PANORAMA EDUCATION

8 College and Career Readiness Strategies

Introduction

College and career readiness (CCR) doesn't happen all at once. It's built through a series of small, intentional experiences that help students build essential skills, understand their options, connect learning to real-world goals, and take meaningful steps toward life after high school.

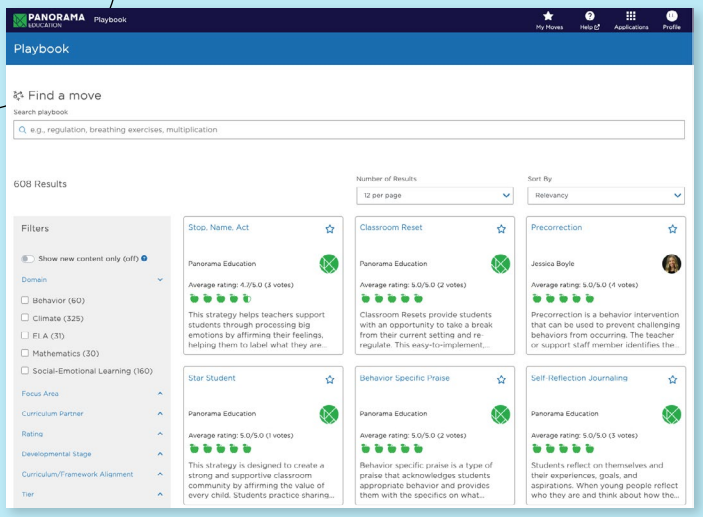
When students can articulate what they're working toward—and why it matters—they're more likely to stay engaged in school, attend consistently, and persist through graduation requirements. And while most districts agree on the importance of CCR, translating that priority into day-to-day student experiences can be challenging.

That's where this toolkit comes in.

Inside, you'll find 8 practical CCR strategies designed to be used directly with students. Each strategy focuses on a specific readiness-building action, such as exploring career interests, setting goals, building planning skills, or reflecting on postsecondary options.

How to use these guides:

- **District Leaders:** Share these strategies as flexible, student-facing resources that schools can adapt to their local context, priorities, and student needs.
- **School Leaders:** Encourage teams to pilot these strategies in advisory, CCR courses, or counseling supports. Use them to strengthen how everyday student interactions can help students prepare for postsecondary success.
- **Classroom Teachers and Support Staff:** Use these strategies directly with students (individually or in groups) to help them reflect, plan, and take ownership of their next steps.



About Panorama Playbook:

The interventions in this toolkit have been selected from Playbook, Panorama's professional learning library for K-12 educators. Districts and schools that partner with Panorama have full access to the collection of 1,000+ strategies, instructional resources, and MTSS interventions across academics, attendance, behavior, college and career readiness, digital literacy, and life skills. Playbook also includes resources for leading professional development, practicing self-care for educator wellness, and engaging families.

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Build Your Support Circle

Focus Area: Graduation Readiness, Student Self-Discovery
MTSS Tier(s): Tier 1 **Developmental Stage:** High School

About This Strategy:

This activity helps students identify the trusted adults in their life who can guide, encourage, and support them as they prepare for college, career, and life after high school.

Instructions:

1. Understand Your Support Circle

- Everyone needs a team of adults who can give guidance, encouragement, and advice. These people can help you stay on track, think through important decisions, and navigate the path toward college or career opportunities.

2. Think About the Adults in Your Life

- Consider teachers, counselors, coaches, mentors, family members, community leaders, and staff members who have already supported you or who could support you moving forward.

3. Complete Your Worksheet

- Use the Support Circle Worksheet to think through each person's role. For every person you list, reflect on:
  - How they currently help you
  - What strengths or knowledge they bring
  - How they might support your future planning

4. Choose Your Go-To Supporters

- Not everyone has to be part of your "inner circle." After you've listed several possibilities, select 3–5 adults you want to include in your Support Circle.

5. Reach Out

- When you're ready, send a message, email, or talk to them in person to ask for their support. You can create your own message or use the examples your teacher provides.

Values Inventory

Focus Area: Graduation Readiness, Student Self-Discovery
MTSS Tier(s): Tier 1 **Developmental Stage:** High School

About This Strategy:

This activity helps students discover what's most important to them: their values. After completing this exercise, students will be able to iIdentify the values that matter most to them in work, school, and life, recognize how their values influence the choices they make, and prioritize their top values to guide their future goals and decisions.

Instructions:

1. Understand What Values Are

- Values are the beliefs or ideas that guide what you care about. They influence the kind of environment you enjoy, the people you want to be around, and the work that feels meaningful to you.

2. Explore Each Category

- On your Values Inventory worksheet, you'll see four sections:
  - Core Values: What matters most in life (like honesty, balance, or achievement).
  - Work Environments: The kind of places or settings where you thrive.
  - Work Interactions: The types of people and relationships that motivate you.
  - Work Activities: The kinds of tasks or experiences that make you feel fulfilled.

3. Rate Each Value

- Read through each list on the worksheet. Decide if each value is:
  - Always Important
  - Sort of Important
  - Not Important
- There are no right or wrong answers—just be honest about what feels true for you.

Values Inventory

Focus Area: Graduation Readiness, Student Self-Discovery
MTSS Tier(s): Tier 1 **Developmental Stage:** High School

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4. Choose Your Top 5 Values

- When you've rated all your values, look at which ones you marked "Always Important." Pick your Top 5 values and list them on the last page of your worksheet.
- These are your personal priorities — the values that matter most in your "perfect world" of school, work, and life.

5. Reflect on What You Discovered

- Think about how your top values show up in your current life or what kind of environments would support them best. Respond to this reflection question in one short paragraph:
  - Which of your top five values feels most important to you right now, and how could this value help guide your choices about school, work, or your future?
  - Work Interactions: The types of people and relationships that motivate you.
  - Work Activities: The kinds of tasks or experiences that make you feel fulfilled.

My Wanderings Map

Focus Area: Graduation Readiness, Student Self-Discovery
MTSS Tier(s): Tier 1 **Developmental Stage:** High School

About This Strategy:

This activity helps students explore their life experiences, interests, and memories to discover patterns that can guide their future choices.

Instructions:

1. Get Ready to Map Your Life

- Turn to the second page of the workbook and write your name in the center.
- Use colors, doodles, or shapes to make it creative and fun.
- You'll be creating a "map" of experiences, not a list—so let your ideas spread out in every direction!

2. Think Back on Your Experiences

- Before you start writing, spend a few minutes reflecting on meaningful or memorable moments. These could include:
  - Favorite classes or school projects
  - Hobbies or sports you love, volunteer work, or other extracurricular/community work
  - Family traditions or experiences
  - Times you felt proud, challenged, or inspired

3. Start Mapping

- Write words or short phrases anywhere on your map to capture these experiences. Use lines or arrows to show connections between related ideas.
- Example categories you might include: Fun Memories, People Who Inspired Me, Skills I've Gained, Things I Love Learning About

My Wanderings Map

Focus Area: Graduation Readiness, Student Self-Discovery
MTSS Tier(s): Tier 1 **Developmental Stage:** High School

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4. Look for Patterns

- Once your map feels full, take a step back and look at what you've created. Think about drawing lines to connect related ideas or themes. Ask yourself:
  - Are there ideas that seem to connect?
  - Do you notice repeated themes—like creativity, teamwork, or helping others?
  - What kinds of activities or environments make you feel energized?

5. Reflect and Connect

- Think about what your map says about you and where you might be headed. How do your experiences connect to your current interests—or to things you might want to explore in the future?
- Wrap-up by responding to or reflecting on this question:
  - What themes or patterns did you notice in your Wanderings Map, and how might they guide your choices about classes, careers, or goals in the next few years?

My Skills Inventory

Focus Area: Graduation Readiness, Student Self-Discovery
MTSS Tier(s): Tier 1 **Developmental Stage:** High School

About This Strategy:

This activity helps students recognize the skills they already use every day—in school, sports, clubs, or your community—and see how they connect to future goals.

Instructions:

1. Discover Your Skills

- We use skills in everything we do—working on a group project, solving a tough problem, or helping a friend. Think about experiences that made you proud, challenged you, or taught you something new. For example:
  - Completing a science fair project → Research, creativity, problem-solving
  - Coaching a younger sibling → Leadership, patience, communication
  - Playing on a team → Teamwork, adaptability, collaboration

2. Review the Skill Categories

- On your Skills Inventory worksheet, you'll find eight main categories inspired by career readiness standards, including:
  - Communication: Expressing ideas clearly, listening, writing, or presenting.
  - Critical Thinking: Making decisions, solving problems, or analyzing information.
  - Career & Self-Development: Setting goals and seeking growth opportunities.
  - Teamwork: Collaborating, sharing responsibility, and building relationships.
  - Leadership: Motivating others, taking initiative, or guiding a group.

3. Check the Skills You've Strengthened

- Read through each list and check off the skills that best describe you. Choose at least one from each section.

My Skills Inventory

Focus Area: Graduation Readiness, Student Self-Discovery
MTSS Tier(s): Tier 1 **Developmental Stage:** High School

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4. Give Examples

- At the bottom of your worksheet, choose five skills you're most proud of and write a short example of when you used each one.

5. Identify Skill Gaps

- Look back at your unchecked boxes. Are there skills you'd like to improve? Maybe it's organization, public speaking, or leadership.
- Circle one or two that feel important.

6. Reflect and Plan

- Think about how you can strengthen those areas—through new classes, volunteer opportunities, or after-school activities.
- Reflect on this question: Which skills are you most confident in, and which ones would you like to grow next? How might developing these skills help you succeed in your future plans?

Perfect World Scenario

Focus Area: Graduation Readiness, Student Self-Discovery
MTSS Tier(s): Tier 1 **Developmental Stage:** High School

About This Strategy:

This activity helps students imagine their "perfect world" of work and life—the kind of environment, people, and daily activities that would make them feel happy and successful.

Instructions:

1. Imagine Your Perfect Day

- Picture your life a few years from now — what would a great day look like? Try not to think about what's "realistic." This is your chance to dream big.

2. Answer Each Question Honestly

- On your Perfect World Scenario worksheet, you'll see a list of questions to help you think about different parts of your ideal work or school life. For each one, jot down what feels right for you. There are no wrong answers!

3. Sample Questions You'll Explore

- How would you want to dress each day?
- Where would you live — city, suburb, or a rural location?
- What would you like to have nearby outside of work or school?
- How would you get to work or class?
- What kind of place would you be working or learning in?
- Who would you work or collaborate with?
- What kind of supervisor, teacher, or mentor would you want?
- What daily tasks would you enjoy most?
- How would you know you're successful?

Perfect World Scenario

Focus Area: Graduation Readiness, Student Self-Discovery
MTSS Tier(s): Tier 1 **Developmental Stage:** High School

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4. Find Your Priorities

- After answering all the questions, look back at your responses. Circle or highlight the 2–5 things that matter most to you.
- These are the non-negotiables; the things that make you feel fulfilled and excited about your future.

5. Reflect and Plan

- Think about how what you wrote connects to your current choices. Are there classes, clubs, or experiences that already fit your “perfect world”?
- Finish by responding to this question:
- What parts of your “perfect world” feel most important to you, and how could you start moving toward one or two of them in real life?

Letter to My Future Self

Focus Area: Growth Mindset, Teacher Growth Mindset, Graduation Readiness
MTSS Tier(s): Tier 1 **Developmental Stage:** Middle School, High School, Adult

About This Strategy:

This activity guides students in a reflection about what kind of person they want to be in their future and helps to develop key goal-setting skills.

Preparation:

- Materials: journal or notebook, writing utensils
- Click here to download the facilitator guide to this strategy.

Instructions:

1. Introduce this activity to students by explaining that they will each be writing a letter to their future selves. The contents of the letter can be anything from advice and lessons learned to hopes and dreams about where they aspire to be.

2. Share a few prompts on the board to help students get started:
   - Can you imagine who you will be in the future? Where you will be? What you will be doing?
   - What would you like to say to that person?
   - What is important to you now? What matters the most to you?
   - What traits and skills do you admire in others?

3. Provide students with 15-20 minutes to freewrite and, when they feel ready, draft a letter to their future self.

4. After students have completed their letters, bring the full class back together to debrief.
   - *Ask: How did it feel to imagine yourself in the future?*

Personal Identity Wheel

Focus Area: School and Classroom Climate, Social Awareness, Sense of Belonging, Graduation Readiness
MTSS Tier(s): Tier 1 **Developmental Stage:** Middle School, High School

About This Strategy:

The Personal Identity Wheel is an activity that encourages students to reflect on how they identify themselves based on their interests and skills. It is best used as an icebreaker or relationship-building exercise to help students examine common ground with their peers.

Preparation:

- Download and print copies (one per student) of the Personal Identity Wheel handout
- Click here to access the Personal Identity Wheel facilitation guide
- Click here to download the Personal Identity Wheel advisory slides.

Instructions:

1. Welcome the class and provide an overview of the activity, explaining that students will reflect on their identities (focusing on their interests and skills) and share them with their peers.

2. Distribute the Personal Identity Wheel handout. Give students 5-10 minutes to complete the wheel.

3. Divide the class into pairs or small groups. Ask students to share aspects of their personal identity wheel with their partner(s).
   - Give each student 5-10 minutes to share.
   - If time permits, consider mixing up groups to create different rounds of sharing.

4. Bring the class back together to reflect and debrief.
   - What components of your personal identity were difficult to identify? What components were harder to share out?
   - What is a skill you are proud of?
   - Who would like to share the three adjectives that they used to describe themselves?
   - Can anyone share a personal motto?
   - What are some of the skills and interests that people found in common with each other?

Build Your Interview Story Bank

Focus Area: Communication, Graduation Readiness, Student Self-Discovery
MTSS Tier(s): Tier 1 **Developmental Stage:** High School

About This Strategy:

Students will create a personalized "story bank" to help them prepare for job interviews by identifying past experiences that demonstrate transferable skills and strengths.

Preparation:

- Materials Needed: Networking Worksheet; pens or markers; sample job description
- Teacher Prep:
  - Select a sample job description that includes a range of soft and hard skills (e.g., communication, customer service, time management).
  - Prepare a sample "theme-to-story" pair from your own experience (or a fictional one) to model.

Instructions + Facilitator Talking Points:

1. Introduce the lesson by explaining how storytelling can be a superpower in interviews.

- Say: *When someone asks you a question in an interview—like 'Tell me about a time you worked on a team'—they're not just looking for the right answer. They're looking for a story that shows them who you are and what you can do.*

2. Explain the focus of today's session.

- Say: *Today, you'll build your very own interview story bank—a set of go-to stories you can use to show your skills and stand out.*

3. Project or pass out a sample job description. Ask students to read and annotate.

- Say: *Read through the description and underline or highlight the themes and skills it asks for. These are your clues—what the employer really wants to see.*
- Teacher Tip: Provide a word bank of common job themes to scaffold this step (e.g., teamwork, problem solving, communication, initiative, organization).

Build Your Interview Story Bank

Focus Area: Communication, Graduation Readiness, Student Self-Discovery
MTSS Tier(s): Tier 1 **Developmental Stage:** High School

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4. Hand out the "Create a Story Bank" template.

- Say: *On the left, write down 6–8 skills or themes that came up in the job description. On the right, match each theme with a story from your own life that shows you have that skill. It could be from a job, school project, volunteer role, club, or even your home life.*
- Look for...
  - Stories that show specific actions and outcomes
  - Students connecting classroom or real-life experiences to transferable skills
  - Thoughtful alignment between theme and story

5. Invite students to pair up and share two of their theme/story combos.

- Say: *Take turns sharing two of your story matches with a partner. Practice telling your story out loud like you would in an interview. Give each other feedback—did the story clearly show the skill? Was it specific enough?*
- Teacher Tip: Encourage partners to use these sentence stems for feedback:
  - "That story shows you're really good at..."
  - "You could make it even stronger by adding..."

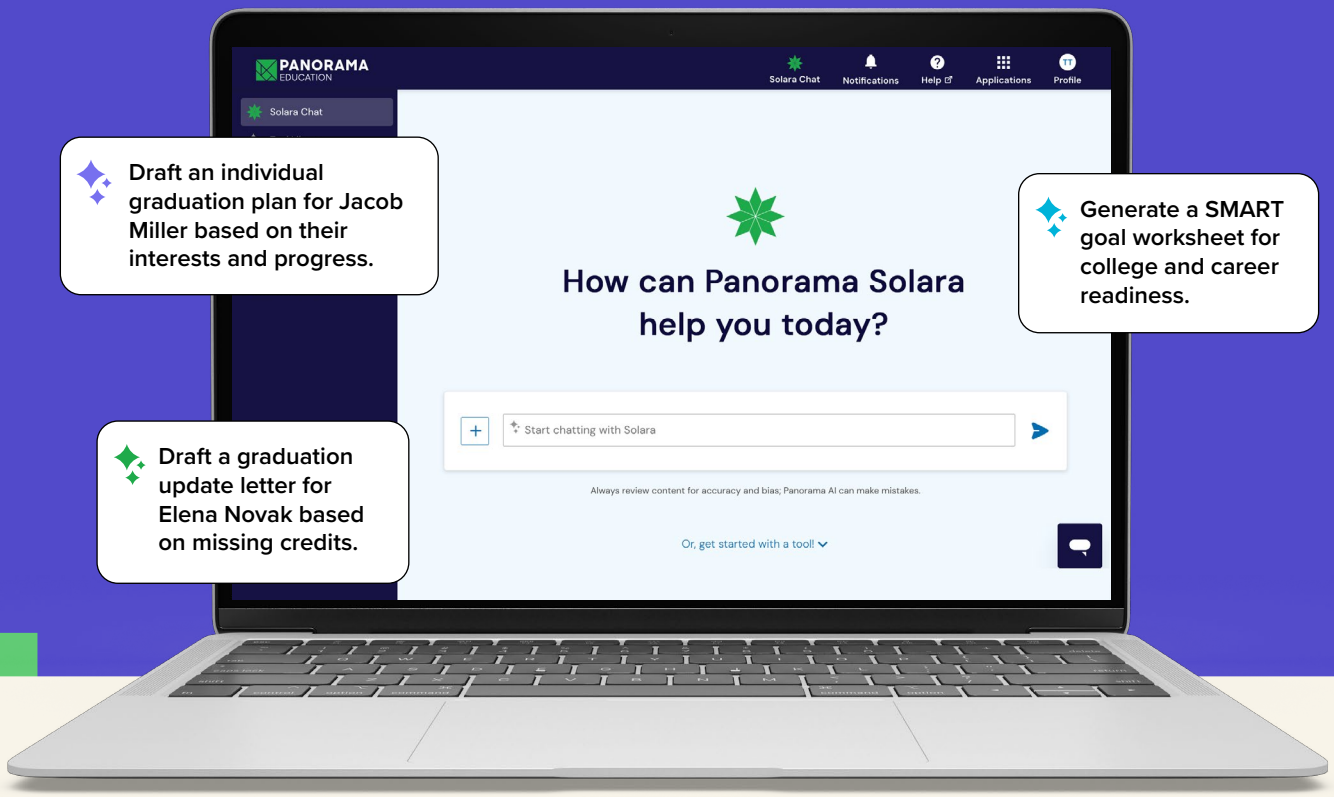
6. Facilitate a full-class reflection. Ask:

- *Which story on your list do you feel most proud of?*
- *How did this activity change the way you think about interviews?*
- *How might you use your story bank again in the future?*

7. Encourage students to keep their story bank and update it over time.

Give Your CCR Program a Power-Up with AI

Panorama Solara delivers safe, effective AI to improve student outcomes. In seconds, educators can generate classroom and student-level resources like intervention plans and family letters aligned to district standards.



"Solara is a game changer. We have district-created resources that Solara can ingest, allowing us to use it for intervention planning, instructional tools, and program development in a way that's actually specific to [our district's] context. We're using a secure AI system with our data to inform our planning."

– Sarah Jay, Executive Director of Equitable MTSS, Boston Public Schools (MA)

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PANORAMA EDUCATION

About Panorama Education

Panorama Education is the leading platform for student support and learning in K-12 education. Panorama partners with districts and states to serve more than 15 million students across 25,000 schools and 2,000 districts nationwide. By connecting academics, attendance, behavior, and engagement in a unified solution, Panorama gives educators the full picture of every student. With AI grounded in district context, educators can quickly understand what's happening, why it matters, and what to do next—so they can take faster, more effective action across instruction, student support, special education, and graduation pathways. This leads to higher student achievement and better preparation for life beyond the classroom. Backed by secure, research-based technology and hands-on professional development, Panorama is how the modern school system drives student success.

Get in Touch

www.panoramaed.com

contact@panoramaed.com

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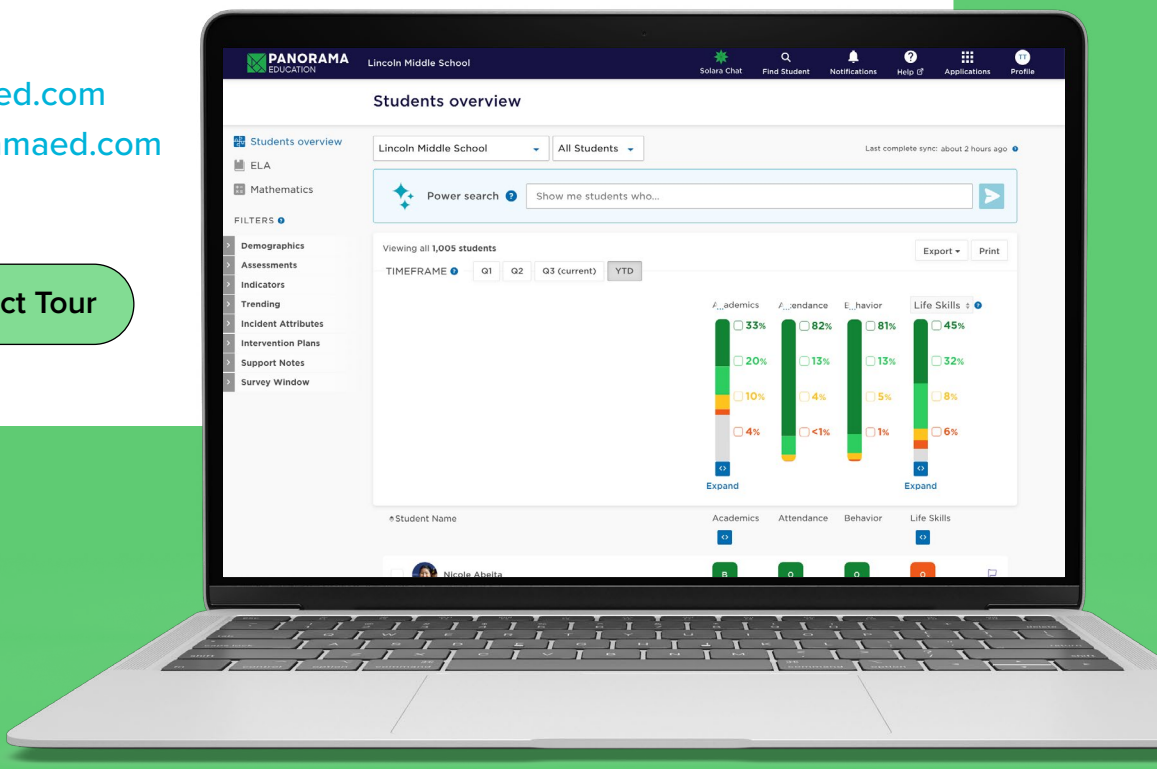
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