



## ABOUT THE NETWORK FOR COLLEGE SUCCESS

The Network for College Success (NCS) envisions high schools that continuously cultivate collaboration, powerful learning, and a culture of high achievement to prepare all students for college and career success.

NCS uses research to design and facilitate professional learning that builds the capacity of school leaders to greatly improve student outcomes. Through cross-school learning communities and job-embedded coaching, we support district leaders, principals, teachers, and counselors to:

- Strengthen school leadership
- Improve teaching and learning
- Support freshmen transitioning into high school
- Prepare students for quality postsecondary options
- Support culture and climate
- Integrate research and data into daily practice

For more information about NCS, please go to [ncs.uchicago.edu](https://ncs.uchicago.edu).

# NCS Core Values and Beliefs

- Educators have the capacity to solve their own problems when there is actionable data, research-based strategies, collaborative teams, and professional trust.
- School-based leaders drive change in schools. Increasing their capacity as leaders is the essential lever for improvement.
- Students' intellectual capacity is not static. It grows when challenged and develops when teachers explicitly build academic mindsets and non-cognitive skills.
- School improvement happens when adults make their practice public and critically examine their work collaboratively. Trust is essential to adults' willingness to engage in this process.
- Data are a powerful tool for school improvement when used to trace causes, seek solutions, and guide change. Data can be destructive when only used to judge and punish.
- Challenging leaders to interrupt inequities in schools and districts is vital to improving schools. All students from all backgrounds deserve equitable educational outcomes.

# About the Toolkit

The NCS Freshman On-Track Toolkit is a collection of protocols, reports, resources, and artifacts used by our experienced Coaches in their daily work to help schools better support students through the critical first year of high school.

The Toolkit is organized around four key components:



APPLYING  
RESEARCH & DATA



DEVELOPING  
CAPACITY & LEADERSHIP



CULTIVATING  
TRUST & RESPECT



BUILDING  
SCHOOL-BASED TEAMS

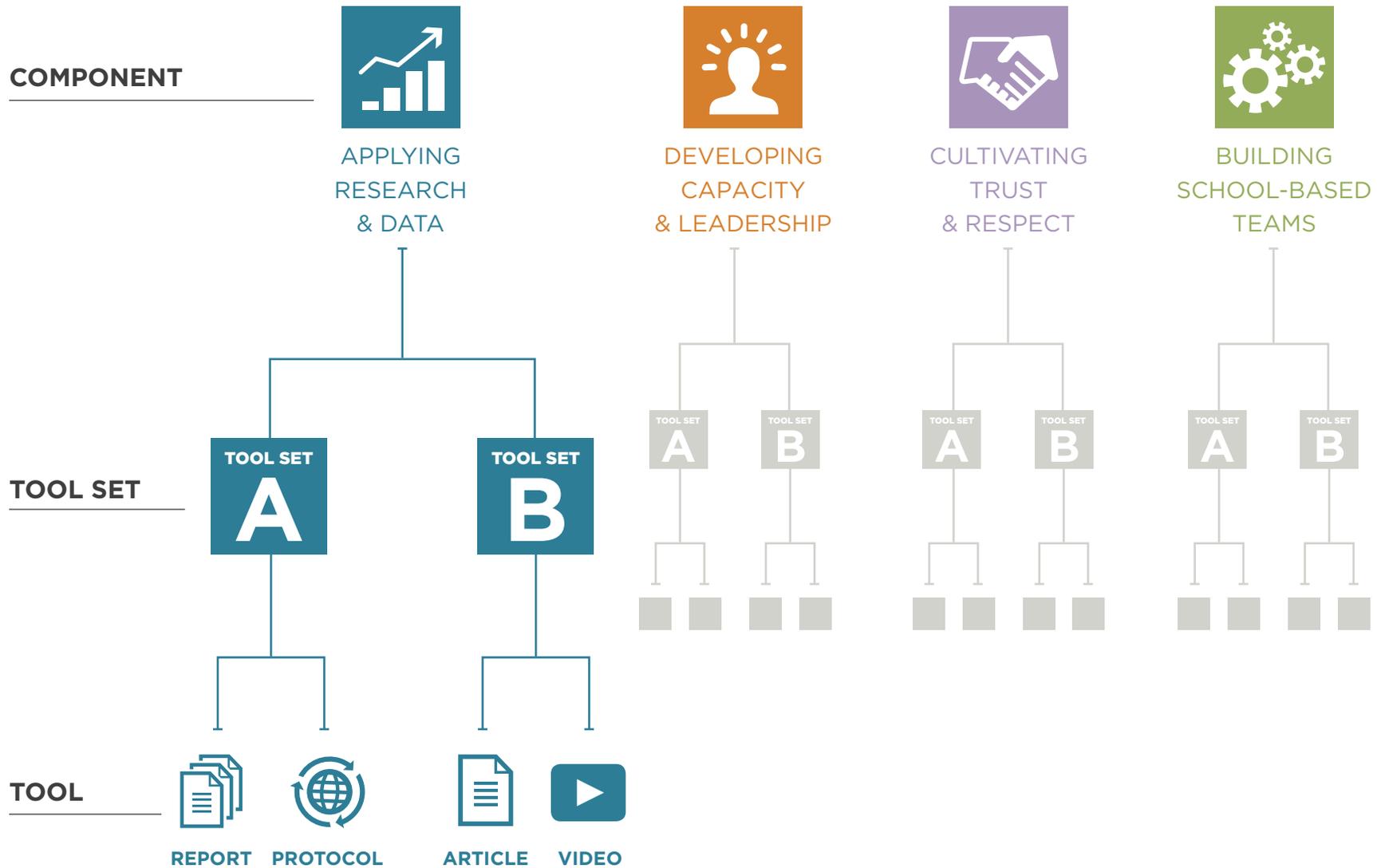
For each of the components, you will find a collection of Tool Sets, or bundles of tools (including videos), organized to help you achieve your Freshman On-Track goals.

## What is On Track?

In Chicago, a student is considered On Track if he or she has accumulated five full credits (ten semester credits) and has no more than one semester F in a core subject (English, math, science, or social science) by the end of freshman year. These represent the criteria to become a sophomore in Chicago Public Schools. Students who are On Track are far more likely to graduate from high school than their off track peers.

On Track may be defined differently in your school or district. For more information about the origins of On Track in Chicago, please refer to the Applying Research & Data component in this Toolkit.

# Toolkit Organization



# Acknowledgements

The Network for College Success acknowledges the dedicated professionals at each of our partner high schools who have made their practice public and shared their expertise, tools, and insights. Without them, this Toolkit would not be possible.

We would like to thank the Chicago Public Schools for their ongoing commitment to the Freshman On-Track work and improving students' academic attainment.

We would also like to thank our partners at the Urban Education Institute, including the UChicago Consortium for School Research, UChicago Impact, and The To&Through Project.

Finally, we would like to express our appreciation to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for their thought partnership and providing the Network for College Success with the resources to reflect on our work with schools and produce this Toolkit.

# A Note about Creative Commons

Many of the tools in the Network for College Success Freshman On-Track Toolkit are original works or adaptations with the permission of the original creator. Because all of the tools have been compiled and presented here in the interest of sharing best practices, original works have been marked with a [Creative Commons](#) copyright license.



In contrast to a traditional copyright, where all rights are reserved to the creator, our purpose in using a Creative Commons license is to make it easier for others to share and use the material. We encourage you to openly use and share the original works found in this toolkit. You may also adapt the tools marked with a Creative Commons license, provided you share those adaptations in the same open, non-commercial manner.

# Getting Started: The NCS Freshman Success Framework Overview

In 2009, the Network for College Success developed the Freshman Success Framework to provide our partner schools with guidance on how to establish a high-functioning system of support for students entering high school. The three dimensions of the system – the actions of the team, its leader, and the principal – are vital for helping freshmen successfully transition into high school.

## Framework Overview

### Dimension 1: Principal (or Assistant Principal)

- Foundational Planning
- Implementation Accountability
- Student-Focused Culture
- Classroom-Level Teacher Support Structures

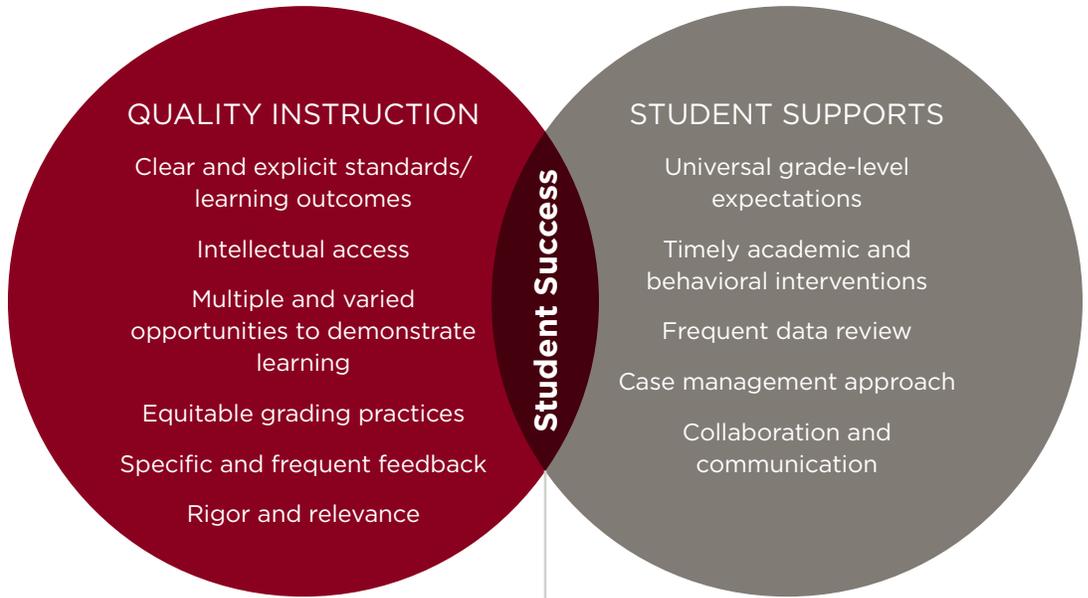
### Dimension 2: Success Team Lead

- Professional Development
- Team Facilitation
- Communication and Advocacy
- Classroom-Level Teacher Collaboration

### Dimension 3: Success Team

- Team Structure
- Success Team Duties
- Communicating a Culture of Success
- Classroom-Level Student Support Structures

# Freshman Success Framework: Satellite View



## Success Team Elements

**Principal or Assistant Principal**

**Success Team Lead**

**Success Team**

## SETTING CONDITIONS

**Foundational Planning**  
 Programs, sets purpose for, and communicates expectations for Success Team work

**Professional Development**  
 Acquires tools and strategies

**Team Structure**  
 Protected meeting time and participation by all members

## IMPLEMENTATION

**Implementation Accountability**  
 Holds Success Team accountable for equitable grading practices and progress toward goals

**Team Facilitation**  
 Establishes a high functioning Success Team with clear goals and benchmarks

**Success Team Duties**  
 Uses timely student data to create, implement, monitor, adjust, and evaluate supports

## COMMUNICATION

**Student-Focused Culture**  
 Meets regularly with Team Lead and works to communicate a culture of success

**Communication and Advocacy**  
 Communicates progress and advocates for resources to support activities

**Communicating a Culture of Success**  
 Establishes common and solutions-oriented language

## INSTRUCTION

**Classroom-Level Teacher Support Structures**  
 Communicates and supports teacher development around a clear vision for quality instruction and learning

**Classroom-Level Teacher Collaboration**  
 Provides resources for problem solving and learning around grading and instructional practices

**Classroom-Level Student Support Structures**  
 Utilizes equitable practices to engage students in intellectually challenging and supportive learning