

Introduction

The Fast Track Assessment is a self-evaluation used by the [Academy Design Team \(ADT\)](#)¹ to assess current practices in an existing career academy that is applying to become a NAF academy. 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 ADT to prepare for completing the official online assessment.](#)

Design of the Fast Track Assessment

The Fast Track Assessment has four elements that makeup NAF's educational design. Each element has two to five standards that elaborate on essential aspects of NAF's educational design. The standards have strategic actions that describe the required academy practices to support each standard. Below is an example of an educational design element with its associated standard and strategic action:

- **Element** » Academy Development & Structure
- **Standard** » 1.4 Academy Leadership - Academy leadership is broad-based, strategic, and sufficiently staffed.
- **Strategic Action** » 1.4.b The academy has a designated staff member to oversee college and career readiness activities.
- **Selection** » Yes/No

Definitions


For the online Fast Track Assessment, click on underlined [words](#) or [phrases](#) with superscripts (word ^{number}) to display their definitions. Review the definitions listed in the glossary at the end of the sample Fast Track Assessment.

Completing the Fast Track Assessment

The ADT members (academy lead, 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 ADT for their review.
2. Coordinate a meeting to review the assessment and 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 4-9.
4. Pay the invoice for the Fast Track program fee.
5. Schedule the Fast Track validation meeting with the portfolio manager.
6. Plan to complete items 7-9 below before the validation meeting.
7. 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 Fast Track validation meeting.
8. Recommendation: Use the [Fast Track Evidence Checklist](#) as a resource for required evidence templates and other supporting documents.
9. Confirm academy readiness for the validation meeting by scheduling a virtual session with the portfolio manager to review the uploaded evidence.

Evidence

Click on the  icon to upload evidence that supports a strategic action selection. The icon is only visible in the online Fast Track Assessment adjacent to each strategic action, and there are also links to 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 in Academy Support Hub.

Scoring

The review team participates in the Fast Track validation meeting to verify that the academy evidence validates 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.

Academy Development & Structure

1.1 Student Recruitment & Enrollment

The academy supports open choice 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 Provide a link to district policy or an academy application/brochure describing an open choice enrollment process.

- [Brochure Template](#)

Evidence

1.1.b Provide the academy enrollment for each operating grade.

- [Academy Enrollment Template](#)

1.1.a All students are eligible to enroll in the academy, and open choice enrollment² results in academy membership that reflects the school's demographics.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

1.1.b Recruitment efforts increase 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.

The academy program is:

- ☐ Fully operational (Students enrolled in grades 11-12 for a 2-year program, grades 10-12 for a 3-year program, and grades 9-12 for a 4-year program)
☐ Not fully operational

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 Learning Environment

The academy creates a personalized learning environment that is inclusive, promotes student agency, and encourages positive relationships to enhance student well-being and achievement.

Evidence

1.2.a Provide an example of how the academy fosters a personalized learning environment from each checked selection.

- [Personalized Learning Environment Template](#)

1.2.a The academy fosters a personalized learning environment⁴ that promotes student success and attainment of college and career goals. The academy team (select all that apply):

- ☐ Connects learning to students' interests, abilities, and aspirations.
☐ Implements academy structures to 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 the ongoing review of academy data to enhance academy development and benchmark student progress.

Evidence

1.3.a Provide an example of how the academy uses data to inform academy practices from each checked selection.

- [Data Review Process Template](#)

Evidence

1.3.b Provide an action plan with goals and strategic actions or a link to the district action plan related to academy development.

- [Action Plan Template](#)

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

The academy reviews (select all that apply):

- ☐ Academy-level data
- ☐ Student-level data
- ☐ Disaggregated data to identify achievement gaps among student groups
- ☐ None of the above

1.3.b The academy uses data from various sources to develop an action plan for continuous academy development.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

1.4 Academy Leadership

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

Evidence

1.4.a Provide the names and roles of staff responsible for managing the academy program.

- [Team Roster Template](#)

Evidence

1.4.b Provide the names and roles of staff who oversee college and career readiness activities.

If applicable, refer to 1.4.a evidence

Evidence

1.4.c Provide an example of how academy leaders share college and career readiness best practices from each checked selection.

- [Ambassadors' Template](#)

1.4.a The academy has a designated academy lead with release time or an academy team with clearly defined responsibilities for managing all aspects of the academy program.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

1.4.b The academy has a designated staff member to oversee college and career readiness⁵ activities.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

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 share college and career readiness best practices with other leaders.

School leaders meet NAF's expectations by (select all that apply):

- ☐ Completing data requests on time.
- ☐ Using social media to promote academy practices and events.
- ☐ Sharing college and career readiness best practices with other leaders at local, state, or national levels.
- ☐ 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 Provide a schedule of common planning or agenda/minutes from the academy team's most recent collaborative planning session.

- [Meeting Agenda Template](#)

Evidence

1.5.b Provide a list of professional learning events that include the date and attendees from each checked selection.

- [Professional Learning Template](#)

1.5.a The academy team (of more than three members) participates in common planning or other formal collaboration time to prepare for career-themed integration⁶, student support systems or 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, including NAF Next⁷.

The academy team attended (select all that apply):

- ☐ NAF Next
- ☐ NAF-sponsored professional learning sessions (Webinars, Advisory Board Convenings, Professional Learning modules, or other Virtual Training)
- ☐ Other CTE training/professional learning sessions
- ☐ None of the above

Advisory Board

2.1 Advisory Board Membership & Operations

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

Evidence

2.1.a Provide advisory board roster with roles and responsibilities.

- [AB Overview](#)
- [Partner Interest Survey](#)

2.1.a Advisory board membership includes at least ten (10) members representing business, industry, government, community, and postsecondary education leaders.

The advisory board includes (select all that apply):

- ☐ At least ten (10) members.
- ☐ At least 80% business, industry, government, community, and postsecondary education leaders OR the academy pathway is within the Education Career Cluster.
- ☐ None of the above

Evidence

2.1.b Provide an updated annual strategic plan and current by-laws.

- [AB Strategic Plan Template](#)
- [AB By-laws Template](#)

2.1.b The advisory board created 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.

The advisory board developed (select all that apply):

- ☐ Strategic Plan
- ☐ By-laws
- ☐ None of the above

2.2 Support for Learning

Advisory board members actively support work-based learning⁸ activities, the program of study, and academy program design.

Evidence

2.2.a Provide an example of how the advisory board supports student learning from each checked selection.

- [AB Support for Learning Template](#)

2.2.a Advisory board members actively support student learning focusing on career awareness, exploration, and preparation activities.

The advisory board supports student learning by (select all that apply):

- ☐ Securing and coordinating work-based learning experiences outlined in the academy's work-based learning calendar.
- ☐ Participating in virtual or in-person classroom activities or projects.
- ☐ Collaborating with academy leaders to inform and update the career-pathway curriculum.
- ☐ Providing 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 by developing high school career academies.

Evidence

2.3.a Provide an example of how the advisory board promotes the academy in alignment with workforce development needs from each checked selection.

- [AB Activities Template](#)

2.3.a The advisory board works to engage the civic community⁹ to enact policies that promote and sustain academies as an integral part of the local workforce and economic development systems.

The advisory board members (select all that apply):

- ☐ 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, or scholarship funds.
- ☐ Recruit other business partners and postsecondary institutions to support WBL and college and career readiness.
- ☐ None of the above

Curriculum & Instruction

3.1 Program of Study

The academy's program of study offers approved NAFTrack Certified courses that require authentic project learning experiences¹⁰ and a competency-based assessment¹¹. Academy course content includes authentic projects, work-based learning activities, and opportunities to build college and career-readiness competencies.

Evidence

3.1.a Provide the academy's Program of Study courses.

- [Program of Study Template](#)

Evidence

3.1.b Provide virtual meeting dates or agenda that includes a NTC overview.

- [NAF's Program of Study Flyer](#)

Evidence

3.1.c Provide the academy's career-themed integration plan using authentic project learning experiences.

- [Authentic Project Learning Template](#)

3.1.a The academy has an approved Program of Study¹² within the designated career pathways in [NAF's Future Ready Learning](#) or other NAFTrack Certified career-pathway courses.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

3.1.b 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.c The academy facilitates career-themed integration using authentic project learning experiences with industry-professional guidance to solve real-world challenges.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

3.2 College & Career Readiness

Academy coursework with competency-based assessments, authentic project learning experiences, and work-based learning activities prepare students to be college and career ready.

Evidence

3.2.a Provide academy's college & career readiness events that build students' college knowledge from each checked selection.

- [College & Career Readiness Template](#)

Evidence

3.2.b Provide academy's advanced academics and postsecondary education options from each checked selection.

- [Advanced & Postsecondary Template](#)

Evidence

3.2.c Provide a letter of support from the district or school leader detailing support of NAFTrack Certification in the absence of a fully executed district agreement.

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.

The academy provides students with assistance for (select all that apply):

- ☐ Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- ☐ College visits/fairs
- ☐ 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. The academy provides (select all that apply):

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

3.2.c The district/school leaders know that NAFTrack Certification enhances students' college and career readiness and commit to ensuring that all seniors achieve NAFTrack Certification.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Work-Based Learning

4.1 Work-Based Learning Program

All academy students complete a sequence of work-based learning experiences that culminate with career preparation activities and NAFTrack Certification.

Evidence

4.1.a Provide the academy's process to collect and analyze individual student participation in work-based learning activities.

- [WBL Tracker Template](#)

4.1.a The academy ensures that students equitably participate in the entire continuum of work-based learning opportunities, including career awareness¹⁴, exploration¹⁵, and preparation¹⁶.

The academy collects data on individual student participation in (select all that apply):

- ☐ Career awareness activities: guest speakers, worksite tours, career fairs
- ☐ Career exploration activities: informational interviews, skill workshops, resume coaching/review sessions, mentoring, job shadows, mock interviews
- ☐ Career preparation activities: internships, clinicals, apprenticeships, mentored industry projects

AND

- ☐ Analyzes student data to ensure equitable participation in the entire continuum of work-based learning opportunities.
- ☐ None of the above

Evidence

4.1.b Provide the work-based learning plan for each operating grade in the academy.

- [WBL Plan and Calendar Template](#)

4.1.b The academy's work-based learning experiences include career awareness, exploration, and preparation activities that build in sophistication, duration, and intensity.

The academy provides (select all that apply):

- ☐ Guest Speakers
- ☐ Worksite Tours
- ☐ Career Fairs
- ☐ Informational Interviews
- ☐ Job Shadows
- ☐ Resume Coaching/Review
- ☐ Mock Interviews
- ☐ Mentoring
- ☐ Mentored Industry Projects
- ☐ Clinicals
- ☐ Internships/Apprenticeships
- ☐ None of the above

4.2 Internship Completion

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

Evidence

4.2.a Provide a list of academy internships detailing at least 20% of graduating seniors completing an internship.

4.2.a The academy students complete an internship of at least 80+ hours or two 40+ hours paid, compensated, or volunteer internship experience¹⁷ before graduation. At least 20% of last year's graduating seniors completed an internship.

☐ Yes

☐ No

Evidence

4.2.b Provide the names and roles of staff who oversee WBL program and internships.

If applicable, refer to 1.4.a evidence

4.2.b The academy designates a team member who learns to manage internships in NAFTrack Certification.

☐ Yes

☐ No

Glossary/Definitions

- 1 **Academy Design Team (ADT):** The ADT is created at the start of Admissions to focus on designing a NAF academy based on the four elements of the NAF educational design. This representative stakeholder team includes school and academy staff, district and school administration, parents, students, and business and postsecondary education partners. After completing the Admissions process, the ADT transitions to the academy team in the launch year.
- 2 **Open choice enrollment:** NAF academies facilitate diversity, equity, inclusion, and access by accepting students based on student agency rather than educational records. Students, who can accommodate the academy's program of study, are eligible to enroll in the academy regardless of academic or disciplinary 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 one of the prerequisites for achieving a Model or Distinguished academy level.
- 4 **Personalized-learning 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 **Career-Themed Integration:** An instructional strategy that is also called interdisciplinary (thematic) teaching. Teachers of other disciplines intentionally use real situations, information, articles, and skills related to the academy career theme. Students use 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 integration.
 - Research that goes beyond the textbook.
 - Relationships between career-themed concepts and core content knowledge.
- 7 **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.
- 8 **Work-Based Learning:** Work-based learning is an educational approach designed to help students connect what they learn in the classroom with what is expected in the workplace by integrating learning with real-world applications in partnership with industry professionals.
- 9 **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.

Glossary/Definitions

- 10 Authentic Project Learning Experiences:** Authentic project learning experiences promote students' transfer of their expertise as they solve real-world challenges in their career industry or community. Students exercise agency in selecting their passion projects to demonstrate content knowledge and career-readiness competencies by developing innovative solutions with industry-professional guidance to design and produce original, relevant, and community-connected outcomes.
- 11 Competency-Based Assessment:** A competency-based assessment is a way to measure industry skillsets or competencies. To prove their competency, students must demonstrate the ability to transfer their content knowledge and career readiness competencies to solve real-world challenges using the benchmarks provided by industry-defined standards.
- 12 Program of Study:** NAF's Program of Study maximizes students' opportunities for achieving NAFTrack Certification by capitalizing on multiple options to pursue career pathways. In addition to NAF's five career themes, the NAF Program of Study aligns with the US Department of Education's 16 career clusters and 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.
- 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) semesters including any combination of NAF and NTC-approved career-cluster course equivalents
 - Required competency-based assessment such as an authentic project learning experience
 - A qualifying internship
 - Graduation from high school to achieve certification
- 14 Career awareness activities:** Students build career awareness and begin to identify areas of interest. Students' primary role is to observe, receive information, and ask questions to acquire knowledge.
- 15 Career exploration activities:** Students gain a deeper understanding of the workplace. Students play an active role in the experience and apply knowledge in interactions with adults.
- 16 Career preparation activities:** Students apply learning through practical experiences with industry professionals. Students engage in activities that have connection and value beyond the classroom and can be evaluated by professionals.
- 17 Internship requirements for NAFTrack Certification:** NAFTrack Certification internship requirements for 2022-23 include approved Alternative Internship Experiences that meet the following requirements:
 - 80+ hours (or two 40-hour experiences)
 - Paid, compensated, or volunteer
 - Direct supervision by an accountable adult who is not the student's teacher
 - Satisfactory internship assessment completed by the student's supervisor (not teacher, parent, or guardian)