

Executive Summary

**A Launchpad for Life:
A Vision for
Purposeful Pathways
for All Students**

The landscape of education and work is rapidly transforming, shaped by families' changing perceptions of the value of college, the tremendous disruption of emerging technologies, and shifts in education and workforce policy. To support the work of cross-sector leaders across the country, the Commission on Purposeful Pathways came together to develop a conceptual framework and a call

to action for communities to implement what we define as purposeful pathways, that ensure every young person is equipped not only for a job but also for a fulfilling life, meaningful career, and economic mobility.

During our work, the Commission often returned to a shared goal as a foundation for our vision—By high school graduation, all students should be able to say, with confidence:

“
I know who I am, I know where I'm going, and I know who can help me get there.



By the Numbers

78%

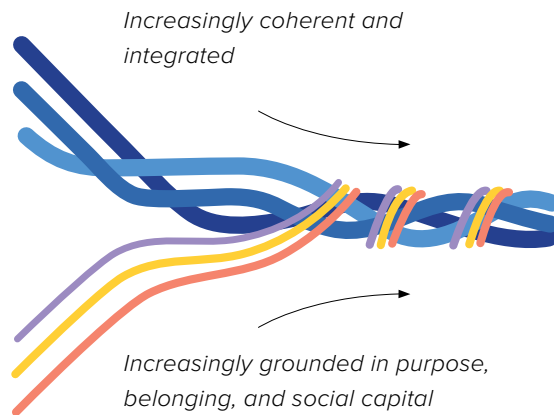
While **78%** of Gen Z students believe it is important to determine career plans before high school graduation ...

13%

... only **13%** of Gen Z students feel fully prepared to do so.

Source: [Question the Quo study](#) (ECMC Group, 2023)

Our vision: *All* students should experience high-quality advising, accelerated coursework, and career-connected learning that cultivate purpose, belonging, and social capital.



Young people graduate high school with agency and momentum on purposeful pathways to achieve economic mobility.

PROGRAMMATIC EXPERIENCES

- High-Quality Advising
- Accelerated Coursework Sequences
- Career-Connected Learning

CULTIVATION OF AGENCY

- Purpose
- Belonging
- Social Capital

“

I know who I am, I know where I'm going, and I know who can help me get there.



Four recommendations for designing, implementing and scaling this vision.

1

Provide all students with purposeful pathways.

Every student, in every community, should experience a purposeful pathway: high-quality advising, accelerated coursework, and career-connected learning, interwoven with purpose, belonging, and social capital. These should be neither exclusive “programs of privilege” nor “interventions” for students seen as falling behind.

3

Move the goalposts beyond the high school diploma to economic mobility.

For too long, the driving indicator of success in high school has been diploma attainment. To ensure that students are making progress toward lifelong economic mobility, communities must move the goalposts, from high school graduation to attainment of in-demand, family-sustaining jobs and wages.

2

Hardwire purpose, belonging, and social capital into every pathway.

Narrow pathways designed to prepare young people for entry-level roles in specific industries are increasingly risky as technology and automation disrupt the world of work. In addition to momentum gained from programmatic experiences, students also need agency to adapt and respond to evolving opportunities.

4

Make student transitions a shared responsibility.

Even the strongest, best-intentioned high school programs cannot solve the difficulty students experience when they graduate and step into a college campus or job site that hasn't been prepared to receive them. Collaboration across K-12, higher education, and workforce systems is essential to align vision, governance, data, policy, and funding and support young people's success.

Learn more about Purposeful Pathways

All high school students should have access to purposeful pathways—regardless of where they are getting started or where they want to go. To support implementing and scaling purposeful pathways for all students, [explore the full Commission report and accompanying action guides.](#)

A Launchpad for Life:

Introduces the vision for purposeful pathways, the evidence behind the programmatic experiences, and the cultivation of agency. Includes galvanizing recommendations for K-12, higher education, workforce, and intermediary leaders to implement and scale purposeful pathways in their communities.

High-Impact Practices:

Introduces a set of high-impact practices that illustrate different approaches to integrate and build coherence across programmatic experiences and cultivation of agency.

Enabling Conditions:

Explores five enabling conditions to support, sustain, and scale purposeful pathways at the local, regional, and state levels.

Measurement:

Introduces a measurement framework and key considerations for pathmaking teams to implement and continuously improve purposeful pathways.

Student Engagement Playbook:

Introduces strategies for school and community leaders to co-design purposeful pathways with youth.

Resources

[Access the full report and accompanying action guides online.](#)