

Quality Coaching is Informed by Data and Evidence

Principle 5

- Principle 1: Centered on education-to-career-outcomes
- Principle 2: Driven by student agency
- Principle 3: Foundation and universal
- Principle 4: Rooted in relationships
- Principle 5: Informed by data and evidence



Quality Coaching emphasizes leveraging data to provide personalized and timely support, embedding evidence-based practices into programming, and measuring outcomes while continually improving through research and evaluation.

In practice, this approach promotes the continuous evaluation of ongoing programs and practices that support student communities. By systematically incorporating diverse metrics and student feedback, it facilitates the improvement of programming, the validation of existing practices, the documentation of promising innovations, and the development of an evidence base to support scalability.

In the evidence review, principle five was treated as a cross-cutting dimension. Because it centers on the evaluation of impact and outcomes and the development of an evidence base, this line of work is not examined in isolation; rather, it is integrated across the other four guiding principles and their

associated categories. The other four principles, by contrast, focus on what is done in practice, including program design, delivery, and the cultivation of relationships.

Across the four principles, the research consistently demonstrates that early, proactive, and personalized career guidance – particularly when embedded within academic experiences and grounded in strong relationships – can improve students' confidence, clarity, and readiness for career pathways. These approaches are most effective when they are developmentally aligned, culturally responsive, and connected to clear labor market information and industry engagement. Evidence also indicates that the greatest benefits accrue to students with more limited access to social capital and networks.

Opportunities to Strengthen and Extend the Evidence Base¹

Extending insights on long-term outcomes. Existing research demonstrates that engagement with labor market information helps students understand labor market trends, career pathways, and the relationship between education and employment outcomes, supporting more informed academic and career decision-making. Evidence also demonstrates meaningful short-term gains, such as increased confidence and self-efficacy in career competencies related to exploration, navigation, and choice. Building on these strong early outcomes, there is an opportunity to examine further how these interventions translate into longer-term impacts, including persistence, degree completion, career trajectories, earnings, job satisfaction, and broader economic mobility after college. Continued research also can deepen understanding of how engagement with workforce data supports diverse student populations and how it most effectively helps students connect their majors to viable and meaningful career pathways.

Refining effective delivery approaches and strengthening understanding of program design. A growing body of practice offers a range of promising approaches across advising formats (e.g., one-on-one advising, group seminars, and digital tools), coaching models, and content. Continued research can help further clarify which combinations, frequencies, and components are most effective, strengthening the impact of already valuable interventions and creating an opportunity to understand better which approaches work best for different students and contexts. Strengthening this evidence base would help practitioners tailor supports more precisely, improve student outcomes, and ensure resources are used in the most impactful way.

Expanding insights across diverse populations and contexts. There is a key opportunity to understand better how variations in coaching interventions support different

student populations and how cultural, geographic, and institutional contexts can inform more responsive and effective implementation.

Broadening the evidence across disciplines and career pathways. While much of the existing research has focused on STEM and technical fields, expanding the evidence base to include the arts, humanities, and social sciences will help ensure that all students benefit from tailored and relevant career development supports.

Advancing systems-level learning and scalable solutions. Promising work is already underway across K–12, postsecondary, and workforce systems, demonstrating the potential of coordinated approaches to support student success. Continued research can illuminate further how these efforts drive outcomes and how comprehensive models can be scaled effectively, sustainably, and cost-efficiently, ensuring they can be maintained and adapted across diverse contexts over time. There also is merit in documenting and elevating effective practices through case studies and applied research, enabling institutions and systems to learn from one another and adapt proven approaches across contexts.

Clarifying coaching's unique contribution. Coaching often is embedded within broader student support models that also include advising, workshops, and digital tools. While these bundled approaches show strong promise, further research can help isolate and better understand coaching's independent impact. Deepening this evidence would help institutions design more effective support models, make more informed investment decisions, and ensure coaching is deployed in ways that maximize student success and long-term outcomes.

¹ [A group of national experts developed the five Principles for Quality Education-to-Career Guidance, which guided this systematic literature review.](#) The review examined U.S.-based peer-reviewed and high-quality grey literature published between 2016 and 2025, including studies, policy briefs, and reports focused on high school and higher education populations. Sources were selected using replicable inclusion criteria to ensure relevance to education-to-career coaching and guidance practices.