

The Why, the Why, the How

How to Use These Messages

Consider selecting key messages and talking points to communicate about Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP) in presentations, conversations, and written materials. Customize them with testimonials, video clips, or other stories.

In a Nutshell

Life beyond high school is different from what it used to be. Most jobs in Colorado now and in the future require training or education beyond high school. There are fewer jobs for high school graduates now than at any other time in Colorado's history. Students who graduate and work in Colorado will need in-demand skills that meet business, industry, and higher education standards.

ICAP is a multi-year process that intentionally guides students as they explore career, academic, and postsecondary opportunities. With the support of adults, students develop the awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and skills to create their own meaningful and PoWeRful pathways to be career and college ready.

ICAP helps students imagine a future career and helps them design the way to get there. Students have a chance to look inside - to determine their interests and passions, and outside - to explore and experience career opportunities. With greater knowledge, they can imagine and then craft their individual career pathway to success.

The Why

Three out of four jobs in Colorado will require education or training beyond high school. When students take the initiative to complete a meaningful ICAP, they find out which pathways fit their learning styles and their unique talents, which careers ignite their imagination, and what kind of training and academic experiences will prepare them for in-demand jobs now and for jobs that may not exist when they graduate high school.

When students complete a meaningful ICAP process, they:

- Are more motivated to attend school and stay engaged
- Become confident learners who can actively set goals
- Have access to quality career guidance activities
- Connect the relevance of education to their future aspirations
- Understand and demonstrate self-exploration, career exploration, and career planning and management
- Make secondary and postsecondary course plans to pursue their career and life goals
- Are connected to their college and career goals
- Select their pathway more strategically to align with self-defined career, college, and life goal
- Are able to articulate their transferable and apply knowledge about how their actions today connect with their goals
- Establish better communication and relational connections between their school and home

The What

ICAP is in legislation (2009). Following Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K) in 2008, schools and districts were mandated to develop an ICAP process in their schools for students in grades 9-12.

ICAP gives students ownership of a process that helps them explore their unique talents and aspirations, participate in career and postsecondary options, and create pathways to financial success after high school.

In 2014, the Colorado Department of Education refreshed the ICAP process. ICAP practitioners asked CDE to provide more guidance in implementing ICAP. Beginning in 2014, more than 400 teachers, School Counselors, CTE and Special education educators, and school leaders gathered for an ICAP Summit to set in motion a refreshed process for developing and enhancing a meaningful ICAP process that students own.

The ICAP must include (*but should not be limited to*):

- Career and college interest surveys
- Written postsecondary and workforce goals, intermediate benchmarks, and data reflecting progress toward those goals
- Scores on assessments
- Experiences in service learning and/or work environments
- Activities that establish connections between school-based instruction and the world of work
- An intentional sequence of courses that reflect progress toward the postsecondary goal
- Academic progress
- College application(s), a resume, or alternative work-based applications
- An understanding of the financial impact of life after high school, including an education.

The How

Students must start the ICAP process in 9th grade, and must update that ICAP every year. (Students begin the ICAP process in 6th grade in many districts.) With the guidance of adults, including their parents, students build their ICAP using resources at school, on the web, and in their communities.

School counselors, educators, school leaders, and businesses can access an [online toolkit](#) to help guide students (of all ages) on their ICAP journey and to assess and strengthen schools, districts, and institutions on their ICAP processes.

- The **ICAP guiding questions** give context to the ICAP Process.
- The **ICAP program readiness and development tool** is designed to guide ICAP teams and professionals with sequential prompts and categories to consider when beginning and refining their ICAP process.
- Middle and high school **ICAP quality indicators** define eight areas that students should explore, experience and use to apply their knowledge, skills, aptitudes, abilities and awareness to be career and college ready.
- These quality Indicators can be evaluated with an **ICAP quality indicator growth scale** to ensure the successful continuum of ICAP processes. Levels include: basic, approaching, accomplished, and exemplary.
- The **process tools** include **crosswalks** (with academic and CTE standards, PWR, IEP, ALP, ASCA, Colorado statute and legislation) **planning tools**, a **program evaluation rubric** and **ICAP promising practices** from across the state.
- A student's ICAP should be transferable through a paper or electronic format.
- A school and district's ICAP process should engage all educators and leaders.