



# College & Career Toolkit

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# Overview

CAST Schools, a non-profit school network partnered with 4 public school districts, were co-created by business, civic and economic development leaders as an economic mobility strategy. The schools are placed in underserved areas and address regional economic mobility by explicitly connecting young people to high-demand, high-growth local jobs and employers.

# Overview

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Our six CAST Schools serve close to 2,500 students; our partner school districts will collectively serve more than 170,000.

**The goal of this toolkit is to provide support to campus staff who work directly with students as they design a post-high school plan.**

## The outcomes we hope to achieve are:

**01** Provide more robust experiences in grades 6-12 for students as they explore career and college opportunities, with an explicit focus on work based learning and college visits

**02** Provide much more robust career support for students who are heading straight to work, or the many who combine work with attending college;

**03** Provide much more robust support post high school, with an explicit focus on mental health, through the 13th and 14th year – and as long as they need it – so as to make the transition from high school to adulthood more successful.



# OUR PROMISE

**By graduation, students will have the opportunity to earn:**



A minimum of 9 transferable college credits



Industry recognized certificates



Meaningful work-based opportunities such as internships, apprenticeships, or jobs

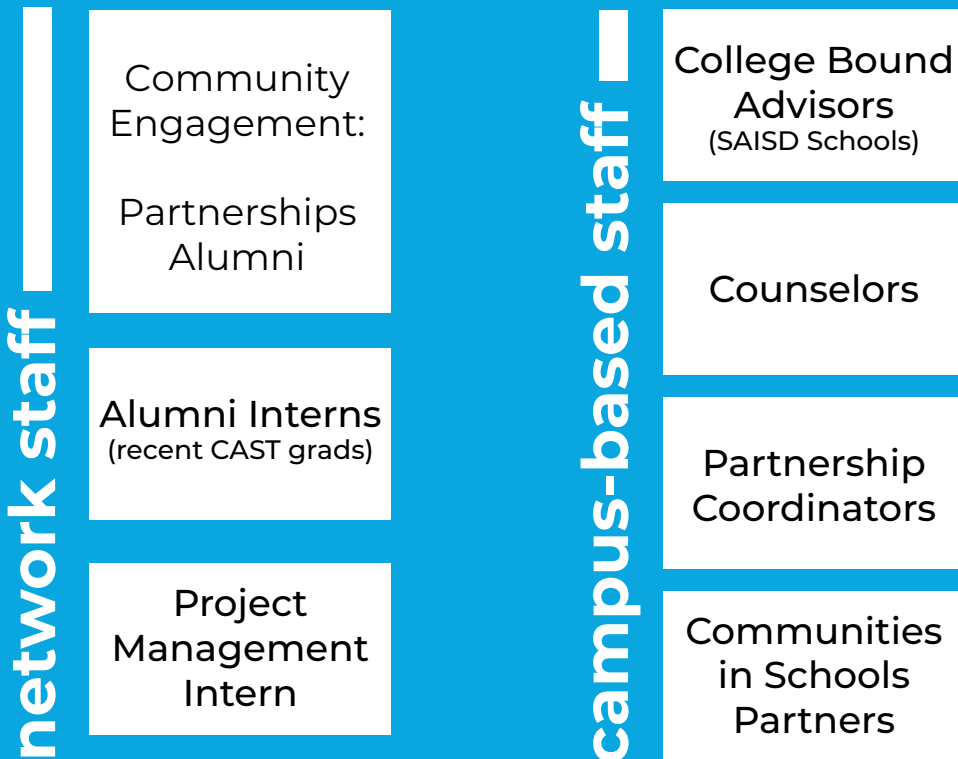
# Pillars



# Pillars

## Guiding Ideas

**01** The CAST Schools network employs dedicated staff focused on college and career readiness at both the network level and the campus level.



**02** Incorporate college visits into all travel opportunities, consistent exposure to industry professionals

**03** Develop strategic partnerships:  
**Up Partnership and Communities in Schools**



## 04 Transition counselors to a strategic leadership role.

College Bound Advisors, working with CAST and SAISD and following the National Postsecondary Strategy Institute model, has developed a postsecondary strategy and an ambitious goal that 75 percent of seniors attend a four-year college. To support that work, a small postsecondary strategy team (including members from CAST), as well as campus-based members, will meet to check in at least monthly about progress toward key goals (such as, for example, identification of colleges that fit a range of criteria so as to ensure best match, early completion of FAFSA/TASFA). These monthly meetings will ensure our ability to quickly provide supportive resources, with an eye toward building systems to eventually push many of these activities into earlier grades and assign responsibilities to other trusted adults, allowing the counselor to oversee and personalize. SchoolLinks allows us to take what we are collaboratively building for seniors, elevate the role of the counselor in planning and decision-making and as a member of the school leadership team, while identifying those who play key supportive roles (e.g. pathway teachers, mentors) and build out training for those key partners for years 2 and 3.

# Principle 01

# Principle 01

## Student Centered Advising/ Futures Planning

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Our model represents a new configuration of training, education, and work-based learning that blurs the lines between high school, college, and career preparatory. Our schools are approximately 70 percent economically disadvantaged and 88 percent Latinx. The majority of our students are first generation college goers.

We are a partnership model, working closely and collaboratively with top local employers, four major school districts, our largest public colleges and universities, and some private, and multiple nonprofit organizations. We work closely with our employer partners to embed enhanced career navigation into the student experience. This includes preferential hiring of our graduates, making more explicit to students the hidden benefits such as tuition reimbursement or career advancement, meeting 1:1 with all seniors to engage in detailed career conversations, offering multiple career fairs with employers willing to hire part- or full-time in technical fields, partnering with Jobward for resumes, and engaging employer partners such as Workforce Solutions Alamo and Alamo College's Youth Apprenticeship program in structured interview and hiring workshops.

# Signature Student Experiences

Signature experiences at CAST schools include activities that focus on leadership/ personhood development, entrepreneurial experiences, tradition building, and exposure to industry and college.

## Network Exemplar Practices

01

**Speak Up, Speak Out Regional Civics Fair**

[\[link\]](#)

02

**Youth Rally**

03

**Tafolla Toro: Three Years of Fear**

[\[link\]](#)

04

**Summer Bridge** - at the request of and in collaboration with individual CAST campuses)

[\[link\]](#)

05

**Senior Year Experience** - At least once per school year, CAST convenes all of the CCMR staff to evaluate and design the experience. Together we backwards map what advising (and when) needs to occur so that the senior year is customized and fully supports each student's post secondary plan.

[\[link\]](#)

# Campus

01

**Signature Experiences** - Each of the six CAST schools also hosts signature experiences that are unique to grade levels and/or pathways.

[\[link\]](#)

02

**Student Milestones**

03

**Leverage district structures and personnel:**

SchoolLinks  
Scope &  
Sequence

[\[link\]](#)

SAISD

TSI Support

[\[link\]](#)

Dual Credit  
Program

[\[link\]](#)

NISD

CTE Website

[\[link\]](#)

SWISD

District  
Resource  
Page

[\[link\]](#)

ECISD

Go Center  
Checklists

[\[link\]](#)

ALA Roadmap

[\[link\]](#)

# Senior Experiences

## Network Exemplar Practices

01

### Student Survey:

Institute an annual student survey. Creating a formal, consistent feedback opportunity for students will help CAST Schools continually redesign and ensure personalization of the post-high school planning process. The survey will allow us to pinpoint and monitor where students may be receiving advising support, such as, but not limited to pathway teachers, mentors, other teachers and school leaders, and counselors, to assess both when certain milestone advising activities are occurring and with whom. We will also use survey findings to enhance our understanding of the socio-emotional factors that may influence postsecondary outcomes, as well as to gauge the effectiveness of our purpose planning and advising model.

**Survey Descriptions & Sample Questions**

[\[link\]](#)

**How We've Used the Survey Results**

[\[link\]](#)

02

### Senior Interviews:

**CAST Med's Senior Interview Questions**

[\[link\]](#)

**Salesforce Process Overview**

[\[link\]](#)

03

### Senior Hiring Fair:

**Senior Hiring Fair Agenda**

[\[link\]](#)

**Student Checklist**

[\[link\]](#)

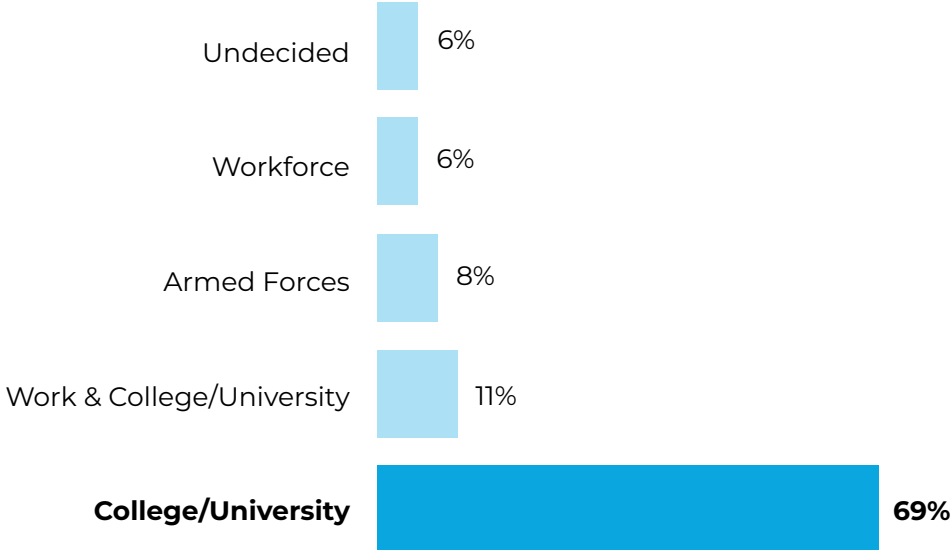


# Senior Interviews (Sample)



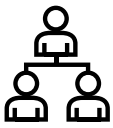
## Post Secondary Plans

Are you going into the workforce, college/university or the armed forces after you graduate from high school?



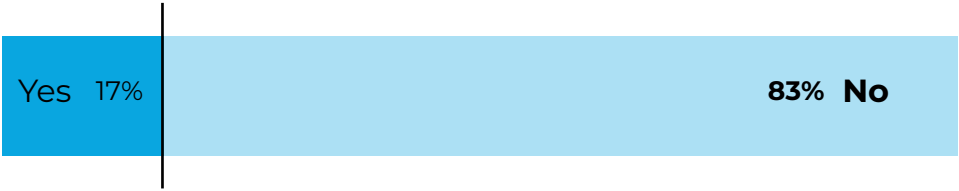
## Resumes

Do you have a resume?



## LinkedIn

Do you have a LinkedIn?



## Internship

Are you interested in future internship opportunities?



Total Students Interviewed: 36

# Campus Exemplar Practices

01

## 1-to-1 Matching:

1:1 matching of a teacher coach who supports seniors with college applications and essays.

02

## Senior Days:

Create a seamless and supportive transition out of CAST schools, create a bond between the network staff and the alumni through 1:1 conversations, and to create time and space for teachers to have planning time.

Senior days can be hosted in a variety of formats:

Conference Sessions

[\[link\]](#)

Workshops

[\[link\]](#)

1-on-1 Interviews

[\[link\]](#)

College Visits



**03**

**At-a-glance Calendar:**

See the at-a-glance calendar by campus [here](#).

**04**

**Senior Gameplan:**

View CAST Tech's Senior Game Plan [here](#).

# Principle 02

# Principle 02

## Alumni Network



The CAST Alumni Network will provide members from all network schools with the resources and support beyond graduation to include: Industry and Peer Mentoring, Internship Opportunities, Professional Networking, Educational, Social, and Mental Health Workshops. <https://castschools.com/alumni/>

### Strategy

Our six CAST Schools serve close to 2,500 students in 2022-2023; our partner school districts will collectively serve more than 170,000. Our goal is to develop two solutions for the students we serve:






### 01

To provide much more robust career support for students who are heading straight to work, or the many who combine work with attending college;

### 02

To provide much more robust support post high school, with an explicit focus on mental health, through the 13th and 14th year – and as long as they need it – so as to make the transition from high school to adulthood more successful.

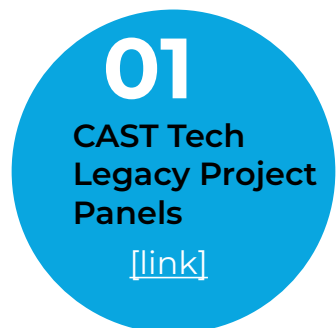
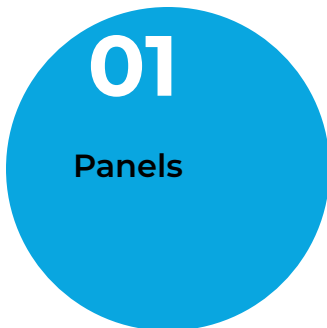
CAST Alumni Network supports its students after high school by:

-  Regularly scheduled gatherings to include topics on mental health, team building, and volunteer/service opportunities;
-  Reminders about important deadlines, such as annual FAFSA due dates;
-  Publicizing relevant job opportunities and college internships with employer partners;
-  Alumni interns who check in by phone or text on fellow Alumni;
-  Creation of cohorts at the schools with the largest number of CAST Alumni (UTSA, Texas A&M, SAC)

# Alumni Representation

## Network Exemplar Practices

## Campus Exemplar Practices



# Meeting Gap Needs

## Network Exemplar Practices

<b>01</b> Alumni Text Campaign Script <a href="#">[link]</a>	<b>02</b> Resource Guide <a href="#">[link]</a>	<b>03</b> Senior/Alumni Hiring Fair <a href="#">[link]</a>
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## Cohorts of CAST Alum at Local IHEs

Inclusion builds confidence and a sense of belonging, and will help students effectively address any looming barriers related to finances, transportation, housing, work, and family responsibilities. Our plan for Year 1 (2021-22) is to build a cohort of CAST Tech graduates in UTSA's Honors College who are co-enrolled in key pathways such as computer engineering or data science, as part of a "freshmen interest group (FIG), and in Year 2, we will focus on either expanding this work with UTSA to include CAST STEM graduates, or adding a partnership with a second university, such as St. Mary's University or Texas A&M San Antonio, depending on student interest. Later, more study-aligned cohorts will be established as our graduates' interests emerge, e.g., logistics and data analytics.

## Network Exemplar Practices

<b>01</b> Draft one-pager <a href="#">[link]</a>
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# Principle 03



# Principle 03

## Support for Non-Collegebound Students

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A distinguishing characteristic of the CAST model is the belief that the road to the future must be individualized in order to be actionable. We fully respect the choices of students who do not wish to pursue a postsecondary degree; our support is flexible and focused on long-term success no matter the path a student takes. Our initial assessment shows more than 90 percent of our students intend to go to college; but using the senior survey, we are doubling down to ensure that all students have a meaningful work-based experience prior to graduation. We will prioritize the small number of graduating seniors who do not plan to immediately attend college for internships tied to their career goals, as well as students who may want to work in their field as a means to pay for college.

# Mentoring

This strategy includes two approaches. First, current CAST mentors will be assisted in maintaining their relationships with CAST graduates through their first year of college. Second, CAST will help our graduates identify potential mentors and build positive relationships throughout their college experience, including joining learning communities, and seeking out faculty and peer mentors. These types of social capital sources -- mentors from home and mentors at school -- have been shown to promote persistence among economically disadvantaged students. As we expand our advising strategy to intentionally include more supportive adults in the four-year process, we will build in training for our mentoring cadre, so as to encourage advising as an ongoing set of conversations between our students and supportive adults.

## Network Exemplar Practices

**01**

**Mentor events beginning of fall and spring semesters**

**02**

**Working with organizations who connect our alumni with current CAST seniors.**

**03**

**The Other 53% Percent**

# Campus Exemplar Practices

01

Each campus has their own mentorship toolkit

02

Students at every campus have the opportunity to engage in a mentorship program facilitated by the campus partnership coordinator. Mentors are members of our industry partners who can offer students real world advice and who can help students look for opportunities to develop work based experiences. Mentors and students are partnered in campus events such as CAST Lead's [Mentor & Mingle Event](#) or mentors are provided a less structured menu of opportunities like [this one](#) from CAST Stem.

# Work Based Learning

## Network Exemplar Practices

**01 Internships:** Internships (before graduation, typically upperclassmen) are an extended (at least multi-week) work-based learning opportunity that is tailored to students' interests and industry needs. Paid or unpaid, the internship experience should be high quality. See the CAST internship website [here](#).

**02 Jobs**

**03 Apprenticeships:** An earn and learn model (go to campus part-time, you are in a job and the employer usually pays for your schooling); can keep an individual connected to career and college.

**04 Job Shadowing:** A short-term (e.g. one day) opportunity to visit a workplace and have a variety of experiences to help an individual understand what that workplace is like; usually done in groups.

**05 Teacher Externships:** Teachers spend a day or more in a setting such as a non-profit

**06 WBL Student Survey:** See the campus-based WBL Student Survey example [here](#).

# Campus Exemplar Practices

**01**

**Partnership  
Coordinators track  
WBL experiences  
through student  
questionnaires**

**02**

**CAST Teach Field  
Experiences**

[\[link\]](#)

**03**

**Texas Fame**

[\[link\]](#)

# Next Steps

# Next Steps



Our next steps include future plans for our alumni network and our alumni cohort.

# Alumni Network

## Future Plans



Expanding our partnership with Communities in Schools-SA to engage a social worker or counselor who will case manage Alumni on our roster;



Provide oversight and training for Alumni interns; engaging additional college interns to act as resident assistants at schools with large CAST cohorts;



Oversee a counseling or social work intern to work directly with a small group of students with high mental health needs;



Developing a referral network of services for Alumni, including but not limited to mental health partnerships and relationships at schools with large CAST cohorts



Engaging with partners like Momentum Education who assist with increasing alumni engagement by pairing current CAST students with a CAST alum. Partners like Momentum extend internship opportunities to CAST Alumni as an actionable way of embodying their model.



# Alumni Cohort

## Future Plans



Launching an alumni survey to identify students who are clustered in certain fields, to connect them to their industry, jobs and more; also to inform establishing affinity groups, could be area of interest (e.g. education, entrepreneurship).



Partnering with SA Works to host industry receptions with Alumni; connecting our Alumni more explicitly to partner programs such as but not limited to Alamo Fellows and City Ambassador Program.



Launching a specific supportive cohort for CAST graduates interested in teaching as part of our teacher pipeline work.



Developing a more consistent annual calendar for alumni events, and more frequent touchpoints.



We are planning a Black Student Union across our network with the hope that group might stay connected as Alumni.



We are planning an Alumni Advisory group to inform our alumni work, and adding two alumni to our nonprofit board.

