



AzCAN College Access Standards for Student Success

2023

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In 2011, the Arizona College Access Network (AzCAN) convened a Student Standards Task Force (Task Force) to define college and career readiness for Arizona students. In a landscape with increasing higher education costs and limited financial resources, college access programs and school educational staff need the best tools to ensure students complete postsecondary education and continue on to succeed in careers and their lives. A critical part of that includes understanding what it takes —and what it means— for a student to become college and career ready.

The Task Force – composed of practitioners and experts in secondary education, higher education, community-based organizations, and workforce development – developed the College Access Standards for Student Success, which supports the overarching goal of helping all Arizona students succeed in life. Each AzCAN Standard includes a set of knowledge and behavior competencies that enable students to be college and career ready when they graduate from high school.

The AzCAN Standards also align with the National College Attainment Network (NCAN) Common Measures.

Developed in 2012, the NCAN Common Measures articulate for the college access and success field a set of common outcomes to track student progress toward postsecondary enrollment and completion. Taken together, the AzCAN Standards and the NCAN Common Measures provide a consistent language about what students need to become college and career ready, and how to track their progress.

The Goals of the Standards

- ★ Provide common, consistent language around competencies for students to become college and career ready
- ★ Establish common measures of changes in mindsets and behavior along the PreK-16 continuum
- ★ Help practitioners identify program strengths and areas for additional supports, which can be used for organizational or programmatic decisions, communications, or reports to funders, and to more easily align efforts with other practitioners.

AzCAN's Standards and Competencies

Standard 1:

Students build awareness and aspirations about postsecondary options, including college and careers.

Students gain a deeper understanding of:

- 1.1 The different types of postsecondary education pathways, and the career opportunities associated with each pathway.
- 1.2 The relationship between educational achievement and social, economic, and social benefits.
- 1.3 The relationship between educational achievement and social, economic, and social benefits.
- 1.4 The value of lifelong learning as essential to life goals.

Students can acquire this understanding through these behaviors:

- 1.5 Exploring subjects of interest and related postsecondary and career options.
- 1.6 Identifying careers of interest.
- 1.7 Engaging in conversations with college students, professionals, and other adults who can offer insight on potential college and career pathways.
- 1.8 Participating in college visits, career days, and related activities that expose them to college life and postsecondary options.
- 1.9 Establishing personal, career, and complementary postsecondary educational goals.

Standard 2:

Students Recognize the roles of social, emotional and cultural factors that affect their postsecondary planning and transition.

Students gain a deeper understanding of:

- 2.1 How having personal responsibility and resilience can strengthen college-going aspirations, behaviors, and beliefs.
- 2.2 How race/ethnicity, gender, income, and or/or family background can impact values, attitudes, and beliefs.
- 2.3 Strategies for addressing personal challenges and leveraging personal strengths to overcome any potential barriers (e.g. stereotypes, financial hardship) to success.

Students can acquire this understanding through these behaviors:

- 2.4 Making postsecondary choices that are rooted in their own aspirations and values.
- 2.5 Persevering toward postsecondary goals in the face of any potential barriers.

AzCAN's Standards and Competencies (cont.)

Standard 3:

Students build a rigorous academic foundation and develop academic behaviors essential to preparing for postsecondary pathways.

Students gain a deeper understanding of:

- 3.1 The relationship between educational achievement and academic behaviors in high school and success in college and career.
- 3.2 Opportunities within and outside of school for academic enrichment.
- 3.3 Learning strategies (e.g. self-regulated learning, goal setting) and cognitive strategies (e.g. problem formulation, research interpretation, communication, precision and accuracy.)

Students can acquire this understanding through these behaviors:

- 3.4 Building life skills (e.g. time management, personal organization)
- 3.5 Establishing challenging academic goals.
- 3.6 Completing a rigorous college preparatory academic program (e.g. AP, IB, honors, dual enrollment).
- 3.7 Monitoring course selection, credit accumulation, course grades, and GPA to ensure on-track progress toward graduation.
- 3.8 Engaging in academic supports as needed.
- 3.9 Participating in extra-curricular and leadership activities that help build life skills.

Standard 4:

Students develop a comprehensive support system that contributes to their academic success.

Students gain a deeper understanding of:

- 4.1 The benefits of leveraging parent and family resources as well as school and social supports to enhance academic success.
- 4.2 The attitudinal and behavioral characteristics of college-going peers.

Students can acquire this understanding through these behaviors:

- 4.3 Engaging in conversations and interactions with family members and peers about college goals.
- 4.4 Establishing strong connections with caring adults, inside and/or outside of school, who are supportive of postsecondary aspirations and can assist with the postsecondary college planning process and transition.
- 4.5 Establishing strong connections with like-minded peers interested in postsecondary attainment.

AzCAN's Standards and Competencies (cont.)

Standard 5:

Students acquire the college knowledge and skills necessary to successfully transition into postsecondary education pathways.

Students gain a deeper understanding of:

- 5.1 The college-going process, including college assessment tests, admissions processes, potential majors/course of study options, and admission requirements.
- 5.2 The difference between high school and postsecondary options with regard to academic expectations and student life.
- 5.3 Where to find resources within the college environment and how to access individuals for support.

Students can acquire this understanding through these behaviors:

- 5.4 Participating in test preparation activities for SAT, ACT, and/or other assessments.
- 5.5 Completing college assessment tests.
- 5.6 Exploring, identifying, applying to, and selecting postsecondary options that match academic, career, and personal goals.
- 5.7 Accessing guidance and supports, as needed, to successfully navigate the college application, admission, and enrollment processes.

Standard 6:

Students understand the fundamentals of financial literacy and financial planning for postsecondary education.

Students gain a deeper understanding of:

- 6.1 The components of financial literacy for financing postsecondary education.
- 6.2 The various financial aid and scholarship options for financing postsecondary education.

Students can acquire this understanding through these behaviors:

- 6.3 Evaluating postsecondary options based on cost and value.
- 6.4 Exploring a variety of financial aid options and supports.
- 6.5 Applying for financial aid.
- 6.6 Making informed postsecondary decisions that include a plan for funding.

AzCAN's Standards and Competencies (cont.)

Standard 7:

Students enroll, persist, and successfully complete a postsecondary education program of study.

Students gain a deeper understanding of:

- 7.1 The enrollment components and requirements for a selected postsecondary institution, including for summer melt/transition programs.
- 7.2 How to strike a balance between school, work, and social responsibilities
- 7.3 The relationship between educational achievement in college and career success.

Students can acquire this understanding through these behaviors:

- 7.4 Enrolling in a selected postsecondary institution.
- 7.5 Participating in summer melt/transition programs, as needed and available.
- 7.6 Monitoring course selection, credit accumulation, course grades, and GPA to ensure on-track progress toward graduation.
- 7.7 Seeking help from instructors and individuals providing academic support, as needed.
- 7.8 Exploring career opportunities (e.g. through internships, job fairs, informational interviews) and/pr graduate school options during school and following graduation.

To view a corresponding toolkit and three-step Assessment Process for the AzCAN Standards, visit EducationForwardArizona.org/AzCANstandards

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