

AzCAN College Access Standards for Student Success

Updated September 2025



AzCAN's College Access Standards for Student Success

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. Over the course of nearly two years and through a highly engaging and iterative process that included the review of literature, best practices and expert feedback, the Task Force—composed of practitioners and experts in secondary education, higher education, community-based organizations, and workforce development—developed the *AzCAN College Access Standards for Student Success*.

In 2023, the *AzCAN College Access Standards for Student Success* continue to maintain their relevance and value. The seven AzCAN Standards support the overarching goal of helping all Arizona students succeed in life - from graduating high school and completing education or advanced training to finding success in meaningful careers.

Each AzCAN Standard includes a set of competencies designed to prepare students to be college and career ready when they graduate from high school. The AzCAN Standards are intentionally aligned with both the Arizona Department of Education's (ADE) Education and Career Action Plan (ECAP) outcomes and the National College Attainment Network (NCAN) Common Measures.

Collectively, the AzCAN Standards, the Arizona ECAP requirements, and the NCAN Common Measures are aligned to strengthen the *AzCAN College Access Standards for Student Success* to provide a framework of knowledge, skills, and expectations that educators, as well as college access and success practitioners need to be aware of to support students to and through education or advanced training beyond high school.

The *AzCAN College Access Standards for Student Success* outline the factors critical to students' postsecondary success and provide a guide for professionals along the PreK-16 continuum to prepare all students to be college and career ready. These Standards are intended to be used by educators and college access practitioners to improve the effectiveness of programs and services.

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

Educational and Training Pathways After High School

- Apprenticeships: Certificate, credential
- Trade/vocational schools: Credential, license
- Community college: Certificate, credential license, Associate's degree
- University: Bachelor's degree +
- Military/ROTC: Training for various trades, military career opportunities

Standard 1:

Build awareness and aspirations about options after high school, including education or training pathways and related careers.

Students will gain a deeper understanding of:

- 1.1** The different types of education or training pathways and the career opportunities associated with each
- 1.2** The relationship between career exploration, middle/high school course planning, and planning for an education or training pathway after high school
- 1.3** The relationship between education after high school and future options (individual, social, and economic flexibility)

Suggested Student ECAP Activities or Services

1.a Explore and identify personal interests, passions, abilities, and culture to create a career personality (i.e. *Guide to Your Future* website, PreACT 8/9, PreACT 10, Discover Guide, etc.)

1.b Develop a 4-year high school plan and review/refine annually (i.e. *Guide to Your Future* website, formal ECAP platform, school-based plan, Discover Guide, etc.)

1.c Explore careers that align with interests, passions, abilities, and culture (i.e. *Guide to Your Future* website, formal ECAP platform, Discover Guide, career interest assessments, job shadowing, internships, career fairs, etc.)

1.d Research school opportunities to register for and take the PreACT 8/9, PreACT 10, and/or PSAT to explore academic interests, career options, and education or training pathways after high school

1.e Define a career goal and review/refine annually based on interests, skills, course knowledge (i.e. *Guide to Your Future* website, formal ECAP platform, school-based plan, Discover Guide)

Essential Indicators

AzCAN

Percentage of students who:

- Can complete a 4-year high school plan that aligns with their pathway for education or training after high school
- Can establish a meaningful SMART goal (personal, academic, post-high school)
- Can explain their plan for education or training after high school and how it connects to their current interests and skills
- Can identify at least two education or training programs of study/majors that align with their career interests
- Take the PreACT 8/9, ACT 10, and/or PSAT

NCAN

Percentage of students who:

- Participate in a campus visit

AzCAN's Standards and Competencies (cont.)

Standard 2:

Recognize the role of social, emotional, and cultural factors that affect planning, transition, and completion in education or training programs after high school.

Students will gain a deeper understanding of:

2.1 How personal responsibility and resilience can strengthen goals, behaviors, and beliefs related to education or training after high school

2.2 How race/ethnicity, gender, income, and/or family background can impact values, attitudes, and beliefs about education or training after high school

2.3 Strategies for addressing personal challenges and leveraging personal strengths to overcome any potential barriers (stereotypes, lack of resources, etc.) to high school graduation and education or training after high school

Suggested Student ECAP Activities or Services

2.a Document school, extracurricular, and community participation (i.e. clubs, organizations, athletics, fine arts, volunteer work, leadership roles, work-related experiences, etc.) to create an academic resume (i.e. *Guide to Your Future* website, formal ECAP platform, school-based plan, Launch Guide, working document, etc.)

2.b Identify and engage with a meaningful mentor to support high school graduation, career exploration, and planning for education or training after high school

2.c Explore and identify personal character strengths and acknowledge how they have been/can be used to overcome obstacles in middle/high school and in preparing for, transitioning to, and completing education or training after high school

2.d Explore, identify, and implement life skills for success (resilience, sustained effort, getting along with others, keeping an open mind, social connection, interdependence, and leadership) to support academic and personal-social success

2.e Explore, identify, and implement an effective time management/ prioritization system (i.e. personal agenda, school planner, electronic calendar, etc.)

Essential Indicators

AzCAN

Percentage of students who:

- Can explain at least three (3) personal character strengths and how they can be leveraged when presented with obstacles and in completing education or training after high school
- Can explain their values/beliefs and the relationship to their plan for education or training after high school and their future career
- Can explain how life skills for success impact academic and personal-social success
- Can demonstrate their effective strategies for time management/prioritization

AzCAN's Standards and Competencies (cont.)

Standard 3:

Build a rigorous academic foundation by developing behaviors essential for transition to and completion of education or training after high school.

Students will gain a deeper understanding of:

3.1 The relationship between effort, educational achievement, and academic behaviors in high school and success in education or training after high school and in a future career

3.2 Early college opportunities available during high school (AP, IB, dual and/or concurrent enrollment) and the associated benefits

3.3 Learning strategies (self-regulated learning, goal setting, prioritization, etc.), cognitive strategies (problem-solving, effective communication, etc.), and emotional regulation strategies (stress management, reframing, etc.) needed for completion of education or training after high school and career success

Suggested Student ECAP Activities or Services

3.a Document achievements and awards and participation in early college opportunities to create an academic resume (i.e. *Guide to Your Future* website, formal ECAP platform, school-based plan, Launch Guide, working document, etc.)

3.b Take personal ownership of education by consistently monitoring high school course selection, credits completed, grades earned, admission assessments, and GPA to ensure on-track progress toward graduation and admission requirements for education or training after high school

3.c Explore, identify, and practice habits for academic success needed in high school, education or training after high school, and in a future career (i.e. asking for help, engaging in test preparation opportunities, managing time effectively, effective communication, sustained effort, keeping an open mind, leadership, etc.)

3.d Define goals for education or training after high school and review/refine annually based on interests, skills, and high school course knowledge (i.e. *Guide to Your Future* website, formal ECAP platform, school-based plan)

Essential Indicators

AzCAN

Percentage of students who:

- Take the PSAT and/or PreACT to prepare for the SAT and/or ACT
- Can meet automatic admission requirements for Arizona colleges and universities
- Can qualify for merit-based tuition assistance programs at Arizona colleges and universities
- Can identify at least three (3) relevant academic and personal success resources on their campus and explain how/when/why to access them
- Can identify at least three (3) habits of academic success that they have cultivated and applied while in high school

NCAN

Percentage of students who are:

- On track to complete/completed core subject areas/rigorous college-prep curriculum, as defined by the state
- Taking the SAT and/or ACT
- Enrolled in AP, IB, and/or dual and/or concurrent enrollment courses
- Graduating from high school on time

AzCAN's Standards and Competencies (cont.)

Standard 4:

Develop a comprehensive support system that contributes to high school graduation and the completion of education or training after high school.

Students will gain a deeper understanding of:

4.1 The benefits of leveraging parent and family resources, as well as school and social resources to support high school graduation and the transition to and completion of education or training after high school

4.2 The attitudinal and behavioral characteristics/habits of successful peers who are enrolled in or have completed education or training after high school

4.3 The value of establishing strong connections with caring adults and mentors, inside and outside of school, who are supportive of education or training aspirations after high school and can assist with the education or training planning and transition process

Suggested Student ECAP Activities or Services

4.a Engage family in the post-high school planning process by reviewing ECAP progress, discussing career goals, goals for education or training after high school, highlighting academic progress, and exploring academic and post-high school planning resources available (i.e. *Guide to Your Future* website, formal ECAP platform, school-based document, Launch Guide, etc.)

4.b Connect with advisors, recruiters or mentors to identify resources for education or training after high school, including summer bridge programs, TRIO programs, first-year success courses/programs, orientations, tutoring, career services, etc.

Essential Indicators

AzCAN

Percentage of students who:

- Can identify at least two (2) mentors who are committed to seeing them reach their education or training goals after high school
- Can communicate their background, goals, and passion effectively through a personal statement

AzCAN's Standards and Competencies (cont.)

Standard 5:

Acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully transition, after high school, to an education or training pathway.

Students will gain a deeper understanding of:

5.1 The planning process for education or training after high school, including required admissions and assessment tests, admission requirements, admissions processes, and potential majors/programs of study

5.2 The difference between high school and education or training after high school with regard to expectations and student life

5.3 Where to locate and how to access resources needed while engaged in education or training after high school

Suggested Student ECAP Activities or Services

5.a Explore educational requirements to achieve a future career goal (i.e. *Guide to Your Future* website, formal ECAP platform, Launch Guide, CTE campus visits, job shadowing, volunteer work, internships, etc.)

5.b Explore admission requirements for education or training pathways after high school (i.e. *Guide to Your Future* website, formal ECAP platform, Launch Guide, campus visits, meet with representatives from education and/or training institutions, etc.)

5.c Explore and identify habits for academic success needed in high school, education or training after high school, and in a future career (i.e. asking for help, accessing resources, cultivating a network, keeping an open mind, sustained effort, leadership, etc.)

Essential Indicators

AzCAN

Percentage of students who:

- Take the PSAT and/or PreACT to prepare for the SAT and/or ACT
- Can identify at least two (2) education or training pathways after high school that align with career interests
- Have a finalized personal statement reviewed by a teacher, counselor, or mentor
- Can explain two (2) ways they have grown as a person from participating in sports, clubs, leadership and/or service
- Indicate that advising/mentoring has been helpful in creating and/or finalizing their plan for education or training after high school

NCAN

Percentage of students who:

- Take the SAT and/or ACT at least one time
- Complete an application for education or training after high school

AzCAN's Standards and Competencies (cont.)

Standard 6:

Understand the fundamentals of financial literacy and financial planning to successfully transition, after high school to an education or training pathway.

Students will gain a deeper understanding of:

- 6.1** The components of financial literacy for financing education or training after high school
- 6.2** The various financial aid and scholarship options and processes for financing education or training after high school
- 6.3** How to evaluate education or training options based on cost and value

Suggested Student ECAP Activities or Services

- 6.a** Explore financial resources for education or training after high school, including scholarships, grants, loans, etc. (i.e. *Guide to Your Future* website, formal ECAP platform, Launch Guide, school-based support, education/training institutional support, local college access programs, etc.)
- 6.b** Engage family in the FAFSA application process (i.e. *Guide to Your Future* website, Ask Benji FAFSA Chatbot, school-based support, Launch Guide, etc.)
- 6.c** Include family and school resources in evaluating financial aid packages from all post-high school education or training institutions to make decisions based on cost and value

Essential Indicators

AzCAN

Percentage of students who:

- Can explain the methods for paying for their education or training after high school
- Have a concrete plan to financially support their plan for education or training after high school

NCAN

Percentage of students who:

- Complete a FAFSA
- Complete supplementary scholarship applications
- Awarded financial aid

AzCAN's Standards and Competencies (cont.)

Standard 7:

Prepare to apply, enroll, persist, and successfully complete an education or training pathway.

Students will gain a deeper understanding of:

7.1 The enrollment components and requirements for the identified education or training after high school, including summer bridge, transition, and orientation programs

7.2 The relationship between achievement in education or training after high school and career satisfaction and success

7.3 How to create balance between school, work, and personal/social responsibilities

Suggested Student ECAP Activities or Services

7.a Complete at least two (2) applications for education or training after high school that align with career interests (i.e. *Guide to Your Future* website, formal ECAP platform)

7.b Include family in the FAFSA application/renewal process (i.e. *Guide to Your Future* website, Ask Benji FAFSA Chatbot, school- or institution-based support, etc.)

7.c Take personal ownership of education by consistently monitoring course selection, credits completed, grades earned, and GPA to ensure on-track progress toward the graduation/completion requirements for education or training after high school

7.d Explore and pursue career opportunities prior to completion of education or training after high school (i.e. *Guide to Your Future* website, formal ECAP platform, Launch Guide, employer interviews, job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships, volunteer work, pathways programs, mentoring relationships, instructors/professors, career fairs, career services, job applications, etc.)

7.e Create a personal organization strategy inclusive of academic, work, and personal/social responsibilities (i.e. personal agenda, school calendar, electronic calendar, etc.) and iterate, as needed

Essential Indicators

AzCAN

Percentage of students who:

- Have a finalized personal statement and resume
- Have three letters of recommendation/ three references who can speak positively about them
- Can identify and seek out resources needed to support enrollment in, transition to, and completion of education or training after high school
- Apply to at least two (2) education or training pathways after high school
- Participate in work-based learning experiences, including internships and apprenticeships
- Indicate they feel a sense of belonging within their post-high school education or training institution
- Participate in one or more job interviews prior to graduation/completion from an education or training pathway after high school
- Complete an education or training pathway after high school, earning a degree, credential, certificate, and/or license

NCAN

Percentage of students who:

- Enroll in an education or training pathway within six months of high school graduation
- Participate in summer melt/transition/bridge programs
- Enroll in education or training by institution type and status (full-time vs. part-time)
- Are placed in remediation English or math courses
- Participate in orientation programs for education or training after high school
- Persist from one term to the next
- Persist through school from year to year
- Complete a FAFSA renewal application
- Transfer from a two-year to a four-year program (with or without an Associate's degree)