AIR’s College and Career Readiness team of researchers, content experts, evaluators, former district administrators, and consultants understands the best practices and policies that support student achievement. We design data tools to identify students who are falling behind and create opportunities for districts to dig deep and understand the interventions that will work best for their students. We evaluate the effectiveness of programs and suggest improvements.

Our Clients

AIR’s College and Career Readiness team has worked with clients across the country to refine their practices so that students graduate on time and ready to succeed in college and careers. A partial list of our clients includes:

- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- California Department of Education, Middle Schools Improvement Office
- Change the Equation
- Chicago Public Schools, Department of Career and Technical Education
- College Summit
- Cristo Rey Network
- Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
- Ohio Department of Education
- Texas Education Agency
- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- U.S. Department of Education
- U.S. News and World Report
- Washington Local School District, Ohio

AIR currently operates the College and Career Readiness and Success Center. The federally funded center, established in 2012, works with states to better inform, align, and support their efforts to ensure that all students graduate from high school ready for college and careers.

American Institutes for Research

American Institutes for Research (AIR) conducts and applies the best behavioral and social science research and evaluation toward improving people’s lives, with a special emphasis on the disadvantaged. A not-for-profit organization, AIR is a national leader in teaching and learning improvement, providing research, assessment, evaluation, and technical assistance to ensure that all students have access to a high-quality, effective education.
The path to college and successful careers begins before students enter kindergarten and continues past high school. Students need the right support at each critical stage to build their skills and keep on track. Educators at the state, district, and school levels need actionable information to support students as they progress through the education system.

American Institutes for Research (AIR) works with clients to refine the decisions and target the actions that create the conditions for students to succeed. We lead our clients to a clear-eyed understanding of what will work to prepare their students for college and careers.

Our services include:
- Research and validation of the indicators correlated with school achievement, high school graduation, and college success
- Evaluation of program design and impact
- Data collection and analysis
- Management, analysis, and modeling of large data sets
- Development of data-collection tools
- Design and implementation of early warning systems for PK–20 that capture information on key predictors of high school graduation and readiness for college and careers
- Alignment of Common Core Standards with career and technical education
- Consultation and assistance in designing school and student interventions
- Facilitation of collaborations and coalitions to foster and support a college-going culture
- Professional development in utilizing data at the state, district, and school levels

Our College and Career Readiness team embodies the consultative approach:
- Identify the issue. We discuss the needs with the client and clarify the problem. We brainstorm possible approaches.
- Review the research and analyze the data. We provide insights about the data and present information on best or promising practices. We review the research and investigate the local context to ensure that we consider any policies that will impact program design and implementation.
- Connect with our clients. We take a “big tent” approach and engage individuals and organizations that will be affected by the design and outcomes in the process. This step is one of the most important we take to ensure that the results are actionable and will lead to real change.
- Check back in. We discuss our progress and determine, with our client, if our original assessment of the need is still correct and if our response is on target.
- Develop the action plan. We identify our areas of focus and create an approach to deliver our final products.

California Early Warning and Intervention System (EWIS)
Working with the California Department of Education, AIR created a community of practice among 20 school districts implementing EWIS. Districts shared their successes and challenges in using the indicator system to improve student achievement. The professional development process established by AIR, as part of a larger collaborative effort to implement a comprehensive early warning system, created the space for district staff to discuss the best practices for preventing students from dropping out. Districts focused on making the data actionable. Other districts are now including ongoing professional development and support drawn from the AIR model as they implement early warning systems.

St. Louis Regional College Access Pipeline (CAP)
Education and civic leaders in the greater St. Louis region set an ambitious goal: by 2020, 50 percent of all students will have a postsecondary degree. AIR led the strategic planning process that engaged more than 100 community members in creating actionable steps to build a college-going culture in all of the region’s high schools, to expand and coordinate the delivery of services, and to improve college persistence. The result is St. Louis Graduates—an effort that provides tangible resources to parents and students, community residents, and educators to increase the number of students who graduate with postsecondary degrees.

Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention (TNGTI)
Program Evaluation
The program was created to ease the transition of at-risk students into high school and increase the likelihood that they would graduate on time and be prepared for college and careers. Targeted students attended a summer program prior to their freshman year and were connected to interventions as needed during the school year. AIR conducted a formative and summative evaluation of the initiative. AIR’s case studies provided in-depth pictures of program implementation, and the multilevel propensity score matching approach found that the program significantly increased the English and mathematics assessment scores of participating students.