



SREB

Career/Technology Centers That Work

An Enhanced *High Schools That Work* Design For Technology Centers

*High Schools That Work (HSTW)*¹ is an effort-based school improvement initiative founded on the conviction that most students can master rigorous career/technical and academic studies if school leaders and teachers create an environment that motivates students to make the effort to succeed. *HSTW* is the nation's first large-scale effort to engage state, district, school and technology center leaders in partnerships with teachers, students, parents and the community to raise student achievement in improved readiness for college and careers. It is based on the simple belief that most students become "smarter" through effort and hard work. Technology center leaders and teachers can motivate students to achieve at high levels when they:

- expand students' opportunities to learn a **rigorous academic core** and a career/technical concentration that is taught in ways that enable students to see the usefulness of what they have been asked to learn.
- create supportive relationships between students and adults. These relationships involve providing students extra help to meet challenging course standards and support to make successful transitions from home high school to technology center and from high school to postsecondary studies and careers with improved readiness for college and careers.
- work as teacher advisers with parents, students, and home high schools to set goals and to help students take the right courses to complete a program of study that prepares them for postsecondary studies and careers.
- establish common planning time and professional development aligned with school improvement plans that focus on providing quality teaching and learning activities.

In this environment, more students will recognize that high school with a career/technical concentration matters to their future. In addition, more students will become independent learners able to set future educational and career goals and choose which courses to take to achieve those goals. With rising workplace requirements, getting a good, relevant high school education is more important now than ever before for a successful career. Yet, too many students do not graduate from high school. Furthermore, many more who do graduate lack preparation for further study and the recognized credentials needed to get good jobs.

To address these issues, the *HSTW* school improvement design provides a framework of Goals, Key Practices and Key Conditions for accelerating learning and setting higher standards. It recommends research-based practices for schools to improve academic and career/technical instruction and student achievement. *HSTW* research has shown that sustained school improvement and student achievement occur when state, district, school, technology center and teacher leaders work together to take ownership and adopt the *HSTW* design for the specific needs of individual high schools and technology centers.

Southern
Regional
Education
Board

592 10th St. N.W.
Atlanta, GA 30318
(404) 875-9211
www.sreb.org

¹ More than 1,100 high schools and over 250 middle grades schools participate in *HSTW*.

Primary *HSTW* Goals for continuous improvement

The mission of *HSTW* is to create a culture of high expectations and continuous improvement in high school. To achieve this mission, *HSTW* has several goals:

- Increase to 85 percent the percentages of career/technical students who meet the *HSTW* reading, mathematics and science performance goals on a National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)-referenced exam.
- Increase the percentages of career/technical students who perform at the Proficient level to at least 50 percent in reading, mathematics and science, as measured by the NAEP-referenced *HSTW* Assessment.
- Increase the percentages of technology center graduates who complete a career/technical concentration and enter employment within the field for which they were prepared and who enter postsecondary studies.
- Increase to 95 percent the percentages of high school students who enter the technology center in grade 11 and graduate on time.
- Advance state and local policies and leadership initiatives that sustain a continuous school improvement effort.
- Work with middle schools to effectively use EPAS assessments to guide students in creating programs of study that consist of courses that prepare students for high school and technology center courses.
- Increase annually the percentage of students leaving the technology center with postsecondary credit or having met standards for postsecondary studies, so they will avoid remedial courses.
- Work with the high schools to annually increase the percentage of students entering technology centers prepared and qualified to earn college credit based on PLAN test scores.
- Increase annually the percentage of technology center high school graduates that pass an improved employers exam.² (National licensure, state exam/credential, etc. such as ASE)

HSTW Key Practices for improving student achievement

HSTW has identified a set of Key Practices that impact student achievement. Following are the *HSTW* Key Practices that provide direction and meaning to comprehensive school improvement and student learning:

- **High expectations** — Motivate more students to meet high expectations by integrating high expectations into classroom practices and giving students frequent feedback.
- **Program of study** — Require each student to complete a plan of study leading them to complete a true concentration in an approved sequence of at least four career/technical courses and an upgraded academic core leading to preparation for postsecondary studies and a career.
- **Academic studies** — Teach more students the essential concepts of the college-preparatory curriculum by encouraging them to apply academic content and skills to real-world problems and projects within their career and technical studies. School leaders need to:
 - Align career/technical courses to essential state, national, academic and career/technical standards that prepare students for postsecondary studies and careers.
 - Align core academic courses to essential state and national standards that prepare youth for postsecondary studies and careers.
 - Align student assignments, student work and classroom assessments to college- and career-readiness standards, state assessments and employer recognized exams.

² Employer certification is an associate's degree in a career field, an associate's or applied science degree or certificate in a career field, apprenticeship or state-issued license or passing an approved employer-recognized certification exam.

- **Career/technical studies** — Provide more students access to intellectually challenging career/technical studies in high-demand fields that emphasize higher-level mathematics, science, literacy and problem-solving skills needed in the workplace and in further education. School leaders need to:
 - Create new courses using authentic projects and applied teaching methods to blend academics and technical content, and new measures for assessing academic and technical achievements.
 - Develop standards, conditions and agreements for awarding postsecondary credit in high-demand career/technical fields to high school students through a dual enrollment option.
 - Require senior projects with academic, technical and performance standards. (Capstone)
 - Provide students opportunities to work toward a recognized employer certification.
- **Work-based learning** — Enable students and their parents to choose from programs that integrate challenging high school career/technical studies and work-based learning and are planned by educators, employers and students.
- **Teachers working together** — Provide teams of teachers from several disciplines the time and support to work together to help students succeed in challenging career/technical and academic studies. Integrate reading, writing and speaking as strategies for learning into all parts of the curriculum and integrate mathematics and science into career/technical classrooms. School leaders need to support
 - career/technical and academic teachers in engaging students regularly in reading books and articles, writing, making presentations, and using high-level reasoning and thinking skills.
 - career/technical, mathematics and science teachers working together to better align and integrate mathematics and science concepts and skills into assignments in career/technical classrooms.
- **Students actively engaged** — Engage students in career/technical and academic classrooms in rigorous and challenging Proficient-level assignments using research-based instructional strategies and technology.
- **Guidance** — Involve students and their parents in a guidance and advisement system that develops positive relationships and ensures completion of a career/technical concentration with an approved sequence of at least four courses and an accelerated program of study. Provide each student with the same mentor throughout high school to assist with setting goals, selecting courses, reviewing the student’s progress and suggesting appropriate interventions as necessary. School leaders need to:
 - Hold a meeting with students, parents and their mentors annually at a technology center to review progress and develop plans for the next year.
 - Develop efforts to educate middle grades parents, school and teacher leaders, and students about the achievement level needed for challenging high school and career/technical studies and to educate high school parents, students and teachers about the achievement level needed for postsecondary study and high-demand, high-income jobs.
- **Extra help** — Provide a structured system of extra help to assist students in completing accelerated programs of study with high-level academic and technical content. School leaders need to:
 - Support all career/technical students to become independent learners by giving them opportunities to practice the habits of successful learners, such as study and literacy skills, time management and cooperative learning.
 - Give students easy access to opportunities to meet course standards and graduate on time with their peers.
 - Support teachers in forming nurturing relationships with career/technical students aimed at improving students’ work and achievement.

- Establish a system to analyze student progress on technology center standards and provide remediation focused on career/technical skills to ensure students can pass both hands-on performance and written certification exams.
- Plan catch-up learning experiences for entering technology center students who are not prepared for career/technical and college-preparatory courses.
- Work with postsecondary institutions to identify 11th-grade career/technical students not ready for postsecondary study. Develop special strategies to get these students prepared.
- **Culture of continuous improvement** — Use student assessment, program evaluation data, technology center performance reports, program enrollment, retention and placement reports, college remediation reports, student follow-up reports and advisory committee input to continuously improve school culture, organization, management, curriculum and instruction to advance student learning.

HSTW Key Conditions for accelerating student achievement

High Schools That Work believes everyone — teachers, high schools, districts, technology centers, local and state leaders — must work together to align policies, resources, initiatives and accountability efforts to support high schools and technology centers as they adopt and implement comprehensive school improvement designs. The *HSTW* Key Conditions include the following:

- **A clear, functional mission statement:** Technology centers need a clear, functional mission statement to prepare students for challenging secondary studies and for success in postsecondary education and the workplace.
- **Strong leadership:** Each technology center and home high school needs strong and committed leaders to improve, align and benchmark curricula to high standards, to improve the quality of instruction and to raise student achievement in grades 10 through adulthood. At each technology center, create a leadership team consisting of the campus director, assistant director, counselor and teacher leaders. School and district teams participate annually in a series of leadership development workshops aimed at more fully implementing the *HSTW* design.
- **Plan for continuous improvement:** Technology centers and site leaders need to create an organizational structure and process that ensures continuous involvement with faculty on what to teach, how to teach it, what students are expected to learn, how to assess what they have learned, and how faculty relate to each other, to the students and to the home high school, family and community.
- **Qualified teachers:** Technology center teachers have in-depth knowledge of their program/content areas and of teaching strategies appropriate to students' needs for success. Alternatively certified technology center teachers lacking certification/BS degree in their program/content areas are supported by the technology center to acquire them. The technology centers employ teachers who have program/content area depth and support them in learning how to teach effectively.
- **Commitment to goals:** School leaders and teachers are committed to achieving the *HSTW* Goals and implementing the Key Practices. School boards are committed to having all students complete a career/technical concentration and a rigorous academic core. Continuous review of local policies and practices ensures that a strong message of high expectations is sent to the school administration, faculty/staff and the home high school.
- **Flexible scheduling:** Technology center superintendents and school boards work with home high schools to adopt flexible schedules enabling students to attend technology centers, earn college credit and certifications, and complete an upgraded academic core.
- **Support for professional development:** Technology center leaders provide teachers with instructional materials, planning time and professional development for implementing new curricula and research-based instructional methods.

The *HSTW*-recommended curriculum

The centerpiece of *HSTW* is a challenging curriculum focused on preparing high school students for further education and the workplace. To complete the recommended curriculum, each student takes the following:

- at least four English courses, with the content and performance standards of college-preparatory English that emphasize reading, writing and presentation skills. Students should read the equivalent of eight books annually, write short papers weekly and write one or more research papers annually. Students revise work until it meets standards.
- at least three credits in mathematics including Algebra I, geometry, Algebra II. A fourth higher-level mathematics course or a specially developed mathematics course designed to prepare students for postsecondary studies is strongly recommended. This will help 11th-graders who are unprepared for college-level studies avoid remedial college mathematics.
 - Students completing Algebra I in grade eight will be required to complete three additional years of mathematics.
 - Students take mathematics their senior year.
 - All career/technical courses focus on numeracy and literacy in the language of the technical area.
- at least three college-preparatory science courses — biology, chemistry, physics or applied physics, or anatomy/physiology. Students conduct lab experiments and investigative studies; read, critique and discuss three to five books or equivalent articles about scientists, scientific discoveries and how science is used in the real world; keep lab notebooks; make presentations; and complete research projects and written reports. Students design and conduct group or individual projects. *HSTW* recommends that schools using block schedules require four years of science.
- at least three college-preparatory social studies courses emphasizing reading and writing to learn. Students will read five to eight books or equivalent articles, write weekly, make presentations, complete research projects, and prepare at least one major research paper in each course.
- at least one computer course or demonstrated proficiency in computer technology beyond simple keyboarding, which students should take early in high school to be prepared to use computer-based technical skills in other classes.
- at least four credits in a concentration that consists of an approved sequence of career/technical courses. Each student will have a choice from at least four career/technical concentrations in career cluster pathways at school sites, work sites, career/technical centers, postsecondary institutions; and a blended concentration, such as mathematics/science/technology or humanities and business studies. Each concentration will include one or two Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB) or dual credit courses.

Literacy goals for higher student achievement

High Schools That Work has identified five literacy goals that result in significantly higher student achievement. Students will do the following:

- Read the equivalent of 25 books per year across the curriculum and demonstrate understanding of the content. Proficient readers summarize what they have learned; ask clarifying questions; use pertinent vocabulary; and analyze the purpose, content and structure of a text.
- Write weekly in all classes to deepen understanding and retention of subject matter content.
- Use reading and writing strategies to enhance learning in all classes. All teachers should know how to use reading and writing strategies.
- Write research papers in all classes, allowing students to choose topics of interest and develop their abilities as independent learners.
- Complete a rigorous English/language arts curriculum taught at the college -preparatory/honors level. To reach this goal, students read 10 books each year and demonstrate understanding, write short papers weekly that are graded and complete research papers in their English classes.

The technology center leaders need to:

Establish a center-wide literacy plan that consists of:

- Defining and measuring student progress in reading books (or established book equivalent).
- Engaging students in the language of the career field weekly through structured reading, writing and oral presentations.
- Require all students to complete weekly writing assignments.

Transition from the middle grades to high school and technology center

Building a strong bridge from the middle grades to high school to the technology center is essential to raise student achievement and keep students in school. Students must be ready to meet the requirements of a rigorous career/technical and academic curriculum when they begin high school. Unprepared students will likely drop out of school or seek less rigorous diploma options. District, high school, technology center and middle grades leaders can work cooperatively to get middle grades students prepared for rigorous high school and career/technical studies by:

- establishing readiness indicators for challenging high school English, mathematics, science and career/technical courses;
- aligning curricula, teacher assignments and assessments to the readiness indicators; and
- setting goals to increase annually the percentages of students having successfully completed Algebra I by the end of grade eight.

Getting unprepared students ready for high school and the technology center

Technology center, high school and middle grades leaders and teachers will implement catch-up strategies for getting unprepared students ready for challenging high school and career/technical work as well as a recovery process for those students who have left high school. They work together to:

- **Develop a dropout recovery program** for students who have left high school. Create an alternative high school strategy that enables students to earn their high school diploma or GED and an employer certification.
- **Work with home schools** to identify students' deficiency areas on end-of-course exams and create a plan to integrate that content in applicable career/technical courses.
- **Collaborate with home high schools that provide four- to six-week summer bridge programs** to help entering ninth-graders who need further study to succeed in high school. The daily program consists of two hours of reading and writing and two hours of mathematics. Four days a week, students spend two hours a day using computers to complete reading, writing and mathematics assignments. On the fifth day, students participate in field trips to the technology center or to businesses that show them the importance of academic studies in the real world.
- **Collaborate with home schools to provide a four- to six-week summer learning experience for students planning to enter the career/technology center** who show major deficiency in mathematics and English/reading. The daily program consists of two hours of reading and writing organized around technical materials and two hours of mathematics with much of the instruction being hands-on and linked to application of mathematics to real workplace problems. Four days a week, students spend two hours a day using computers to complete reading, writing and mathematics assignments. On the fifth day, students participate in a field trip to business and industry who employ students completing programs offered by the career/technology center. Integrated into this summer curriculum will be study skills, time management, relationship skills and other habits of success that will enable students to be successful, to meet high school graduations standards, and career- and college-readiness standards.
- **Formalize a plan for extra help for all career/technical students who are unprepared for challenging career/technical studies.**
- **Develop a process to help students monitor their progress toward planning and preparing to enter and complete an associate's degree or postsecondary certificate program.**

The technology center will collaborate with home high schools to provide special intervention and remediation for students who are entering the center who have not yet passed essential state exams for graduation.

Introducing career/technical studies: a taste of the future

Some students, particularly those at risk of dropping out, need opportunities in grades eight, nine and 10 to explore career options and to experience introductory career courses. One approach is to provide at-risk ninth-graders access to introductory career/technical studies on alternating days for one semester during the freshman year. Giving students a taste of possible career options helps them to understand and envision career pathways in career/technical studies, to understand the underlying technology in various technical fields and to have opportunities to complete introductory assignments about available career options.

The technology center should collaborate with the home high school to implement introductory courses in career cluster areas that connect students to technology center programs and to preparation for postsecondary studies

In addition, students can complete a program of study outlining projected high school courses that lead to postsecondary study and good jobs. They can also write career papers, assessing themselves and possible future careers. These projects can be joint assignments between an introductory career/technical course and an English course.

Transitions from high school to postsecondary studies and careers — making the senior year count

Just as the middle grades have the responsibility to prepare students for challenging secondary studies, home high schools and technology centers must prepare students for the next step: postsecondary studies and careers. The key to the next step is a productive senior year.

HSTW recommends making the senior year more challenging and meaningful for students. Taking a mathematics course in the senior year will help prepare students for postsecondary mathematics courses and the application of mathematics in the career/technical concentration and the workplace. Aligning senior year career/technical and academic courses to college- and career-readiness standards enables students to pursue postsecondary studies without taking remedial courses. Teachers' assignments, students' work and course exams must match what is required for postsecondary studies and career readiness.

The senior year should prepare students for an important transition. When students have not taken challenging courses for more than a year, they often struggle when they enter college.

School leaders need to:

- Utilize 10th-grade assessments to identify students who qualify for dual credit and those needing extra help to qualify.
- Work with postsecondary institutions to administer placement exams to 11th-graders. Use the results to work with parents and students to modify senior year programs of study to prepare students for postsecondary studies and work. Develop, in collaboration with colleges, special senior English and mathematics catch-up courses for students unprepared for college-level studies.
- **Provide students prepared for college-level work the opportunity to take at least 15 semester hours of postsecondary credit during their junior and senior years. States and districts have several strategies for juniors and seniors to earn college credit — Advanced Placement courses, concurrent enrollment courses, dual credit career/technical courses, learning experiences on college campuses during the summer and the school year, and the use of virtual college courses and distance learning.**
- Assist students not planning to attend college to use the senior year to prepare for high-paying, high-demand jobs. Provide them with opportunities to take industry-approved programs leading to an associate's degree, a certificate or an employer-recognized certification. These programs can be offered at high schools, career/technical centers or community technical colleges or through apprenticeship programs and work-based instruction.
- Mount an effort to help all seniors graduate on time. Help them make up failed courses or exams through the use of technology, Web-based independent study courses, retaking classes after school, etc.
- Require seniors to take at least three academic courses, including a high-level mathematics or science course and a college-preparatory-level English/language arts course.
- Consider requiring a senior project that includes a research paper, a product or service and an oral presentation. The senior project should be the culmination of the technology center's efforts to strengthen the key learning skills of students — studying effectively, organizing and managing material, problem solving, conducting research, evaluating their own work, and communicating what they have learned. Under the guidance of a project mentor, students need to complete projects at the technology center that develop and strengthen these skills. They should choose and complete a major project from topics related to their concentration area. Students need to propose their topics in grade 11 and explain in their proposals how their projects strengthen their preparation for postsecondary learning and careers. Ideally the effort should be coordinated between the technology center and the home high school to meet the requirements for a senior project or research paper.

Measuring and reporting progress

The primary tool used for measuring high school and technology center students' levels of achievement and schools' progress is the *HSTW* Assessment. This test is referenced to NAEP proficiency standards and measures 12th-graders progress in reading, mathematics, science and career/technical fields of study. The results also indicate to schools how they have improved and what areas require greater improvement.

The *HSTW* Assessment also includes student and teacher surveys. The student survey addresses high school students' experiences, what and how they have been taught and what is expected of them in both career/technical and academic courses. The teacher survey indicates how much time teachers spend working and planning together and what school staff thinks about school culture and the quality of instruction.

HSTW also conducts a follow-up survey of students one year after high school graduation; graduates report on how well high school and the technology center prepared them for postsecondary education and career.

Technical Assistance Visit³ (TAV) reports provide base-line information, challenges and action steps to help school leaders assess where their schools are in relationship to the *HSTW* Key Practices. The reports guide school leaders and teachers in prioritizing next steps for implementation of school improvement.

Every technology center site prepares an annual site progress report in the spring to document accomplishments and challenges in their efforts to implement the *HSTW* Key Practices. The annual report is part of a reflection and planning process through which schools note accomplishments from the previous school year and outline improvement priorities for the upcoming year.

Research-based evidence for the success of *HSTW*

Students who complete the *HSTW*-recommended career/technical concentration and academic core have higher mean reading, mathematics and science achievement scores than students who do not meet either or both conditions. Students are more likely to have mean scores at the Basic and Proficient levels than students who do not complete such a core and concentration.⁴ Students are more likely to take the *HSTW*-recommended curriculum at schools that have more deeply implemented the *HSTW* design.

Students have significantly higher achievement in mathematics, reading and science at high schools that have more deeply implemented the *HSTW* design than do similar students at schools that have not, regardless of students' ethnicity or level of parents' education. Using student and faculty survey data from the 2002 and 2004 *HSTW* Assessments, *HSTW* identified 75 school sites that have more fully implemented the *HSTW* design and compared student achievement at those sites with that of students at 75 other schools with low-level implementation. The findings are presented in the *HSTW* publication, *Students Can't Wait: High Schools Must Turn Knowledge Into Action*, available at www.sreb.org. Among the findings:

³ A Technical Assistance Visit (TAV) is a three-day, team-led school visit, which includes interviews, classroom observations, review of school data and an exit report of findings. A complete written report is sent to the school.

⁴ Bottoms, Gene, Alice Presson and Lingling Han. *Students Can't Wait: High Schools Must Turn Knowledge Into Action*, SREB, June 2006.

- **The most-improved high schools are doing something that works to improve the reading achievement at the same rate for all students.** All groups of students at the most-improved high schools made fairly equal gains in reading achievement, amounting to approximately one grade level. Likewise, all students at the non-improved schools showed declines in reading.
- **The most-improved high schools are doing something that works to raise the mathematics achievement of all groups of students.** At the most-improved high schools, all student groups had a gain of eight to 11 points in mathematics, while those at the non-improved had declines of six to nine points.
- **The most improved schools are doing something that works to raise the science achievement.** At the most-improved schools all students had a gain of 16 to 17 points in science, while all students at the non-improved schools had declines of nine to 12 points.

Teachers and school leaders at the most-improved schools have taken **responsibility** to place emphasis on **rigor**, **relevance** and **relationships** in order to create schools where more students understand the importance of what they're learning and its value as a bridge to the future. In turn, more students have accepted greater responsibility for their own learning.

The findings of this study demonstrate that a high school faculty of academic and career/technical teachers working together with the *HSTW* Goals and Key Practices always in mind, can be a powerful force to help students maximize their talents, make their lives better and prepare to contribute to the larger community.

What *HSTW* agrees to do

High Schools That Work (HSTW) agrees to provide leadership, guidance, information and assistance to support technology centers, districts and states in improving student achievement. School participation in *HSTW* can take one of two forms: joining a state *HSTW* network or contracting independently with *HSTW* (the *HSTW* Contracted Schools Network).

For schools participating in a state network, priority services include the following:

- supporting the state agency that manages and coordinates *HSTW* sites;
- providing consultation to the state and its network schools;
- collaborating with the state to develop statewide *HSTW* councils that provide overall guidance to *HSTW* efforts;
- providing information and dissemination services to support state and site efforts using print, video and Internet resources;
- evaluating sites' progress in implementing the *HSTW* design and raising the achievement of students in reading, mathematics and science through biennial NAEP-referenced *HSTW* Assessments; a teacher survey; a follow-up study of graduates; and providing state and site reports of findings;
- providing annually one technology center Site Development Workshop to give teams from new sites an introduction to the *HSTW* design of Key Practices, Key Conditions and Goals;
- managing and helping states lead on-site Technical Assistance Visits (TAVs);
- providing professional development opportunities for states and sites through national professional development that includes a major annual conference for all network sites and state leaders in July that typically attracts more than 7,000 participants and national experts;

- providing contact information for professional development consultants and center coaches to assist with site improvement needs;
- creating networking opportunities for sites to share strategies and resources;
- supporting creation of site-focused professional development plans;
- conducting training of state personnel to assist in providing *HSTW* services;
- conducting annual leadership forums for teams and district leaders from all *HSTW* states;
- seeking support from the private sector and foundations for delivery of *HSTW* services; and
- disseminating information and publications about *HSTW* best practices to state organizations.

What participating sites agree to do

Schools and school systems participating in a *HSTW* state network agree to do the following:

- Have site leaders — superintendents, school board members, the campus directors and a core group of teachers and the home high school administrator, counselor or teacher leader — examine the Goals and Key Practices and decide if *HSTW* is viable for the school and the community. If so, they commit to at least a five-year implementation effort and require almost all students to take a career/technical concentration and upgraded academic core.
- Appoint someone at the district level and at the school site to coordinate *HSTW* action planning, professional development and technical assistance; coordinate data collection; monitor progress; foster communication; and integrate the *HSTW* Goals and Key Practices with other school improvement efforts.
- Support career/technical and academic teachers with professional development, materials and time to work together to implement the Key Practices.
- Promote student participation in a system of school- and work-based learning that integrates academics with career/technical courses.
- Organize an overall school leadership team composed of key academic and career/technical teachers, home high school administrator or teacher leader and administrators; guidance counselors; parents; and representatives of business, industry and postsecondary education. Establish a team structure where all teachers work in a focused team to address curriculum, guidance, evaluation, professional development, industry-recognized credentials and transitions.
- Prepare an action plan that meets the school improvement plan requirements but uses the Key Practices and a site-specific staff development plan to help teachers carry out the action steps.
- Participate in the biennial *HSTW* Assessment, teacher survey and follow-up study of career/technical graduates to obtain base-line data and to measure progress in raising student achievement.
- Host a Technical Assistance Visit (TAV) involving a team led by SREB or the state to review progress made and determine challenges to address to raise student achievement.
- Participate in district leadership activities, state staff development activities and the annual *HSTW* Staff Development Conference.
- Become an active member of a state and multi-state network for sharing information and ideas.

- Expand student access to modern career/technical courses in the technology center, at a college or university, or in a work setting that is connected to school-based academic and career/technical studies. Site leaders will work closely with employers and two-year postsecondary institutions.
- Designate district resource staff to guide all teachers to integrate reading, writing and mathematics across the curriculum to improve achievement in all content areas.
- Promote a vision of high achievement for all technology center students among faculty and staff, parents, students, home school and community members.

What participating states agree to do

States participating in *HSTW* agree to do the following:

- Name a representative to serve on the SREB-State Vocational Education Consortium Board.
- Designate a state *HSTW* coordinator and dedicate the equivalent of a full-time staff person for every 40 *HSTW* sites.
- Allocate discretionary funds to help sites implement their school improvement plans;
- Conduct Technical Assistance Visits (TAVs) to one-third of sites annually to recommend ways for existing sites to further advance student learning.
- Conduct TAVs to all new sites during year one to help them develop and implement action plans for raising student achievement.
- Encourage sites to attend the Annual *HSTW* Summer Staff Development Conference and identify site participants to present and preside.
- Link staff development to sites' school improvement plans and create opportunities for teachers and administrators to participate in state-sponsored institutes and *HSTW* workshops and conferences.
- Support sites in participating in the biennial *HSTW* teacher survey and follow-up survey and help them to use the data to improve their action plans.
- Provide new *HSTW* sites technical assistance for developing action plans during year one.
- Support *HSTW* sites annually with professional development, including a statewide *HSTW* staff development conference.
- Foster networking of sites through meetings, visits and electronic communication.
- Convene sites regularly to share resources and solve common problems.

How to become a *HSTW* site

Becoming a state network site

SREB and the states work together to provide services to *HSTW* sites. Each state uses its own process for selecting technology center sites to participate in *HSTW*. In most states, schools wishing to join the state network must submit an application; a few states require annual proposals. Some states require majority approval by school staff for adopting the *HSTW* design. Schools or districts seeking *HSTW* site information should contact their state coordinators at their state's department of education.⁵ There are two exceptions: in Arkansas, interested sites should contact the Arkansas Department of Workforce Education; and in Oklahoma, they can contact the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education.

Benefits from becoming a *HSTW* site

Participation in *HSTW* benefits all stakeholders in the educational process: students and parents, teachers, administrators, and the broader community.

Benefits to students: *HSTW* improves students' academic and career/technical knowledge and skills. It shows students the connection between high school and their futures and encourages them to prepare for the next step, which often combines work and further study.

Benefits to parents: Parents become partners in students' education as they participate in planning six-year programs of students' studies, are informed in order to assist in decision making about postsecondary and career options, and are updated regularly about students' progress to keep them on track to meet academic and career goals.

Benefits to teachers: Teachers gain confidence in their abilities to help all students complete challenging studies. They work together to create more rigorous curriculums and plan professional development activities aimed at raising students' achievement.

Benefits to campus directors: Technology center administrators strengthen their leadership skills as they deal with scheduling, staffing and curriculum design issues resulting from offering a high-quality curriculum to all career/technical students. They become more adept at using the incremental process — planning, doing, reviewing, making new plans and revising old ones — to improve student learning.

Benefits to schools: Schools receive data about students' strengths and weaknesses in career/technical studies, reading, mathematics, and science. Teachers, administrators and community members base action plans on this information. The result is improved communication among technology center faculty and staff, home school faculty and staff, students, parents, employers, and postsecondary institutions.

Benefits to educational reform: States adopt new long-term strategies for working with local school systems to improve high schools and middle grades. School leaders and teachers discover that they can raise the achievement of all students, including those previously underserved.

Benefits to the community and nation: Challenging programs of study raise students' communication, mathematics, science and technical skills; they increase students' earning potential and raise the bar of achievement for everyone.

⁵ Visit the SREB Web site, www.sreb.org, to find contact information for each *High Schools That Work* member state coordinator. Select the *High Schools That Work* tab at the top of the page. Then, from the menu on the right hand side, choose "Becoming a *HSTW* site or state."

For more information, contact

Gene Bottoms, SREB Senior Vice President and Director of *High Schools That Work*. Phone: (404) 875-9211, ext. 249.
Fax: (404) 872-1477. E-mail: gene.bottoms@sreb.org.

Steve Broome, Director, State Development for High School and Middle Grades. Phone: (404) 875-9211, ext. 292.
Fax: (404) 872-1477. E-mail: steve.broome@sreb.org.

Ivy Alford, Consultant, State Services for School Improvement. Phone: (985) 386-4377. E-mail: ivy.alford@sreb.org.

Gay Burden-Villarreal, Consultant, State Services for School Improvement. Phone: (615) 855-2504. E-mail:
gay.burden@sreb.org.

Beth Andrews, Assistant to the Senior Vice President. Phone: (404) 875-9211, ext. 277. Fax: (404) 872-1477. E-mail:
beth.andrews@sreb.org.