skills, qualifications, and experiences needed to achieve the goal when completing your ECP. This will help ensure efficient completion of each section of your ECP, as well as highlight critical conversation and references are available at the end of your ECP that you can use for additional resources along the way. We encourage you to preview questions you may have during your planning. We hope you enjoy this interactive and exploratory process. Above all else, we hope your postsecondary goals into successful accomplishments. Enjoy your journey!							
5		Education & Career Plan (ECP) of:	[Student Name]			[Student ID]			[Class of]
6		Name of Parent/Guardian:	[Parent/Guardian Name]			[Phone]			[Email]
7		Name of Navigator:	[Navigator Name]			[Phone]			[Email]
8									

You’ll notice we’ve included a table to help track the various comments and feedback students may receive along the way (Rows 17–26). Most likely, your student will share a link to this document not only with you, but with other Navigators present during their college- and career-readiness journey. Tracking comments and feedback from all navigators will help ensure proper planning, communication, and organization.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
14													
15		You will work with a navigator – a teacher, counselor, advisor, mentor, or other advocate – who can provide guidance to you as you develop your ECP and prepare for the future. If feasible, share the ECP with your parents/guardians. Having them review and sign off on the plan will keep them informed and engaged.											
17		Entering 9th Grade			Entering 10th Grade			Entering 11th Grade			Entering 12th Grade		
18		[Student Signature]			[Student Signature]			[Student Signature]			[Student Signature]		
19		[Date]			[Date]			[Date]			[Date]		
20		[Parent/Guardian Signature]			[Parent/Guardian Signature]			[Parent/Guardian Signature]			[Parent/Guardian Signature]		
21		[Date]			[Date]			[Date]			[Date]		
22		[Navigator Signature]			[Navigator Signature]			[Navigator Signature]			[Navigator Signature]		
23		[Date]			[Date]			[Date]			[Date]		
24		[Date]			[Date]			[Date]			[Date]		
25		[Date]			[Date]			[Date]			[Date]		
26		[Date]			[Date]			[Date]			[Date]		
27		[Date]			[Date]			[Date]			[Date]		

Depending on the exposure your student has had to postsecondary planning, it may be beneficial to dedicate your first session to simply reviewing the ECP template, each section component, and

the additional readings and resources available. This will help familiarize your student with the tool, help address any unfamiliar or key terms used, and ensure they understand the process as a whole. Like you, your student has access to a *Student Quick Guide* as a resource to use when completing their ECP. Confirm your student has this guide. To wrap up the initial session, consider taking the time to create a targeted timeline for next steps (e.g., date by which student completes each section, date of your next meeting). Also consider adding joint notifications and reminders to both of your calendars. This will allow you to send gentle nudges to your student for upcoming targets; it will also help foster continued communication and help your student become accountable for his or her success.



SECTION 1: EDUCATION & CAREER GOAL SETTING & PLANNING

This section of the ECP is the foundation for your student’s education and career planning. It is where the student will identify his or her:

- Initial career goals
- Credentials needed to achieve them
- High school course work that must be completed, and
- Additional experience(s) that would help them reach their goals

A good place for a student to start is to complete one or more career exploration inventories that are typically available through a school’s college- and career-planning software program (e.g., Naviance or Xello) or made available by the counseling department. If your student’s school does not use such a program or provide specific recommended inventories, no need to worry! Simply refer your student to the Resources Roadmap section of this guide for links to free self-inventories that can help answer typical career exploration questions.

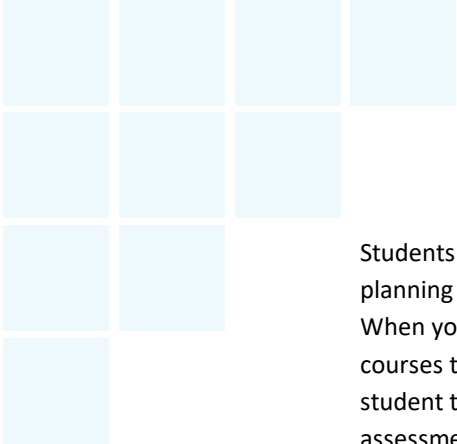
Once your student has identified their initial career goal(s), the next step is to advise him or her to dedicate some time to research information that might be needed to answer the additional section headers (e.g., credentials, coursework, extracurriculars). Again, don’t forget to refer your student to the Resources Roadmap in the guide and review, along with them, what is available to help with these exploratory and planning phases. Once your student has identified information of value, they can fill in the table with their responses and share with you (and their other Navigators) for feedback. It is recommended that you meet with your student at least twice a year to review and update as needed.



SECTION 2: ACADEMIC & EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES: A RECORD OF HIGH SCHOOL PROGRESS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

This section is where students track:

- Coursework they have completed
- Courses they plan on taking to meet graduation requirements and/or that are related to their goals
- Grade point average (GPA)
- Postsecondary entrance exams
- Electives and afterschool and out-of-school experiences



Students should work closely with their school guidance counselors to ensure proper course planning that aligns with both high school graduation requirements and their postsecondary needs. When your student meets with you or their guidance counselor each year, they should note the courses they successfully completed that year, along with the grades they received. Encourage your student to look back at Section 1 and review his or her career goals and interests, along with any assessments they may have taken. Have them add future courses to their ECP that will help them reach those goals. If your student completed any postsecondary tests—such as the PSAT, SAT, or ACT—be sure those scores are recorded in this section as well. If your student has postsecondary plans that require these tests, be sure to discuss this with them. Ensure they not only register in a timely fashion, but also take the time to prepare properly. Information and tools are provided in the Resources Roadmap that will help your student with this process.

Many postsecondary opportunities require an application or personal statement of some sort. Some may even require a resume. This section of the ECP includes space where students can add details about their afterschool and out-of-school experiences. This is a great way to help keep track of key activities and yearly highlights—making it easier when the time comes to write a resume, application, and personal statement. All of the information will be stored in one place.



SECTION 3: CAREER EXPLORATION: A RECORD OF PROGRESS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING THE HIGH SCHOOL YEARS

Before beginning this section, advise your student to look once again at the career goals they identified in Section 1. They should keep these firmly in mind so they can start taking action on a variety of career development activities that will help them reach those goals—such as conducting career exploration activities and work-based learning activities. Review and discuss these actions with your student. Suggested prompts can include:

- What activities have you completed so far?
- Which activities do you need to get a jump on?
- Do you know where to start?
- What areas do you feel you need the most support in?
- What resources do you need to help you with this process?

If your student doesn't have answers to some of these questions, that's perfectly OK! Simply remind them this is what the career exploration phase is all about. You can refer your student to the Resources Roadmap in their ECP and/or use these resources to assist them. You can also suggest conducting a Google search to find answers. Better yet, share with your student personal insights or networks you may have that can best support them—and suggest they connect with their other Navigators in this way. Once your student has taken action and made progress, they should summarize their activities and accomplishments in this section.

SECTION 4: POSTSECONDARY READINESS: A RECORD OF PROGRESS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING THE HIGH SCHOOL YEARS

Most likely the career goals your student has identified will require some sort of additional training and education beyond high school. Whether making plans to attend college, technical school, or other postsecondary program, your student will need to complete a number of steps. This section

outlines categories of action that may be important in their postsecondary planning (e.g., prepare a personal statement, complete national test, diagnose and address skills gaps). Your student should use this section of their ECP to summarize the work they've done in these areas and the results they received. You should review this section at least once a year with your student—not only to go over what they've done, but to identify any next steps they should take. Note that some activities may only be applicable to junior and senior years of high school (or, depending on the student's postsecondary plans, may not be applicable at all). There is no need for your student to fill in every box of this section—just those that are relevant to them.



Additional Reading & References

As students prepare for their postsecondary journeys, they are bound to have questions. Even as a Navigator, you might not be able to answer all of the questions your student has. Check out this section for information related to general postsecondary planning; financial aid and paying for education beyond high school; testing requirements and study resources; and helpful college application websites. Simply click on the links provided in each subsection to learn more! If these topics are new to you, you may want to review them with your student so you can explore and process the information together.



Remember

Your student can share their ECP with anyone they consider a Navigator—a teacher, counselor, mentor, parent, or any person helping them prepare for their path towards college and career readiness. The unique benefit of the ECP design is that it allows for a collaborative process; that is, your student can share the same live document with all of the navigators in their life who are providing great insights and lending support in different capacities. Each Navigator can support the student's success, and all of you can learn from one another. The ECP allows for information to be shared with whomever the student feels will support them, while the focus remains uniquely centered on the individual student.



“Connecting with my Navigator to work on my ECP has left me feeling not only organized but motivated and ready to tackle my future.”

- Pathway to Success Participant, 2020

RESOURCES ROADMAP

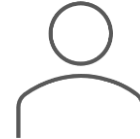


Self-Inventory Assessments

- ✓ [Skills Assessment](#)
- ✓ [Personality & Career Assessment](#)
- ✓ [Work Values Assessment](#)
- ✓ [Career Exploration Assessment](#)

Writing Your Resume

- ✓ [The Importance of the High School Resume](#)
- ✓ [High School Student Resume Template](#)
- ✓ [Your High School Resume: A Step-By-Step Guide](#)
- ✓ [How to Write a High School Resume for College Applications](#)



Writing Your Personal Statement

- ✓ [What Is a Personal Statement? Everything You Need to Know About the College Essay](#)
- ✓ [How to Write Your Personal Statement in 4 Easy Steps](#)
- ✓ [College 101: Awesome Examples of Personal Statements](#)
- ✓ [First-Year Essay Prompts: The Common App](#)

Creating Your LinkedIn Profile

- ✓ [How to Use LinkedIn in High School](#)
- ✓ [LinkedIn Profile Checklist for High School](#)

Informational Interviews

- ✓ [What Exactly Are Informational Interviews?](#)
- ✓ [15 Questions to Ask in an Informational Interview](#)
- ✓ [How to Land and Ace an Informational Interview](#)
- ✓ [Informational Interview Etiquette](#)



Preparing for Job Interviews

- ✓ [Job Search Tips for High School Students](#)
- ✓ [Student Job Interviews: Questions & Answers](#)
- ✓ [Interview Tips for High School Students](#)
- ✓ [Benefits of Having a Job in High School](#)
- ✓ [Financial Planning Tips for High School Students](#)



Preparing for College Interviews

- ✓ [College Interviews: The Basics](#)
- ✓ [College Interview Questions You Must Prepare For](#)
- ✓ [Top College Interview Tips](#)
- ✓ [The Ultimate College Interview Guide](#)



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUCCESS

Collaborate

The first step towards developing a successful ECP is to make sure all the Navigators in a student's life are involved and collaborate on the same plan. The combined comments and feedback, as recorded in the general section, allow for cross-communication among the diverse supports in a student's life. Communication is the key to successful partnerships and relationships. The ECP relies very much on this partnership of Navigators.

Ask Questions

This is a new journey for your student and quite possibly, a new journey for you and other Navigators as well. You and your student will come across many unknowns—whether these are next steps, strange terminology, or unfamiliar resources and supports needed along the way. And “not to know” is OK. What's not OK, is not asking the questions to learn the answers.

Before engaging in this journey with your student, review FHI 360's [College and Career Readiness: A Guide for Navigators](#), which helps both students and Navigators map and track the college- and career-readiness journey. This guide will provide you with a structured framework to nurture the critical connections your student must make for college and career readiness. If you're looking for in-depth review of the college- and career-readiness process, as well as tips for success, lesson plans, and more, this should be your go-to resource.

Depending on your background and expertise, you may also wish to explore **career discernment**. This differs from career exploration because it encompasses the exploratory phase but also pairs it with reflection and intentional action planning. University of Notre Dame's [Undergraduate Career Services](#) provides an overview of career discernment that you may find helpful. The degree to which each Navigator contributes to his or her student's college- and career-readiness journey can be different. However, all Navigators should have a basic understanding of the career discernment process and make attempts to educate their students about this lifelong process.

The college- and career-readiness process requires vulnerability, honesty, and commitment. If you can embrace the process and encourage your student to do the same, they will make the progress they strive for. In essence, you and your student will get out of this experience what each of you puts into it.

Explore

This is the time in your student's life when he or she can explore, make mistakes, and try new things. Encourage them to be open to the process, learn about new paths they never considered before, meet new people to expand their networks, and above all else, trust themselves and have fun. Let your student's mind be the explorer, with you and their ECP as their guide along the way.