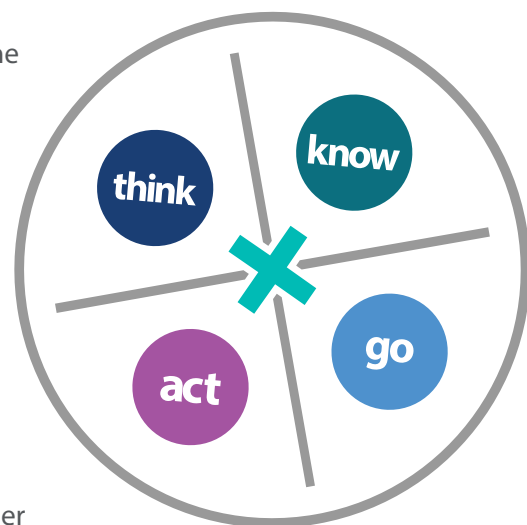


Many educators, families, and students are taking a hard look at the current educational system and finding there is a significant gap between what **IS** and what **OUGHT TO BE** if we want our students to be prepared for the future. *The Four Keys to College and Career Readiness* provide a framework and common language to use as we work to close this gap by developing systems that support all students.

The Four Keys to College and Career Readiness

Based on over a decade of research and 20 years of experience in the public education system, our founder, Dr. David Conley developed the Four Keys so students, families, and educators can identify and prioritize the skills that are needed to be successful after high school. Let's take a few minutes to walk through the Four Keys framework: **THINK**, **KNOW**, **ACT**, and **GO**.



First, let's take a look at **"THINK"**

– The classic way of describing this is critical thinking and inquiry. That said, we also consider ideation, creativity, innovation, and design thinking. In addition, we include communication skills in **THINK**, such as the ability to communicate effectively using a variety of methods and adapting communication to different audiences. Ultimately, Think is about solving problems and addressing issues through versatile and intentional thinking patterns. Every school talks about these being important skills, but rarely share common language for how to describe them.

"KNOW" is classic content knowledge and skills such as reading, writing, and math. These are the skills that the "system" has deemed **SO** important that if you are a student with a disability or an English Language Learner, you are often required to take extra classes in math and English, which can negatively impact your ability to engage in other curricular options that cater to developing the **THINK**, **ACT**, and **GO** skills.

It's our opinion that an over-inflated value of **KNOW** skills is part of structural racism that masks the brilliance found in communities where English is not the first or predominant language.

Additionally, it's our firm belief that this narrow focus is the driver behind students with disabilities consistently having the lowest achievement rates including graduation across the country. The system tends to fixate on students' challenges and weaknesses to the exclusion of playing to their strengths.



“ACT” can best be expressed as ownership of learning—the ability to be self directed and goal oriented. It also includes the ability to collaborate as well as some classic academic behavioral skills such as note taking and time management.

In Conley’s original work, **“GO”** was all about privileged knowledge – the fact that our country’s postsecondary education system is the single most complex system in the world. While this is still part of **GO**, it has expanded to include elements of student agency– self awareness, self knowledge, and an understanding of who you are in the context of the world around you, including your family and your community. Because of this we include leadership skills, advocacy skills, self-care and healthy habits as well as skills like kindness and empathy in the **GO** category.

To prepare students to be lifelong learners, they need the ability to

think deeply about what they are doing
know contextually why they learn
act purposefully to achieve their goals
go successfully through life’s transitions

Communities who apply this framework develop environments in which **ALL** students are prepared to succeed beyond high school. Using the Four Keys as a lens allows school and district leaders to examine existing efforts, resources, initiatives, and programs to give balance to their approach for supporting and preparing all students to become lifelong learners.