What is Illinois Pathways?
Illinois Pathways was launched in 2012 in response to a growing awareness that education and job opportunities are not adequately aligned. The mission of Illinois Pathways is to empower and support all Illinois learners to explore, progress through, and transition from high quality, structured career pathway systems into rewarding careers in critical growth areas for Illinois’ future competitiveness.

Illinois Pathways is a key strategy supporting the Illinois P-20 Council’s goal to increase the proportion of adults in Illinois with high-quality degrees and credentials to 60% by the year 2025.

What is a career pathway system?
A career pathway system is a series of connected education, training, and support strategies that enable individuals to secure industry relevant credentials and degrees and transition into a rewarding career within a targeted occupational area.

Career pathway systems are grounded in 5 interconnected principles:
1) Rigorous academics that prepare students for success in community colleges and universities, as well as in apprenticeships and other postsecondary programs.
2) Career-based learning that delivers concrete knowledge and skills through a cluster of three or more courses, emphasizing the practical application of academic learning and preparing students for high-skill, high-wage employment.
3) Professional learning via job shadowing, apprenticeships, internships, and professional skill-building opportunities.
4) Support services that include counseling and supplemental instruction in reading, writing, and math to help students master the rigorous academic and professional skills necessary for success in college and career.
5) Stackable, industry relevant credentials and degrees.

How is Illinois Pathways achieving its mission?
Illinois Pathways relies on two complimentary strategies in furtherance of its mission:
1) **Supporting Learners Through High Quality Career Pathway Systems:** Empowering and supporting Illinois students to explore and pursue their academic and career goals through participation in local career pathway systems in critical growth areas
2) **Redefining the Employer-Education Relationship:** Launching new statewide partnerships and redefining Illinois education and workforce governance to fundamentally redefine how employers and education entities partner in support of career pathway systems.
Illinois Pathways is organized around a sector-based approach. The State has identified 8 specific areas for State-level investments and supports, based on economic development objectives, labor market information, and strength of partnerships and resources in those areas. However, local career exploration and support systems will (and should) provide students with opportunities in other sectors.

Illinois Pathways and the STEM Learning Exchanges

As part of its strategy to support local career pathway systems development with participation and input from community stakeholders, Illinois Pathways has launched new statewide partnerships (between schools, industry, state government, and non-profits) known as STEM Learning Exchanges that better coordinate investments, resources, and planning in a particular area. This strategy allows students and teachers to take advantage of regional and statewide resources for a particular career path. The areas of focus for the Learning Exchanges are:

Delivering Resources and Supports for Local Career Pathway Systems:
1. Creating opportunities and resources for e-Learning curriculum
2. Expanding access to classroom and laboratory space, equipment, and other educational resources
3. Supporting student organizations and their major activities, including internships, competitions, and community projects that build leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills and provide professional and peer support networks.
4. Providing professional development resources for teachers and administrators, including STEM externships and support for web-based networks.
5. Providing career development and outreach resources to expand awareness about STEM careers
6. Providing tools and resources to help students, parents, and schools create a personalized education plan for each student.

Expanding Quality Work-Based Learning Opportunities
7. Providing internships and other work-based learning opportunities that connect students with adult mentors
8. Sponsoring challenges and resources for students to work together in collaborative teams to address real-world, interdisciplinary problems.

Manage System Design
9. Creating a review process for the performance of STEM career pathways systems.

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