

Areas of Focus FY26

Regional Alignment

The Northwest Educational Council for Student Success (NECSS) is a secondary and postsecondary regional educational collaborative focused on student success via career planning and opportunities, teacher qualifications and professional development, and enriching collaboration between all district partners and the local communities.

Focus	Regional Alignment
Goal	Continue work on a comprehensive dual enrollment program, College Now, that allows high school students to complete an Associate of Arts (AA) degree, beginning in the 2026–27 school year. Once College Now is in place, explore opportunities to expand the program to include Associate of Science (AS), Associate of Applied Science (AAS), and career-focused certificate options.
Description	<p>Beginning in the 2026–27 school year, NECSS will launch College Now which allows high school students to complete an Associate of Arts (AA) degree by graduation. This program will align high school and college coursework to create an accessible, affordable pathway to postsecondary success.</p> <p>Following the successful implementation of College Now, NECSS will explore expanding the program to include an Associate of Science (AS), Associate of Applied Science (AAS), and career-focused certificate options, offering students multiple pathways to college and career readiness.</p>
Activities & Action Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Support roll-out of programming across organizations.2. Collaborate with NECSS Council, Power of 15, and Marketing Committees for<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Advising and Support Structuresb. Communication plansc. Monitor, Evaluate, and Refine processes and progressd. Scaling and Expansion modelse. Expand Access and Flexibility in models
Committee/Taskforce	NECSS Council Power of 15

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	Marketing Committee
Timeline	On-going
Status	In-Progress
Updates/Reflections	November 19, 2025: College Now remains on track for a 2026–27 launch of its AA program. We finalized eligibility criteria, built a unified communication plan and website, set the timeline, and aligned logistics. We established student support services and began tracking applications. With applications reviewed and acceptances issued, we are now moving into registration, orientation, and testing.
Reference Documents	

Focus	Regional Impact
Goal	Develop and implement an interactive professional development training for student support staff to enhance their understanding of high school-to-college math pathways by Pathways and Areas of Interest (AOI). The training will prioritize equitable access and improved outcomes in college readiness, particularly for historically underrepresented student groups.
Description	This initiative aims to close equity and readiness gaps by equipping student support staff, including advisors, counselors, and transitional specialists, with the tools and knowledge to guide students through math pathways that align with both college and career aspirations. Through an interactive training program, participants will explore the structure and expectations of high school-to-college math transitions by Pathways/AOI, leveraging labor market data and input from regional workforce stakeholders.
Activities & Action Steps	<p>Build a program that will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illuminate the consequences of math misplacement and course retaking. • Feature simulations, real student case studies, and equity-focused discussions. • Provide access to updated labor market information to inform advising practices. • Include guidance on reducing tracked pathways and increasing access to college-level math earlier in students' trajectories. • Embed implementation into planned initiatives. <p>This professional learning will directly support NECSS's FY26 goal to reduce detracking and college readiness gaps by</p>

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	ensuring students receive informed, equitable, and future-focused advising along their math pathways.
Committee/Taskforce	D211: LaShaunda Sandifer D214: Jill Hlavacek D220: Nate Rouse Harper: Dr. Sandra Villanueva
Timeline	
Status	In-Progress
Updates/Reflections	November 19, 2025: The team kicked off the initiative, confirmed the goal, and brainstormed action steps. We are inventorying how organizations currently share information. At the November meeting, representatives from the Illinois P-20 Council will present statewide work on math placement to inform our training design.
Reference Documents	