Step 1: Get Started! College and Career Readiness for All!

PSAM will help schools go *from* a well intentioned, but piecemeal approach *to* an organized and strategic expansion of the pathways to college and career readiness for ALL students starting in the 9th grade[1]. When integrated into school improvement planning, PSAM supports whole-school improvement through the lens of postsecondary success, particularly for students of color and low-income students.

Postsecondary Success Asset Mapping (PSAM) is a researched-based survey and set of tools that helps schools better guide ALL students, especially those traditionally underserved, toward successful college and career pathways. Using PSAM, schools:

- Gather data through the user-friendly PSAM survey on five key asset areas of college and career readiness;
- Assess college and career readiness strengths and challenges;
- Identify and align resources for the greatest impact on college and career readiness;
- Prioritize the greatest needs around college and career readiness; and
- Implement action steps to better prepare their students for college and career pathways.

This section of the Toolkit provides tools and seasoned advice on simple ways to prepare for the PSAM process that will make it flow smoothly and effectively. The advice, along with the tools and resources that make up PSAM, were developed, piloted, and refined in 10 public high schools in Miami, Philadelphia, and San Francisco as part of the Postsecondary Success Collaborative (PSC), an initiative led by FHI360. With an initial cohort of 4,500 students in grades nine through twelve, PSAM was a central component of PSC and critical to its overwhelming success in increasing the numbers of underserved students who successfully transitioned into and persisted in college.

The PSAM process has the following five steps and this Toolkit provides all the resources and materials needed for each one. With the preparation outlined below, your school will be ready to launch PSAM!

RESOURCES

Activity: Introduction to PSAM for leadership and school improvement teams

Sample Implementation Timelines.pdf

PSAM Survey Tool.pdf

The five steps of PSAM are:

1. Taking the PSAM survey. Collect data to determine where the school is currently in each of the five asset areas of college and career readiness.
2. Reviewing and analyzing data from the PSAM survey in each of the five Asset Areas
3. Identifying college and career readiness priorities for organizing and expanding the pathways to college and career in order to make a significant increase in the numbers of students in the school who successfully transition to college and career pathways.
4. Developing and implementing action plans. Create and follow through on a plan to address the highest priorities and make adjustments as needed.
5. Implement action steps to better prepare their students for college and career pathways.

These steps help schools, often for the first time, to determine without finger pointing, how well they are actually supporting students—starting in the 9th grade—in developing the knowledge and skills that make them college and career ready. Armed with this information, the PSAM process guides schools in working with key partners on improving program coordination and quality—and filling in where new strategies are needed. The work is to build on what is going well and to strengthen areas that need improvement. PSAM provides a structure and strategy that supports this kind of ongoing planning and monitoring; it guides and focuses the collaboration among schools and partner organizations to set priorities for individual and shared work that all agree will improve student outcomes.

College and Career Readiness leads to Postsecondary Success

College and career readiness refers to readiness to succeed in any formal setting in which an individual pursues additional learning and training beyond high school. This includes earning a degree or its equivalent from two- or four-year colleges or universities, certificate or licensure programs, apprenticeships or training programs, or the military. If a student is college and career ready, s/he will have postsecondary success.

Establish a team or build upon an existing school improvement or leadership team

A newly designated or existing school team must be charged with the important work of leading PSAM, which should be thought of as a continuing commitment throughout each school year. The "PSAM team" (although it may be a committee of an existing team or go by another name such as Data team) analyzes PSAM data through an inquiry process in order to set strategic priorities that can be embedded in or aligned with the school improvement plan. The work continues as the team helps to follow progress throughout the year and to make mid-course corrections and enhancements.

It is critical for the success of this work that the principal and at least one other high-level administrator be directly engaged in leading PSAM. In the most successful schools, principals lead by creating and spreading buy-in. This can begin with making the decision to do PSAM in consultation with the school improvement team or other similar group and then supporting each step whether it's by providing resources or removing barriers.

An **ideal** PSAM team will reflect the diversity of roles within the school to capture varying perspectives, including:

- Principal
- One other senior administrator (e.g., AP, Dean)
- Instructional or advisory leadership in each of the core content areas (ELA and Math in particular)
- Guidance counselor, college counselor, and/or career advisor
- An college support partner program (e.g., College Access Program coordinator or advisor)
- Key community partners/stakeholders

In addition, consider including an **external, impartial facilitator** who understands the particular context, structure, and culture of the school and who has the trust of those participating in the process. For the team leading this work, it can be time consuming, and having an external partner or facilitator who can keep the work on track is a critical success factor. Sources of potential facilitators include a local college or university, community-based organization, and business partner.

Tip for Success—Tap key experts as needed

It is important that the core PSAM team not get too unwieldy, which can happen when it grows past 10 members. To ensure that essential perspectives are heard, some schools invite staff and others to participate in discussions for those assets that relate specifically to the work they do in the school. For example, when analyzing the asset data on Key Transition Knowledge and Skills consider inviting more of the college support partners to participate in that session. For the asset data on Core Content Knowledge, consider bringing in a larger team of teachers from the ELA and Math departments.

With the PSAM team in place, school leaders can further the understanding of and commitment to the work by:

- Engaging the team in sharing what they think and know about college and career readiness at the beginning of the PSAM work together;
- Providing an introduction and overview of PSAM to the team;
- Explaining the process and develop an implementation timeline for doing PSAM in the school;

Activity: Introduction to PSAM for leadership and school improvement teams

Determine a timeline for PSAM

Resource: Sample implementation timelines

Taking the PSAM survey itself takes only approximately 30-minutes. What will take more time is the PSAM team's work of analyzing the results, identifying areas of strength and areas of improvement, and developing action plans. Some schools set aside an intensive one- or two-day retreat at the beginning or end of each year to analyze and discuss the data from the survey and develop their annual action plans. Other schools opt to spread out meetings over the course of one to two months and then incorporate changes into existing school plans and activities. Each school must determine how to schedule and implement the process based on its resources, school improvement plan, partners, and other contextual factors. We offer two sample timelines for how schools can implement PSAM in their schools.

- Year-long implementation plan: Meetings are approximately once per month for 60-90 **minutes**
- Accelerated implementation plan: Several half-day or full-day retreats.

Administer the PSAM Survey

The PSAM survey is the tool that you will use to collect data on the five asset areas of college and career readiness. The online version of the PSAM tool is administered anonymously to faculty, staff, and other key partners through any web browser and takes approximately 30 minutes to complete. The online tool **will tabulate and aggregate your results, and present them in a table or graph format.**

You can also download the PDF version of the PSAM tool and administer paper copies. However, administering the survey in paper and pen format means that your team will have to manually tabulate and aggregate the results of the survey—an arduous and time consuming process.

There are five sections of the survey, one for each asset area. All administrators and staff should be expected to complete Assets 1-4. It is also recommended asking community partners, particularly those providing college and career support to any of your students, to complete Assets 1-4. **Survey questions in Asset 5 are to be completed by only those individuals who are on the team leading PSAM.**

To administer the online version of the PSAM survey contact FHI 360's Postsecondary Success Collaborative fsantiago@fhi360.org to receive an email with a unique link that will enable online participation in the PSAM survey. After completing the survey, FHI 360 will provide a data report in an editable PowerPoint format with approximately 1 table per survey question. In addition, your raw data will be in an Excel spreadsheet, which has the functionality for you to present your data in customized graphs, charts, and tables.

Confidentiality of PSAM survey data

In order to maintain confidentiality, no names of schools or individuals will be collected through this survey. No other entities will have access to your school's data. FHI 360 staff will assign a number to each survey and data report as administrators of the surveys; however, since no names will be collected or recorded, it will be impossible for FHI 360 staff to identify any school or individual. All FHI 360 staff who handle data are certified by the federal government in the protection of human subjects and the maintenance of confidentiality protocols.

Using the other resources and tools in the PSAM Toolkit

The other tools and resources included in this Toolkit are designed to be used with the PSAM survey as part of the school improvement process, of which college and career readiness is an integral piece. The sample agendas, timelines, resources, and templates will help with the implementation of PSAM in your school, as follows:

1. Taking the PSAM Survey
2. Accessing and displaying your data
3. Reviewing and analyzing your data
4. Identifying college and career readiness priorities
5. Developing and Implementing an action plan

Who do I contact to get started with PSAM?

If you would like to get started with implementing PSAM, contact the following members of the Postsecondary Success team:

Frances Santiago (fsantiago@fhi360.org)
PH: 212 243-1110

Once you receive an email with information on how to access the PSAM through *Qualtrics*, be sure to keep it in a safe place.

Tips for using this Toolkit

There are many ways to use the PSAM Toolkit. We recommend the following:

- Engage your external partners. There may be one that can help lead or facilitate this effort, provide technical assistance, sustain focus and keep the momentum moving forward.
  - For example, if you don't have an in-house data expert, look to your external partners who may have resources to help you with data collection and presentation. Higher education institutions, business partners, and local education funds (LEF) often have the resources and expertise in this area.
- The decision to do PSAM should be a decision and process that is undertaken collaboratively. Plan for discussion and reflection of this work with the members of your school improvement team or other similar group before beginning it.
- Figure out the time and resources that PSAM will take your school to complete and develop a plan and timeline for the work.
- As soon as possible, communicate the goals, purpose, and activities of this work with all staff and partners, and the importance of having everyone complete the PSAM survey in the time allotted.
- Read each Step of the Toolkit along with the sample agendas and worksheets prior to starting discussions or activities in order to get a sense of what is involved.
- Feel free to tailor these materials to meet the needs of your specific context.
- Once you have begun this work, you may find that certain assumptions you made have changed or that the realities of implementation are different than you had imagined. That is perfectly normal and to be expected. **Revisit your plan throughout the implementation and revise it as necessary.**

Tips for Success

- Principal and one other top level school administrator leads PSAM.
- Develop a lead team or committee for PSAM that reflects the diversity of roles and perspectives of the school and its partners.
- Consider inviting content or skill area experts in your building to help the team analyze and discuss specific Asset Areas.
- Partner with trusted local organizations, such as a local education fund, for key supports such as external facilitation and data management and analysis.
- Once the PSAM team finalizes an implementation plan, share it with staff and stakeholders.

Up Next: Taking the PSAM Survey→

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[1] Research is clear that 9th grade is a "make or break" year. More students fail 9th grade than any other grade in high school, and a disproportionate number of students who are held back in 9th grade subsequently drop out (Herlihy, 2007; 9th Grade Transitions by Connie Warren, Cheri Fancsali et al).