School Counselor Lead Initial Individual Career and Academic Plan Implementation Design

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Abstract

In Fall of 2014 for Fountain-Fort Carson School District #8 undertook a revamping of graduation and state mandated ICAP requirements for implementation for the graduating class of 2021. This design and implementation process included numerous stakeholders and several years of planning from Fall of 2014 to Spring of 2017. The design and implementation of this process, and its measures, can be used as a roadmap of best practices for other schools and districts moving towards ICAP and state mandated graduation requirement implementation. With increased significance placed at the state and national level for post-secondary preparation for all students, the necessity for high quality career and academic planning, created and led by school counselors, continues to be paramount. This study grows the body of knowledge practice around multi-year post-secondary planning and design implementation for current high school practitioners.

Keywords: School counseling, post-secondary planning, graduation requirements, ICAP, School Counselor Lead Initial ICAP Implementation Design

1. Introduction

In Fall of 2014 the Colorado Department of Education began a transition process to adapt state graduation requirements for the graduating class of 2021. With this role out individual districts have been tasked with implementation of new state graduation requirements. This planning and implementation process must be in place prior to the Fall enrollment of the class of 2021 which would be no later than Fall of 2017. With a limited time window individual districts have begun the planning process for implementation of these new state graduation requirements (Colorado Department of Education 2014). School Counselors began work co-leading an exploratory committee for Fountain-Fort Carson School District #8 in Fall of 2014 and continued to move toward a formalized steering committee for recommendations to district central leadership

Specifically the new Colorado Department of Education requirements dictate a student score at certain benchmarks on a "menu" of exams the individual district can choose from in addition to district created "capstone" projects. Currently the "menu" of exams totals thirteen exams or projects that are meant to measure college and career readiness. With this post-secondary focus the Colorado Department of Education has mandated that she benchmarks scores be recorded, measured, and maintained in the individual student's Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP). Currently in Colorado there is no specific program for student ICAP. Currently individual school districts (and in some instances individual schools) select their own method for ICAP documentation. The Colorado Department of Education mandates that ICAPs be housed digitally with the ability for students and parents to access them at their own discretion.

Fountain-Fort Carson High School had previously been using an in house ICAP program created by faculty through the software program Moodle. This ICAP programming was limited in its functionality and accessibility by parents and students. The district was in need of a standardized, district wide, ICAP program that extends to middle school through to twelfth grade. The existing ICAP program through Moodle was only used in grades 9-12 but with the new state mandates a district's ICAP program must extend to include 8th grade as well, at minimum. This ICAP program was written and programmed by district school counselors. A process collectively viewed as inefficient.

Existing assessments and programs in Fountain-Fort Carson High School that satisfy the current menu of exams only number five of thirteen. The roll out and incorporation of more of the assessments and projects on the state "menu" was an emphasis of this implementation and design process. Additionally the second focus of this school counselor lead process was the creation and incorporation of a new district-wide ICAP program for documentation of these assessments.

The Colorado Department of Education has mandated the new "Menu of College and Career-Read Demonstrations". Individual school districts are allowed to utilize all or some of these demonstrations validate a student satisfying graduation requirements. Currently the focus in on English and Math on the state mandate. Between initial planning and the writing of the implementation plan the requirements for Social Studies were dropped after the state decided to do away with CMAS for 12th grade students.   Additionally Science benchmarks have been dropped since Fall 2014 as well.

These benchmark scores for college and career readiness are currently in their 5th draft. This draft (Draft 5.4.15) is a truncated version of the original drafts from Fall 2014 and provide some additional leeway in districts ability to select their assessments and projects from the larger menu. In addition to the menu and table of currently approved assessments and projects the state has had an ongoing steering committee for special education students. The steering committee has been working since November 2014 and has yet to publish a proposed draft of varying benchmarks for students that take amended assessments as part of their Individual Education Plan.

The Colorado Department of Education and various other professional bodies including the American School Counselor Association have published many documents for "scope and sequence" of state ICAP requirements in addition pages of elements needed to be met for state ICAP. For the purpose of this School Improvement Plan the digital component of a district wide ICAP model will be the focus of ICAP implementation into state mandated graduation requirements.

Goals for ICAP Implementation are structured into two categories. The first category concerns goals for the new state mandated graduation requirements. The second category of goals concerns creation and implementation of a new digital ICAP program to store and evaluate completion and benchmarks that satisfy the new graduation requirements. The first goal for state mandated graduation requirements was to attend trainings provided by the state and engage in teleconferences with the CDE department overseeing this initiative. Following the initial trainings the next step is to engage a steering committee at Fountain-Fort Carson High School comprised of teachers from core areas impacted by these new standards. With the new truncated menu of assessments and impacted core areas this steering committee has been reduced to include teachers from Math and English in addition to a school psychologist for input into the special education population and benchmarks. The steering committee at Fountain-Fort Carson High School was headed by a former school counselor, now an assistant principal. The goal of this steering committee is to provide recommendations from the CDE Menu for our building principal and district central administration.

The second focus and goal set for this School Improvement Plan is for the creation and implementation of a district wide ICAP program to replace the outdated Moodle software. The initial goal is to meet with district leadership and discuss alternatives for ICAP. Following selection of a new ICAP program the next goal is to focus on implementation and roll out prior to enrollment of the Class of 2021.

1.1 Literature Review

The majority of research and theory gathered for this school improvement project has been in relation to the state graduation requirements and post-secondary planning. Research from numerous states has been gathered and analyzed to purposefully determine state required assessments and additional assessments selected locally by the school district (Colorado Department of Education 2014). Furthermore, additional course work, or removal of required course work for graduation purposes was researched to determine the most equitable graduation standard for students of all abilities.

Initially a review of the California Exit exam (CAHSEE) was used as a benchmark for the new graduation standards. The CAHSEE has been required for the Class of 2006 and on. The study by Callett measures aspect of "Fairness" (Callet 2005) across demographics. As a requirement for graduation the authors stated there are

still concerns regarding the tests ability to accurately assess graduation via a test and that the state still needs "increased "Fairness measures" (Callet 2005).

The next study and theory reviewed focused on graduation test data from Ohio during a period of time from 2004-2006. The focus of the study was on bilingual test takers on the mathematics assessment and how this impacts their ability to pass the generalized assessment for all students. "During 2007 the state incorporated native language based assessments in 9 languages and saw an increase in LEP student's ability to pass the state assessment without changing the content being tested" (Goll 2009). This began to inform the decisions on which tests the school improvement project would address.

After reviewing exit exam information for California and Ohio, Texas was evaluated. In Texas high stakes testing has been interpreted as exit exams for graduation. A recent study explored the unintended impact and consequences on English Language Learners. "Texas does not offer alternate forms of their exit exams in alternate languages ….actually hurts the state's graduation rates" (Heilig 2011). Addressing theory in regards to this school improvement plan is has become increasingly apparent that factoring ELL and SPED populations is a necessity. With Colorado mandating assessments as graduation requirements a solution to testing these populations must be addressed. Currently there is not recommendation from the state, so this will be an ongoing area of emphasis as the school and district steering committee address the varying assessments.

1.1.1 Current Best Practices

Currently other school districts are working with the same Colorado mandated graduation requirements for 2021. Mentioned later in this school improvement project is current progress in relation to overall success. Presently, other local school districts are only now beginning to address the 2021 Colorado mandated requirements. District administration has been attending meetings with other local districts to assess progress and recommendations while passing this information on to building leadership. The greatest strength of addressing the graduation requirements in this manner is that it impacts all districts across the state. With that in mind many districts are adopting a collaborative approach to developing their local graduation requirements that satisfy state mandates.

In reference to Naviance Implementation, Fountain-Fort Carson High School is actually catching up to their district peers by rolling out this platform. Currently many other districts in the area (almost all) utilize Naviance to satisfy the state mandated ICAP requirements. This has been an area for improvement and as a result of Fountain-Fort Carson High School's late adoption of Naviance the expedited implementation window is a weakness, but also a potential strength. The potential for becoming a strength comes from the increased student utilization of Naviance during a smaller window. This could potentially increase students comfort with the platform as they will be utilizing it more often in the first year than their peers in other districts.

1.1.2 Method and Design

The implementation designs for both the graduation requirements and Naviance portions of ICAP implementation are set by the Colorado Department of Education and Hobson's (the parent company of Naviance). In both cases deadlines have been set for completion of implementation. In the case of the state mandated graduation requirements the target class is the Class of 2021. This creates a default deadline of roll out for some time during the 2016-17 school year for students in the eighth grade of that year. This allows for proper rollout to parents and students for the first class the requirements will impact before they actually enroll in high school.

The implementation design for Naviance follows a set format for roll out over the course of one to two years depending on when the platform was purchased. This design follows set benchmarks for inclusion of students, teachers, parents, and the completion of set tasks during the course of a student's high school career. The strengths of having both implementation design deadlines set by outside bodies is that it gives firm deadlines with benchmarks to meet along the way. Basically the district or school does not need to start from scratch. On the other hand the greatest weakness of having both implementation designs created by outside agencies is that there is little flexibility. For state mandated graduation requirements there is no flexibility for adjustment of deadlines unless determined by the state. The Naviance Implementation design does allow for more flexibility and adjustment of benchmark dates as determined by the district and individual schools.

1.1.3 Resources and Budget

The budget for the purchase of the District model of Naviance came from the District's primary operating budget. In the first year of implementation (2015-16) the coast was 10,000 dollars more than it will be in coming years. The first year cost of Naviance for the District model was 28,725.62 dollars. This cost will decrease next year, and future years, to 18,000 dollars per year. The initial expense and additional 10,000 dollar cost was used to pay for implementation planning, trainings, professional development, and additional implementation processes such as data syncing and importing. Currently no building based budgets or resources are impacted by this purchase. The invoice for Naviance is included below but does not include and itemized list of line items. The overall cost to the district was determined by the number of students that would be utilizing Naviance and the trainings that were included in the purchase of Naviance. Additional "menu" options were not purchased by the district during the initial Naviance implementation. The only additional service purchased through Naviance was the "Naviance Curriculum" which is an add on to the Naviance platform. This curriculum is internet based and linkable from the Naviance Family Connections platform.

1.1.4 Implementation Summative Evaluation

The state graduation requirements were determined by the Colorado Department of Education to include only Math and English. The evaluation of this portion of the ICAP implementation and design plan was be done in conjunction with the District Accreditation and Accountability Committee, Building Steering Committee, Building Administration, and District Administration. Following the completion of recommended graduation requirements to satisfy CDE requirements the information will be submitted to building leadership, then central administration, and eventually the Board of Education for Fountain-Fort Carson School District #8

During each step of this process teachers, administrators, and counselors were included to make appropriate recommendations to the board for the new graduation requirements. Measures of success for this goal will simply be the completion of district graduation requirements presented to central administration and the Board of Education by May of 2016. Following presentation of new graduation requirements to the Board of Education the requirements were then be open for public input during a Board of Education meeting. This was the last step in including all community stake holders in the input process.

Naviance roll out was measured during implementation deadlines and deadlines/activity completion for students, parents, and teachers. Upon completion of this implementation plan Naviance implementation was ahead of schedule for student roll out with 92% completion on the initial Naviance activity for students in October. The second Naviance activity for students in November was at 93% completion for students in grades nine through. For student Naviance engagement and completion the aim was to have 100% of students with completion in scheduled Naviance activities by May 2016. The completion rate goal of 100% completion for Naviance activities by May of 2016 was not met, with final completion rates for all activities by ICAP activity number three at 91% (see Figure 1).

Parent engagement in Naviance was set to be the measure of stakeholder engagement in late Spring 2016. This measure of success was far more difficult to complete at a high rate. Currently the benchmark was internally set at 30% participation by April 2016 with parents of students. That benchmark goal was increased in the 2016-17 school year as more opportunities to engage parents in student Naviance supervision were rolled out. Naviance participation summaries and activity completion surveys are currently run monthly to verify completion and student engagement.

1.2 Results

The most difficult aspect of ICAP implementation and design was the ever-changing target set by the Colorado Department of Education. In the Fall of 2014 the state had initially rolled out new 2021 graduation requirements for Math, Social Studies, English, and Science. During each revision of the graduation requirements the tests allowed on the "menu" of assessments changed as well. This made it extremely difficult as a school implementation team to plan ahead and to start working proactively on solutions well ahead of time. At one point the implementation team was told to "hold off" as a result of these delays.

In the most recent iteration of the 2021 graduation requirements the state moved to benchmarks in only Math and English. This was a 50% reduction in the requirements we were set to work on. At first glance the requirements for benchmark scores on the "menu" of assessments was very basic. Essentially all but a few benchmark assessments were already assessments in place at Fountain-Fort Carson High School. This then allowed the steering committee to focus on graduation course work requirements in District. This ongoing readdressing of district graduation course requirements was initially an unforeseen aspect of the state assessment graduation requirements. This was a strong opportunity to address these course requirements, though it was not initially an aspect of this school improvement project.

Naviance implementation was a seamless goal to attain though measures of completion and success remain ever-changing. The Naviance purchase, implementation, and training process was long and drawn out but with very few changes to the plan. With the assistance of Central Administration and Naviance (Hobsons) the roll out went smoothly and quicker than originally planned per the original timeline. With things going well during the Naviance Implementation process it was tempting to speed up the roll out process. This was done in a small fashion but it was decided that, even though Naviance implementation was going well, that it would be better for the implementation team to do it right rather than to do it fast. This approach has led to higher levels of student engagement and activity completion in Naviance curriculum.

The two aspects of the ICAP implementation and design project are still in varying stages of completion even after the 2016-2017 school year, though overall both have been successful. The creation of graduation requirements for the Class of 2021 was successfully finalized, with roll out completed in April 2017 at the middle school levels for incoming Freshmen in August of 2017. This process required board approval which was agreed upon in early Spring 2017. Given the current timeline, and feedback from the Colorado Department of Education, (omitted) successfully completed the all requirements well before deadlines.

The Naviance Implementation aspect of the ICAP implementation and design plan was successful from both measures of deadline completion and student engagement. Following the initial roll-out to students there was a marked increase in student utilization of the Naviance program for ICAP planning and post-secondary preparation.   There has been a steady increase in ICAP completion rates as students became familiar with the platform. Current completion rates have improved after solving technology issues such as internet connectivity and login credentials. Currently Naviance is set to default usernames and passwords which has reduced login issues for students. The greatest success so far in the Naviance curriculum has been activities that focus on student self exploration that ties into careers and post-secondary college majors. (omitted) has also seen a 5% increase in students utilizing Naviance curriculum at home outside of school time between ICAP Activity #3 and the writing of this paper. Fall of 2016 set a target window for Naviance implementation for students to utilize Naviance on their own time for college applications and submission of documents. 100% of the college going population of the Class of 2017 utilized Naviance for college application components. This was achieved through mandating electronic submission transcripts, letters of recommendation, and student essays in lieu of the old processes of mailing these documents.

1.3 Discussion

ICAP Implementation and design best practices include the management and inclusion of the numerous stakeholders and knowledgeable individuals. Despite faculty familiarity with the Naviance program and strong technological back grounds, faculty continue to rely heavily on District Technology staff. The implementation team successfully worked with District Technology frequently over the course of implementation, but this implementation plan reaffirmed the need to be as clear and explicit as possible when discussing and writing about large scale technologically based initiatives with stake holders across fields. The team learned quickly that a mis-typed email can result in 1800 students missing data, or be assigned erroneous data. These instances were opportunities to address how the team writes and speaks to clarify technology based goals while making requests for data uploads more efficient and effective.

All ICAP activity completion rates were initially measured on school counselor led classroom guidance activities. Ongoing use of analytical tools within Naviance for student completion rates and login rates that are classified as student self-directed (outside of the school day) are recommended. Measurement of student self-selected ICAP activity completion rates may further validate the quality and technical implementation of the ICAP program beyond initial implementation. Additional measurements of student ICAP completion rates and

assessment benchmarks are recommended for the class of 2021, allowing for a longitudinal four year study of the 2021 cohort's post-secondary plan completion starting measurement in Fall of 2017. .

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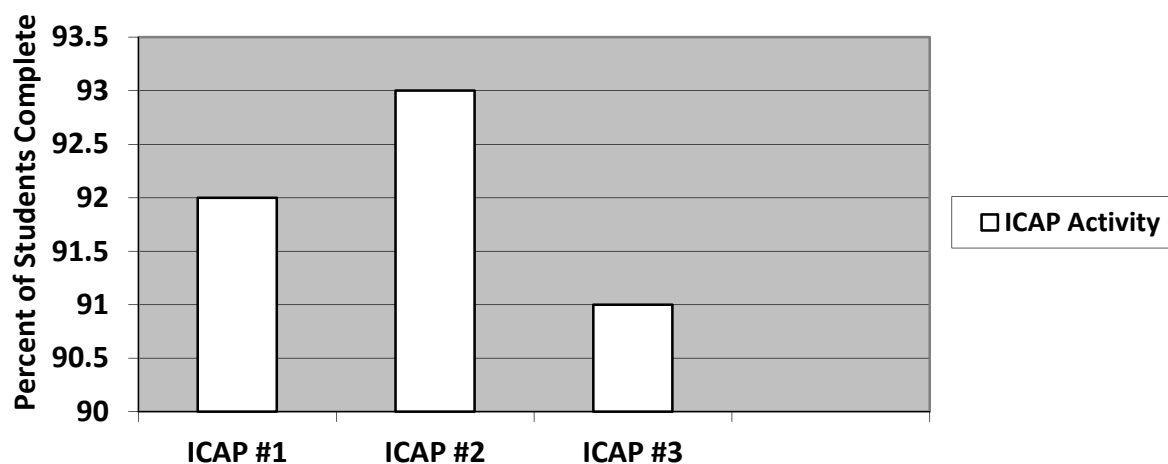
Figure 1: ICAP completion rates by activity

Table 1. ICAP and Graduation Requirement Implementation Timeline

Goal	Target Completion Date	Date Completed
Attend ACT State Conference (Benchmark Scores)	September 2014	September 5th, 2014
CDE Phone Conference on 2021 Grad Requirements	September 2014	September 18th, 2014
Attend State ICAP Summit	November 2014	December 3rd 2014
Naviance School Site Visits	January 2015	January 16th, 2015
English Accuplacer Training and Administration for state benchmarks.	January-February 2015	January 22nd, 2015
PLC Leadership Day on new CDE Grad Requirements and ICAP mandate	January-February 2015	January 29th, 2015
Naviance Online Tech Demo	January-February 2015	February 3rd, 2015
Naviance Phone Conference with Sales Department and Tech	January-February 2015	February 23rd, 2015
Naviance Planning Meeting	August 2015	August 11th, 2015
Naviance Implementation Team Meeting	August 2015	August 22nd, 2015
Naviance Training- Site Coordinator assigned	September 2015	September 20th, 2015
Data import from Infinite Campus to Naviance complete	September 2015	September 2nd, 2015
Naviance Training- Site Coordinator role expanded	October 2015	October 6th, 2015
Naviance Training- Site Coordinator role expanded	October 2015	October 12th, 2015
CDE Phone Conference on new draft of grade requirements (Math/English)	October 2015	October 2015
Steering Committee Finalized and Formed for Math/English graduation requirements	October-November 2015	November 9th, 2015
Naviance Rolled out to students	December 2015	October, 2015
Naviance Rolled out to teachers	January-February 2016	January-February 2016
Naviance Rolled out to parents	March-April 2016	Pending

Table 2. ICAP and Graduation Requirement Implementation Stakeholders

Stake Holder	Role	Date of Inclusion
District Board of Education	Final approval of assessments and projects used to meet new state mandated graduation requirements for class of 2021.	Projected- May-August 2016
Central/District Administration	Initiation of planning committees, oversight, and approval of recommendations. Selection and purchase of ICAP software for district model.	July 2014- Present
Building Administration	Oversight and selection of steering committee and project leaders.	July 2014- Present
School Counselors	Implementation of ICAP software and roll out process. Preparation and planning for guidance of students and parents regarding new mandates and ICAP software.	September 2014- Present
Teachers	Inclusion in steering committee to select appropriate assessments from CDE Menu. Creation of District Capstone Projects in core areas where necessary. Implementation of curriculum and preparation for selected assessments in class.	October 2015- Present
Students	Awareness and training necessary to educate students on new graduation requirements prior to high school enrollment. Training and access of new district ICAP software and model.	Projected- December 2015
Parents	Access and training on new ICAP software for parent access. Parent meetings and informational sessions on new state mandated requirements and district selected assessments and projects from "Menu".	Projected- January/February 2015
Local Colleges	Local colleges brought in to help articulate high school classes to satisfy concurrent enrollment option under the CDE Menu. Approval of CTE certificate programs that satisfy Industry Certificate section of CDE Menu.	March 2015- Present

Table 3. Fountain-Fort Carson High School Naviance Implementation Plan

	Task	Who	Start Date
ASSESS	Processing Worksheets		
	Form Steering Committee	-District Implementation Team -School Implementation Team -School Counselors	February 2015
	Review Existing Curriculum	- School Implementation Team -School Counselors	May 2015 ongoing
	Build Implementation and PD Plan	- School Implementation Team -School Counselors	August 2015 ongoing
	Schedule Recurring Status Meetings	- School Implementation Team -School Counselors	9/21/2015- recurring every Monday through 5/28/2016

	Task	Who	Start Date
IMPORT	Specify Data Types, define fields, and build data import files.	- District Technology Office -School Site Coordinator (Counselor)	8/11/2015 Import of records at end of each semester
	Import Data into Naviance	- District Technology Office	8/11/2015 -Ongoing data sync nightly -Import of records at end of each semester

	Task	Who	Start Date
CONFIGURE	Configure User Roles and Permission	- District Technology Office	8/11/2015
	Set Single Sign in for Parents and Students	- District Technology Office	10/16/2015
	Attend Initial User Professional Development	-School Implementation Team -School Counselors	9/21/2015 and 10/6/2015
	Configure District Level Functionality	- District Technology Office -District Implementation Team - School Counselors	8/20/2015
	Review Family Connections Settings and Account Preferences	-School Site Coordinator (Counselor)	11/2/2015
	Create News Bulletins and Announcements for Family Connections	-School Site Coordinator (Counselor)	11/16/2015
	Post Scholarships and College Visits in Naviance	-School Site Coordinator (Counselor)	10/12/2015 Ongoing weekly posts
	Create Tasks, Programs, and Goals in Success Planner	-School Site Coordinator (Counselor)	11/16/2015 Ongoing prior to guidance lessons

	Task	Who	Start Date
Deploy	Create Communication Plan for Parents and Students (Grades 9-11)	-School Site Coordinator (Counselor)	10/21/2015
	Roll Out Family Connection to Parents and Students (Grades 9-11)	-School Site Coordinator (Counselor)	Students- 10/21/2015 Parents-1/11/2016
	Work With Students on Resume Building (Grade 11)	-School Site Coordinator (Counselor) -School Counselors	3/28/2016
	Track and Monitor Usage	-School Site Coordinator (Counselor)	12/11/2015 ongoing
	Use Journal to Track Student Interactions	-School Site Coordinator (Counselor) -School Counselors -School Classified Staff	2/10/2016 ongoing
	Begin College Planning with Students (Grades 9-11)	-School Site Coordinator (Counselor) -School Counselors	10/21/2015 ongoing
	Students Complete Career Inventories (Grades 9-10)	-School Counselors -Advisory Teachers	12/2/2015 ongoing
	Build Online Senior Survey (Grade 12)	-School Senior Counselors	5/1/2016

	Task	Who	Start Date
MEASURE	Define Reports for Audit	-School Site Coordinator (Counselor) School Implementation Team -District Implementation Team	5/1/2016
	Configure and Schedule Reports	-School Site Coordinator (Counselor)	5/8/2016