

Introduction

NAF's Fast Track Assessment is a self-evaluation of the current practices in an existing career academy that is applying to become a NAF academy. The assessment aligns with the four elements of NAF's educational design: Academy Development & Structure, Advisory Board, Curriculum & Instruction, and Work-Based Learning. The assessment results show the alignment of current academy practices with NAF's educational design and dictate the recommended admissions program to become a NAF academy.

[Share this sample of the Fast Track Assessment with the academy team to prepare for completing the official online assessment.](#)

Definitions

Review the definitions for underlined words or phrases with numbered superscripts at the end of the assessment.


Completing the Fast Track Assessment

The academy team¹ members (academy director/site coordinator, teachers, counselor, district/school leaders, and advisory board members) work together as a *review team* to complete the assessment. The phases of the review process are:

1. Distribute copies of the sample Fast Track Assessment to the academy team for their review.
2. Coordinate a meeting to review the assessment and to reach an agreement on the responses for all strategic actions.
3. Complete the online Fast Track Assessment to determine the academy's level of implementation of NAF's educational design. An academy must have a provisional score of 15 or above to continue with items 4-8.
4. Pay the invoice for the Fast Track program fee and schedule the Fast Track validation meeting.
5. Plan to complete items 6-8 below before the validation meeting.
6. Compile required electronic evidence to verify the achievement of the designated strategic actions and upload files directly into the online assessment for review by the portfolio manager no less than two weeks before the validation meeting.
7. Recommendation: Use the Fast Track [Evidence Checklist](#) as a resource for required evidence templates and other supporting documents.
8. Confirm academy readiness for the validation meeting by scheduling a virtual session with the portfolio manager to review the uploaded evidence.
9. Schedule the validation meeting with the portfolio manager.

During the Fast Track validation meeting, the review team and portfolio manager finalize the Fast Track Assessment after a review and discussion of the evidence.

Evidence

Click on the  icon to upload all required evidence listed in the Fast Track Assessment evidence column. The icon is only visible in the online Fast Track Assessment adjacent to each strategic action, and there are links to the required evidence templates. No additional evidence is necessary if academies use evidence templates. Download the templates using the links provided, fill in the templates, and upload the completed templates into the Fast Track Assessment evidence section.

Scoring

The review team participates in the Fast Track validation meeting to verify that the academy evidence confirms the achievement of the strategic actions for each standard of practice.

An academy that earns a final score of 15 or above during the validation process is eligible to become an open academy in NAF's network. The Fast Track Assessment results also serve as a guide to modify the action plan for continuous improvement during the launch year.

Element 1: Academy Development & Structure

1.1 Student Recruitment & Enrollment

The academy supports open, choice-based enrollment that maximizes students’ access to career and college opportunities and results in academy membership that reflects the school's demographics.

Evidence

1.1.a

Link to district's open, choice-based enrollment policy (e.g., application, brochure)

1.1.a Open, choice-based enrollment² results in academy membership that reflects the school's demographics.

- Yes
- No

1.1.b

Document the number of years of operation

1.1.b Recruitment efforts result in increasing student enrollment each year to meet the threshold³ criteria by enrolling 200 (4-year program), 150 (3-year program), or 100 (2-year program) students in a single NAF academy with at least 20 students per grade level.

A class roster of students enrolled in each operating grade of the academy

The academy program is:

- Fully implemented
- Not Fully implemented

The academy:

- Enrolls 50 or more students per grade level (for large schools) or 20 or more students per grade level (for small schools)
- Enrolls less than 50 students per grade level (for large schools) or less than 20 students per grade level (for small schools)

1.2 Personalized Environment

The academy creates a personalized learning environment that is inclusive, promotes student voice and choice, and encourages positive relationships within the academy and school environment to enhance students’ social-emotional well-being and academic achievement.

Evidence

1.2.a

Document exemplars for a personalized environment [Personalized Environment Template](#).

1.2.a The academy fosters a personalized environment⁴ that promotes student success and attainment of college and career goals.

Select all that apply. The academy team:

- Connects learning to students' interests, abilities, and aspirations.
- Implements academy structures that encourage peer relationships and develop a sense of belonging among academy members.
- Develops personalized academy learning plans that the academy team regularly reviews to assess student progress towards college and career goals.
- Engages a network of teachers, family, mentors, and advisory board members who connect with academy students to provide support for accomplishing their college and career goals.
- None of the above

1.3 Data Collection & Review

The academy participates in an ongoing review of academy data to enhance academy development and benchmark student progress.

Evidence

1.3.a

Examples of academy data and student data to support checked items

1.3.a The academy collects, analyzes, and reports academy and student-level data to inform academy practices and ensure educational equity for students.

Select all that apply. The academy:

- Reviews academy-level data.
- Reviews student-level data.
- Does not review data.

1.3.b

Action plan for academy development with goals and strategic actions

[Action Plan Template](#)

1.3.b The academy uses data from various sources to develop action plan goals with strategic actions for academy development and regularly monitors progress in achieving goals to ensure continuous academy development.

- Yes
- No

1.4 Academy Leadership

Academy leadership is broad-based, strategic, and sufficiently staffed.

Evidence

1.4.a

Academy site coordinator's schedule or job description or a list of clearly defined team roles

[Academy Team Roster Template](#)

1.4.a The academy designates a site coordinator, lead, or academy director with release time or an academy team with clearly defined responsibilities for managing all aspects of the academy program.

- Yes
- No

1.4.b

College and career coordinator's job description or list of daily activities of the college and career designee

If applicable, refer to evidence provided for 1.4.a

1.4.b The academy designates a team member to oversee college and career readiness⁵ activities.

- Yes
- No

1.4.c

Documentation to support checked items

[Ambassadors' Template](#)

1.4.c The district, school, and academy leaders are ambassadors for the academy. In alignment with NAF's expectations, academy leaders complete data requests on time, use social media to promote academy practices and events and attend conferences that focus on college and career readiness topics.

Select all that apply. School leaders meet NAF's expectations by:

- Completing NAF data requests on time.
- Using social media to promote academy practices and events.
- Attending/presenting at local, state, and national conferences where college and career readiness topics are the focus.
- None of the above

1.5 Professional Learning

District, school, academy leaders, and advisory board members participate in regularly scheduled professional learning sessions and collaboration meetings.

Evidence

1.5.a

Schedule of common planning or collaboration time for more than three academy team members (e.g., agenda, sign-in sheets)

[Academy Team Agenda Template](#)

1.5.b

Documentation to support attendance at selected events (e.g., agenda, registration receipt)

[NAF Sponsored PL Template](#)

1.5.a The academy team (of more than three members) participates in common planning time or other formal collaboration time to prepare for career-themed integration, student support systems and interventions, and college and career activities across the curriculum and grade levels. Common planning occurs with an academy team of more than three members:

- Weekly
- Bi-weekly
- Monthly
- Not Regularly

1.5.b The academy participates in NAF sponsored or other Career Technical Education (CTE) professional learning sessions.

Select all that apply. The academy team attended:

- [NAF Next⁶](#)
- Virtual/webinar training
- Other CTE training/professional learning events
- None of the above

Element 2: Advisory Board

2.1 Advisory Board Membership & Operations

A formally organized advisory board operates with broad-based community representation.

Evidence

2.1.a

Roster with roles of the advisory board members

[Advisory Board Overview](#)

[Partner Involvement Interest Survey](#)

2.1.a The advisory board development focuses on recruiting at least ten (10) members representing business, industry, government, community, and postsecondary education leaders.

Select all that apply. The advisory board membership includes:

- At least ten (10) members.
- At least 80% business, industry, civic, and postsecondary education leaders.
- None of the above

2.1.b

Strategic plan and current by-laws.

[Strategic Plan Template](#)

[By-laws Template](#)

2.1.b The advisory board creates operational documents, including a strategic plan with clear annual outcomes informed by academy data and by-laws to help the academy grow and sustain academy needs.

Select all that apply. The advisory board developed:

- Strategic plans for 2020-21
- By-laws
- None of the above

2.2 Support for Learning

Advisory board members actively support work-based learning activities, the program of study, and academy program design.

Evidence

2.2.a

Work-based learning activities that include AB member support

[AB - WBL Supports for Learning Template](#)

2.2.a The advisory board (AB) members actively support the implementation of the work-based learning (WBL) program focusing on career [awareness](#)⁷, [exploration](#)⁸, and [preparation activities](#)⁹.

Select all that apply. The advisory board supports:

- Secure and coordinate work-based learning experiences outlined in the academy's work-based learning calendar.
- Participate in virtual or in-person classroom activities or projects.
- Collaborate with academy leaders to inform and update the career-themed curriculum.
- Provide professional learning opportunities for academy staff.
- None of the above

2.3 Support for Sustainability

Increasing public awareness and civic engagement are vital to long-term academy sustainability. The advisory board increases public awareness and civic understanding of the need for workforce development systems by engaging the K-12 school system in discussions with postsecondary education and civic leaders about building talent pipelines through developing career academies in high schools.

Evidence

2.3.a

Advisory board (AB) activities and the alignment of the theme to the local workforce

[AB Ambassadors' Template](#)

2.3.a The advisory board works to engage the [civic community](#)¹⁰ to enact policies that promote and sustain academies as an integral part of the local workforce and economic development systems.

Select all that apply. The advisory board members

- Conduct or participate in public forums or meetings on workforce development.
- Engage in meetings with local civic leaders regarding building talent pipelines.
- Raise funds for paid internships, work-based learning activities, and scholarship funds.
- None of the above

Element 3: Curriculum & Instruction

3.1 Program of Study/Integration

The academy's program of study¹¹ offers approved NAFTrack Certified courses that require career-themed integration into core subjects and a performance-based assessment¹². Academy course content includes project-based and work-based learning activities and opportunities to build college and career readiness.

Evidence

3.1.a

Virtual meeting dates or agenda that includes an NTC overview

[NAF Program of Study Flyer](#)

3.1.b

List of course selections per grade level for the program of study

[Program of Study Template](#)

[Curriculum FAQ](#)

3.1.c

Documentation to support curriculum integration plan (e.g., using PBL in theme courses and at least one core subject) for checked items

[Integration Plan Template](#)

3.1.a The academy knows the NAFTrack Certification¹³ (NTC) Program of Study requirements plus the associated benefits, and plans are in place for students to generate NTC accounts to track progress toward NTC:

- Yes
- No

3.1.b The academy plans to prepare students to meet all NAF's Program of Study requirements to achieve NAFTrack Certification. The academy provides career-themed courses that integrate with core subjects, work-based learning, and college readiness activities in each operating grade of the academy.

Select all that apply. The academy provides career-themed courses in:

- 9th grade
- 10th grade
- 11th grade
- 12th grade

3.1.c The academy facilitates career-themed integration¹⁴, a learning strategy used to integrate the academy's career theme into designated core subjects or other disciplines. An interdisciplinary project¹⁵ is the primary Project-Based Learning¹⁶ (PBL) strategy used to incorporate authentic, real-life, and career-related issues in non-academy courses.

Select all that apply. The academy facilitates career-themed integration through:

	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th	N/A
Ongoing collaboration among teachers that fosters integration for students in	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Incorporating career-themed content or skills into non-academy courses in	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Implementing for at least 10-days during the course/semester, interdisciplinary PBL activities that provide solutions to relevant career-themed issues in	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3.2 College & Career Readiness

Academy coursework with performance-based assessments and integrated project-based and work-based learning activities prepare students to be college and career ready.

Evidence

3.2.a

A four-year plan for college and career readiness (CCR) activities for grades 9-12

[CCR Event Template](#)

[CCR Calendar Template](#)

3.2.b

Academy brochure or link to school website showcasing postsecondary options

[Postsecondary Template](#)

3.2.c

Letter of support from the school or district leader detailing support of NTC

3.2.a The academy intentionally build students' college knowledge by helping them understand the postsecondary system and culture, research college options, visit college campuses, and navigate issues such as testing, applications, and financial aid.

Select all that apply. The academy provides students with assistance for:

- Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- College visits
- College preparation examinations (SAT, ACT, PSAT)
- Scholarship applications
- None of the above

3.2.b The academy students experience advanced academics by participating in Advanced Placement (AP), Cambridge, or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses and enroll in postsecondary education options through industry certifications and dual enrollment.

Select all that apply. The academy provides:

- Industry Certifications
- Dual enrollment, AP, Cambridge, or IB courses
- None of the above

3.2.c District, school, academy leaders know that NAFTrack Certification enhances students' college and career readiness. Academy leaders support the goal that all academy students achieve NAFTrack Certification.

- Yes
- No

Element 4: Work-Based Learning

4.1 Work-Based Learning Program

All academy students complete a sequenced set of work-based learning experiences that culminate with paid internships and NAFTrack Certification.

Evidence

4.1.a

Document the procedure the academy uses to collect and analyze student participation in work-based learning activities

WBL plan for each operating grade in the academy
[WBL Template v1 and v2.](#)

4.1.b

If applicable, refer to evidence provided for 4.1.a

4.1.a The academy provides a work-based learning (WBL) program for all students in each operating grade. It analyzes data to ensure equitable participation in the entire continuum of work-based learning opportunities.

Select all that apply. WBL occurs in the following grades:

- Career awareness activities: guest speakers, worksite tours, career fairs
 - Career exploration activities: informational interviews, job shadows, mock interviews
 - Career preparation activities: internships, apprenticeships
- AND
- Analyzes student data to ensure equitable participation in the entire continuum of work-based learning opportunities
 - None of the above

4.1.b Work-based learning experiences include career awareness, exploration, and preparation activities that build in sophistication, duration, and intensity culminating in internship opportunities.

Select all that apply. The academy provides:

- Guest Speakers
- Worksite Tours
- Career Fairs
- Informational Interviews
- Job Shadows
- Mock Interviews
- Mentoring
- Internships/Apprenticeships
- Other WBL activity
- None of the above

4.2 Internship Completion

The academy develops and sustains a program of high-quality paid internship experiences for all students..

Evidence

4.2.a

Document student internships

4.2.b

Academy internship coordinator's job description and schedule or an identified team member with clearly defined responsibilities

If applicable, refer to evidence provided for 1.4.a

4.2.a The academy students complete an internship of at least 80+ hours or two 40+ hours paid, compensated, or volunteer internship experience before graduation. At least 20% of last year's graduating seniors completed an internship.

- Yes
- No

4.2.b The academy designates a team member to manage internships or identifies a team with clearly defined responsibilities for managing all aspects of the internship program.

- Yes
- No

Glossary/Definitions

Definition

- 1 **Academy team:** An academy team is a multi-disciplinary group with representation from the district, school administration, academy, parents, students, civic, business, and postsecondary communities. At least three or more members meet regularly to discuss career-themed integration along with work and project-based learning. The team conducts progress monitoring by collecting and examining school and academy data, as well as participating in regular professional learning related to career-themed curriculum and college and career readiness.

- 2 **An open, choice-based enrollment process:** NAF academies facilitate access, equity, inclusion, and diversity for underserved students and accept students based on their interests rather than academic or disciplinary records. Students who can take the academy's program of study courses are eligible to enroll in the academy regardless of academic history. Academy selection may be subject to a lottery system that randomly selects academy students.

- 3 **Threshold:** NAF's Academy Assessment establishes thresholds or minimum performance requirements on selected strategic actions in the Academy Assessment. Academies must meet the designated thresholds as prerequisites for achieving a Model or Model- Distinguished academy level.

- 4 **Personalized environment includes:**
 - Connecting learning to students' interests, abilities, and aspirations;
 - Implementing academy structures that encourage peer relationships and develop a sense of belonging among academy members;
 - Developing personalized academy learning plans that the academy team regularly reviews to assess student progress towards college and career goals;
 - Engaging a network of teachers, family, mentors, and advisory board members who connect with academy students to provide support for accomplishing their college and career goals

- 5 **College and career readiness include:**
 - Building students' knowledge of college through an awareness of the postsecondary system and culture and completing credit-bearing college courses that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials or certificates
 - Engaging students in work-based learning opportunities throughout high school, including career awareness, exploration, and preparation activities that culminate in paid internships and to develop students' competency in 21st-century employability skills for entry into the workforce

- 6 **NAF Next (NN):** NAF's annual professional learning conference brings together teachers, academy leaders, counselors, advisory board members, business partners, and district administrators to address some of the most significant challenges facing education and the economy.

- 7 **Career awareness activities:** The initial set of events in NAF's Work-based learning continuum that:
 - Expose students to a variety of careers by connecting them in-person or virtually with business and industry partners through career fairs and classroom presentations;
 - Allow students to begin identifying areas of career interest;
 - Encourage students to observe, receive information, and ask questions to acquire career knowledge and awareness;
 - Relate school to the world of work by connecting careers to the academy's career theme and postsecondary education;
 - Can include career-themed projects that emulate workplace projects

- 8 **Career exploration activities:** The secondary set of events in NAF's Work-based learning continuum that:
 - Provide direct, two-way interactions, in-person or virtually, with business and industry partners;
 - Expose students to the range of occupations within the industry or career theme and the skills and education required for related jobs;
 - Offer students opportunities to see the relevance of core and career-themed content to the world of work;
 - Assist students in identifying their interests and strengths, in refining their areas of interest or identify different interests, and in completing more in-depth career exploration;
 - Provide students with the basic skills training necessary for paid internships

- 9 **Career preparation activities:** The final set of events in NAF's Work-based learning continuum that:
 - Provide one-on-one, two-way interactions with business and industry partners over an extended period to allow for assessment of student's performance relative to industry standards;
 - Allow students to learn through practical experiences in the workplace to build job-related competencies;
 - Empower students to produce valuable work that furthers the partner organization's goals

Glossary/Definitions

Definition

- 10 Civic community:** Advisory board members engage with the civic community by attending or convening meetings, forums, and events to network and build relationships, and they volunteer to coordinate fundraisers that promote workforce engagement of high school students through internship and employment opportunities for all students in the community.
- 11 Program of Study:** NAF's Program of Study maximizes students' opportunities for achieving NAFTrack Certification by capitalizing on multiple options to pursue career pathways. It aligns with the US Department of Education's 16 career clusters and their associated career pathways. NAF academies apply for NAFTrack Certification approval for dual enrollment/early college and state-approved career-cluster courses to meet the curricular requirements of NAFTrack Certification.
- 12 Performance-Based Assessment (PBA):** PBA measures students' ability to apply the knowledge and skills learned from a unit or units of study, challenges students to use their higher-order thinking skills, and requires the creation of a product or completion of a process. Examples of PBA include NAF's culminating projects & capstone projects.
- 13 NAFTrack Certification (NTC):** NTC is NAF's employability credential that serves as NAF's seal of college and career readiness. NAF measures college and career readiness using a multi-method approach that requires academy students to complete:
- Four (4) semester courses that include any combination of NAF courses and NTC approved career-cluster course equivalents
 - Required performance-based assessment (PBA)
 - Qualifying paid internship
 - Graduation from high school
- 14 Career-Themed Integration:** An instructional strategy that is also called interdisciplinary (thematic) teaching. Teachers of other disciplines are intentional about using examples of real situations, information, articles, and skills related to the academy career theme. Students apply skills and knowledge from both their career-themed and core classes in the context of each class to answer questions or solve problems. The components of career-themed integration include:
- Teacher collaboration with at least one core subject teacher;
 - Creation of projects that are the primary focus of the career-themed integration;
 - Research that goes beyond the textbook;
 - Relationships between career-themed concepts and core content knowledge
- 15 Interdisciplinary Projects:** Interdisciplinary projects assist students in making connections across the career theme, core subjects, or other disciplines. Teachers of core courses or other subjects permit academy students to pursue real-life questions or problems related to their career theme in their classes. They encourage students to look for relationships and make connections with their disciplines. Exemplars:
- The English teachers assist academy students with planning and writing their career-themed research papers for culminating or capstone projects.
 - The mathematics teachers facilitate the aggregation, graphical display, and analysis of data for career-themed research papers.
 - The computer teachers support academy students in creating graphics for their product displays or PowerPoint presentations.
 - The engineering or graphics teachers help with the design and construction of the research products.
- 16 Project-Based Learning (PBL):** PBL is a learning strategy that engages students by focusing on complex questions or problems and investigating solutions to problems over an extended period that often results in presentations or products.