Intrinsic’s EPIC model supports students in cultivating their strengths and interests and building critical habits and skills to enable them to be successful in school and life.

**OVERVIEW**

The EPIC model prepares students for postsecondary success and motivates them to be change agents by focusing on areas of learning beyond academics. The model consists of five integrated components designed to support students in building critical postsecondary habits and skills: advisory, Choice Day (C Day), postsecondary seminar & counseling, exploration experiences, and student-led conferences (SLCs).

EPIC is implemented in Intrinsic’s two Chicago campuses serving 1800+ students, where they outperform district and state peers in college readiness as measured by early college coursework, postsecondary enrollment, and graduation rate. Intrinsic offers school visits and a resource toolkit to other schools interested in implementing the EPIC model.
What Makes This Model Innovative?

Active Self-Direction
Students take ownership over aligning their learning experiences with their personal goals and needs. They identify their interests, and how to link those interests with a postsecondary pathway. They build and practice postsecondary skills and habits like self-advocacy and agency.

Affirmation of Self & Others
Students explore a variety of interests to discover their passions and develop a strong identity. Students make connections between their experiences, strengths, and interests to set goals and choose a postsecondary pathway.

Customization
Students pursue academic support and enrichment options customized to their unique interests, needs, and goals. Staff work with students to ensure they have a strong postsecondary plan that is aligned to each individual student’s strengths and passions.

DESIGN

Goals
The EPIC model is designed to help students build agency mindsets, habits, and behaviors and prepare them for success in college, career, and life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empathy</th>
<th>Understand the perspectives of others, build inclusive communities, and act in kindness.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perseverance</td>
<td>Set and pursue goals proactively, adapt and build resilience in the face of obstacles, and become independent.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Analyze and take ownership of one's life story and discover and work towards a greater purpose.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curiosity</td>
<td>Seek to continuously learn about the world and be cognizant of the limitations of one's own perspective and experience.</td>
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Learner Experience
The EPIC model consists of five integrated components—advisory, C Day, postsecondary seminar & counseling, exploration experiences, and SLCs—designed to support students in building critical postsecondary habits and skills.

Advisory
Advisory provides a strong foundation for the EPIC model and serves two main purposes:
1. Community and relationship building
2. Goal setting and reflection.

Advisories consist of small single-gender groups of students who meet together daily with an advisor. Students engage in Circle and other activities to build community and practice reflection and mindfulness. Through these activities, they build strong relationships with their advisor and peers and foster a sense of belonging.

Students also receive coaching and support on achieving their goals. With peers, as well as with the advisor, students reflect on progress, identify strategies for overcoming obstacles, and determine how to select resources and experiences (e.g., on C Day) that will help them advance their goals. Finally, students prepare for SLCs and engage in additional reflection opportunities to build a deeper sense of self and help determine their future plans.

Exploration Experiences
College visits, job shadow days, internships, professional brown bag lunches, and networking events help to open student minds to possibilities for the future. Providing a wide range of opportunities reinforces the model's value for multiple pathways and supports students in identifying a postsecondary plan that's right for them. ✏️ Big Map to College & Careers Opportunities may include the following:
- Visit a college
- Visit a job site of interest
- Attend a college fair
- Attend a Networking Night to identify mentors in preferred careers
- Meet with a college representative
- Job shadow a position of interest
- Obtain a job or internship in a field of interest
C Day

On C Day, students take ownership of their learning by creating their own schedules to align their learning experiences with their needs, interests, and goals. C Day, which occurs on most Wednesdays, begins and ends with advisory and is composed of four choice blocks—two academic and two “Club” (enrichment).

Academic: Students get the academic support they need and build self-advocacy by making choices to drive their learning. Students select their academic blocks on the C Day portal during morning advisory based on their individual needs and goals that week. Academic block options include

- Office Hours: Students can address a low test/quiz score or a missing assignment, as well as receive help with understanding content.
- Peer Tutoring: Students can sign up to work with a trained, peer tutor offered through the National Honor Society program.
- Study Hall/Self-Directed Learning: Students work independently and silently.
- Study Group: Students work collaboratively in small groups on assignments.
- Writing Lab: Students receive assistance with writing assignments.

Club: In clubs, students discover interests and passions, develop leadership skills, and build community. Students select their Club blocks at the start of the semester based on their interests. Club options change each semester and have included options such as culinary, photography, fashion, comics/drawing, mixed martial arts, film, coding, debate, and more. Some clubs are offered by school staff and some are offered through external partnerships.

Students also have the ability to apply and start their own club, fostering agency. To start a club, students must find a faculty sponsor and 15 students who are interested in joining their club.

Students also have the opportunity to develop leadership skills by holding a position in a club, such as president, VP, secretary, or historian. Students who hold leadership positions receive explicit leadership training.

Postsecondary Seminar & Counseling

Intrinsic recognizes and values many different pathways to postsecondary success. Their postsecondary programming is designed to support students and families in identifying potential options, making informed decisions, and taking the concrete steps necessary to successfully pursue a chosen path. Their programming helps students develop a deep sense of who they are and their emerging life’s purpose, and learn to link today’s decisions with their
postsecondary aspirations, academic planning, and short- and long-term goals.

**Postsecondary Seminar:** A dedicated class for high school students to build and practice postsecondary skills and habits and prepare for life after high school. Students will engage in lessons and discussions about the four postsecondary pillars: college exploration, career exploration, identity exploration, and academic habits. By the end of a student's senior year, he or she will be equipped to create a strong postsecondary plan aligned to his or her strengths and interests.

Early in the seminar progression, students focus on exploration, building habits, and planning for as many opportunities as possible. As students progress through the seminar sequence, they develop a deeper sense of who they are and their emerging life's purpose, and begin to narrow in on the postsecondary pathway they will pursue. Once students have identified a postsecondary plan, they engage with "checklists" aligned to their chosen pathway that include all the steps required to successfully execute their plan.

**Postsecondary Counseling:** Because choosing, pursuing, and matriculating into a strong postsecondary plan is a complex process with a "hidden curriculum" that often limits access for many students; the EPIC model provides all students and families with one-on-one counseling and support to navigate the process. This requires a low counselor-to-student ratio, allowing counselors to work closely with students and families to design an individualized post-graduation plan for each student.

Every student applies to at least nine target schools, based on the likelihood of admission, financial aid, and support for first-generation college students when needed. Each spring, counselors sit down with every senior and their family for an in-person strategy session. Students select and commit to their post-graduation plan and prepare for success by signing any promissory notes for funding, formally enrolling, and scheduling their orientation. Counselors also facilitate college workshops for students and families year-round.

**Student-Led Conferences (SLCs)**

Three times a year, students lead a discussion with their advisor and parents (or other key influences in their lives) to share their progress and discuss future plans. SLCs provide opportunities for students to practice habits and skills critical to postsecondary success, including goal-setting, reflection, growth mindset, and planning. SLCs are 100% led by students. Students prepare three key components: experience reflection, academic reflection, and goal setting. [SLC Student Interviews](#)
**Experience Reflection:** Students reflect on a recent experience to gain insight into how this experience helped them grow in the EPIC outcomes, like informing their identity, and how it might shape their future plans. Each grade level has a guiding question that anchors their reflection (i.e., “Who am I?” in grade 7, to “What does the world need?” in grade 12). The discussion supports students in building a deep sense of self and purpose and in practicing sharing their strengths to affirm their identity.

**Academic Reflection:** Students reflect on how they are progressing on their academic goals, their postsecondary plans, and other holistic goals. Students begin by sharing their report card and giving an overview of their grades and other metrics such as promotion status and service-learning hours. In their junior year, they also share their postsecondary planning progress. Their presentation is followed by a discussion with their family and advisor to push students doing well and support students who may need to problem-solve. The aim is to keep the discussion positive, affirming, and rooted in the student’s strengths.

**Goal Setting:** Based on their experience reflection, academic reflection, and previous goal progress, students create a new goal for the upcoming quarter and discuss the support needed to reach their goals.

**Supporting Structures**
The model can be integrated into a school’s existing overall model but will require some shifts to the daily schedule, adult roles, and approach to family partnerships as well as the development of a postsecondary preparation curriculum.

**Academic and agency habits must be explicitly taught and practiced for postsecondary success.**

The EPIC model uses a curricular scope and sequence that gradually builds the knowledge and skills needed for postsecondary success from 7th to 12th grade. Seminar Scope & Sequence In seminar, students deepen their identity and explore postsecondary pathways, while building critical postsecondary skills such as organization, self-advocacy, and perseverance. Students practice identifying and executing strategies to overcome barriers. Students also build awareness of resources available to them. Intrinsic’s Matriculation Checklists serve as a codified pathway with clear action steps for students to matriculate. Matriculation Checklists

Intrinsic explicitly teaches goal setting and reflection through SLCs. Students are provided with resources (template, achievement data, access metrics) to prepare for SLCs and track their progress over time. SLC Template

Students use protocols for reflecting on experiences and the essential
questions. Students practice presenting their SLC in their seminar class (high school) or advisory (middle school) and receive feedback.

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**School Community & Culture**

The school culture must be inclusive and celebrate the uniqueness of each student, including their chosen postsecondary pathway.

Intrinsic recognizes and celebrates the uniqueness of each student, from their interests and strengths to their chosen postsecondary pathway.

Students explore their unique interests and passions through C Day clubs and exploration experiences. They develop strong relationships with their advisor and advisory peers, where they celebrate their growth and accomplishments. They celebrate all postsecondary pathways, from four-year or two-year colleges, to workforce, to military & service. Intrinsic’s postsecondary vision is that 100% of Intrinsic students have a strong postsecondary plan at the time of graduation. The plan is aligned to the student’s strengths and interests, has been justified and defended with a counselor, is financially reasonable, has a clear path to employment, has articulated next steps, and is crafted in partnership with families.

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**Adult Roles, Hiring, & Learning**

All adults serve as advisors and relationship builders when implementing the EPIC model.

All teachers at Intrinsic, as well as counselors and leaders, serve as advisors to 18-20 advisees. In high school, advisors “loop” with advisees for added consistency and relationship deepening.

All Intrinsic staff receive professional development to be an advisor, support SLC discussion, and provide individualized postsecondary support. They may also opt in to additional PD support for their advisor role. Professional development is a combination of both internally created content and training through partnerships.

Intrinsic staff internalize the college access metrics (GPA and SAT) to set goals and reference them in class and conferences with students and parents. Staff are also encouraged to share their personal stories with students while being mindful of differences in context.

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**Schedule & Use of**

Student schedules must have significant dedicated time for EPIC programming.

**Advisory:** Students meet with their advisory daily for 25 minutes at the start of the day and have extended advisory time on C Day, where they meet for 55 minutes in the morning and 10 minutes in the afternoon. Outside of advisory, students meet with their advisors one-on-one approximately every
two weeks to practice reflecting and strategizing around obstacles.

**C Day:** C Day begins with an extended morning advisory for students to engage in circle lessons. Circle lessons allow students to strengthen relationships with peers and their advisor and build community. Students then move into four choice blocks (two academic and two club), then close with afternoon advisory. Students have an early dismissal day, which allows teachers to engage in whole-staff PD. In addition, teachers have additional prep time on C Day to plan for the academic blocks. Intrinsic has enabled C Day to occur on most Wednesdays by having an extended day Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, which allows them to meet all seat-time requirements.

**Postsecondary Seminar:** Intrinsic believes students need space to make sense of their unique experiences—both in and out of school—and understand how they all contribute to their identity. During this time they not only explore and reflect on their unique strengths and interests but also build and practice key postsecondary habits and skills. Intrinsic accomplishes this in their seminar course. Seminar takes 180 minutes per week and is rostered to no more than 30 students per class. Currently, Intrinsic offers seminar in 9th, 11th, and 12th grades.

**Exploration Experiences:** Some exploration experiences are planned during the school day (e.g., field trip) while others take place outside of school hours (e.g., internship). Intrinsic begins exploration experiences in 7th grade to allow students to have early exposure.
ongoing communication and partnership with advisors.

**Community Partnership:** The EPIC model requires intentional community partnerships to provide exploration and enrichment opportunities for students. Partnerships with local colleges and businesses allow students to explore pathways (college visits, job shadowing) and build a broad network of support (networking events, alumni panels). In addition, community partnerships can allow for richer options for C Day clubs. Intrinsic has partnerships with various community organizations to give students the opportunity to explore their interests and passions beyond what Intrinsic is able to offer within the school building. During the SY 2018-2019, through their partnership with After School Matters (ASM), they have provided offerings such as Culinary, DJ, Instrumental Music, Latin Dance, Mosaic Arts, and Painting & Drawing.

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**IMPLEMENTATION**

**Supports Offered**

Intrinsic offers the following supports to help you implement their model.

**School Visit**

*Free*

Intrinsic hosts 100+ in-person visits each year for colleagues in the education sector: administrators, principals, teachers, nonprofit staff, and policymakers. Intrinsic provides an overview of the model, tailored discussions, and materials.

**Learn More**

**Student-Led Conferences Website**

*Free*

Intrinsic hosts a resource hub for schools interested in adopting student-led conferences. The website is organized into four sections: 1) overview materials to explore SLCs and why they work, 2) training documents to help plan for SLC implementation, 3) the resources students (and teachers) will need to lead conferences, and 4) feedback tools to learn and improve through each round of conferences.

**Access Now**
Reach

1,800+ Students
83% Free or Reduced Lunch
19% Students with Disabilities
230+ Visitors Annually

Impact

- 100% of Intrinsic seniors have a strong postsecondary plan in place by May 1 of each year. On average, 58% enroll in four-year college, 34% enroll in two-year college, 7% enter the workforce, and 1% serve in the military. [Intrinsic, 2019]
- Intrinsic students outperform peers in the district in state in college readiness as measured by early college coursework, postsecondary enrollment, and graduation rate. [Intrinsic via Illinois State Board of Education, 2019]
- Intrinsic earned the highest possible rating on the Chicago Public Schools School Quality Rating Report for percentages of graduates earning early college or career credentials. [Chicago Public Schools, 2019]

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RESOURCES

Big Map to College & Careers
C Day Student Leadership
Student-Led Conferences
Hear directly from students

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Intrinsic's Big Map lists examples of exploration experiences students have to help them identify a postsecondary plan that is right for them.

Training Slides
A sample slide deck to train students taking leadership positions in C Day clubs.

about what it's like to lead conferences.

Postsecondary Scope & Sequence
The EPIC model uses a curricular scope and sequence that gradually builds the knowledge and skills needed for postsecondary success from 7th to 12th grade.

Matriculation Checklists
Intrinsic counselors created these checklists to serve as a codified pathway with clear action steps for students to matriculate.

SLC Templates
These slide templates help students to prepare for SLCs, including prompts for reflecting and graphic organizers for collecting data.

Sample Student Schedule
A sample student schedule that shows how advisory, C Day, and seminar are incorporated.

SLC Commitment Criteria
A checklist of investments and structural requirements needed in order for schools to successfully implement SLCs.

Intrinsic Results
Intrinsic's website highlights the outcomes their model is yielding.

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College Readiness Data
Data visualization showing Intrinsic students outperform peers in the district and state in college readiness, as measured by early college coursework, postsecondary enrollment, and graduation rate.

CPS School Quality Rating Report
Intrinsic earned the highest possible rating on the Chicago Public Schools School Quality Rating Report for percentages of graduates earning early college or career credentials.