

College Readiness: It's More than Just a Test

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3,2,1.....

- Write three things you wish you knew before you went to college.
- Write two things you learned the hard way once you got there.
- Write one piece of information every student should absolutely know before they commit to a college.

A Complete Definition of College and Career Readiness

David T Conley, PhD

In many circles, efforts are under way to develop definitions of college readiness, career readiness, or both. This brief contains a definition that is the culmination of 18 years of study and research on this topic. Major work conducted by the author and his colleagues that contributes to this definition includes a proficiency-based college admissions system developed for the Oregon University System, a national study on college readiness standards sponsored by the Association of American Universities, multiple analyses of entry-level college courses sponsored by the College Board and others, college and career readiness standards developed under the sponsorship of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and subsequent studies of their validity relative to college and careers, a study of career preparation programs sponsored by the National Assessment Governing Board, and two major studies sponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation on the alignment of the Common Core State Standards to college and career readiness.

Additionally, the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC) works on a continuing basis with secondary and postsecondary faculty to help them improve student readiness for college and postsecondary success. What is learned from practice is incorporated into tools, techniques, and strategies to help all students become ready for college and careers. All of this information from practice contributes to this definition.

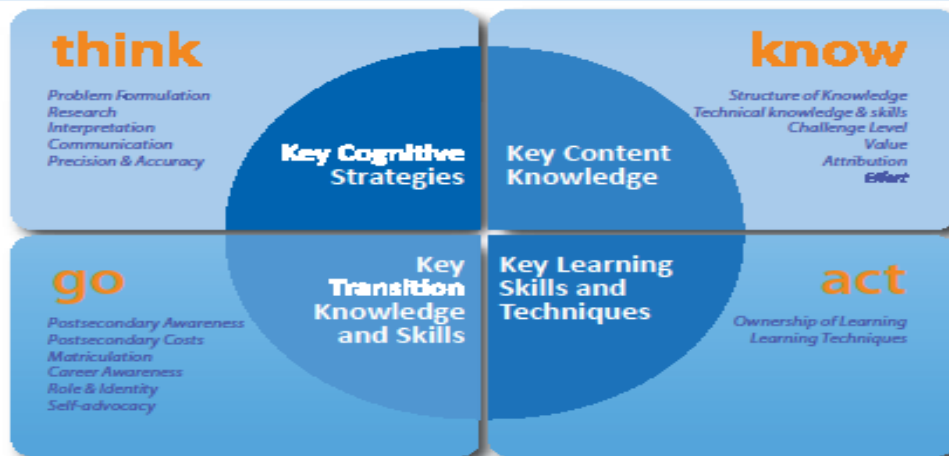
This definition, then, is based on both empirical evidence gathered via multiple research studies and on-the-ground interactions with practitioners attempting to improve programs that affect a wide range of students, particularly those who would be first in family to attend college. Postsecondary, in this definition, refers to any formal setting in which an individual pursues additional instruction beyond



high school. This might include two- or four-year degree programs, certificate or licensure programs, apprenticeships, or training programs in the military. Furthermore, this definition differs from indices or “cut scores” that use a single cut score alone or in combination with another element, such as high school grade point average, to predict college success. This definition is designed to be actionable. It describes what students should know and be able to do in general terms that can then be defined and addressed with increasing detail and measured in a variety of ways using appropriately complex measures.

A Definition of College and Career Readiness

A student who is ready for college and career can qualify for and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses leading to a baccalaureate or certificate, or career pathway-oriented training programs without the need for remedial or developmental coursework. However, not every student requires the same proficiency in all areas. A student’s interests and post-high school aspirations influence the precise knowledge and skill profiles necessary to be ready for postsecondary studies. Therefore, a single cut score on a test given to high school students does not take into account this individualization of the match between knowledge and skills on the one hand, and aspirations on the other. A secondary program of instruction should be designed to equip all students with sufficient knowledge and skill as identified in the following section. The measure of success should be student success in their chosen field of postsecondary education or post-high school training. Measuring this requires a more specialized and adapted assessment strategy than can be achieved with a single cut score on a single test.



The Four Keys to College and Career Readiness

College and career readiness consists of four “keys.” Students are ready to the degree to which they have mastered all four. They consist of the following:

Key Cognitive Strategies

Key Cognitive Strategies are the ways of thinking that are necessary for college-level work. They include formulating hypotheses and developing problem-solving strategies, identifying sources and collecting information, analyzing and evaluating findings or conflicting viewpoints, organizing and constructing work products in a variety of formats, and monitoring and confirming the precision and accuracy of all work produced.

Key Content Knowledge

Key Content Knowledge refers to key foundational content and “big ideas” from core subjects that all students must know well, and an understanding of the structure of knowledge in core subject areas, which enables students to gain insight into and retain what they are learning. Also included in this Key are the technical knowledge and skills associated with career aspirations, the ways in which students interact with content knowledge, its perceived value to them and the effort they are willing to expend to learn necessary content, and their explanations of why they succeed or fail in mastering this knowledge.

Key Learning Skills and Techniques

Key Learning Skills and Techniques consist of two broad categories: student ownership of learning, which includes goal setting, persistence, self-awareness, motivation, progress monitoring, help seeking, and self-efficacy; and specific learning techniques, such as time management, study skills, strategic reading, memorization techniques, collaborative learning, technology skills, and self-monitoring.

Key Transition Knowledge and Skills

Key Transition Knowledge and Skills are necessary to navigate successfully the transition to life beyond high school. This information is often privileged knowledge that is not equally accessible to all students. Least likely to have this information are students from families and communities historically under-represented in higher education or certain career pathways. This key includes, among other things, knowing which courses to take in high school in order to be admitted to an appropriate postsecondary program, understanding financial aid options and procedures, being focused on a career pathway or major, understanding college-level and workforce norms and expectations, and knowing how to be a self-advocate within the institutional framework of postsecondary programs.

The Four Keys to College and Career READINESS

think:

Key Cognitive Strategies

The Key Cognitive Strategies describe the thinking skills and strategies that allow students to develop and demonstrate competency in learning, applying, and extending academic or on-the-job knowledge.

Students are able to think strategically and insightfully about the work they do.



Have you ever played the game of SCRABBLE? Players draw seven random letters at a time and try to make words on the grid game board. Letters have different point values, and some of the squares on the grid have different values too. The player with the most points at the end of the game wins. When someone is just beginning to learn how to play the game, he or she usually just tries to make the longest words possible. But with a little experience and practice, players soon learn that there are a lot of different strategies they can use to win, playing "defensive" by blocking opponents' next moves, playing a small word that racks up big points, and so on. When you approach a complex problem in a similar manner, identifying different ways of solving it and choosing the best option based on the information you have, you're thinking strategically.

Hypothesis/Strategy	Identify/Collect	Analyze/Evaluate	Organize/Construct	Monitor/Control
Problem-Focused Do you know as much about the problem as you might be approached?	Research Do you identify the resources, information, or data needed to solve this problem?	Strategy/Action Do you synthesize appropriate the whole with justifiable conclusions addressing the problem?	Communication Do you utilize a clear, organized, and effective communication strategy when presenting your solution?	Persistence & Accuracy Do you ensure the problem is addressed completely and accurately?

Key Content Knowledge

know:

Key Content Knowledge describes the structure of knowledge and the student characteristics that determine how they interact with content. Students who possess grade-specific content knowledge are motivated to learn relevant facts, names, and concepts... and to understand how they fit together.

Students work to see the "big picture" of knowledge, not just the factual details.

A Portrait of Your Brain (aka How You Know Stuff)

The brain retains complex information to the degree to which it can: 1) generate connections or links among the pieces to make a structure; 2) associate emotions, positive or negative, with the information; 3) find the information meaningful, relevant, or useful; 4) apply or use the information in a variety of authentic situations; and 5) receive timely feedback on how useful the information was to achieve a specific purpose or general goal.



STRUCTURE OF KNOWLEDGE includes key facts, linking ideas, and organizing concepts.

Thinking & Writing | Mathematics | Science | Social Studies | The Arts

RELATIONSHIP WITH KNOWLEDGE includes student's effort, value, and challenge level.

By working to understand the structure of knowledge, and by focusing on how you relate to content knowledge, YOU CAN LEARN TO BECOME AN EXPERT ON JUST ABOUT ANYTHING!

[insert your future here.]

act:

Key Learning Skills and Techniques are the skills that students use to study and to be responsible for their own ongoing learning. Possession of these skills enables lifelong learning and personal growth as well as the performance in college classrooms and the workplace.

Students with these skills know how to learn.

- Learning? You mean that!
- ### TO-DO List...
- Set and work toward goals.
 - Persist through challenges.
 - Assess strengths and weaknesses.
 - Stay motivated.
 - Seek help when needed.
 - Monitor progress.
 - Be confident in ability to succeed.
 - Gain proficiency in technology.
 - Use strategies to memorize & recall facts.
 - Collaborate with others!
 - Manage time effectively.
 - Be prepared to take tests.
 - Develop note taking skills.
 - Read strategically.

Pop Quiz:
IQ is generally the most important contributing factor in students' grades. TRUE or FALSE?

Answer:
FALSE. Research has shown time and time again that students' learning skills and techniques, like goal-setting, time management, and all the other items on the to-do list, have a greater impact on academic success than the basic brain power captured in IQ scores.

For example, Dr. Angela Duckworth, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, followed 140 eighth grade students over the course of one school year. She asked them questions about their study habits and attitudes toward school, and she asked parents and teachers similar questions about students' learning behaviors. When she combined this information with student IQ scores, achievement test scores, attendance rates, and final class grades, she found that students' self-discipline was the strongest determinant of final grades - twice as important as IQ scores!

Key Learning Skills and Techniques

go:

Key Transition Skills are those necessary to successfully adjust and perform within a student's chosen postsecondary environment. Students who possess this set of knowledge and skills thoughtfully explore their options, identify and obtain the necessary resources, complete the steps to pursue their chosen path, and are prepared for the challenges ahead.

Students know how to get where they want to go.

NAVIGATING the road ahead!

Transitioning from high school to college and career requires students to navigate a complex process of personal, cultural, financial, and professional challenges. Your pathway won't always be a straight line either, and there are some kinds of skills and knowledge you'll need to find your way.

- College Knowledge:** Learn about different postsecondary options like 4-year and 2-year colleges, certificate programs, and apprenticeships.
- Self-Advocacy:** Be aware of resources available to support your goals and seek them out. Find a mentor or role model who's taking a path similar to the one you're interested in.
- College Costs:** Learn about how much it costs to go to college, how to pay for it, and what it would cost you over a lifetime to not go.
- Career Awareness:** Explore what kinds of careers are possible when discussing your, and required skills and education.
- Life After High School:** Know that when it takes to succeed in high school is different from the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to be successful in college or the workplace.

Did you know... The average person who is a bachelor's degree will earn \$1,500,000 more than a high school dropout over their lifetime!

[The Education Trust]

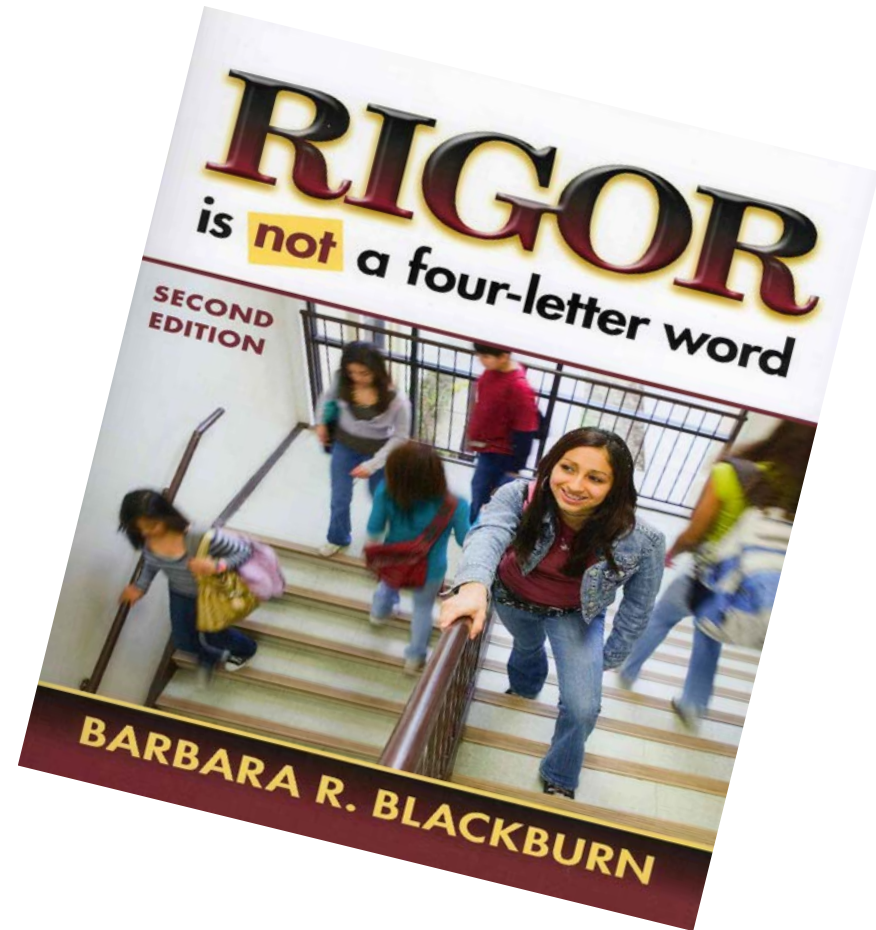
Key Transition Skills and Awareness

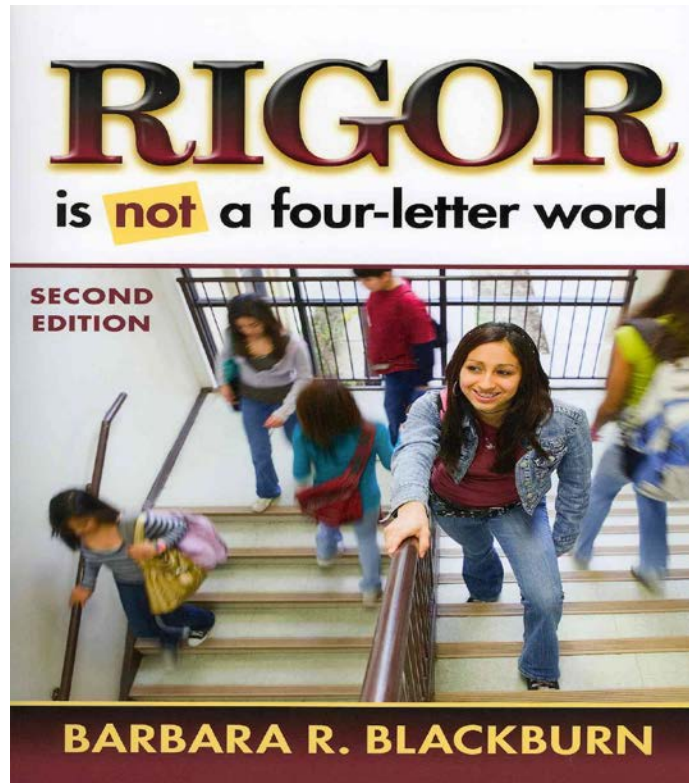
About Early College Academy at Southridge

- Sixth year in existence
- Enrollment - 378
- % economically disadvantaged – 69%
- Ethnicity
 - Hispanic – 193
 - Asian – 35
 - African American – 105
 - White – 58
- Graduating class
 - 28 Associate Degrees, Class of 2015
 - 48 Associate Degrees, Class of 2016

Key Cognitive Strategies - Think Key Content Knowledge - Know

W - Writing
I - Inquiry
C - Collaboration
O - Organization
R - Reading





“Rigor is creating an environment in which each student is expected to learn at high levels, each student is supported so he or she can learn at high levels, and each student demonstrates learning at high levels.”

Barbara R. Blackburn-*RIGOR is not a four-letter word*

Expecting Students to Learn at High Levels

What we teach

- Providing a challenging curriculum (AP, dual credit)

Raise the level of content

- Increasing text difficulty—An effective way to raise the level of content is to increase the difficulty of the texts the students read.

How we teach

- Helping students interact with the content in a more rigorous way
- Marking the text
- Pre-reading
- Summarizing

Supporting Each Student to Learn at High Levels

Motivation and engagement

- Students are generally **motivated** when they value what they are doing and when they think they have a chance for success.
- Scaffolding provides opportunity for success by providing appropriate support and guidance.

Scaffolding during reading activities:

- Read pair share
- Gallery walks
- Group reading and discussion
- Revising notes

Demonstrating Learning at High Levels

Students should have opportunities to demonstrate higher levels of understanding.

- More challenging assessments
- A variety of assessments
- Lessons with **embedded** formative assessments

What we found....

Quick Write

Using complete sentences, write about three successful instructional strategies used on your campus....

Specific Strategies to Increase Rigor in the Classroom

Increase complexity

- Vary the types of writing assignments given to students so they can understand the topic at a higher level:
 - Quick writes
 - Summaries
 - Reflections
 - Revise notes

Resources

- Kelly Gallagher – Article of the Week www.kellygallagher.org/article-of-the-week/
- Izzit.org

Specific Strategies to Increase Rigor in the Classroom

Give appropriate support and guidance

Open Your Focus

- Open-ended questioning ensures students are answering questions on a variety of levels.
- Students use question stems to pose questions.
- Students use Costa's house to ask questions about a topic.
- Students use Costa's house to pose questions in the margin of notes.

Raise Expectations

- Track progress—students track their own progress to maintain motivation.

Key Learning Skills and Techniques — Act

Ownership of Learning

- Goal setting
- Grade reflection/progress monitoring
- Academic requirements

Learning Techniques

- Cornell notes
- Agendas
- Study groups

Key Transition Knowledge and Skills — Go

Post-Secondary Awareness and Transition

- College goals
- Applications
- Financial aid
- Eligibility
- Admissions
- Raise me

What We Found

It is important to have a support system in place for students in their transition to college

- Language placement tests (AVANT, AP)
- Dry run of SAT/ACT for students
- ASVAB for career awareness

What have you found?

Learning Log

Answer the following questions:

- What did you learn today?
- What did you find most useful in what you learned today?
- What questions do you still have?

Questions

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