



The Unlocking Career Success Toolkit

Playbooks

Business and Industry

Advanced Manufacturing, Construction, and Clean Energy

Entertainment

Healthcare

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Artificial Intelligence, Technology, and Cybersecurity

Community Based Organizations

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Business and Industry Playbook



Unlocking Career Success

This playbook provides ways in which business and industry can blur the lines between high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. Business and industry play a significant role to Raise the Bar for student success by developing an *education-to-workforce system* focusing on Unlocking Career Success.

Step 1

Signal
Labor Needs

Step 2

Support Work-Based
Learning

Step 3

Strengthen
Alignment

Signal skill and labor needs

How employers articulate the types of skills and occupations that they need is foundational to informing classroom instruction, work-based learning, and students' education and career plans. Business and industry can share labor market information to inform educators and students, ensure instructional programs and resource allocation reflects the needs of employers, and support students to continue their education and enter the workforce. When signaling skill and labor market needs, employers should consider how to:



Discuss in-demand skills and occupations by translating the needs of employers and the industry to help students develop the skills they need to be successful, including analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, past-, present- and future-occupational trends, and direct input from employers.



Plug into existing routines as states and many local communities have existing processes to collect and publish labor market information, typically through a state LMI (Labor Market Information) office, which can help employers better understand the types of data that are collected, when and how data are presented, and how employers can provide additional data.



Partner with other employer groups which can include employer associations, chambers of commerce, business roundtables, and other groups to collect and share employer and industry needs, signal skill and occupational needs within and across industries, and build the capacity of employers to work with education and workforce systems.

Tools for signaling:

Provide Timely Labor Market Information

Numerous staff in the education and workforce system use labor market information to align career-connected learning programs with in-demand careers and the advisement of students

In Vermont, the Business Roundtable and Vermont Agency of Commerce organized almost 100 employers to forecast new jobs across 11 critical job categories, which mobilized education partners to align resources and curricula to support this market need.

In Virginia, the Shenandoah Valley Career Hub is a collaborative effort among business, education, and economic development communities to broaden awareness of high-demand, high-wage careers in the region including through a partnership with a local TV station that featured 24 different career pathways that are high-wage and do not require a 4-year degree.



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Tools for signaling (continued):

Leverage Perkins and WIOA Funding

There are two key federal laws that influence our education and workforce systems: (1) the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins V), and (2) the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Perkins V, administered by the U.S. Department of Education, and WIOA, administered by the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor, provide a range of opportunities for business leaders to get involved and embed industry needs and skills across the education and workforce systems.

At the state level, business and industry can provide LMI and guidance to inform CTE programs and Perkins V and WIOA state plans, specifically the states' visions and goals, sector strategies, and in-demand occupations.

At the local level, business and industry feedback is an important element of local CTE applications; in particular, LMI is necessary to complete the Perkins required Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA). Materials published by AdvanceCTE, the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), and Business Leaders United provide a "[cheat sheet](#)" on how employers can get involved in strengthening career and technical education.

Leverage Groups to Convene Employers

In Minnesota, the Chamber of Commerce brings together the business community and local high schools through the [Bloomington Future Leaders](#) program that includes a speaker series and mentoring on career exploration.

The Roxboro Area Chamber of Commerce in North Carolina created an industrial relations committee that hosts monthly luncheons on current workforce trends connecting community college staff with local industry partners.

An initiative of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, [Kentucky's Talent Pipeline](#) was launched by the Kentucky Chamber Workforce Center to empower employers to lead on workforce development by creating employer collaboratives across the state to support talent pipeline development for key sectors.



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Support work-based learning (WBL), including registered apprenticeship

Employers are vital to providing students with the high-quality learning experiences that occur in the workplace. Work-based learning can include career exploration activities like job shadowing and more immersive experiences such as internships and cooperative education. Registered apprenticeship is the premier earn-and-learn model. These opportunities are designed to broaden the career options available to students. When supporting WBL, consider how to:



Participate in different types of WBL including career expos, mock interviews, workplace tours, and job shadowing as well as the direct employment of students through internships, cooperative education, and youth apprenticeships to find areas where the employer can add value to their organization, build their capacity to support students, and expand partnerships over time.



Create a registered apprenticeship program, which is an industry-driven career pathway that provides employers with the opportunity to shape their future workforce and provide students with the keys to Unlocking Career Success, including high-quality work-based learning and an industry recognized credential.



Engage intermediary organizations to make it easier for employers to start and scale WBL opportunities and can help to build the capacity of employers to provide coordination between industry and educational institutions creating or expanding youth apprenticeship programs, and supporting student career navigation and coaching.

Tools for supporting WBL:

Support WBL and Youth Apprenticeships

The Department of Labor has resources to support employers in establishing Registered Apprenticeships. The President's Council on Science and Technology also issued a report on bioengineering and biomanufacturing that provides examples of models of modern apprenticeships in these fields.

In North Carolina, the Guilford Apprenticeship Program provides companies with the opportunity to train a new generation of skilled workers through a registered youth apprentice program that allows youth to start a rewarding career in high school.

EmployIndy and Ascend Indiana launched a Modern Apprenticeship Pilot (MAP) to support high school pathways to in-demand fields. MAP is a paid multi-year work-based learning experience with local employers where students emerge with a high school diploma, college credits, relevant credentials, and professional work experience.

In Georgia, Hertz Electrifies Atlanta is a public-private partnership to expand the adoption of electric vehicles (EV) in which Hertz is partnering with Atlanta College and Career Academy to provide students with EV education and training opportunities and providing summer job opportunities through the city's Summer Youth Employment Program.

In Louisiana, YouthForce NOLA partners with hundreds of employers to increase career awareness among educators and students, coordinate paid internships, and serves as the intermediary for students and employers.



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Tools for supporting WBL (continued):

Support Professional Mentors

Employers can engage through virtual platforms, to connect students to industry mentors and professionals in a wide range of career fields.

Employer groups can host events like the [Pittsburgh Technology Council](#) which organizes an annual STEM summit to showcase the diverse array of STEM-related careers for students, parents, and educators including company tours as a highlight.

In Texas, [UpSkill Houston](#) is an employer-led initiative that hosts conversations between employers and the education community. It also provides resources and [videos](#) to showcase jobs that provide a living wage and don't require a four-year college degree.

Support Problem-Based Learning

Employer-driven and problem-based learning helps embed career exploration in the classroom and in out-of-school programs.

In California, Qualcomm hosts a [QCamp for Girls in STEM](#), a two-week camp for middle school girls recruited from San Diego and Vista Unified School Districts held in Qualcomm's Thinkabit Lab, which is a hands-on makerspace. QCamp provides an opportunity for girls to strengthen STEM skills through hands-on engineering projects.

Nationally, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce [Employer Provided Innovation Challenges \(EPIC\)](#) is an initiative that seeks to scale high-quality, employer-led, problem-based learning. The Chamber Foundation tasks innovation clearinghouses (e.g., a local chamber) to design, disseminate, and credential authentic problem-based learning. These real-world challenges are made available to cross-functional, interdisciplinary teams of learners.

Partner with an Intermediary

[Oklahoma CareerTech](#) partners with Express Employment Professionals to remove legal barriers for employers to participate in WBL with students. In this partnership, Express Employment Professionals serve as the employer of record and assists in student onboarding and offboarding processes and covers the required workers' compensation insurance and liability so the employer can focus on student mentorship.

In Indiana, [Talent Bound](#) serves as a WBL intermediary to provide students in Marion County with authentic learning experiences that occur in the workplace, leveraging a network of engaged businesses.

In Ohio, the [NW Ohio Manufacturing Pilot](#) created a sophisticated marketing campaign and employs a full-time recruitment partner to assist student job seekers by matching them with training opportunities, support services, and job opportunities in manufacturing; the pilot is a collaborative effort between career and technical education, community colleges, and local businesses.

Facilitate Career Exploration

There are many career exploration opportunities that do not require extensive staff time, planning, or resources on the part of the employer and are beneficial to local educational agencies and schools. These opportunities can include participating in a career day event at a local high school, joining a skills competition hosted by a [career and technical student organization](#) (CTSO), sponsoring a CTSO team to attend a regional, state, or national leadership event, judging a CTSO event, or by providing industry expertise to teachers or to support classroom instruction. Employers can also donate equipment to schools, especially in career fields that require expensive machinery or employers can work directly with schools as instructional aids or part-time educators.



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Strengthen alignment between school and work

Employer partnerships are central to high-quality career and technical education (CTE) programs which span P-12, postsecondary education, and the workforce. Employer involvement in shaping career-connected learning is best when it informs curriculum and student attainment of high-value industry credentials, alignment of programs across P-12 and community and technical colleges, and facilitates youth employment. When aligning school to work, consider how to:



Support student access and success by engaging with local educational agencies to ensure that all students have access to high-quality CTE and the support they need to be successful, which can include supporting the instructional needs of students, identification and attainment of high-value industry credentials, and expanding work-based learning placements.



Sponsor extended learning opportunities which includes career and technical student organizations (CTSOs) and other programs to support student diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility as well as to create opportunities for youth to develop leadership and employability skills, and apply those skills in regional, state, and national experiences.



Catalyze interest and relationships to connect industry and schools by creating opportunities for youth and their families to interact with business and industry professionals to inform student's education and career plans as well as work with educators and school counselors through externships or other models that provide educators with familiarity of different workplaces.

Tools for strengthening alignment:

Sponsor Co-curricular and Student Competitions

Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO) comprise 11 non-profit organizations, aligned to 16 national career clusters, and are authorized via Congress in the Perkins V Act. CTSOs help students, particularly non-traditional students, to understand and develop skills and interests in career pathway programs. More information about CTSOs can be found here: <https://www.ctsos.org/>

FIRST is a robotics community that prepares youth through a suite of inclusive, team-based robotics programs, with support from over 200 Fortune 500 companies—in which LEGO sponsors a FIRST LEGO league to provide younger student participants with real-world problem-solving experiences through a guided robotics program to increase student STEM learning and skill development.

In Virginia, Manassas City Public Schools hosts robotics teams at every level of its school system thanks to donors like Micron and Lockheed Martin—some team alumni have gone on to work at Lockheed Martin directly after high school and now serve as mentors to their former robotics teams.



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Tools for strengthening alignment (continued):

Work with Local Educational Agencies

Employers can work with local education agencies to shape curriculum, define in-demand skills, identify credentials of value, and provide wrap-around supports (i.e. child-care or transportation) to enable youth to participate in CTE and Work based learning opportunities.

In California, [The Wonderful Company](#) helps to shape agricultural-tech education at schools through [Wonderful Agriculture Career Prep](#) where high school students earn an Associate of Science degree and prepare for high-tech agriculture jobs. This free early college career pathway program provides three pathways across seven partnering high schools with college professors teaching classes at each high school. Students earn 40-60 units of free college credit and graduates join the Wonderful Company's highly skilled agriculture workforce with a guaranteed, high-paying job and support to continue their education in a 4-year college.

In Connecticut, the [Advanced Manufacturing Alliance](#), a regional sector partnership representing 35+ manufacturing companies, supports the [Eastern CT Youth Manufacturing Pipeline](#) curriculum, providing opportunities for students of all ages to learn and advance into careers in manufacturing.

Leverage State-of-the-Art Technology

Nationally, the philanthropic arm of the Society of Manufacturing Engineers (SME) prepares the next generation of talent through [SME PRIME](#), which partners private industry with academia to build custom manufacturing and engineering programs in high schools across the country. PRIME schools are in nearly 100 communities, and each high school is supported and informed by local manufacturers. SME Prime provides equipment, professional development, and STEM-focused extracurricular support.

Often in partnership with SME Prime, [Stratasys 3D education](#), a leader in industrial 3D printing and additive manufacturing solutions provides free materials, technical guides, on-demand webinars, and lesson ideas to provide students with classroom-based 3D printing experience. In addition, Stratasys offers an industry-endorsed certification program.

Sponsor Educator Externships

Employers can help local school staff better understand the needs of business and industry and to keep pace with technological and workplace changes through direct partnerships and professional learning experiences. Externships are a unique professional learning opportunity for educators and school counselors to engage in a workplace that is not a school and to learn directly from industry about employment opportunities and skill requirements for youth.

The Colorado Bioscience Institute partners with local educational agencies across the state to provide an annual summer externship known as the [Research Experience for Teacher program](#), which provides teachers with first-hand experiences in the workplace, information on the latest research, and a better understanding of technological development in STEM industries.

The U.S. Engineering's Educator Externship enables educators to delve into practical work experiences, connecting theory with classroom practices, and return to the classroom with knowledge that educators can use to support students' education and career goals.

The [Maryland Chamber of Commerce](#) offers a four-week teacher externship program to connect educators with local businesses, providing educators with hands on experiences and empowering them to educate students with essential career skills.



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Industry-Specific Addendum

Unlocking Career Success



Introduction

[Unlocking Career Success](#) is an interagency initiative that reimagines how our nation's high schools prepare all students to thrive in future careers. The initiative blurs the lines between high school, college, and career, providing students with accelerated and innovative opportunities to earn college credits and gain real-world career experiences. This joint effort across the U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, Transportation, Energy, and Commerce supports public and private sector leaders, government agencies, and other community-based organizations to help students earn postsecondary degrees and industry credentials that our employers need and our economy demands. Together, we are creating pathways to success that fulfill the promise of education as an opportunity for people to create the lives that they want.

As a part of the [Unlocking Career Success](#) initiative, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) hosted an Employer Summit in June 2024 that brought together over 175 employers and industry representatives alongside educators to discuss ways to more effectively partner across the education and workforce systems. The momentum from the event led to a series of nine listening sessions with representatives across several key industries including artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, clean energy, construction, entertainment, space, technology, and cybersecurity. The following addendum includes recommendations and examples of employer engagement that span these industries. Each section includes a brief description of the industry and examples of employers who are engaged in supporting students and educators in innovative ways. This addendum accompanies the [Unlocking Career Success Business and Industry playbook](#).

Invest in America: Advanced Manufacturing, Construction, and Clean Energy Industries

Careers related to Investing in America such as advanced manufacturing, construction, and clean energy will provide extensive career opportunities for Americans for years to come. These industries have been fueled by federal laws enacted by the Biden-Harris administration, including the CHIPS and Science Act (CHIPS), Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). Today's manufacturing environments are often filled with advanced technologies, clean rooms, computer-aided machines, and progressive software programs, allowing manufacturing professionals the ability to focus on innovation, precision, and quality. The construction industry includes a range of employers engaged in the construction of buildings or engineering projects, e.g., highways and utility systems, and those involved in the preparation of sites for new construction and in subdividing land for sale as building sites.

At the same time, according to the [U.S. Department of Energy's \(DOE\) 2024 U.S. Energy & Employment Jobs Report](#), jobs in clean energy are growing rapidly and have the power to enhance economic growth, support energy independence, and improve the health and well-being of the American people. The clean energy industry, which includes solar, wind, water, geothermal, bioenergy, and nuclear energy, generates hundreds of billions of dollars in economic activity. Below are examples of robust employer engagement driving key strategies to help forge deeper connections between education and careers.

1. Dual Enrollment Programs

Employers can partner with comprehensive high school models that embed dual enrollment. For example, [Micron](#) is a lead partner in a P-Tech program, a high school model that allows students to concurrently earn a high school diploma, associate degree, and real-world work experience in



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Syracuse, New York. The Syracuse program includes access to college courses in engineering and advanced manufacturing during high school and intensive work-based learning opportunities in semiconductor facilities.

2. Work-based Learning

Employers can support the creation and expansion of pre-apprenticeship or registered apprenticeship programs, as well as support opportunities for students to develop workplace skills. Wauwatosa East High School in Wisconsin is running a [certified pre-apprenticeship program](#) through the North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters. The school partners with several local companies, and students who participate receive credit hours towards the union's registered apprenticeship. In New York City (NYC), the [Malloy Initiative for Construction Skills \(CSKILLS\)](#) apprenticeship preparation program trains NYC high school students on elements of North America's Building Trades Unions Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (MC3) and enables students to gain direct entry referrals into registered apprenticeship programs in NYC's unionized building trades. The 14-week pre-apprenticeship program has placed more than 2,500 NYC residents into registered apprenticeship programs across the city. The [Caterpillar Foundation](#) supports the development of workplace skills by working with the nonprofit [Learning Undefeated](#) in both Texas and Maryland to develop mobile STEM labs, which are high-tech tractor trailers with interactive career exploration activities for students. Employers can also help schools provide early exposure opportunities to students. For example, [Manassas City Public Schools](#) in Virginia hosts robotics teams at every level of its school system as an extracurricular opportunity through a partnership with Lockheed Martin.

3. Workforce Credentials

Employers can work directly with education systems and curriculum developers to ensure the alignment of occupations and industry credentials. For example, the [Wisconsin Center for Manufacturing and Productivity](#) partners with the Wisconsin Technical College system to offer insight into employer needs, and then supports the development of bootcamps in the advanced manufacturing field. [Stratasys](#), an advanced manufacturing company that specializes in 3D Printing, offers an industry-endorsed certification program in additive manufacturing for participating schools, teachers, and students. The company also provides students with 3D printing experiences in the classroom. Each semester, the [Finishing Trades Institute of the Mid-Atlantic Region](#) (FTI-MAR) hosts a 15-week [Vocational Internship Program \(VIP\)](#) for Philadelphia students to learn foundational building trades skills. FTI-MAR collaborates with multiple unions to ensure curriculum quality and applicability, including the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades and the North American Building Trades Union. High school juniors and seniors leave VIP with industry-recognized credentials and six academic credits that are transferable to postsecondary institutions in the state.

4. Career Advising and Navigation

Employers are uniquely positioned to help make students aware of opportunities in their industry. For example, the Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), employers, and the Manufacturing Industrial Council partnered to develop [Core Plus](#) curriculum and advising program designed to increase students in Washington who graduate with knowledge in manufacturing. Additionally, the [American Clean Power Association's Career Energy Pathways catalog](#) gives students, families, and counselors a resource to search opportunities and jobs within the clean energy industry. A nonprofit consortium, the [Center for Energy Workforce Development](#) works with over 120 energy companies and has a [Get Into Energy/Get Into STEM program](#) to provide teachers with resources and information to help students learn about STEM careers through supportive advising.



Entertainment Industry

When people think of the entertainment industry, they often think of such occupations as actors, performers, and singers. However, the entertainment industry is broad and includes a range of roles like set designers, lighting technicians, costume designers, and food services, with many of these roles supported by strong unions.

1. Work-based Learning

Career-connected learning needs to be relevant and reflect the needs of industry. For example, a consortium of professional actors, the Los Angeles Unified School District, and movie studios built the [Roybal Film and Television Magnet school](#) to support a more inclusive pipeline of students interested in the film and television industries. Eight different studios have partnered with the school and the [Entertainment Industry Foundation](#) to support students at Roybal to get internships in the industry, certifications, and advising from professionals to support their career pathways.

2. Career Advising and Navigation

Employers are uniquely positioned to help make educators aware of the breadth of career opportunities. For example, [the AME Institute](#) offers professional development for teachers in the Arts, Media, and Entertainment (AME) fields. Teachers then use AME standards, which are informed by entertainment employers, to develop new CTE pathways within their local districts and engage in communities of practice. The development of pathways unique to entertainment fields is essential to students looking for career opportunities.

Healthcare Industry

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the demand for workers in the healthcare sector will exceed the current pipeline of students in health sciences field, and employment in healthcare occupations is projected to grow much faster than the average of all occupations from 2022-2032, adding 2 million new jobs over the decade. Despite this, in 2022, states reported to the U.S. Department of Education that fewer than 443,660 high school students and 500,000 postsecondary students concentrated their career and technical education (CTE) studies in health science programs. When industry collaborates with educational systems to help build rigorous pathways, schools have a clear model to build CTE programs that provide high-quality experiences that align to industry recognized credentials and postsecondary programs.

1. Dual Enrollment Programs

[Delaware Pathways](#) is a vehicle to ensure all high school students can fulfill their educational goals and career aspirations. Students in Delaware [can complete pathways](#) in Allied Health, Nurse Assisting, Public and Community Health, and Biomedical Science among others at Delaware Technical Community College (Del Tech) and can apply high school dual enrollment credits to programs of study there. Employers partner with Delaware's Office of Work-Based Learning to support middle and high school youth and students enrolled at Del Tech to engage in career awareness, exploration, and immersion experiences, and help inform each program of study's dual enrollment options.



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Ivy Tech Community College (Ivy Tech) serves more than 170,000 students in Indiana and each year awards more than 20,000 degrees and certificates. [Employers are key constituents of the college](#) and can work with personnel to develop a talent pipeline plan, start early recruitment activities, offer work-based learning to students, and post on HireIvy, Ivy Tech's free job board. Employers directly support the institution by supporting the development of dual enrollment opportunities and short-term certificate programs including in healthcare.

2. Work-based Learning

[Youth Build](#) is a national pre-apprenticeship program that provides job training and educational services for those who are age 16-24 who left school without a secondary diploma. Participants learn vocational skills in high-demand industries including the healthcare field. Participants split their time between the vocational training work site and the classroom, and participating employers play a critical role in supporting students prepare for postsecondary training opportunities, including college, apprenticeships, and employment.

[Registered Apprenticeship Programs \(RAPs\)](#) give employers the opportunity to train the future workforce and give career seekers paid on the job learning experiences. RAPs are industry-vetted and approved and validated by the U.S. Department of Labor (Labor) or a State Apprenticeship Agency. Labor's Office of Apprenticeship organizes a Registered Apprenticeship Healthcare Community of Practice, which gives the opportunity for stakeholders in the healthcare field to share best practices, resources, and more. In 2023, there were 24,492 registered apprentices served in the healthcare industry, a 169 percent increase over the past 5 years.

[The North Dakota State College of Science pharmacy technician program](#) partners with local employer PioneerRx, a pharmacy software system, to simulate the functions of a real pharmacy. Learners participate in an eight-week internship in a community or hospital setting utilizing the pharmacy software, and the program has had a 100% job placement rate since 1994.

[Health Education and Learning \(HEAL\) High School](#) in Houston is an educational pathway program designed in partnership with Memorial Hermann and Aldine Independent School District. HEAL High School integrates health care career knowledge and job-training into the K-12 experience. The program prepares graduating high school students to transition directly into high-demand health care jobs.

3. Workforce Credentials

The Rogue Community College (RCC) developed a [Basic Health Care Certificate \(BHC\)](#) that "stacks" to 11 allied health certificates and degrees to meet workforce demand in southern Oregon. The certificate, which is now part of the college's Allied Health Care program, can lead to multiple CTE and career pathways, including nursing assistant, community health worker, emergency medical technician, health care informatics, medical assistant, human services, clinical lab assistant, nursing (RN), dental assistant, fitness technician, and massage therapy.

Labor's [Nursing Expansion Grant Program](#) supports nursing training programs to diversify the pipeline of nursing professionals able to fill healthcare jobs and improve the nation's healthcare system. This grant program places an emphasis on training people from historically marginalized and underrepresented populations to bring greater employment equity in underserved



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communities and improve healthcare workforce diversity. Evidence-based partnerships, such as this one, are proven to increase earnings for underserved workers by 24 to 40 percent.

4. Career Advising and Navigation.

[Northwell Health](#) has a variety of programs for high school students. In partnership with FutureReadyNYC, Northwell hosts an internship program for high school juniors and seniors with hospital tours, skills-based workshops, mentorship opportunities, and hands-on demonstrations.

[The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Career Development Program](#) received the [Redefining American Healthcare Award](#). Through the award, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma is empowered and equipped to assist secondary students, specifically those within the Poteau and Talihina, OK, communities, in navigating a health career pipeline that provides career technology certification courses, test preparation, mentoring, guest speakers from the healthcare industry, and professional career counselors. [Health Education in Rural Oklahoma \(HEROES\)](#) also assists Choctaw tribal members who are interested in pursuing a career in healthcare by providing support, funding, and educational and career opportunities.

5. Other Recommendations and Examples

[Bloomberg Philanthropies](#) has invested \$250 million in funding, technical expertise, and marketing resources to create 10 healthcare focused high schools across the country. Students who attend the schools can enter jobs in their field immediately after graduation through partnering care institutions.

As part of supporting a career pathway in Health Care Sciences, [Rochester Public Schools \(RPS\)](#) developed a Health Science Career Center (HSCC) with the Mayo Clinic to encourage high school students to enter the health care field. RPS and Rochester Community and Technical College also developed a committee called CARE (collaboration among Rochester educators) to further mutually beneficial projects including opportunities for Adult Basic Education students to take advantage of training at the HSCC, and incorporate navigators, career counselors, and college credits to open doors for student.

Space Industry

Space exploration impacts industries across the globe, including health care, agriculture, telecommunications, energy, and climate management. Astronauts may be the best-known space workers, but they hold a very small percentage of the [jobs in the space industry](#), which can include engineers, physicists, logisticians, and industrial machinery mechanics. These occupations all offer above-average projected growth and good pay.

1. Dual Enrollment

There are many employers that work to support high school students pursuing postsecondary coursework tied to specific industries, including the space industry. At [El Camino College in California](#) students have the opportunity to start on an [aerospace pathway](#) while they are still in high school, including earning college credits in pre-engineering courses, applying for internships, or being hired into a registered apprenticeship program. The Museum of Flight in Seattle hosts the



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[Washington Aerospace Scholars](#) program, which invites high school juniors to take credit-bearing, online courses affiliated with the University of Washington.

2. Work-based Learning

Career-connected learning needs to be relevant and reflect the needs of industry. Employers can support this through student mentorship and by engaging students to explore and pursue careers. For example, the Greater New Orleans Regional Advanced Manufacturing Partnership (GNO RAMP) is a [partnership](#) between [NASA's Michoud assembly facility](#) and the Louisiana Board of Regents. The partnership holds regular events for middle and high school students locally.

3. Workforce Credentials

Employers can work directly with education systems to ensure the alignment of occupations and industry credentials. For example, [Space Florida](#), a public corporation that was created by the original three space organizations in the state, has developed a [comprehensive master credentials list](#) by working with other employers in the aerospace industry and educational entities across Florida. That employer-driven credentials list is now widely accepted, and educational partners are creating programs that offer the included credentials.

4. Career Advising and Navigation

Employers are uniquely positioned to help make students aware of opportunities in their industry. For example, the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics produced a new guide, [Careers in Aerospace Handbook](#), for students to navigate educational and career opportunities available in the aerospace industry. NASA has published [Surprisingly STEM](#) videos to promote unusual STEM careers at the NASA research and development centers, and the Smithsonian Science Education Center curated [K-12 Space STEM Education Resources](#) and [Space STEM Career Resources for K-12 Teachers and Students](#). The Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) at ED invited high schools to submit designs for a product or service that will contribute to space missions and exploration. The eight winners of the [Your Place in Space Challenge](#) were announced in February 2024.

Artificial Intelligence, Technology, and Cyber Security Industries

The Artificial Intelligence (AI), technology and cybersecurity industries represent multiple career fields, pathways, occupations, and roles — and are constantly evolving. Computer and information technology occupations create or support computer applications, systems, and networks. Cybersecurity refers to any technologies, practices, and policies for preventing cyberattacks or mitigating their impact. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projects that overall employment in computer and information technology occupations will grow much faster than the average for all occupations, with an average of [356,700 openings](#) each year. AI is also a burgeoning field that is rapidly advancing and will impact how we learn and work. Artificial intelligence is the theory and development of computer systems able to perform tasks normally requiring human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, learning, decision-making, and natural language processing. ED's May 2023 report [Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Teaching and Learning](#) guides educators in understanding what these emerging technologies can do to advance educational goals while evaluating and limiting key risks.

1. Dual Enrollment



Industry-Specific Addendum

Unlocking Career Success



Employers can support high school students to pursue postsecondary coursework tied to specific industries, including technology, cybersecurity, and AI. In California, [The Wonderful Company](#) helps to shape agricultural-tech education at schools through [Wonderful Agriculture Career Prep](#) where high school students earn an associate degree and prepare for high-tech agriculture jobs. Students earn 40-60 units of free college credit and graduates are guaranteed a job with the Wonderful Company afterwards.

2. Work-based Learning

Employers can support the creation and expansion of pre-apprenticeship or registered apprenticeship programs, as well as support opportunities for students to develop workplace skills. For example, during [Google's U.S.-based Registered Apprenticeship program](#), apprentices get exposure to different areas of employment and teams at Google, while receiving external training and developing their professional skills on the job. Career-connected learning also needs to be relevant and reflect the needs of industry. Employers can support this through student mentorship and by engaging students to explore and pursue careers. For example, the San Diego Supercomputer Center, launched in partnership by the National Science Foundation, Atomic Technologies and UC San Diego, offers a [Research Experience for High School Students program](#), an eight-week experience where students learn about career options, gain work-based learning experience and skills, and receive mentorship from research scientists.

3. Workforce Credentials

Employers in the technology, cybersecurity, and AI industries can support students to earn related credentials. The [Waukesha County Technical College](#) has built pathways to AI careers that are accessible for high school students, informed by industry. They offer two programs, [Foundations of AI](#) and [AI Technician](#) that cover the basic elements of AI, offer certifications, and prepare students for occupations within the field by engaging with employers.

4. Career Advising and Navigation

Employers are uniquely positioned to educate teachers and advisors on the nuances of an industry. For example [Amazon's Future Engineer](#) program, in addition to providing scaffolded computer science curriculum, financial aid, and work-based learning opportunities for students, supports [educators interested in teaching computer science](#) and technology through a teacher [fellowship and ambassador program](#). Informed teachers are able to more effectively advise students on new pathway opportunities. Amazon Web Services (AWS) also runs the [Skills to Jobs Tech Alliance](#), a coalition of institutions of higher education, employers, organizations, and government agencies across nine countries that supports over 38,000 students across three pathways: cloud engineering, software development, and data analytics. The Alliance reviews curriculum and assists higher education plan programming, hosts hiring events, and provides job readiness training.

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Community Based Organization Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



This playbook provides ways in which Community Based Organizations (CBOs) can blur the lines between high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. CBOs play a significant role to Raise the Bar for student success by developing an *education-to-workforce system* that focuses on Unlocking Career Success.

Step 1

Expand Community Partnerships

Step 2

Expand Pathways Ecosystems

Step 3

Lead System Innovation

Expand community partnerships

Education and workforce initiatives are designed to improve people’s lives, yet the voice of the community is not always included when these initiatives are developed. Ensuring that youth, family, and community voice is present during public policy development and throughout implementation is paramount to education and workforce systems working in lockstep with the people they intend to serve. When expanding community partnerships, consider how to:



Elevate stakeholder voice by engaging in formal stakeholder convenings, like those that states are required to host as part its upcoming Perkins and WIOA state plans, as well as coordinating and sharing through less formal channels to capture how public policy decisions impact the lives of people in the communities that they serve.



Align community and system goals by working with staff in city, municipal, or state government, P-12, higher education, and workforce systems to understand how youth career pathways fit within their strategic plans, where there may be gaps in services or unmet student needs, and how actors in non-governmental spaces can support and lead change.



Convene and advocate by leveraging relationships with existing boards and trustees, employers or other private sector partners, philanthropic partners, donors, or other sponsors to develop a shared voice and strategy to advocate for the needs of youth, build partnerships that integrate the community, and to shape future policy.

Tools for expanding community partnerships:

Connect with Decision Makers Across Systems

Connect with decision makers across P-12, higher education, and workforce systems. In California, Unite LA is working to redevelop the education system from cradle through career through programs such as L.A. Youth at Work that connects youth to internships.

Participate on a Committee, Board, or Council

Participate on a committee, state workforce development board, or advisory council. In Delaware, the Rodel Foundation has been partnered with Delaware Pathways, a public-private partnership designed to create meaningful job experience and college-level courses for high schoolers.

Advocate for Resources

Advocate for resources— financial, human, and physical—that fill community gaps. Resources can be sourced through membership dues, philanthropy, local, state, and federal grants, and volunteer entities. In Rhode Island, Skills RI is a workforce intermediary that partners with government agencies, institutions of higher education, and CBOs to expand economic opportunity by connecting unemployed and under-employed with socially minded employers.



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Expand pathways ecosystems

Community partners can drive education and workforce systems to help young people access high-quality learning experiences in and outside of school. CBOs often have greater flexibility than traditional system actors to provide direct student supports and partner coordination, such as helping youth to extend their learning or transition beyond high school into higher levels of education and the workforce. When expanding the career pathways ecosystem, consider how to:



Create models of shared learning by bringing together leaders across the community, education, and workforce systems as part of a cross-cutting team or working group that is representative of the community and ensure that each partner is responsible for leading specific actions with shared accountability to support the success of the initiative.



Leverage the strengths of each organization, which can help to build capacity to engage employers, scale work-based learning opportunities, expand youth apprenticeship, and strengthen student career navigation and coaching.



Use resources and information strategically, by braiding funding that better connects public, private, philanthropic, and corporate resources, and use data to inform the organization's strategy, guiding staffing, programming, and partnership development.

Tools for expanding career pathways ecosystems:

Provide Direct Funding

Provide direct funding or mobilize philanthropy to launch community -wide initiatives for expanding capacity and coordination of pathways programming spanning K12, Higher Ed, and Workforce.

In Michigan, Detroit at Work serves as a workforce intermediary for jobseekers and employers, providing information on in-demand career pathways and bolstering system wide capacity.

In Illinois, the Chicago Roadmap harnesses the power of the city's leading civic, philanthropic, and academic partners to enhance pathways for students.

Engage State and/or Local Workforce Development Boards

Communities can help to connect in-school and out-of-school youth programs that are administered through WIOA and other workforce development funds that may be state-issued to support youth employment and student transition as well as to expand wrap-around services for youth.



Community Based Organization Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



Tools for expanding career pathways ecosystems (continued):

Support Research-Driven Partnerships

Community partners often work across multiple local education agencies and can support the identification and replication of evidence-based practices across LEAs and those that can be used to inform state policy development and iteration, as well as to better link educators, policymakers, and researchers within the career-connected learning system.

Develop New Data Collection Tools

Optimize data-informed decision making and to both better understand and communicate the needs of students.

In Massachusetts, the [Boston Private Industry Council](#) analyzed real-time data to guide education and workforce activities, leading to new research reports on college and careers to better understand the realities of Boston Public School graduates.

Prioritize Support for Underrepresented Students

Data can also help to identify equity and opportunity gaps for youth and coordinate strategies that integrate community partners to help address these barriers.

Supporting underrepresented students can lead to increased community impact, additional funding, and the closing of equity and opportunity gaps perpetuated by existing structures.

Regularly reviewing disaggregated data to see changes in outcomes allows CBOs to nimbly shift their supports to populations that need additional intervention.



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Lead system innovation

Community partner are critical within the career-connected ecosystem, and are positioned to lead innovative programs, support strategic financing, and to coordinate wrap-around and support services for youth. CBOs can also help initiatives to reach their intended scale, support student equity, and can directly support student transition and work-based learning efforts. When leading system innovation, consider how to:



Create innovative programs through direct employer, educator, and workforce system engagement and work to support innovative human resource policies, like skills-based hiring models, to develop paid work-based learning opportunities, internships, and registered apprenticeship programs for youth.



Support strategic financing which includes working with public and private partners to develop a coordinated funding strategy, which may include the development of a memorandum of understand or partnership agreement, to braid or blend resources, or work to jointly develop grant proposals or work with philanthropic organizations.



Develop and expand student-focused supports which can include partnerships across local educational agencies, community and technical colleges, and local workforce boards to expand the four keys to Unlocking Career Success including dual or concurrent enrollment, work-based learning, industry credentials, and student advisement.

Tools for leading systems innovation:

Provide Durable Skills Training

The Boys and Girls Club of America, (BGCA) provides a wide range of workforce readiness training. In Tennessee, the Juice+ Technical Training Center enrolls youth in self-paced training programs with career tracks such as logistics and IT.

In Minnesota, Achieve Twin Cities partners with local school districts to offer a range of career and postsecondary planning guidance and resources for high school students by physically embedding into local schools. Through physical and virtual services, the organization provides leverage to local schools and to educate students on the wide range of postsecondary opportunities.

Connect Youth to WBL Opportunities

Engage employers to help youth find and secure paid internships. This can include preparatio of youth with resume development and mock interviews or helping students to understand what good jobs might mean for them, and how to prepare for and seek good jobs. For example, the Urban Institute provides a guide to effectively engaging employers.

In Louisiana, YouthForce NOLA operates as a connector across schools, businesses, students, and the larger community to provide opportunities for student work experience, technical skills, and employability training.

In Philadelphia, LaunchPad partners with schools without CTE programs to engage students, especially diverse students in well-paid technology careers, including support though afterschool programing and a summer program that combines colleges credits with technical training.



Community Based Organization Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



Tools for leading systems innovation (continued):

Support Paid Interns

The YMCA of South Hampton Roads hosts an annual Counselor Internship Program for youth ages 16 and 17 to prepare them to be a future camp staff members.

In New York City, nonprofit organizations provide internship opportunities for low income young adults thanks to support from the city's Work Progress Program.

Provide Wrap-Around Supports

DOL-funded YouthBuild programs are community-based pre-apprenticeship programs that provide job training and education opportunities for historically underserved youth.

UnitedWay Long Island's signature program is YouthBuild, changing the future pathway of youth by addressing core issues such as housing, education, and employment. Youth from low-income families work toward their GED High School Equivalency while earning essential job skills.

In Connecticut, ReadyCT is a workforce intermediary that develops partnerships between local schools and the business community to support career-connected learning through the full continuum of work-based learning experiences.

The National Partnership for Student Success (NPSS) is supporting President Biden's goal to have an additional 250,000 postsecondary transition coaches, tutors, mentors, student success coaches and wraparound supports coordinators supporting students in school and out-of-school time programs by 2025. LEAs, schools, and CBO's are able to access technical assistance, and resources to support postsecondary transition coaching.



Community Based Organization Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



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School Counselor Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



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Step 1

Identify Student Goals

Step 2

Support Student Self-Reflection

Step 3

Connect Learning Experiences

Step 4

Plan for Post High School

Identify student goals

Postsecondary and career planning helps students identify their interests and strengths and take steps to achieve their future goals. Students benefit from annual school-led processes that help them customize their learning, broaden their perspective, and support the attainment of their goals. When helping students define and achieve their goals, consider how to:



Support students to develop a postsecondary and career plan that includes education and career goals, encourages short- and longer-term steps to achieve student goals, provides opportunities for iteration and reflection, and includes input from multiple stakeholders including the student, their family, and other mentors.



Unlock student potential through the four keys to Unlocking Career Success which include dual enrollment coursework in academic and technical subjects, participation in work-based learning, attainment of an industry-recognized credential, and career advising and navigation.



Prepare students for the transition beyond high school by helping to educate students and families about career pathways, related labor market information, and postsecondary opportunities to accomplish their goals, which can include registered apprenticeship or industry credential programs, as well as two- and four-year degree programs.

Tools to define and achieve postsecondary and career goals:

Support Career Exploration

The American School Counselor Association's Career Conversation Starters can facilitate productive conversations with students and parents. The ASVAB Career Exploration Program provides tools to help students make informed decisions based on their unique skills. Advance CTE's Student Interest Survey for Career Clusters® can help students identify career clusters of interest, which are broader occupational groupings, and may be helpful in assisting students with choosing between multiple career pathway programs. Smart Futures provides surveys, activities, and skill-building tools to provide students with the self-awareness needed to identify realistic career goals.

Require Individualized Learning Plans

Help students explore careers, identify their goals, interests, and strengths, and capture that data within an individualized learning plan (ILP). The Colorado Department of Education provides the Individual Career and Academic Plan, a comprehensive resource on individualized student planning. Another career development resource, the Promoting Quality Individualized Learning Plans throughout the Lifespan, provides examples of ILP implementation for multiple age groups and settings.

Share the Value of Career-Connected Education

Clearly communicate the value of career-connected learning. In Illinois, Mundelein High School's Pathways Handbook provides a student and family-facing handbook that explains what pathways are, why they matter, and other helpful tools. Counselors in Georgia use an infographic to help communicate the difference between vocational education and modern career, technical, and agricultural education. Academies of Shakopee (MN) in Minnesota has a library of videos and other engagement tools for high school career academies to empower students to explore careers without limiting options.



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Support student self-reflection

Student advisement is an iterative process that involves multiple conversations, engagements, and other supports throughout a student’s educational journey. Opportunities for individual and group reflection, including the use of technology, can help students better understand their career interests and passions. When supporting student self-reflection, consider how to:

- Leverage technology and data systems* to support student engagement and capture students’ input and reflections, which can include postsecondary and career planning tools, labor market information, and school-based communication tools that can be used to share information with students and their families more effectively.
- Engage students and families* to ensure that families are taking proactive steps to plan for their children’s future, which can include postsecondary and financial planning, developing an annual ILP, and educating families on the postsecondary options that are available to youth based on their career goals.
- Address occupational segregation* by focusing on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility within career pathway programs by exposing students to a range of career options that highlight in-demand, high-wage, and high-skill jobs and the career pathways to achieve them.

Tools to help students to self-reflect and discuss their needs:

Discuss High-Wage In-Demand Jobs

Provide information on high-wage and in-demand jobs and map the educational pathways to achieve these careers. My Colorado Journey centralizes education and career pathways resources, enabling users to find and explore careers in Colorado and take steps to achieve their goals. In Indiana, Hoosiers by the Numbers provides a dashboard to review labor market information by county and topic. In California, the Community College Salary Surfer provides an estimate of potential wages after students receive a credential in a certain career.

Celebrate & Uplift Student Choice

Celebrate the variety of choices students pursue in high school. The Yuma Union High School District celebrates student success through career and technical student organizations like the SkillsUSA state championships. Reach Higher Shasta hosts a college and career signing day that celebrates students who are pursuing different postsecondary options like registered apprenticeships, community colleges, and the military.

Engage Families & Guardians

Leverage national resources like Next Steps Webinars to empower families to learn about postsecondary options and answer parent questions about different careers, career pathway programs, types of education and training models, and registered apprenticeships. In Georgia, Brookwood High School hosts Informational Nights for Parents to support students’ postsecondary and career goals with benchmarks at each grade level. In California, San Clemente High School hosts a Meet the Industry Night, an annual event that brings together students, parents, and industry partners.



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Connect learning experiences

School counselors can help students connect their career goals to what they are learning in the classroom and outside of school. Intentional partnerships with community-based organizations and non-profit service providers, that utilize wrap-around supports for students and their families can help students leverage out-of-school time more intentionally. When connecting in-school and out-of-school learning, consider how to:



Develop partnerships with out-of-school learning providers to help students enroll in high-quality and meaningful work-based learning experiences that occur after school and over the summer, which can include coordination with employers, non-profit organizations, childcare centers, youth organizations, and may leverage summer youth employment programs.



Create flexibility in student course schedules to allow youth to participate in work-based learning experiences alongside rigorous academic and technical coursework, enroll in summer learning and/or summer youth employment programs, and ensure that these learning experiences are captured on an academic record/transcript.



Consider blended advisement models that evolve over the course of the high school experience, create time during the school day to provide whole group and individualized student advisement based on the academic, social, and emotional needs of students, and use professional and faculty mentors strategically.

Tools to connect in-school and out-of-school learning:

Create Advising Cohorts

In Connecticut, [Westbrook High School's Advisory Structure](#) includes dedicated cohorts of students that move through the high school experience together with lesson plans and other resources with support for student advisors within each cohort. Leverage proven models such as the [Linked Learning Alliance](#), an education model that many schools have adopted that supports a shared advisement structure as demonstrated in [Oakland, CA](#). In Oregon, the [ASPIRE Mentoring Program](#) offers students education and mentoring opportunities including 1:1 and group mentoring, activities or events that focus on career exploration, career and college research, admissions applications, scholarships, and financial aid.

Connect Academics to Careers

In California, [Cajon Valley's World of Work](#) is a school-based initiative that embeds student self-exploration and career exploration within traditional lesson plans. The digital tool [Pathful](#) provides learners with a network of industry professionals and matches teachers and students with industry professionals virtually. Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) are designed to work as an integral component of a career and technical education program to further support classroom instruction, and to create opportunities for students to build employability and career skills through hands-on demonstrations, and real life and/or work experiences.



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Plan for life after high school

Students have multiple options to pursue postsecondary education and training, including registered apprenticeship, industry certification programs, and two- and four-year degree programs. However, students and their families may not be aware of the options are available to them and how school counselors can support students to pursue their career goals. When supporting this preparation, consider how to:

- Support students to transition* which includes helping students understand and apply to the appropriate postsecondary option(s) that are available to them (e.g., registered apprenticeship, community and technical college, four-year institutions, military, and workforce) and to coordinate transition services and other student supports.
- Support students' academic and social-emotional needs* by engaging with local and state partners to bring together experienced organizations in the school community to help recruit and engage adults to serve as tutors, mentors, student success coaches, and postsecondary transition coaches.
- Create multi-tiered systems of support* within schools to help every student acquire the supports and services needed to be successful, which can include coordination with in-school youth programs operated by local workforce development boards and pre-employment transition services through the state vocational rehabilitation system.

Tools to support preparation for life after high school:

Support Social & Emotional Learning

Utilize evidence-based social and emotional learning content. During periods of student transition, school counselors can leverage resources that support student mental health like the American School Counselor Association's Resources on Social/Emotional Development and the U.S. Department of Education's Supporting Child and Student Social, Emotional, Behavioral, and Mental Health Needs Toolkit to ensure that students are successful in navigating the demands of postsecondary planning and choice.

Create Structured Planning Time

School counselors can work with their schools to create structured time for students and families to support their postsecondary plans. For students interested in attending college after graduation, this can be done through group college application sessions like the Community College of Rhode Island's Enrollment Days, or helping students prepare for the SAT/PSAT, as in Plano Independent School District, or supporting families in completing the FAFSA, like the East Baton Rouge Parish FAFSA night. School counselors can also share resources, such as, the U.S. Department of Education's College Scorecard to help students and families make decisions about applications to colleges or universities.

Talk About Registered Apprenticeships

For students interested in entering the workforce upon graduation, school counselors can support students and families by providing information about registered apprenticeship opportunities through sources like the U.S. Department of Labor's Earn While You Learn Today and Apprenticeship Finder. Both are useful tools for school counselors and students who would like to research apprenticeship jobs and available training programs in their community. School counselors can share labor market information or encourage youth to connect with the local workforce development board to help enroll in out-of-school time programs sponsored under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. School counselors can reference the Department of Labor's YouthRules for resources about youth labor rights when supporting youth employment opportunities.



School Counselor Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



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CTE Director Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



This playbook provides ways in which Career & Technical Education (CTE) Directors and their teams can blur the lines between high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. CTE Directors can play a significant role to Raise the Bar for student success by developing an *education-to-workforce system* that focuses on Unlocking Career Success.

Step 1

Link Students and Systems

Step 2

Align Resources

Step 3

Strengthen Partnerships

Link students, schools, and employers

Local CTE Directors often support educators, schools, and central office staff to scale the four keys to Unlocking Career Success, including dual or concurrent enrollment, work-based learning, industry credentials, and student advisement, and embed student and employer voice within the local education system. Connecting school operational routines, staff professional learning models, and other student supports is necessary to ensure high-quality career and technical education exists for every student. When linking students, schools, and employers, consider how to:



Connect education and workforce needs by aligning the school system strategic plan to state and local workforce needs and to related goals for career and college readiness, and by ensuring that federal or state CTE requirements, like the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment are used to improve CTE program quality and student equity.



Help students prepare for high school by creating middle school CTE programs that link academic and technical instruction, support students to explore and develop their career interests and related employability skills and help students and their families to enroll in high-quality CTE programs that propel their futures.



Help students prepare for postsecondary education and careers by ensuring that student and educator voices are reflected in the implementation of career-connected learning and that there are opportunities for every student to pursue high-quality CTE programs that embed the four keys to Unlocking Career Success.

Tools to link students, schools, and employers:

Start in Middle School

CTE directors can support engagement with CTE starting in middle school. New Jersey's Middle Grades Career Awareness and Exploration Program provides grants to develop innovative career awareness and exploration programs in the middle grades.

Support Career Exploration

CTE Directors can also utilize other resources that help students identify career interests like Career Conversation Starters to guide career conversations with students and parents, developed by the American School Counselor Association, or the ASVAB Career Exploration Program, which provides no-cost planning tools to help students to make informed decisions based on their unique skills. Advance CTE also published the Student Interest Survey for Career Clusters®, which can help students to identify career clusters of interest, which are broader occupational groupings and may be helpful to assisting students with choosing between multiple career pathway programs.



CTE Director Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



Tools to link students, schools, and employers (continued):

Share the Value of Career-Connected Learning

Develop and share resources that clearly communicate the value of career-connected learning and dispel common misconceptions. In Illinois, [Mundelein High School's Pathways Handbook](#) explains to students and families what CTE pathways are, why they matter, and other helpful tools. In Georgia, the Department of Education uses an [infographic](#) to help communicate the difference between vocational education and modern career, technical, and agricultural education. In Minnesota, the [Academies of Shakopee](#) provides a library of videos and other public engagement tools for high school career academies to empower students to explore careers without limiting options.

Focus on CTE Quality

Local CTE Directors should also have an eye towards aligned and high quality CTE implementation across the grade span. These efforts can be supported through evidence-based frameworks like [ACTE's High Quality CTE Framework](#) and the [Linked Learning Alliance School Model](#) that integrate rigorous academics with high-quality CTE, work-based learning, and student supports. The [P-TECH](#) model provides a framework to reimagine high school within a four- to six-year time frame to enable students to graduate with a high school degree, associate degree, and work-based learning experience.



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Step 1
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and Systems

Step 2
Align
Resources

Step 3
Strengthen
Partnerships

Align human and fiscal resources

There are multiple funding sources that local educational agencies can use to implement career-connected learning. Federal funds, including Perkins and ESEA formula funds, as well as discretionary grants can be leveraged to support local CTE programs and to implement each of the four keys to Unlocking Career Success. State and philanthropic funds may also be available for local initiatives. When aligning resources to support career-connected learning, consider how to:



Create a funding plan that includes federal, state, and local resources supporting the four keys to Unlocking Career Success, considers how these funds can be braided, and supports a plan to incorporate philanthropic, private, employer, or community-based funds that can be leveraged to support student and school system needs.



Braid financial resources to better leverage federal and state funds across the P12, postsecondary, and workforce systems to create and scale career pathways and to provide wrap-around and transition services for youth, which can include flexibilities in Perkins and other federal funding (e.g., see guidance on ARP, Apprenticeship, and Educator Preparation).



Link financial investments with student opportunity such as by negotiating a bulk cost model to support dual or concurrent enrollment programs at scale to help students pursue their postsecondary and career goals or by using free or low-cost resources like shared labor market data to support federal or state CTE program requirements.

Tools to align resources to support career-connected learning:

Utilize Available Data

Leverage low- or no-cost supports to align career-connected learning to in-demand careers in communities and to support the implementation of the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment. Maryland's Department of Labor provides labor market information via the LMI Dashboard to support education and workforce development communities to make data-driven decisions. Wisconomy is a Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development tool that provides labor market data and visualizations to inform the alignment of education programs and workforce needs.

Braid Funding

Federal funds, including Perkins WIOA, and ESEA funds, as well as discretionary grants can be leveraged to support a CTE Director's vision. Wisconsin's Guide to Implementing Career-Based Learning Experiences describes work-based learning experiences that school districts may offer as part of their academic and career planning programming that utilizes these different funding streams.

Review Staffing Models

In Pennsylvania, the River Valley School District shares a joint employee with Penn College who serves as both the STEAM Academy Director and Executive Director of CTE Partnerships at the college. National partners like CompTIA Apprenticeships for Tech program can be leveraged to expand staff capacity, by working with local school systems to provide high school students with apprenticeship opportunities through its cybersecurity program.



CTE Director Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



This playbook provides ways in which Career & Technical Education (CTE) Directors and their teams can blur the lines between high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. CTE Directors can play a significant role to Raise the Bar for student success by developing an *education-to-workforce system* that focuses on Unlocking Career Success.

Step 1

Link Students and Systems

Step 2

Align Resources

Step 3

Strengthen Partnerships

Build and strengthen partnerships

CTE programs require coordination across local education agencies and partnerships with employers and community-based organizations. Partnerships with intermediary organizations, public and private partnerships, and cross-agency teams improve opportunities for youth and support career pathways. When building and strengthening community and employer partnerships, consider how to:



Engage state and local workforce development boards to leverage and embed services offered through in-school and out-of-school youth programs under WIOA within the local education agency, as well as ways in which the school system can support the implementation of these programs.



Build strategic partnerships to expand the four keys to Unlocking Career Success, which can include partnerships with community and technical colleges to expand dual or concurrent enrollment programs in academic and career-focused coursework, eliminate remedial education courses, and expand industry credential programs.



Support intermediary organizations to build the capacity of the local education agency to engage employers and community-based organizations, to scale work-based learning opportunities, create or expand youth apprenticeship programs, and to support student career navigation and coaching.

Tools to establish a unified vision for career-connected learning:

Focus on Employer Engagement

Tools like the Advance CTE's Advancing Industry Engagement report can help to explain the essential role that business and industry can play in CTE and how to leverage WIOA sector strategies. The ColoradoStatePlan.com website provides guides and case studies to support the development of strong partnerships with employers. CTE Directors can leverage technology platforms like SmartFutures or Pathful to virtually connect students to business and industry mentors, and develop direct relationships with employers to support their students.

Leverage Intermediaries

Intermediaries can support employer engagement, scale student participation in work-based learning, and support curriculum development and industry credential alignment. In Oklahoma CareerTech schools partner with Express Employment Professionals to remove legal barriers for employers to participate in work-based learning. Express Employment Professionals is the actual employer of record for the student placement and covers the required workers' compensation insurance and liability.



CTE Director Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



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Educator Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



This playbook provides ways in which educators can blur the lines between high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. Educators play a significant role to Raise the Bar for student success by developing an *education-to-workforce system* that focuses on Unlocking Career Success.

Step 1

Help Students
Achieve Goals

Step 2

Unlock
Career Success

Step 3

Prepare Students
for Life

Help students achieve their goals

Educators serve in a variety of roles, including teacher, mentor, and coach, and are crucial to helping young people foster their sense of identity, develop skills and interests, and take steps to pursue their education and career goals. Educators also help youth take immediate and concrete actions, upon which youth can self-reflect and evaluate to inform their future goals. When helping students to achieve their education and career goals, consider how to:



Support student self-exploration and reflection through asset-based approaches that grow and evolve throughout a student's high school experience, including both individual and group reflection, are supported by technology, and create opportunities for students and their families to set realistic and timebound goals.



Champion diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility as the school, classroom, and learning experiences that educators create contribute to how young people see themselves in the future and occupational segregation in the labor market prevents people of different races and genders from entering different kinds of jobs.



Support students to develop a postsecondary and career plan that includes education and career goals, helps students take short- and longer-term steps to achieve their goals, provides opportunities for iteration and reflection, and includes input from multiple stakeholders including the student, their family, and other mentors.

Tools to help students achieve their goals:

Help Students Identify Interests, Strengths, and Goals

Career Conversation Starters is a tool designed for educators to help guide career conversations with students and their families, and there are several high-quality tools to help students match their interests and skills to a potential career, including the ASVAB.

Advance CTE's Student Interest Survey for Career Clusters® can help students identify career clusters or broad occupational groupings that may be of interest, to help students identify a broader set of skills and occupations that may be helpful when choosing among career pathway programs.

Connect Classroom Learning to the Real World

Cajon Valley School District's World of Work is a school-based initiative that embeds student self-exploration and career exploration within traditional lesson plans.

Smart Futures provides surveys, activities, and skill-building tools to provide students with the self-awareness needed to identify realistic career goals.

The Department of Labor has the Good Job Initiative that can help student consider what a good job looks like for them.



Educator Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



Tools to help students achieve their goals (continued):

Engage Employers to Support Exploration

There are many opportunities that employer associations and local businesses can support that do not require extensive time, planning, or resources. Employers can participate in a career day event, judge a skills competition, sponsor a [career technical student organization](#) (CTSO) team, or provide industry expertise to students on school-based projects and school-run enterprises. Employers can also donate equipment, especially in career fields that require specific machinery, or can work to support student advisement and mentoring programs or work with teachers directly to support their instructional planning.

Expose Students to a Range of Career Options

This includes helping to educate students and their families about career pathways, related labor market information, and the different types of postsecondary education that are available to youth based on their goals, which can include registered apprenticeship, industry credentials, two- and four-year degree programs, and military service.

Resources such as [My Colorado Journey](#) enable users to find and explore careers in Colorado and map out the steps to achieve their goals while taking into account job outlook, expected earnings, and the required training.

Several states have dashboards and tools that teachers can leverage including [Indiana's Hoosiers by the Numbers](#), which presents labor market information by county and topic.

In California, the [Community College Salary Surfer](#) provides the aggregated earnings of graduates and estimates potential wages after students receive a certificate or degree in certain career disciplines.

In Texas, [UpSkill Houston](#), an employer led initiative, hosts conversations with employers and the education community and provides resources and [videos](#) to showcase good careers that don't require a four-year degree.

Communicate the Value of Career-Connected Learning

Help dispel misconceptions, like [Mundelein High School's Pathways Handbook \(IL\)](#), a student and family-facing handbook explaining what career pathways are, why they matter, and other helpful tools. In Minnesota, the [Academies of Shakopee \(MN\)](#) provides a library of videos and other public engagement tools for high school career academies to empower students to explore careers without limiting options.

Explore an Externship

By participating in an externship, teachers can work to keep pace with technological and workplace changes. Externships are a unique professional development opportunity for teachers to spend time in a workplace, learning directly about industry.

The [Teacher Externship Guide](#) published by the University of California, provides an overview of teacher externships.

The [Colorado Bioscience Institute](#) partners with school districts to provide an annual summer externship, which is further described here: [Research Experience for Teacher program](#) to provides teachers with first-hand experiences on the latest research and development in CO's STEM industries.

The [U.S. Engineering's Educator Externship](#) enables educators to delve into practical work experience, connecting theory with classroom practices, and bring back new knowledge to educate students.

The [Maryland Chamber of Commerce](#) offers a four-week teacher externship program to connect educators with local businesses, providing educators with hands-on experiences and empowering them to educate students with essential career skills.



Educator Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



This playbook provides ways in which educators can blur the lines between high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. Educators play a significant role to Raise the Bar for student success by developing an *education-to-workforce system* that focuses on Unlocking Career Success.

Step 1

Help Students Achieve Goals

Step 2

Unlock Career Success

Step 3

Prepare Students for Life

Grow the keys to Unlocking Career Success

Unlocking Career Success is an interagency initiative that reimagines how our nation's high schools prepare all students to thrive in their future careers by focusing on four keys; work-based learning, workforce credentials, dual enrollment, and career navigation. This action is part of the U.S. Department of Education's Raise the Bar call to action to unite around what truly works. When growing the four keys to Unlocking Career Success, consider how to:



Scale work-based learning, which includes coordination of school-based controls, like the school or course schedule, and direct engagement with employers and community-based organizations, which can be supported through an intermediary, to create paid learning opportunities for youth in the workplace and to expand career coaching.



Support students to earn a workforce credential through partnerships with the local workforce development board, employers, and postsecondary institutions to identify industry credentials of value that young people need to enter the workplace and pursue higher levels of education as well as the supports necessary to facilitate student success.



Create opportunities to pursue dual enrollment, also known as concurrent enrollment, in both academic and technical subject areas, ideally in partnership with a community and technical college, for students to complete college-level coursework in high school aligned to their career plans, and work to ensure that awarded credit is transferable within a degree pathway.

Tools to grow the keys to Unlocking Career Success:

Embed Problem-Based Learning

In Indiana, Talent Bound serves as an intermediary for schools to engage with a network of businesses to provide career-connected learning experiences including a talent challenge where industry professionals review student presentations on potential solutions to real-world problems.

Nationally, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Employer Provided Innovation Challenges (EPIC) program seeks to scale high-quality, employer-led, problem-based learning. The Chamber Foundation also supports challenge or innovation clearinghouses through a local chamber to design, disseminate, and credential authentic problem-based learning.

Incorporate Workforce Credentials

Teachers can respond to increasing student demand for career preparation by incorporating workforce credentials in a wide range of contexts. While credentials are regularly used in high school CTE programs, they can be incorporated into a wide range of classes and used to demonstrate career readiness and other related skills.

To identify quality credentials, teachers can leverage state-published lists of approved credentials (e.g., Texas) and work with local chambers of commerce or workforce development boards to identify and align industry credentials with high-wage and in-demand career pathways.

Additionally, this Fordham Institute Report provides more information on the role of credentials in high school.



Educator Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



Tools to grow the keys to Unlocking Career Success (continued):

Encourage Dual Enrollment

Teachers can educate students and parents on the benefits of dual enrollment, explaining what courses are available, the logistics involved, the cost structure, and other information necessary to facilitate student enrollment.

The [Community College Research Center Research Brief](#) assesses the importance of college credit in high school, particularly for underrepresented students.

Teachers can also explore certification as a dual enrollment instructor. Many high school teachers already meet the credentials required for college faculty and are eligible to teach dual enrollment coursework.

Although dual enrollment requirements vary by state and may be different for CTE instructors, the requirements for each state can be found in Table 1 of the [Education Commission of the States report](#).

Teachers can also work with their local educational agency and, as applicable, labor organization or union to create incentives for teachers to pursue their master's degree and/or advanced coursework needed to teach dual enrollment coursework, which could include supplemental payment for teaching dual enrollment classes.



Educator Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



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Prepare Students for Life

Prepare students for life after high school

Students have multiple options beyond high school to pursue higher levels of education, enter the workforce, or do both concurrently. However, this choice is not typically communicated to students or their families. And while education and a good job are explicitly linked, the type of credential or degree that holds value can depend on the occupation and industry that young people want to pursue. When supporting preparation for life after high school, consider how to:



Talk about the full range of postsecondary options as students and their families need to better understand their options and the most direct path to help students achieve their career goals which can include registered apprenticeship, industry credential programs, community and technical college, four-year institutions, or national service through civilian or military options.



Support students' academics, through navigation and student success resources by engaging with community partners to bring together organizations across the school community to support college access and success, social and emotional learning, transition coordination, and support tutors, mentors, and student success or postsecondary transition coaches.



Support multi-tiered systems of support within schools to help students acquire the supports and services that they need to be successful, which can include coordination with in-school youth programs operated by local workforce development boards and pre-employment transition services through the state vocational rehabilitation system.

Tools to support preparation for life after high school:

Uplift Student Choice Post-High School

The Yuma Union High School District celebrates student success through career and technical student organizations during the SkillsUSA state championships.

Teachers can leverage national resources like Next Steps Webinars to empower families to learn about postsecondary options and answer parent questions about different careers, career pathway programs, types of education and training models, and registered apprenticeships.

Reach Higher Shasta hosts a college and career signing day that celebrates students who are pursuing different postsecondary options like registered apprenticeships; trade schools; community and technical college; universities; national service, including the military; and those who are entering the workforce.



Educator Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



Tools to support preparation for life after high school (continued):

Provide Information on Apprenticeships

The U.S. Department of Labor's [Earn While You Learn Today](#) and [Apprenticeship Finder](#) are useful tools to research registered apprenticeship jobs and available training programs in the community.

Teachers can share timely [labor market information](#) or encourage youth to connect with the [local workforce development board](#) to help students enroll in both in-school and out-of-school youth programs sponsored by the state or local workforce development board.

Teachers may also choose to connect youth to summer employment programs or other youth programs that may be available in their communities and can use the [Youth Program Finder](#) or [youth.gov](#) to support their research.

Create Structured Time for Families

Support families to complete the [FAFSA, such as by](#) using the [FSA 2024-2025 Roadmap](#) that includes updated information for practitioners on the roll out of the new FAFSA.

The U.S. Department of Education [College Scorecard](#) can help students and families evaluate postsecondary options and make decisions about applications to colleges or universities.

Help students prepare for the SAT/PSAT. [Plano Independent School District has a website that provides resource, including a video in Spanish, to help family's and students understand the process.](#)

Host group college application sessions like the [Community College of Rhode Island's Enrollment Days](#).



Educator Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



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Governor Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



This playbook provides ways in which Governors and teams can blur the lines between high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. Governors play a significant role to Raise the Bar for student success by developing an education-to-workforce system that focuses on Unlocking Career Success.

Step 1

Establish Unified Vision

Step 2

Create Management Structure

Step 3

Link Goals to Performance

Step 4

Align Policy and Practice

Establish a unified vision for career-connected learning

The Governor’s vision can serve as an animating force to bring together multiple partners and distinct priorities to improve the lives of youth. Several states and Governors have developed goals that link educators, employers, community-based organizations, and others as equal partners in achieving the Governor’s vision. When establishing a unified vision for career-connected learning, consider how to:



Create a whole-of-government effort by bringing together state leadership from P-12, postsecondary, and workforce systems, and leveraging existing federal and state resources to create the foundation for both short- and long-term strategies that produce talent at scale and improve community and economic development.



Elevate employer engagement by ensuring that education and training programs reflect employer needs, supporting employers and industry in scaling work-based learning programs, and including employers in the development of pathway policies.



Commit to equity as a driving factor by expanding access to and support for career-connected learning opportunities for individuals of all backgrounds, especially those from underserved populations, supporting student transition across different types of education and training, and embedding student and community voice.

Tools to establish a unified vision for career-connected learning:

Statewide Initiatives and Interagency Taskforces

PrepareRI is a statewide initiative in Rhode Island that was created in response to the Governor’s expectation that all students should be prepared for success in college and career. PrepareRI is run by an interagency taskforce that includes the Rhode Island Department of Education, the Governor’s Workforce Board, and the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner.

Postsecondary Attainment Goal and Committees

Through Executive Order 61, the Governor made a commitment to combine education and workforce efforts to prepare students for future careers. The EO established a joint agency steering committee to develop the Delaware Pathways Strategic Plan, which outlines the roles and responsibilities for state agencies and community partners in supporting Delaware Pathways.

Combined WIOA State Plans that Include Perkins V

Multiple states and governors have chosen to submit a Combined Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) state plan that includes Perkins V. In doing so, states can establish a unified vision, link education and workforce goals and data systems, and coordinate programs and/or braid resources through these federal programs.

Amplification and State of the State Addresses

In 2023, the majority of governors focused on expanding and improving Career and Technical Education (CTE) and workforce development opportunities in their 2023 state of the state addresses. The Alabama Strong Start, Strong Finish plan was announced.



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Create a management structure and plan

Youth career pathway programs often span P-12, postsecondary, and workforce systems, requiring coordination amongst state agencies and partnerships with employers and community facing organizations. Several states and Governors have developed strategic plans and cross-agency teams to manage implementation. When creating a management structure and plan, consider how to:



Link education and economic development by understanding and preparing for both the short- and long-term economic needs and developing career pathways that span P-12, registered apprenticeships, community and technical colleges, four-year institutions, the military, and workforce systems.



Codify roles and responsibilities that bring together different agencies and organizations as part of a cross-cutting management team, to ensure that each partner is responsible for leading specific actions and to create individual and shared accountability to support the success of the initiative.



Leverage community partners including community-based organizations, non-profits, and other intermediary organizations to support system innovation, build and scale relationships with the community and employers, and support braided funding models that better connect with private, philanthropic, and corporate funders.

Options to create a management structure that supports the vision:

Convene Councils

Governors have the power to convene councils and multiple states have launched K-16 or P-20 councils and state workforce development boards through executive order to help focus on career pathways and state agency and partner coordination. This was done in both Delaware and Maine.

Create Teams or Offices

Governors can create teams or offices to manage coordination of plans, like in Alabama where the Governor's Office of Education and Workforce Transformation was established to accomplish three major objectives: (1) braid Alabama's federal education and workforce development funding streams to support in-demand career pathways, (2) annually identify regional and statewide in-demand occupations, career pathways, and credentials of value, and (3) develop industry and registered apprenticeship programs, or in Indiana where the Office of Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship was created by to implement statewide policies for registered apprenticeship and work-based learning.

Appointments

In many states, the Governor has the power to appoint individuals to boards and commissions that have oversight of education and employment. Youth can and should be considered for these official appointments.



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and Practice

Link public goals and performance management

Top line outcomes and progress measurement can provide focus and to create momentum. They can also help to celebrate accomplishments and ensure that partners remain committed to the overarching vision. Several states and Governors have developed data models and performance routines that encourage collaboration and transparency. When linking public goals and performance management, consider how to:



Create cascading goals that include top line metrics to measure system performance, showcase accomplishments and gaps, and create opportunities for P-12, postsecondary, and workforce agencies and institutions to review and develop aligned goals within their organizations.



Model individual and shared accountability through the annual or more frequent measurement of the state's top line metrics as well as through the measurement of progress via annual or more frequent performance routines that reflect the management structure and plan, and partner specific roles and responsibilities.



Create public accountability by ensuring agency roles and responsibilities are visible, aligned to the Governor's vision, and embedded within other governing documents specific to that organization, like annual plans and reports, state education and workforce plans, or other public facing materials.

Ways to link public-facing goals and performance management structures:

Standardize Language

Efforts should be made to link public-facing goals and performance management structures for state agencies and partners. One way this can happen is through standardization of language, for example, in Illinois there is a Career Pathways Dictionary which includes common definitions for pathways terminology statewide, meaning that every state agency has shared language to discuss and implement the Governor's vision.

Data Visualizations and Statewide Systems

Another important aspect of performance management is consistent and transparent data, ideally through a statewide data system with data visualizations like Connecticut's P20 WIN system, Indiana's Graduates Prepared to Succeed (GPS) dashboard, or the Kentucky Center for Statistics, which includes an interactive dashboard on student outcomes by high school.



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Align policy and practice

States can establish policy through executive order, legislation, regulation, and state plans that are required for federal programs, as well as through administrative policy and procedures that are used to manage implementation of programs. Several states and Governors have developed model policies and infrastructure to manage implementation. When aligning policy and practice, consider how to:

- Leverage federal programs*, particularly those that require state plans and Governor approval, including ESSA, WIOA, and Perkins V, to align the vision and goals, support data collection and accountability, and establish policies that improve career-connected learning (Note: updates to Perkins V and WIOA state plans are due in FY24).
- Create a fiscal strategy and braid financial resources* to leverage existing federal and state funds across the P-12, postsecondary, and workforce systems to create and scale career pathways, provide wrap-around and transition services to youth, and to stage future budget requests and philanthropic or private sector grant development.
- Lead by example* through direct employer engagement and leadership of state agencies, which have hiring needs and can be leveraged to create innovative human resource policies, like skills-based hiring models, and to develop paid work-based learning opportunities, internships, and registered apprenticeships for youth.

Opportunities to align statewide policies with day-to-day practice:

- Support Qualified Non-Degree Workers**
Multiple states—including Alaska, Colorado, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota—have taken efforts to support qualified non-degree workers (often referred to as “STARS” - skilled through alternative routes) to access state employment opportunities and employ skills-based hiring via executive order, which can help to better connect youth with state service.
- Leverage Enacted Budget Proposals**
California’s Golden State Pathways Act is a program that promotes secondary to postsecondary pathways in high-wage, high-skill, high-growth areas, or Hawaii’s career development success program, that provides financial incentives to high schools for student attainment of industry-recognized credentials, to advance alignment between policy and practice.



Governor Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



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Higher Education Playbook



Unlocking Career Success

This playbook provides ways in which Higher Education Agencies (sometimes referred as the State Higher Education Executive Officers) and teams can blur the lines between high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. Higher Education Agencies (HEAs) play a significant role to Raise the Bar for student success by developing an *education-to-workforce system* that focuses on Unlocking Career Success.

Step 1

Create Unified Vision

Step 2

Connect Data Systems

Step 3

Strengthen Partnerships

Establish a unified vision

The HEA's vision can serve as an animating force to bring together multiple partners and distinct priorities to improve the lives of youth. Several states have developed education and attainment goals that link educators, employers, community-based organizations, and others as equal partners in attaining the state's vision. When establishing a unified vision across education and workforce systems, consider how to:



Develop and expand policies that promote the four keys to Unlocking Career Success through legislation, regulation, state plan development (e.g., ESEA, Perkins, WIOA), as well as policy and other procedural guidance to create a broad vision for career-connected learning and guidance for implementation.



Create programmatic, fiscal, and accountability policies and practices that incentivize institutions of higher education and others to implement career-connected learning alongside technical assistance, professional learning communities, and other supports to ensure that career-connected learning opportunities exist for every student.



Build from existing practice and infrastructure, like supporting high-quality career and technical education (CTE) programs to expand career-connected learning, supporting community and technical colleges to connect P-12 and higher education, or working through established groups like P20/P20W councils to support system innovation.

Tools to establish a unified vision across education and workforce systems:

Create Shared Governance Models

HEAs can develop or play an active role in shared governance boards that span P-12, higher education, and workforce to set and enforce policy that includes community and technical college systems. The Delaware Pathways Strategic plan positioned the community and technical colleges as critical partners to scale high-quality career pathways and facilitate implementation of a statewide work-based learning program.

The Higher Ed system was also a vital partner in Rhode Island's PrepareRI 2.0 plan, which is an inter-agency initiative connecting P-12, higher education, and workforce - including a formal role for the state's Office of Postsecondary Education.

Additionally, the Texas Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative is a collaboration among the state's Education Agency, Higher Education Coordinating Board, and Workforce Commission, to create aligned goals, data, and processes for student outcomes and to ensure that the education system meets employers' needs through common definitions and standards for work-based learning and a library of workforce credentials.



Higher Education Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



Tools to establish a unified vision across education and workforce systems (continued):

Create Statewide Frameworks

Develop statewide frameworks for dual or concurrent enrollment that clarify governance models, articulation, and funding. The Illinois [Dual Credit Quality Act](#) was created to expand dual credit and to ensure that credit transferability, accountability, and partnerships were available to partnering local educational agencies through a state model partnership agreement between P-12 and postsecondary institutions.

Colorado developed an [Accelerating Students through Concurrent Enrollment](#) program to provide an opportunity for students to earn a postsecondary credential through a 5th-year high school program which allows students to earn college credit with no tuition cost. This legislation allowed HEAs to take a more active position to align dual enrollment programs across the P-12 and postsecondary systems

Braid Funding

HEAs should work to braid state and other federal funding sources to align with the state's career connected learning plan and vision. [Delaware](#) braided ESSER, GEER⁶ and philanthropic funds to launch a \$16 million expansion of its [Delaware Pathways](#) program.

Washington launched [Career Connect Washington](#), a network of employers, labor, government, education, and community leaders, to deliver academic and work-based learning experiences to more than 16,000 students since 2019. Career Connect Washington has used a combination of federal, state, and local funds to launch, expand, and maintain this program.



Higher Education Playbook



Unlocking Career Success

This playbook provides ways in which Higher Education Agencies (sometimes referred as the State Higher Education Executive Officers) and teams can blur the lines between high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. Higher Education Agencies (HEAs) play a significant role to Raise the Bar for student success by developing an *education-to-workforce system* that focuses on Unlocking Career Success.

Step 1
Establish Unified Vision

Step 2
Connect Data Systems

Step 3
Strengthen Partnerships

Connect data systems

The ability to connect students to credential and degree data and related employment outcomes has never been more important. These data systems are necessary to inform consumers of the costs associated with higher education and the likely return on their investment, as well as to provide information to policy makers and practitioners to better address employer needs. When creating data systems that support career pathways, consider how to:



Link student records across P-12, higher education, and workforce which includes the expansion of state longitudinal data systems and P20/P20W efforts, shared labor market information, linking credential and degree attainment with unemployment/wage data, identify equity gaps, and using common data tools like transcripts to signal students' prior learning records, consistent with applicable privacy laws including Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).



Support student transfer across higher education programs to better bridge workforce and industry credential programs, registered apprenticeship, and two- and four-year degrees through policies that support credit for prior learning, embedded and stackable credential models, and statewide articulation agreements.



Support research driven partnerships to identify and scale evidence-based practices that are replicable across institutions of higher education and to inform state policy development and iteration, make higher education data accessible, and to better link educators, policymakers, and researchers within the career-connected learning system.

Tools to create data systems that support pathways:

Create Longitudinal Data Systems

Many HEAs have developed robust statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDS) that link P-12, postsecondary, and workforce data, like the Alabama Terminal on Linking Analyzing Statistics (ATLAS) that is used to regularly adjust career pathways programs based on economic needs or Maryland's Longitudinal Data System that collects and organizes student and workforce data from all levels of education and the state's workforce. The Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Education Commissioner collects and publicizes municipal level data that includes local postsecondary attainment rates, FAFSA completion rates, who goes to college, and the current workforce's level of education.

Share Labor Market Information

Through shared labor market information, HEAs can illustrate the alignment between postsecondary programs of study and in-demand jobs. The Kentucky Council of Postsecondary Education is required to compile annual data on in-demand jobs within the state and develop a delivery method that ensures access to postsecondary instruction in these in-demand job areas for prospective students. Colorado's Talent Pipeline Report provides an annual analysis of labor market information and highlights talent development strategies for the state. Indiana's Hoosiers by the Numbers provides a dashboard for labor market information that breaks data out by county and topic.



Higher Education Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



Tools to create data systems that support pathways (continued):

Create Tools to Inform Students and Families

HEAs can also use data to empower students and create tools to guide students' postsecondary decisions. [My Colorado Journey](#) is a free user-friendly resource that centralizes the state's education and career pathways resources, enabling users to find and explore careers in Colorado and take steps to achieve their goals. The [University of Texas SeekUT](#) resource presents to students user-friendly data that maps out what real UT graduates earn based on campus, major, and the number of years post-graduation as well as loan outcomes. California's [Community College Salary Surfer](#) provides the aggregated earnings of graduates from a five-year period to provide an estimate of potential wages after receiving a certificate or degree in certain disciplines.



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Step 1

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Step 2

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Strengthen Partnerships

Build and strengthen partnerships

Career pathway programs often span P-12, postsecondary, and workforce systems, requiring coordination among state government and partnerships with employers and community facing organizations. Through intermediary organizations or cross-agency teams, states can develop strategic partnerships to support youth career pathways. When building and strengthening partnerships across education and workforce systems, consider how to:



Engage the state and local workforce development boards to leverage and connect services offered through in-school and out-of-school youth providers and adult education providers to support postsecondary access and success and ways in which institutions of higher education can support the implementation of these programs.



Invest in intermediaries as industry-facing organizations are necessary to support employer and community engagement at scale, as well as to expand registered apprenticeship, residency, clinical, and internship programs offered by institutions of higher education.



Support higher education partnerships including partnerships with K12 and workforce partners, as well as partnerships across institutions of higher education, to support student admissions, facilitate student basic needs, support student transfer, and co-develop affordable educational programs for completion strategies and services that link to employer needs.

Tools to strengthen partnerships across the education and workforce systems:

Create Seamless Pathways

There are examples across the country of HEAs building strategic partnerships with education and workforce systems to support career connected pathways, including seamless pathways from high school to college, and between in-state colleges. Idaho's Direct Admissions Initiative proactively alerts all Idaho high school seniors that they qualify to attend the state college system, then asks students to fill out a free common application, Apply Idaho, which shares the application to up to 10 in-state public and private institutions. Similarly, Virginia created the Statewide Guaranteed Admissions Agreement.

In Ohio, Columbus State Community College brought on a full-time "superintendent in residence" to create and sustain partnerships between P-12, higher education, economic development organizations, and industry leaders.

In Illinois, the Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act and the Articulation Initiative Act require cooperative policies across public two- and four-year institutions, as well as between P-12 and higher education.



Higher Education Playbook



Unlocking Career Success

Tools to strengthen partnerships across the education and workforce systems (continued):

Support Intermediaries

Delaware Promise, established through [Executive Order 61](#) to ensure that 65% of the state's workforce earns a college degree or professional certificate by 2025. E61 also established a joint agency steering committee that was charged with developing the [Delaware Pathways Strategic Plan](#) which outlines the roles that multiple state agencies and community partners take on to support youth pathways.

Combined WIOA State Plans that Include Perkins V

Consider statewide strategies to support intermediaries to systematically engage business and industry leaders. [South Carolina](#) formalized an inter-agency memorandum of understanding across education and workforce agencies to advance industry engagement throughout the state. The agreement supports sector partnerships and regional coordinating bodies for education, workforce development, and economic development partners to align their programs and services with the needs of industry.

Develop Shared Accountability

Develop cross-agency, statewide frameworks that outline quality and accountability metrics for pathways-related work. [Indiana](#) subsidizes a pre-approved list of liberal arts and technical dual enrollment courses, caps student costs, and requires each high school to offer at least two dual credit courses. The Texas [Effective Advising Framework](#) was designed as a statewide effort to provide districts with a blueprint for a comprehensive school counseling system. Illinois provides guidance on its [Employability Skills Framework](#) and [Model Program of Study Guides](#) on specific career pathways to guide implementation and evaluation.

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City and County Playbook



Unlocking Career Success

This playbook provides ways in which City and County Leaders and their teams can blur the lines between high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. City and County Leaders can play a significant role to Raise the Bar for student success by developing an *education-to-workforce system* that focuses on Unlocking Career Success.

Step 1

Establish Unified Vision

Step 2

Cultivate Partnerships

Step 3

Streamline Resources

Step 4

Align Policy and Practice

Establish a unified vision

The City and County Leader’s vision can serve as an animating force to bring together multiple partners and distinct priorities to improve the lives of youth. Several cities, counties, and municipalities have developed goals that link educators, employers, community-based organizations, and others as equal partners in attaining a unified vision. When establishing a unified vision for career-connected learning, consider how to:



Support a city/county/municipal-wide effort by bringing together leadership from P-12, postsecondary, and workforce systems, and leveraging federal, state, and local resources to create the foundation for short- and long-term strategies that produce talent at scale and improve community and economic development.



Codify the roles and responsibilities of different agencies and organizations as part of a cross-cutting management team or working group to ensure that each partner is responsible for leading specific actions and to create both individual and shared accountability.



Commit to equity as a driving factor by expanding access to and support for career-connected learning opportunities for individuals of all backgrounds, especially those from underserved populations, supporting student transition across different types of education and training, and embedding student and community voice and leadership.

Tools to establish a unified vision:

Create Cross-Cutting Initiatives

Fund and launch initiatives that streamline career pathway programs across P-12, postsecondary education, and the workforce system. In Illinois, the Chicago Roadmap is a collaboration between Chicago Public Schools, City Colleges of Chicago, and philanthropy to support students on their path to college and career. In Michigan, Detroit at Work, a program that provides information on in-demand career pathways and training programs that are aligned to jobs in growing career sectors. In Douglas County, Nebraska, the ARPA-funded Career Forward program provides supplemental financial support, books and training tools, transportation, career coaching and more. Career Forward collaborates closely with Omaha Housing Authority, Urban League, and local shelters to build supportive career pathways for low-income individuals experiencing complex barriers to education.

Establish College and Career Readiness Goals

Washington, DC, has established a citywide college and career readiness goal through collaboration with local educational agencies. Raise DC is a collective impact initiative that brings together public and private partners to support citywide goals for improving youth education and workforce outcomes. In Virginia, the Fairfax County Chairman's Task Force on Equity and Opportunity established specific recommendations to meet the goal of fostering cradle to career success.



City and County Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



Tools to establish a unified vision (continued):

Amplify the Needs of Youth and Employers

In 2023 many local leaders highlighted youth, education, and pathways in their 2023 state of the county addresses or similar public engagements. In California, the [workforce development board serving Sacramento County](#) recruits youth and young adults to provide a “Youth Voice” to ensure that the youth of Sacramento are adequately represented when decisions are made that will impact young residents in the community.



City and County Playbook



Unlocking Career Success

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Step 4

Align Policy and Practice

Cultivate partnerships to support career-connected learning

Youth career pathway programs often span P-12, postsecondary, and workforce systems, requiring coordination amongst government and partnerships with employers and community facing organizations. Several cities, counties, and municipalities have created intermediary organizations, public and private partnerships, or cross-agency teams to support youth career pathways. When cultivating partnerships, consider how to:



Support intermediary organizations that can build the capacity of local education agencies and postsecondary institutions to engage employers and community-based organizations to scale work-based learning opportunities, create or expand youth apprenticeship programs, and support student career navigation and coaching.



Leverage community partners including community-based organizations, non-profits, local philanthropic groups, and others to support system innovation, build and scale relationships with the community and with employers, and to support braided funding models that better connect with private, philanthropic, and corporate funders.



Elevate employer engagement to ensure that education and training programs reflect and respond to employer needs, support industry groups or associations to help employers to scale apprenticeship and work-based learning programs, and that employers help to develop and shape local policies that support career pathways.

Ways to cultivate partnerships:

Leverage the Workforce System

Local workforce development boards and councils can support talent development pipelines. In California, Oakland's Workforce Development Board contracts with youth-serving organizations to identify summer worksites and recruits youth for work-based learning opportunities. In North Carolina, Charlotte Works, which is a council of public and private workforce development providers, helps employers access diverse talent pipelines. In Maryland, Worksource Montgomery, Inc. is working with local partners to place trained Career Coaches in every public and special middle and high school throughout the county.

Expand Education Partnerships

Create structured opportunities for P-12 and postsecondary partnership. In Wisconsin, M³ (M-Cubed) is collaboration between Milwaukee Public Schools, Milwaukee Area Technical College, and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee designed to promote an effective K-16 pipeline and provide higher levels of education and workforce readiness for individuals to meet the needs of Milwaukee employees. In Nebraska, Douglas County's Heartland Work Ready Community assembles a consortium of over 320 community partners, businesses, K-12, and post-secondary education providers and



City and County Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



Ways to cultivate partnerships (continued):

Expand Education Partnerships

public institutions that collaborate on grant applications and building career pathways. In New York, Saratoga County is using [WIOA Incumbent Worker Training](#) funds to upskill EMTs to paramedics and meet a local workforce need. The county also operates an EMT career pathway program for youth taking the first step toward a medical career (in collaboration with Hudson Valley Community College, Town of Clifton Park, Clifton Park-Halfmoon EMS, and Shenendehowa High School).

Create and Expand Intermediary Organizations

In Massachusetts, the [Boston Private Industry Council](#) (Boston PIC) serves as an intermediary supporting school and industry connections while also running a summer internship program. In Texas, the [Dallas Regional Chamber](#) supports activities from early education through workforce development. In Oregon, [Connected Lane](#) County collaborates with local school districts, institutions of higher education, the local workforce board, and industry innovators to provide underrepresented Lane County youth with vital experiences.



City and County Playbook



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Align Policy and Practice

Streamline resources and initiatives

Topline outcomes and progress measurement help to identify where resources are needed and create momentum. They can also help ensure partners remain committed to the overarching vision. Several cities, counties, and municipalities connect spending plans with outcome measurement and performance routines encouraging collaboration and transparency. When streamlining resources and initiatives, consider how to:



Support students' secondary to postsecondary transitions which can include helping to facilitate partnerships between local education agencies, community & technical colleges, and local workforce development boards, who can be leveraged to coordinate in- and out-of-school youth programs and services to support student transition.



Create a fiscal strategy and braid financial resources¹ to leverage existing federal, state, and local funds across the P-12, postsecondary, and workforce systems to create and scale career pathways, provide wrap-around and transition services to youth, and to stage future budget requests and philanthropic or private sector grant development.



Create public accountability by ensuring agency and partner roles and responsibilities are visible, aligned to the local vision, and are embedded within other governing documents that are specific to the organization, like annual plans and reports, local education and workforce plans, or other public-facing materials.

Options to streamline resources:

Review Strategies and Resources

Community landscape analyses can inform current and future resource allocation, the expansion of career pathway programs, and how to better leverage the community. In Arizona, Maricopa County's Workforce2You pilot program brings Medical Billing and Coding and Medical Administrative Assistant accelerated training programs in a cohort model to 3 rural communities—Queen Creek, Wickenburg, and Gila Bend—that experience distance and financial barriers to accessing workforce development resources.

Coordinate Data and Information

City, county, or municipal wide data systems can be leveraged to share and amplify labor market information and needs across the education and workforce systems. In Maryland, Prince George's County maintains an Economic Dashboard featuring employment, education, and income data across the county.

Create New Funding Streams

In California, the Long Beach Mayor's Fund for Education, was established as a non-profit organization to support collaboration amongst community, civic, and education partners to help address the most pressing needs facing Long Beach area students and their families.



City and County Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



Options to streamline resources (continued):

Leverage Federal Funds

In Wisconsin, Milwaukee's [Skillful Transitions Project](#) outlines the city's plans to use \$3 million of American Rescue Plan funding to support paid work-based learning opportunities for students. In Arizona, Maricopa County is expanding the reach of flexible ARPA funds by enrolling ARPA-funded Route to Relief students at Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD) schools in WIOA. A partnership between Maricopa County, MCCCD and the City of Phoenix [Route to Relief](#) provides assistance for tuition, books, training, and career navigation, as well as up to 6 months of a \$1,000-\$1,500 stipend. By dually enrolling these students in WIOA, this flexible funding can stretch further.

¹ Braiding funds means coordinating two or more funding sources to support the total cost of a service or activity while separately tracking and reporting on each source of funding. Cost-allocation methods are required to ensure that each funding source is charged its fair share. See Urban Institute (2022), Local Work-force System Guide. Retrieved from: <https://workforce.urban.org/node/57.html>.



City and County Playbook

Unlocking Career Success






This playbook provides ways in which Mayors and Municipal Leaders and their teams can blur the lines between high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. Mayors and Municipal Leaders can play a significant role to Raise the Bar for student success by developing an *education-to-workforce system* that focuses on Unlocking Career Success.



Align policy and practice

Local leaders can establish policy via mayoral order, their work with city, county, or municipal officials, budget authority and spending orders, oversight of local agencies, and administrative policy or procedures supporting implementation of federal, state, or locally funded programs. Several cities, counties, and municipalities developed model policies to manage implementation. When aligning policy and practice, consider how to:

-  *Build strategic partnerships* as part of the local vision, which can include partnerships across local education agencies, community & technical colleges, and local workforce boards to expand the four keys to Unlocking Career Success including dual or concurrent enrollment, work-based learning, industry credentials, and student advisement.
-  *Lead by example* through direct employer engagement and leadership of local agencies, which have hiring needs and can be leveraged to create innovative human resource policies, like skills-based hiring models, and to develop paid work-based learning opportunities, internships, and registered apprenticeship programs for youth.
-  *Link education and economic development* by understanding and preparing for both the short- and long-term economic needs of your city, county, or municipality and developing career pathways² that span P-12, registered apprenticeships, community and technical colleges, four-year institutions, the military, and workforce systems.

Opportunities to align policies and practice:

Partner with Business and Industry

Identify areas of focus that are important to the community and its employers. In Hawaii, the City and County of Honolulu has built sector partnerships in 3 in-demand industries -- engineering, health care, and IT. These industry-led, community-supported collaboratives work to develop new training models and hiring practices that connect young people to local jobs. In Delaware, Wilmington's Future Builder's Program supports youth who are disconnected from school and creates opportunities for youth to access jobs in the construction industry along with other supportive services and related training. In Tennessee, Nashville's FUSE Corps fellow program is a national non-profit organization that works alongside government and community partners to design projects, recruit the right talent, and embed executive fellows to help accelerate the project.

Create Aligned Management Structures

Add capacity through new organizational structures to address education-to-workforce pipelines. In Arizona, the Phoenix Youth and Education Office is a new office designed to build connections between city services, community resources, and public schools. In Washington, D.C., the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education is an executive-level position with the explicit mission to focus on the educational continuum from birth to age 24, overseeing P-12 education, postsecondary education, workforce development, employment services, libraries, and parks and recreation.



City and County Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



Opportunities to align policies and practice (continued):

Create Aligned Management Structures

In Maryland, the Baltimore County Office of Educational Partnership collaborates and coordinates services across the county's various early childhood programs, the Baltimore County Public School system, higher education institutions, workforce development and personal growth pathways, and educational programs embedded in recreation and senior centers.

²Section 3(7) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) defines a “career pathway” as a combination of rigorous and high-quality education, training, and other services that, among other things, aligns with the skill needs of industries in the economy of the state or regional economy involved. For the full WIOA definition, please refer to <https://cte.ed.gov/initiatives/career-pathways-systems>.



City and County Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



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Organized Labor Playbook



Unlocking Career Success

This Playbook provides steps in which organized labor (such as teacher unions and building trades) can blur the lines between high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. Organized labor plays a significant role to Raise the Bar for student success by contributing to an *education-to-workforce* system that focuses on Unlocking Career Success.

Step 1

Partner with Stakeholders

Step 2

Connect with Affiliates

Step 3

Leverage Membership

Step 4

Advocate for Industry

Partner with CTE programs, Schools, Districts, and Higher Education

One of the most powerful ways that organized labor can contribute to the career-connected ecosystem is by partnering directly with Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, schools, districts, and higher education. When partnering directly consider how to:



Support professional learning. Build a community of excellent teachers and faculty that promote engagement in high-wage, high-demand industries. Sponsoring educator externships is a great way to help local school staff better understand the needs of business and industry and to keep pace with technological and workplace changes. Externships are a unique professional development opportunity for educators and school counselors to engage in a workplace setting that is not a school and to learn directly from industry about employment opportunities and skill requirements for youth.



Prepare students for the transition beyond high school by helping to educate students and families about career pathways, related labor market information (LMI), wrap-around services, and postsecondary and training opportunities to accomplish their goals, which can include registered apprenticeship or industry credential programs.

Tools for partnering directly with educational entities:

Support curriculum development

ACE Charter High School in Camarillo, California, is an independent public charter school with a skilled trades focus that allows students to choose between four major pathways: Construction, Engineering, Architecture, and Computer Science. Its project-based programming is strengthened by a partnership with the Sheet Metal Workers' Local Union No. 104, or SMART Local 104, a union that spans 49 California counties from the Oregon border to Ventura County, and includes International Baccalaureate curricula.



Organized Labor Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



Tools for partnering directly with educational entities (continued):

Develop exposure opportunities including pre-apprenticeship programs and internships

In Louisiana, Vernon Parish School District partnered with Capture Point Solutions LLC and the United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters to launch a high school pre-apprenticeship program with a clean energy focus. This program, the Capturing Better Futures Initiative, takes place at Leesville High School and trains high school students to work in the carbon management industry by preparing them for streamlined entry into registered apprenticeships.

In Oregon, the [Gresham-Barlow School District](#) offers FAST (Future Apprentices in the Trades) Track programs at two high schools, providing students with pathways to certification in construction or metal manufacturing through Oregon's Bureau of Labor and Industry (BOLI). Through a combination of CTE coursework and internships, students leave high school as certified pre-apprentices and receive special consideration and priority for several apprenticeship programs because of the partnerships with labor and industry (e.g., SMART Local 16, NECA-IBEW Electricians Union, UA 290, Northwest College of Construction, Pacific Northwest Carpenters Institute, and more).

Each summer, the Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors' National Association, also known as SMACNA, and their partners run a series of [Heavy Metal Summer Experience](#) camps throughout the country to allow 15–19-year-old students to gain first-hand experience in the sheet metal, piping, and plumbing trades. In addition to working alongside craft professionals and learning concrete skills, students also tour active job sites and union training facilities to get a sense of local apprenticeship programs.

Partner with Higher Education partners

The Augusta Building and Construction Trades Council and Augusta Technical College (ATC) in Georgia signed an MOU to streamline workforce development collaboration to enhance career opportunities and support the growth of skilled professionals in various high-demand industries. Key components of their partnership include ATC training for incumbent Augusta Building and Construction Trades Council workers, union representation on the college's Advisory Committees, and expansion/promotion of pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs.



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Connect with your national affiliates

National affiliates support regional and local operations. When working collaboratively, local and national unions can leverage scale and geographic diversity to advance cohesive messaging and share resources. When connecting with your national affiliates consider how to:



Leverage federal Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins) and Workforce Innovation and Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) processes to support the alignment of education and the workforce development system and coordination of sector strategies. There are two key federal laws that influence our education and workforce development system: (1) Perkins V, and (2) WIOA. Perkins V and WIOA are administered by the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor and provide a range of opportunities for business leaders to get involved and embed industry and skill needs across the education and workforce development system.



Braid financial resources to leverage federal and state funds across the P12, postsecondary, and workforce development system to create and scale career pathways and to provide wrap-around and transition services for youth, which can include flexibilities in Perkins and other federal funding (e.g., see guidance on American Rescue Plan (ARP), Apprenticeship, and Educator Preparation).

Tools for connecting with your national affiliates:

Broaden exposure to Registered Apprenticeship models

For students interested in entering the workforce upon graduation, organized labor and national affiliates can support students and families by providing information about registered apprenticeship opportunities by highlighting resources like the U.S. Department of Labor’s Earn While You Learn Today and Apprenticeship Finder.

Leverage national resources for regional programs

Each semester (fall and spring), the Finishing Trades Institute of the Mid-Atlantic Region (FTI-MAR) hosts a 15-week Vocational Internship Program (VIP) for Philadelphia students to learn foundational building trades skills in preparation for a variety of registered apprenticeship programs. FTI-MAR collaborates with multiple unions to ensure curriculum quality and applicability, including the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT) and the North American Building Trades Union (NABTU). High school juniors and seniors, primarily from Philadelphia Public Schools, leave VIP with industry-recognized credentials and six academic credits that are transferable to institutions such as the Community College of Philadelphia and the Pennsylvania State University.



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Leverage the power of membership to advance career-connected learning

Career-connected learning supports young people to get good jobs that provide stability, a livable wage, agency, and mobility. But to support students at scale, it requires partnerships at scale and expertise from different stakeholders. When leveraging the power of organized labor membership to advance career-connected learning consider how to:

-  *Support career mentorship.* Each region, state, district, and municipality are distinct and require a variety of supports to help students navigate their postsecondary and career options. Mentorship is a great way to introduce students to different career options and inform postsecondary and career decision making.
-  *Create learning opportunities in the workplace* which can be an animating force for effective cross-system alignment. Note, departments of Labor and workforce development boards frequently refer to relevant real world-learning as “work experiences” while educational systems often use the term “work-based learning” to mean the same type of career-connected learning.
-  *Commit to equity as a driving factor* by ensuring that career-connected learning opportunities exist for individuals of all backgrounds, especially those from underserved populations, support student transition across different types of education and training, and embed student and community voice.

Tools for leveraging the power of membership:

Celebrate and Uplift Student Choice

Celebrate the variety of choices students can pursue in high school. The Yuma Union High School District celebrates student success through career and technical student organizations like the SkillsUSA state championships. Reach Higher Shasta hosts a college and career signing day that celebrates students who are pursuing many different postsecondary options like registered apprenticeships, community colleges, and the military.

Convene subpopulations in support of career-connected learning

Women in Nontraditional Careers (WINC) is a 16-week pre-apprenticeship program for Philadelphia residents that is hosted by FTI-MAR. Each cohort of women (18+) is trained on foundational building trades skills in preparation for a variety of registered apprenticeship programs. Participants earn industry-recognized credentials and receive both an hourly wage and support funding for items such as professional clothes, gear, and technology. Site visits around the Philadelphia metropolitan area are central to the WINC experience, allowing program participants to see first-hand the applicability of what they are learning.

Leverage national connections with employers

In Wisconsin, Wauwatosa East High School is running a certified pre-apprenticeship program through an industry-funded HVAC lab. By partnering with local SMART affiliate (number 18) as well as several local companies (including JM Brennan, Total Mechanical, and Air Flow Inc), the school district was able to establish one of only two such high-school pre-apprenticeship programs in the state to build construction skills within the K-12 system.



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This Playbook provides steps in which organized labor (such as teacher unions and building trades) can blur the lines between high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. Organized labor plays a significant role to Raise the Bar for student success by contributing to an *education-to-workforce system* that focuses on Unlocking Career Success.



Be an Advocate for Industry

Robust career pathways play a vital role in shaping our country’s future, both by ensuring a continuous flow of skilled talent into the workforce and by increasing access to good-paying jobs for the next generation of professionals. Through specific, intentional mechanisms, organizations can support employee growth, address future workforce needs, and create clear, actionable routes for long-term career advancement. When advocating for industry consider how to:

-  *Address occupational segregation* by focusing on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility within career pathway programs by exposing students to a range of career options that highlight in-demand, high-wage, and high-skill jobs and the career pathways to achieve them.
-  *Partner with other employer groups.* These can include employer associations, chambers of commerce, business roundtables, and other groups. Work together to collect and share employer and industry needs, signal skill and occupational needs within and across industries, and build the capacity of employers to work with education and the workforce development system.
-  *Prioritize high-need areas.* When determining workforce and skill priorities, it is important to first consider which sub-sectors and pathways within an industry need the most support, as well as which communities are underserved (e.g., rural communities, communities of color). It is important to incorporate an equity lens into all steps of recruitment and training processes.

Tools to advocate for industry:

- Communicate the value of career-connected learning**
Help dispel misconceptions, like Mundelein High School’s Pathways Handbook (IL), a student and family-facing handbook explaining what career pathways are, why they matter, and other helpful tools.
In Minnesota, the Academies of Shakopee (MN) provides a library of videos and other public engagement tools for local high school career academies to empower students to explore careers without limiting options.
- Share LMI broadly**
Unions can share LMI or encourage youth to connect with the local workforce development board to help enroll in out-of-school time programs sponsored under WIOA. School counselors can reference the Department of Labor’s YouthRules for resources about youth labor rights when supporting youth employment opportunities.
- Engage families and guardians**
In California, San Clemente High School hosts a Meet the Industry Night, an annual event that brings together students, parents, and industry partners.



Organized Labor Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



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Principal Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



This playbook provides ways in which Principals and their teams can blur the lines between high school, post-secondary education, and the workforce. Principals play a significant role to Raise the Bar for student success by developing an *education-to-workforce system* focusing on Unlocking Career Success within their schools.

Step 1

Create the Foundation

Step 2

Build Staff Capacity

Step 3

Create Conducive Environments

Step 4

Strengthen Partnerships

Create the foundation for career-connected learning

Principals often serve as an instructional leader, building manager, and implementation coach to mobilize school system staff and external partners. Many schools have created policies and learning conditions that link educators, employers, community-based organizations, and others as equal partners in student success. When creating the foundation for career-connected learning, consider how to:



Create a shared vision that brings together students and families, community and employer partners, academic and technical educators, school counselors, and other personnel to ensure that every student can realize their full potential and has options to pursue higher levels of education and employment upon graduation.



Build strategic partnerships to expand the four keys to Unlocking Career Success, which can include partnerships with community & technical colleges to expand dual or concurrent enrollment programs in academic and career-focused coursework, eliminate remedial education courses, and expand industry credential programs.



Leverage data to improve partnerships and research-driven practices, which can include student and family voice and input from school and community stakeholders to create common goals and shared language that anchors school-based services and operational routines to improve student success and postsecondary transition.

Tools to create the foundation for career-connected learning:

Create a Shared Vision

In Colorado, Canon City High School's mission focuses on student career exploration. In Washington, Lakewood High School's vision is to have all students gain the skills necessary to contribute to a global community.

Review Research-Based Models

The Linked Learning Model is a proven approach that combines rigorous academics with career and technical education as demonstrated in California with the Oakland Health Pathways Project. The P-TECH Getting Started Roadmap combines high school with the first two years of college, and is connected with a specific industry.

Share Data & Info on CTE

Research clearly establishes the value of career-connected learning. Dispel common misconceptions about CTE to students, parents, and staff to appropriately set the stage for career-connected learning. Principals can do this through multiple types of media, like infographics as was done in Georgia, or by utilizing webinars from national partners like Next Steps Webinars to answer questions about career pathways, training, and apprenticeships.



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Build staff and school capacity

Principals play a unique role within the local education agency and are essential to scale career-connected education systems. Principals often lead and champion the school's strategic plan, lead and support school-based teams to manage operational and instructional goals, serve as a liaison to community partners, and coach key staff who are responsible for implementation. When building the capacity of the school, consider how to:



Create a school strategic plan that prioritizes career-connected learning and builds the capacity of school-based leadership teams and staff to reimagine high school through the expansion of the four keys to Unlocking Career Success and intentional partnerships with community and employer partners.



Bring together a cross-cutting management team that consists of school administrators, grade level staff in academic and technical subject areas, school counselors, community and employer partners, and students and families to ensure that open dialogue and partnerships are the foundation for the success of the school.



Create supports for educators and counselors through mentorship and coaching models, professional learning communities, and opportunities to build relationships with postsecondary, community, and employer partners, which can help to drive the four keys to Unlocking Career Success and connect in-school and out-of-school learning.

Strategies to build the capacity of personnel:

Support Professional Learning

Create opportunities for staff to engage in professional learning, connect with business and industry, as well as meet with school counselors and other school-based personnel to expand student supports.

Create Opportunities for Collaboration

Give teachers intentional opportunities to collaborate and lead. In Arizona, Westwood High School's teachers and students are distributed across academy teams and each team is given collaborative planning time to provide more flexible support to address student needs. Additionally, create opportunities for staff to support operational routines including budget construction, student course scheduling, and other operations.



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Create conducive learning environments for career pathways

High schools are incubators of talent, building the capacity of young people to enter the world and find success. Principals can help to ensure that classroom instruction and real-world learning connect. Extended and summer learning models, on-the-job training, and secondary-to-postsecondary partnerships can help to accelerate opportunities for youth. When creating learning environments that are conducive to career pathways, consider how to:



Support students secondary to postsecondary transition, which can include helping to facilitate partnerships between schools, community & technical colleges, and local workforce development boards to drive the four keys to Unlocking Career Success and coordinate in-school and out-of-school-time youth programs and services.



Leverage community partners, including community-based organizations, non-profits, local philanthropic groups, and others to support school implementation, build and scale relationships with the community and with employers, and better connect students to wrap-around services, transition supports, and out-of-school learning opportunities.



Elevate employer engagement to ensure that career-connected learning programs in schools reflect and respond to employer needs, partner with industry groups or associations to help recruit employers to support apprenticeship and work-based learning programs, and create opportunities for employers to partner with educators and students.

Ways to create conducive learning environments for career pathways:

Scale Work-Based Learning

In Virginia, CodeRVA's guaranteed internship model provides every student with a paid work-based learning experience while in high school in a high-wage, high demand field.

Create Tools for Students and Families

In Illinois, Mundelein High School's Pathways Handbook is a student and family facing handbook explaining what pathways are, why they matter, and a range of other necessary information. Course catalogues, pathways mapping tools, career inventories can help create conducive environments.

Conduct an Asset Map

Conduct school and community asset mapping exercises to better understand the community's existing resources that can be deployed to support career-connected learning.



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Build and strengthen partnerships

Youth career pathway programs require coordination across local education agencies and partnerships with employers and community facing organizations. Several schools have partnered with intermediary organizations, and developed public and private partnerships, and/or cross-agency teams to support youth career pathways. When cultivating partnerships, consider how to:



Engage the local workforce development board to leverage and embed services offered through in-school and out-of-school youth programs under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) within school-based services, as well as ways in which the school and staff can support the implementation of these programs.



Support intermediary organizations to build the capacity of the school and staff to engage employers and community-based organizations, to scale work-based learning opportunities, create or expand youth apprenticeship programs, and to support student career navigation and coaching.



Support school partnerships as feeder patterns, school types and configurations vary widely, as do the availability of certain types of career-connected programs and funding models, to ensure that every student has access to high-quality career-connected learning and that the transition from middle to high school and beyond is successful.

Opportunities to cultivate partnerships:

Partner with Business and Industry

Bring industry into the school. In New York, the Brooklyn STEAM Center provides a partnerships opportunity guide and recording for employers to more easily engage with the school.

Expand Community Partnerships

Send students into the community via externships, internships, or other work-based learning opportunities like Butler Tech's 5th Day experience in Ohio in which students can take advantage of coordinated, exploratory work-based learning opportunities with added flexibility in the school week.

Engage Neighboring Schools

Connect with other administrators, particularly feeder middle schools and neighboring high schools to strengthen relationships and share best practices, like the Ches-terfield County Public Schools partnership in Virginia, in which administrators have created a districtwide program of study guide showing pathways from elementary through high school.



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School Board Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



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Step 1

Engage Stakeholders

Step 2

Implement Vision

Step 3

Build Capacity

Step 4

Promote Shared Responsibility

Engage with students, families, educators, district leadership, and communities

It is crucial that school boards actively engage with, and advocate for, families, students, educators, district leadership, and communities to ensure that career-connected programs are responsive to the desires of students, families, and local workforce needs. By involving these stakeholders, school boards can gather valuable insights into the skills, competencies, and languages demanded by families and employers within their region, which allow them to tailor teaching and learning experiences to better prepare students for future careers, fostering a seamless transition for education to employment. When engaging with students, families, and communities consider how to:



Create a shared vision that brings together students, families, and community partners with employers, academic and technical educators, school and district leadership, school counselors, and other personnel to ensure that every student can realize their full potential and has options to pursue higher levels of education and employment upon graduation.



Build strategic partnerships to expand the four keys to Unlocking Career Success, which can include partnerships with community and technical colleges to expand dual or concurrent enrollment programs in academic and career-focused coursework, eliminate remedial education courses, and expand industry credential programs.



Leverage data to improve partnerships and research-driven practices. Include student and family voice and solicit input from school and community stakeholders to create common goals and shared language that anchors school-based services and operational routines to improve student success and postsecondary transition.

Tools for engaging with students, families, and communities:

Communicate the value of career-connected learning

Mundelein High School's Pathways Handbook (IL) helps dispel misconceptions through a student and family-facing handbook explaining what career pathways are, why they matter, and other helpful tools.

In Minnesota, the Academies of Shakopee (MN) provides a library of videos and other public engagement tools for high school career academies to empower students to explore careers without limiting options.

The National Center for English Language Acquisition has a resource to help understand the English benefits of career and technical education (CTE) for English language learners (ELs).



School Board Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



Tools for engaging with students, families, and communities (continued):

Ensure that opportunities are accessible to all learners

As described in a [Dear Colleague Letter](#) jointly issued by the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, schools must provide information and communication with families in a language they understand to help families and students as they navigate important educational decisions, including when and how to enroll in CTE and other career-connected learning programs.

In Bismarck, North Dakota, the school board has ensured that many students can take classes at the [Bismarck Career Academy and Technical Center](#), including students from private schools and home-schooled students. As part of the Bismarck Public School District, the Bismarck Career Academy & Technical Center offer courses geared towards career pathways and each year; more than 1400 students enroll in courses.

[California](#) allows highly mobile students to graduate without completing local graduation requirements that go beyond statewide course requirements and grants eligible students the option to complete a fifth year of high school to complete credits necessary to graduate, or complete exempted courses to maximize college and career opportunities.

Share data and information about CTE

Research clearly establishes the value of career-connected learning. Set the stage for career-connected learning by actively communicating with students, parents, and school personnel about CTE. This can be done through multiple types of media, like infographics as was done in [Georgia](#), or by utilizing webinars from national partners like [Next Steps Webinars](#) to answer questions about career pathways, training, and apprenticeships.

The Office of English Language Acquisition at the U.S. Department of Education created a resource in multiple languages ([English](#), [Spanish](#), [Chinese](#) and [Arabic](#)) to highlight the benefits of CTE for ELs and how schools can provide needed support for their participation.



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Promote Shared Responsibility

Collaborate and implement a districtwide vision

School boards actively work with the school district's superintendent and other district staff to establish strategies, priorities, and initiatives, including goals for career-connected learning. By embracing and executing this vision, school boards can ensure cohesive planning across schools within the district. When collaborating and implementing a districtwide vision consider how to:



Position schools to lead and work together. As school types and configurations vary widely, so does the availability of certain types of career-connected programs and funding structures. Ensure that every student has access to high-quality career-connected learning by ensuring that schools are responsive to student and employer needs.



Commit to equity as a driving factor by expanding access to and support for career-connected learning opportunities for individuals of all backgrounds, especially those from underserved populations. Support student transitions across different types of education and training programs, and embed student and community voice in as many materials as possible.

Tools for collaborating around a districtwide vision:

Establish clear expectations

Develop graduation requirements in partnership with district leadership, families, and students to ensure that community voice is at the center of system design and the community is represented in solutions. In Virginia, the Academies of Hampton portrait of a graduate envisions all students prepared for success in careers, lifelong learning, and life.

In New Mexico, Zuni Public Schools portrait of a graduate includes A:Shiwi core values to ensure youth are responsible citizens who make positive contributions to the world. North Carolina also has a portrait of a graduate at the state level.

Expand community partnerships

Create opportunities for students to partner with the community via externships, internships, or other work-based learning opportunities like Butler Tech's 5th Day experience in Ohio where students can take advantage of coordinated, exploratory work-based learning opportunities with added flexibility in the school week.

Include adult learners in career pathway design

In New York, the school board has partnered with the Center for Workforce Development (CWD) at Monroe 2 – Orleans Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) to offer Adult Career Training Programs. They are providing a variety of industry-aligned educational solutions to prepare all learners for the 21st century workforce. The BOCES 2 CWD strives to provide quality, cost-effective educational and workforce services in partnership with other higher educational agencies, the local workforce community, and adult learners.



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Promote Shared Responsibility

Build capacity for Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs

School boards are in an important position and have a responsibility to build capacity for CTE programs within their communities. They can promote awareness among students and families about the benefits and opportunities offered by career connected learning and ensure appropriate resources: human and financial. When building capacity for CTE programs consider how to:



Build from existing practice and infrastructure. Leverage existing routines like the comprehensive local needs assessment required by Perkins V to inform CTE program expansion, enlist the support of CTE educators for best practices, and encourage the creation of professional learning communities.



Develop and expand policies that promote the four keys to [Unlocking Career Success](#) through board and district policies, local plan development (e.g., [ESEA](#), [Perkins](#), [WIOA](#)) and other procedural guidance to create a career-connected vision and guidance for implementation.



Provide opportunities for employer and community leadership by engaging with community-based organizations, local industry, and workforce development boards. Encourage business and industry to share labor market information (LMI) that informs decisions and ensures that resource allocation reflects the needs of employers.

Tools for building capacity for CTE programs:

Invest in professional development for CTE educators and school counselors

In Virginia, Fairfax County's [Great Beginnings teacher induction program](#) provides comprehensive supports for new teachers. In Florida, Broward County Public Schools' [Professional Learning Communities](#) provides teachers the opportunity to gain skills to better support students, including a specific focus on subjects relating to career-connected learning.

Allocate sufficient resources and funding for CTE

In California, Oakland's [Measure H](#) is a [local tax](#) that provides consistent funding for career readiness programs across the local educational agency (LEA).

Hawaii's [career development success program](#) provides financial incentives to high schools for student attainment of industry-recognized credentials, to advance alignment between policy and practice.

The [Funding to Support Equitable Pathways](#) resource highlights promising practices from five states that braided resources to support high-quality, equitable career pathways.

Engage private and philanthropic partners

Establish dedicated funding to support innovation and system development. In California, [Porterville Pathways Foundation](#) supports the local school district's pathways. And the [Linked Learning Alliance](#) works directly with employers to establish apprenticeship programs, industry advisory committees, and work-based learning experiences.



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Promote Shared Responsibility

Promote shared responsibility

School boards can promote shared responsibility by setting clear expectations and goals aligned with the superintendent's vision for CTE programs. Regularly monitoring data for continuous improvement through data analysis and performance review ensures that district leaders remain focused on achieving these goals. When promoting share responsibility, consider how to:



Require outcomes and metrics within district's strategic plan. Ensure that all plans include dedicated metrics, owners, and deadlines so superintendents and school teams are empowered to make progress.



Create programmatic, fiscal policies that incentivize school districts and LEAs to implement career-connected learning alongside technical assistance, professional learning communities, and other supports to ensure that career-connected learning opportunities exist for every student.



Leverage federal programs, particularly those that require state and local plans, including ESSA, WIOA, and Perkins V, to align the vision and goals, support data collection and performance accountability, and establish policies that improve career-connected learning.

Tools for creating shared responsibility:

Create dedicated CTE teams

In California, the [Porterville Unified School District](#) deploys dedicated teams to support pathways programs within their schools. In Texas, the [Dallas Independent School District](#) has established a dedicated CTE office with clear communication and outreach mandates.

Utilize data for all staffing decisions and resource allocation

Familiarize yourself with [current state and national data](#), collect local and site level data, and use data to determine enrollment in CTE programs, particularly for students who represent special populations. For example, districts in [Ohio](#) conduct "equity labs" to analyze data on special populations and identify the largest and most pressing gaps.

Include youth voice

In Colorado, Douglas County School District has a [student advisory group](#) that serves as a focus group for the school board and school system personnel. This structure empowers students to share their voice in policy making and to provide feedback on the implementation of cultural assets.



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State Education Agency Playbook



Unlocking Career Success

This playbook provides ways in which State educational agencies (SEAs) and teams can blur the lines between high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. SEAs play a significant role to Raise the Bar for student success by developing an *education-to-workforce system* focusing on Unlocking Career Success.

Step 1

Create Unified Vision

Step 2

Leverage Public and Private Funds

Step 3

Strengthen Partnerships

Step 4

Align Accountability Systems

Create a unified vision

The SEA's visions can serve as an animating force to bring together multiple partners and distinct priorities to improve the lives of youth. Several states have developed goals that link educators, employers, community-based organizations, and others as equal partners in attaining the state's vision. When establishing a unified vision across education and workforce systems, consider how to:



Develop and expand policies that promote the four keys to Unlocking Career Success through legislation, regulation, and state plan development (e.g., ESEA, Perkins, WIOA) and policy and other procedural guidance to create a career-connected vision and guidance for implementation.



Create programmatic, fiscal, and accountability policies and practices that incentivize local educational agencies (LEAs) and others to implement career-connected learning alongside technical assistance, professional learning communities, and other supports to ensure that career-connected learning opportunities exist for every student.



Build from existing practice and infrastructure like supporting high-quality career & technical education (CTE) programs to expand career-connected learning, investments in innovation, and opportunities for LEAs to leverage best practices and create professional learning communities.

Tools to establish a unified vision across education and workforce systems:

Review Governance Structures

In Indiana, the Office of Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship was created by Executive Order in 2019 to focus on the implementation of statewide policies for apprenticeship and work-based learning. South Carolina formalized an inter-agency memorandum of understanding that spans education and workforce agencies to advance industry engagement throughout the state. In Kentucky, the TRACK program is a partnership between the state's Department of Education and Office of Apprenticeships to provide high school students with pathways into registered apprenticeship and to enable employers to select CTE courses to support their apprenticeship programs.

Blend College and Career Readiness

Connect college- and career-readiness policies and statewide goals through existing state plans, which include state plans required under ESEA, Perkins, and WIOA. For example, Delaware's ESEA plan outlines expectations for students to be college and career ready and defines related metrics as part of the state's high school accountability model which are identical to performance indicators in the state's Perkins plan. Similarly, Kentucky's High School Graduation Regulations establish student expectations for a "ready graduate," which includes the state's work-based learning program.

Develop Shared Terminology

In Texas, the Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative is a collaboration across the states' Education Agency, Higher Education Coordinating Board, and Workforce Commission to produce a strategic framework, common definitions, and quality standards for work-based learning and a library of workforce credentials. In Illinois, the Career Pathways Dictionary provides definitions for career pathways systems, related terms, and relevant criteria that were developed by multiple state agencies and stakeholders. In Kentucky, the Work-Based Learning Manual provides information on different types of WBL and implementation advice including how to address student participation legal barriers.



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Leverage public and private funds

There are multiple funding sources that SEAs can use to implement a vision of career-connected learning. Federal funds, including Perkins and ESEA formula funds, as well as discretionary grants can be leveraged to support a statewide vision and to implement each of the four keys to Unlocking Career Success. State and philanthropic funds can also be leveraged for statewide initiatives. When leveraging federal, state, and philanthropic funding, consider how to:



Create a funding plan that includes federal, state, and private resources that support the four keys to Unlocking Career Success and how these funds could be leveraged to support innovation, how federal or state resources influence regional or local resources, and a plan to incorporate philanthropic or other funds to support system needs.



Braid financial resources to leverage federal and state funds across the P12, postsecondary, and workforce systems to create and scale career pathways and to provide wrap-around and transition services for youth, which can include flexibilities in Perkins and other federal funding (e.g., see guidance on ARP, Apprenticeship, and Educator Preparation).



Link financial investments with student opportunity which includes a review of existing federal, state, and private funds to ensure that resources support and incentivize the types of outcomes that are best for youth, such as supporting dual or concurrent enrollment programs that are clearly aligned to postsecondary credentials vs. general education.

Tools to leverage federal, state, and philanthropic funding:

Braid Federal Funds

Ensure that there are multiple complementary funding sources to support career-connected learning. Maryland Works is a Maryland State Department of Education grant that leverages ESSER III funds to establish an industry-aligned and statewide apprenticeship program. Delaware braided ESSER, GEER, and philanthropic funds to launch a \$16 million expansion of its Delaware Pathways program. There are also several funding sources within Perkins that states can take advantage of such as reserve and state leadership funds. Ohio's Equity for Each Competitive Grant uses the Perkins V reserve fund to promote promising practices to improve equity in CTE.

Leverage State Funding

Florida's CAPE Act made Florida one of the first states to provide dedicated CTE funding to school districts and postsecondary institutions. Many states have similar policies and financial practices.

Create Flexible Funding

SEAs can utilize flexible funding from philanthropic and employer groups to diversify funding, supplement funding gaps, and launch statewide initiatives or programming. The New Hampshire Charitable Foundation and the Business and Industry Association of New Hampshire funded up to \$10,000 for career pathways programs that support partnerships between high schools with area businesses and local chambers of commerce. Massachusetts utilizes state workforce funding through their local workforce development boards to support work-based learning opportunities for students. Many states and communities also leverage summer youth employment funds to scale work-based learning opportunities for youth.



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Align Accountability Systems

Build and strengthen partnerships

Career pathway programs often span P-12, postsecondary, and workforce systems, requiring coordination among state and local governments and partnerships with employers and community facing organizations. Through intermediary organizations or cross-agency teams, states can develop strategic partnerships and support youth career pathways. When building and strengthening partnerships, consider how to:



Codify roles and responsibilities that bring together different agencies and organizations as part of a cross-cutting management team to ensure that each partner is responsible for leading specific actions and to create both individual and shared accountability to support the success of the group and the initiative.



Leverage community partners including community-based organizations, non-profits, and other intermediary organizations to support system innovation, build and scale relationships with the community and with employers, and to support braided funding models that better connect with private, philanthropic, and corporate funders.



Engage the state and/or local workforce development boards to connect in-school and out-of-school youth programs that are administered through WIOA and other workforce development funds that may be state issued to support youth employment and student transition as well as to expand wrap-around services for youth.

Tools to build and strengthen partnerships across the state:

Create Cross-Sector Partnerships

SEAs can create programs that support innovative teaching and learning. The Massachusetts's Innovation Pathways is a collaboration among the Massachusetts Executive Office of Education, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Department of Higher Education to ensure that new college and career pathways are carefully designed to offer high-quality preparation for college and career. Tennessee's Innovative School Models is a grant program that supports partnerships between local education agencies, postsecondary institutions, and employers to rethink educational models that prepare students for postsecondary education and careers.

Develop Policies Across Agencies

SEAs can partner with higher education agencies or systems to develop robust statewide policies on dual enrollment that close equity gaps. In Illinois, the Dual Credit Quality Act established a state partnership agreement between P12 and postsecondary institutions to expand dual credit and increase course rigor, transferability, oversight, and accountability. The Delaware Technical Community College regularly shares instructors with LEAs under a partnership agreement to blur secondary and postsecondary education, especially when programs are co-located on the college's campus.

Seek Innovative Solutions

Create opportunities for LEAs to demonstrate innovation through policy, resources, and grants. Butler Tech's 5th Day Experience initiative in Ohio allows students to attend school virtually, participate in work-based learning, or attend specific campus programming on the fifth day of each school week – thanks to a state waiver to allow the school system to modify their academic calendar.

Support Intermediaries

SEAs can support and invest in intermediaries to accelerate career-connected learning like Washington's Career Connect Intermediary Grant program which provides funding to support intermediaries, organization that help bridge industry and education.



State Education Agency Playbook






Unlocking Career Success

This playbook provides ways in which State educational agencies (SEAs) and teams can blur the lines between high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. SEAs play a significant role to Raise the Bar for student success by developing an *education-to-workforce system* focusing on Unlocking Career Success.



Align accountability systems

Data and student information is required to continuously improve career-connected learning programs. States play a strategic role in the development and alignment of monitoring routines, accountability and data models, and administrative policy and procedures to support data-informed decisions and the implementation of the four keys to Unlocking Career Success. When developing strong monitoring and accountability systems, consider how to:

-  *Develop performance management routines* that are asset-based, occur within traditional LEA planning cycles, and support LEAs to identify existing best practices, areas of growth and opportunity, and identify technical assistance or financial supports that can assist the LEA to scale the four keys to Unlocking Career Success.
-  *Leverage existing federal requirements* like accountability models in Perkins to improve program coordination, monitoring, and accountability across federal programs, such as through ESEA, Perkins, and WIOA, to provide support to LEAs to produce accurate, timely data to inform annual or more frequent improvement cycles.
-  *Support research driven partnerships* to identify and scale evidence-based practices that are replicable across LEAs and those that can be used to inform state policy development and iteration, as well as to better link educators, policymakers, and researchers within the career-connected learning system.

Tools to develop strong monitoring and accountability systems:

Review Accountability Systems

States can incentivize the adoption of high-quality programming by developing common measures and a coordinated data collection model across ESEA, Perkins, and WIOA. Washington Education Research & Data Center combines state education and workforce data into a statewide longitudinal data system to inform policy and decision making.

Maryland's Longitudinal Data System collects and organizes student and workforce data from all levels of education and the state's workforce. Alabama established the Governor's Office of Education and Workforce Transformation to braid education and workforce funding through modifications to their ESEA, Perkins, and WIOA state plans to support the Alabama Career Pathways Model. In 2022, ED approved amendments to Alabama's ESEA state plan to include new indicators of college and career readiness to support CTE programs and in-school youth apprenticeship.

Support Data-Driven Decisions

Many SEAs make regular updates to policy based on real-time data and systemic feedback loops like the Alabama Terminal on Linking Analyzing Statistics (ATLAS), a statewide longitudinal data system design to empower agencies and businesses with data to regularly adjust career pathways programs based on economic needs.



State Education Agency Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



Tools to develop strong monitoring and accountability systems (continued):

Consider Quality Frameworks

SEAs often develop statewide frameworks that outline quality metrics and create accountability structures for local education agencies. The [Texas Education Agency](#) provides a list of approved CTE programs and aligned industry-based certifications to inform its Perkins funding model. Texas also created the [Effective Advising Framework](#) to provide local education agencies with a blueprint for comprehensive school counseling systems. [Indiana](#) subsidizes a pre-approved list of liberal arts and technical dual enrollment courses, caps student costs, and requires each high school to offer at least two dual credit courses, in addition to including work-based learning as a requirement for high school graduation. Illinois also provides guidance on its [Employability Skills Framework](#) and [Model Program of Study Guides](#) to inform specific career pathways development and to guide implementation and evaluation.

Invest in Technical Assistance and Monitoring Routines

Another primary function of the SEA is to provide technical assistance targeted reviews, and/or monitoring. Texas created a [Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment Guidebook](#) to provide Perkins funded programs with guidance and to assist local educational agencies in their use of regional labor market information. States also establish conditions to manage quality, like [New York's Department of Education](#) requirement for work-based learning experiences to be registered for a five-year period and for students to earn academic credit, and [Florida's Department of Education](#) annual audit of course offerings in the state CTE system to analyze the alignment of secondary and postsecondary programs to in-demand, high-skill and high-wage employment opportunities.



State Education Agency Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



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Student and Family Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



This playbook provides ways in which students and their families can blur the lines between high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. Students are the most important stakeholders to Raise the Bar for student success and can play an active role in shaping the *education-to-workforce* system to focus on Unlocking Career Success.

Step 1

Focus on Goal Setting

Step 2

Unlock Career Success

Step 3

Prepare for Life After School

Focus on goal setting

High school is an opportune time for young people to try different types of programs and leadership opportunities that help foster their sense of identity, develop skills and interests, and take steps to form and pursue their education and career goals. Students and their families can work to establish these goals and take concrete steps to accomplish them throughout high school. When focusing on goal setting, consider how to:



Develop an education and career plan that provides opportunities to set realistic and timebound goals, with at least annual milestones, allows for reflection and iteration of these goals throughout high school, incorporates course of study options, supports students in attaining good jobs, and creates opportunities to discuss these goals with family, friends, different peer groups, and other key mentors.



Get a head start on your future by participating in career pathways and early college programs that are offered in high school, which include career and technical education (CTE), early college programs, youth apprenticeship programs, or similar programs that support the development of academic, technical, and leadership skills.



Participate in youth career development and leadership activities which can occur in-school, after-school, and over the summer months and include things like career and technical student organizations (CTSOs), programs offered through youth.gov, summer youth employment programs, extracurricular activities, volunteer opportunities, and other youth focused programs.

Tools to focus on goal setting:

Enlist Support and Input

Talk with a school counselor, CTE Director, teacher, or coach to understand different postsecondary and career options, and develop a plan while in high school to help accomplish goals related to education and future careers.

Explore external resources like Colorado's Individual Career and Academic Plan, a comprehensive resource to support individualized student planning.

Work with counselors, teachers, and family members to document interests, activities, and goals—many states require that students complete a plan designed to help young people define their education and career goals and take steps to pursue them.



Student and Family Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



Tools to focus on goal setting (continued):

Identify Your Personal and Professional Strengths

Take steps to *identify personal interests and strengths*, which can help inform careers and types of postsecondary education programs that may be of interest. Activities such as the American School Counselor Association's [Career Conversation Starters](#) can help students identify personal strengths and professional interests.

Explore skill-to-career matching websites that help students and their families to look at and evaluate different postsecondary and career options, which can include free assessments such as the [ASVAB Career Exploration Program](#) that can help students identify potential careers based on their unique skills. [MyNextMove.Org](#) will match skills to a variety of careers that utilize and develop personal skills into professional practice by offering tools to search careers, browse careers by industries, and discover interests. Resources such as [My Colorado Journey](#) enable users to find and explore careers in Colorado and map out the steps to achieve their goals while taking into account job outlook, expected earnings, and the required training.

Ask your teachers and counselors about opportunities to meet with industry professionals through webinars, informational and mock interviews, workplace tours, or job shadowing. Many schools leverage virtual platforms to connect students to mentors and industry professionals, or can host events independently, like [The Pittsburgh Technology Council](#) which hosts an annual STEM summit to showcase the diverse array of STEM related careers for students, parents, and educators with company tours as a highlight, or [UpSkill Houston](#), an employer-led initiative that hosts conversations with employers and the education community and provides resources and [videos](#) to showcase good careers that don't require a four-year college degree.

Consider Career Pathway Options in High School

Research the benefits of career and technical education to see if it would be a good fit. The U.S. Department of Education's [CTE Data Story](#) provides information on the overall benefits and national landscape. A student's local high school or district may offer an overview of what high school career pathways are, why they matter, and what they involve such as [Mundelein High School's Pathways Handbook \(IL\)](#).

Consider the best possible career pathway to meet student interest. [Advance CTE's Student Interest Survey for Career Clusters®](#) can help narrow down careers of interest. Resources such as [My Colorado Journey](#) enables users to find and explore careers in Colorado and map out the steps to achieve their goals while taking into account job outlook, expected earnings and the required training. Many states have similar dashboards and tools that teachers can leverage, including [Indiana's Hoosiers by the Numbers](#), which breaks out labor market information by county and topic.

Identify what career pathways are available at your local high school and explore other available options. While many high schools offer CTE and Early College programs, every school is unique. Some communities require students to apply to participate in career and technical focused high schools or "career academies." If the program you are interested in is not available locally, you may be able to apply for the opportunity to attend another school or district or participate in a program through distance or out-of-school time learning. For example, Massachusetts provides an [overview of CTE](#), explaining the different types of statewide programs and how to enroll.



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Step 1

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Career Success

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Prepare for Life
After School

Unlock Career Success

Unlocking Career Success is an initiative that is designed to reimagine how high schools prepare all students to thrive in their future careers and focuses on dual enrollment, work-based learning, workforce credentials, and career navigation. When put together, these experiences help young people to explore postsecondary education and the world of work, develop transferable skills, and seek support as needed. During a student's high school experience, consider how to:



Participate in work-based learning experiences which can include a variety of activities from job shadowing to mock interviews, to paid learning experiences that occur in the workplace—collectively these experiences build awareness about how to access a job, build a professional network, and develop work experiences that are part of a resume.



Earn a workforce credential or a similar articulation of skill and experience that is high value, which means the industry credential can help to apply for postsecondary education and a job and may support advanced standing in postsecondary education and/or increased wages in a job because of the level of skill and experience demonstrated.



Pursue dual enrollment (also known as concurrent enrollment), in both academic and technical subject areas to get a head start on college-level coursework while still in high school, to eliminate remedial education, and ensure that all awarded credit is transferable to a degree.

Tools for Unlocking Career Success:

Participate in Dual Enrollment

Dual enrollment means taking courses that allow high school students to earn both high school and college credits, which are transferable to the institutions of higher education.

Ask teachers and school counselors about the benefits of dual enrollment, what courses are available, how to get enrolled, what costs and financial supports might exist, and other information necessary to enroll in college-level coursework while still in high school.

Dual enrollment can help students earn postsecondary credits at low or no cost and has a proven track record to support high rates of success in college, through both virtual and on-site college classes. To learn more about the benefits of dual enrollment, particularly for underrepresented students, see the Community College Research Center Research Brief.

In several career and early college high school models, students can earn an Associate degree by the time they graduate high school. Look at Early College High School to review characteristics of early college programs and P-Tech to help to evaluate the types of programs that are offered in your area.

Advanced Placement® offered by the College Board and International Baccalaureate® are classes that provide access to college-level content while in high school and can often, but not always, result in awarded credit at colleges and universities based on a student's score on the end-of-year exam(s).



Student and Family Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



Tools for Unlocking Career Success (continued):

Take Part in Work-Based Learning (WBL)

WBL is often paid, on-the-job learning that supports the development of a specific set of skills, and may include related classroom instruction, allowing students to “earn-and-learn.”

Identify paid internships in the community or those that may exist virtually by talking to teachers and school counselors, family and friends, contacting local workforce boards or area chambers of commerce, and exploring online job boards.

Start by developing an online resume and a second traditional resume that can be saved and shared as a PDF. Before reaching out to employers, consider making social media profiles private and be sure to double-check social media content for anything that may not put you in the best light.

Registered Apprenticeship is the premier work-based learning experience that students can pursue while in high school and after. It offers paid, on-the-job training, with guaranteed wage progression, related training, and instruction, culminates in an industry-recognized credential and national certificate of completion, and provides valuable career mentorship and partnership with an employer.

Many schools are working to create youth apprenticeship programs that start in high school, like in North Carolina where the Apprenticeship NC program offers high school students opportunities to earn credit for secondary career and technical education coursework, college credits, and on-the-job training with a registered apprenticeship sponsor. After graduation, students complete their apprenticeship along with their Associate degree, all of which is paid for by the employer.

My Next Move is a great resource to support career exploration and includes tools to help search for careers and industries as well as explore interests. Additionally, Career OneStop includes supports to find a career, support the completion of high school, guidance on creating a resume, applying for postsecondary education and training, and searching for a job.

YouthRules provides resources on young workers rights and includes information for youth, parents, educators, and employers on topics like where youth can work, what hours youth can work, and best practices related to youth employment. Additional resources can be found on the Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s Safe Work for Young Workers, which includes information on youth rights to work, employer responsibilities, and occupational safety.

Showcase Your Skills through Workforce Credentials

Workforce credentials should hold value both in the labor market and in higher levels of education and can provide a leg up in both.

How students articulate and present their skills and experiences is particularly important for young people who choose to enter the workforce immediately after high school or those who choose to work and pursue postsecondary education simultaneously. A workforce credential can assist students in communicating their skills and can help youth to be more competitive for a job.

Career and technical education (CTE) programs are often a starting place for students to pursue a workforce credential and many CTE programs require students to complete a workforce credential as part of the program.

Understanding which workforce credentials hold value is important—to learn more about the role of credentials in high school, check out this Fordham Institute Report.



Student and Family Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



Tools for Unlocking Career Success (continued):

Career Advising and Navigation

Every young person should leave high school with clear career goals and the knowledge and resources needed to pursue them. Getting there requires the help and support of adults.

Navigating postsecondary education and the evolving labor market can be extremely complicated. As such, it is important for young people to leave high school with clear education and career goals, and the knowledge and skills needed to pursue them. Career counseling and navigation supports have traditionally been provided by school counselors and educators.



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Step 1

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Step 3

Prepare for Life After School

Prepare for life after high school

Students have multiple options beyond high school to pursue higher levels of education, enter the workforce, or do both concurrently. However, these choices are not always communicated to students or their families. And while education and a good job are explicitly linked, the type of credential or degree that holds value is most reflective of the occupation and industry that young people want to pursue. When preparing for life after high school, consider how to:



Explore two- and four-year options like community and technical colleges and four-year institutions, and take actions to apply, like researching colleges and programs, completing the ACT or SAT, completing the FAFSA®, looking into financial student aid estimator, researching college promise programs, completing the Common App, and applying for scholarships.



Explore earn-and-learn options, like registered apprenticeship, military or other national service, and youth programs, and take actions to apply, like researching and finding a registered apprenticeship, looking for industry credential or youth program through a local workforce board or American Job Center, looking into military requirements, or looking into other youth programs like Job Corps, YouthBuild, and AmeriCorps.



Act as your own advocate by talking with school counselors, educators, family and friends, and other key mentors to create a postsecondary and career plan, know what postsecondary and career options are available, take steps to apply to these options, and to ensure that the appropriate supports and transition services are available along the way.

Tools for preparing for life after high school:

Explore Your Postsecondary Options

College is one of several options that students have beyond high school. Explore different types of earn-and-learning models like registered apprenticeship, industry credentials, military or other national service, and youth programs.

As an AmeriCorp member, students can choose the service opportunity that aligns with their passions, as an example in AmeriCorps NCCC you will travel the country, all expenses paid, addressing climate change, disaster relief, and more, while earning money for college.

YouthBuild primarily serves young people who lack a high school diploma reclaim their education, gain job skills, and become leaders in their communities. They provide financial resources through community-based, pre-apprenticeship programs that provides job training and educational opportunities —and includes a network of hundreds of YouthBuild programs in the United States and around the globe.

Job Corps is the nation's largest free, residential career training and education program for low-income young adults ages 16 through 24, and provides education and training as well as wrap-around supports and job placement services in more than 100 training areas, 10 in-demand industries, across more than 120 campuses nationwide.



Student and Family Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



Tools for preparing for life after high school (continued):

Explore Your Postsecondary Options (continued)

[Reentry Employment Opportunities](#) is a grant programs offering direct services and training for justice-involved youth, young adults, and formerly incarcerated adults.

There are different pathways into the military including military academies, [Reserve Officer Training Corps](#), or enlisting in active-duty service, which could later [help pay for college, offer you experience in industry partnerships](#), or provide advanced degrees while teaching you valuable technical skills. For more information on each branch of the military, see the related military [requirements](#).

Working with [local workforce development boards](#) and [American Job Centers](#) can help to identify additional programs for youth including [in-school and out-of-school youth programs](#) which can help youth to connect to industry credential programs, transition services, and other supports to help young people continue their education and pursue employment beyond high school.

Registered apprenticeship is an industry-driven, high-quality career pathway where employers can develop and prepare their future workforce, and individuals can obtain paid work experience, receive progressive wage increases, classroom instruction, and a portable, nationally recognized credential. To learn more about registered apprenticeship see [here](#), to find a registered apprenticeship in the community see [here](#).

Get Support to Access Postsecondary Education

Pursuing the right postsecondary educational opportunity can require some mentorship, guidance, and support. To help students be successful in finding their unique postsecondary pathway, consider the following:

Consider joining family organizations, such as a [Parent Teacher Association \(PTA\)](#) to become more active in P-12 activities. Connect with high school counselors, CTE teachers or supervisors, and other school-based staff to see what internship opportunities exist by grade level.

Advocate for students' postsecondary needs and aspirations.

[Prepare for life challenges](#) a student may face through understanding the complexities associated with navigating secondary and postsecondary education and training.

Understand the Costs Associated with Postsecondary Education

Understand the costs of different postsecondary education options and what support students need as they apply to certain programs.

The Department of Education's [College Scorecard](#) can help compare college's fields of study, earnings, costs, admissions, debt, completion results, and more.

Take control of your future by completing the [My Future My Way](#) workbook which explores the crucial steps to understanding how to prepare financially for college, including federal, state, or local resources.

Explore family-specific opportunities such as [Saving Early = Saving Smart!](#) To start saving for college early.

Look for ways to offset the cost of college tuition through Pell grants, work-study

[FSA](#) provides a federal student aid estimator that helps provide an estimate of how much federal student aid a student may be eligible to receive.



Student and Family Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



Tools for preparing for life after high school (continued):

Explore Ways to Pay for Postsecondary Education

Review the [Federal Student Aid's Money Management Checklist for College Students](#), and learn the difference between [saving](#) and [borrowing](#) through MyMoney.gov.

Grants: This source of funding is [generally needs based and most do not have to be repaid](#), including [Pell Grants](#), and other [federal student grant programs](#).

Scholarships: These are often pots of money allocated to students based on academic achievements, financial need, extracurricular activities, student demographics, and more that are searchable through websites such as [FastWeb.org](#) and [Scholarship.org](#).

Work-Study Jobs: A [Federal work study](#) program provides part-time jobs to undergraduate and graduate students with financial need and can occur on and off campus. Students can earn minimum wage as they learn with set working hours – this program specifically encourages community service, such as tutoring or serving as a mentor, and work related to the student's course of study.

Loans: Money that you borrow that you have to pay back. Consider who is making the loan and the terms and conditions of the loan. For example, if you receive a federal loan – the U.S. Department of Education is your lender.

Understand the different types of loans that are available including [federal loans & private loans](#) and [direct subsidized and unsubsidized loans](#).

Utilize a [Loan Comparison Calculator](#) to compare up to four different loans at the same time and a [Loan Payment Calculator](#) to estimate future monthly loan payments, including the annual salary to manage them.

Internships: Paid work-based learning opportunities like [internships](#) are a common way for college students to offset college-related expenses, and also increase their personal and professional wealth and knowledge.

Make a Plan and Execute

Once a student and family decide on a postsecondary path, students and families should prepare for the realities of postsecondary education and training programs.

Create a postsecondary or college savings plan utilizing [studentaid.gov](#). Take control of your future by completing the [My Future My Way](#) workbook which explores the crucial steps to understanding how to prepare financially for college, including federal, state, or local resources.

Identify your family's financial need and [how financial aid is calculated](#). Financial need is calculated based on the difference between the [cost of attendance \(COA\)](#) at a school and your Student Aid Index (SAI). While COA varies from school to school, your SAI does not change based on the school you attend. Use the [Federal Student Aid Estimator](#) to find out how much federal student aid you are eligible to receive and don't forget to research costs beyond tuition!

Complete a FAFSA. This will require collecting your family's financial information, determining your dependency status, and choosing which colleges and universities to which you will send your financial information. Go to <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa> to learn more and access additional U.S. Department of Education resources.



Student and Family Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



Tools for preparing for life after high school (continued):

Make a Plan and Execute (continued)

Understand how to read a financial aid award letter. Specific to the college you applied to – you will be provided with a student aid package or school offer that will discuss the type of financial aid available to you including the annual total cost of attendance, a list of financial aid options such as gift aid and repayable loans. Calculate the cost of attendance (COA) when considering financial aid packages, and remember the average cost of attendance includes housing (room and board), meal plans, supplies, textbooks, and other expenses.

Explore opportunities to apply for additional financial aid and make key decisions. This can include filing for a financial aid appeal letter, searching for additional scholarships, and private loans. The College Financing Plan is a consumer tool and FAQ document that simplifies financial aid information to help students and families make informed decisions in a streamlined and comparable way. Contact your college's financial aid office and connect with a financial aid counselor, the Department of Labor's free scholarship tool: CareerOneStop, and more!



Student and Family Playbook

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Adult Learner Playbook

Unlocking Career Success for Special Populations



Playbook Introduction

Career-Career-connected learning is an educational strategy that combines high-quality academic instruction, skill-based learning, and real-world experiences to prepare students with the knowledge and skills that they need to pursue their college and career goals. Career-connected learning can be delivered in a variety of ways, including in core content classes, through career and technical education (CTE) programs, in partnership with community and technical colleges, and through work-based learning experiences like internships, pre-apprenticeships, and registered apprenticeship programs. Career-connected learning is especially important for an often-overlooked group of students, adult learners. The term “adult learners” encompasses many groups of people. For instance, for purposes of the [Adult Education and Family Literacy Act \(AEFLA\)](#), an “eligible individual” is an individual— (A) who has attained 16 years of age; (B) who is not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law; and (C) who— (i) is basic skills deficient; (ii) does not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and has not achieved an equivalent level of education, or (iii) is an English language learner.

Focusing on adult learners is crucial to our economy and nation because they represent a significant portion of our population striving to further their skill development and career prospects. Adult learners often face added challenges, such as balancing work and family responsibilities while pursuing their education, so it is important they maximize the benefits from their education. Career-connected learning plays a pivotal role in supporting adult learners by offering practical, hands-on training that directly aligns with evolving industry needs. This targeted approach not only equips adult learners with relevant skills but also increases their employability in competitive job markets. By focusing on CTE adult learners can complete their education while acquiring certifications, gain real-world experiences, and work as apprentices, leading to more promising career opportunities and personal financial stability.

One of the most significant innovations brought about by WIOA was to position the Federal adult education program firmly within the workforce development system. Integrated education and training (IET) is a program model and instructional approach that provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, for the purpose of educational and career advancement toward meeting WIOA goals. The instruction combines three required components to accelerate student learning and career advancement: basic literacy and language instruction, workforce preparation, and workforce training. To support states to build their capacity to offer IET, the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) funds several technical assistance (TA) efforts, the most significant of which are the IET Toolkit, IET Quality Indicators, and the Basic and Advanced IET Design Camps.

- Correctional education and reentry programs play a critical role in preparing incarcerated adults for success after release, especially as measured by increased employment outcomes and reduced recidivism (Davis et al., 2014; Western, 2006). Data from the 2014 U.S. Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies Survey of Incarcerated Adults indicate lower educational attainment rates for incarcerated adults compared with the general U.S. population (Petersilia, 2003; Taliaferro, 2017). Many incarcerated adults also lack job skills and a steady employment history (Petersilia, 2003; Western et al., 2001), creating hurdles to finding employment after release. To address these challenges, state and facility correctional education leaders are turning to evidence-based practices, such as Integrated Education and Training (IET) models, to prepare participants for release by aligning and contextualizing education and workforce instruction and accelerating participants’ progress along a career pathway.



Adult Learner Playbook

Unlocking Career Success for Special Populations



- IET programs are gaining momentum across the country as an evidence-based strategy for building academic, employability, and occupational skills together and often leading to an industry-recognized credential (Institute of Education Sciences, 2021). In corrections, effective IET programs align with and enhance existing reentry education services (as illustrated by the [Reentry Education Framework](#)) by leveraging similar components and accelerating the learner experience. IET programs in corrections can help participants earn academic and occupational certifications to prepare them for success after release.

Unlocking Career Success

[Unlocking Career Success](#) is one of the priority initiatives within Secretary Cardona's Raise the Bar initiative, and it is an interagency program that reimagines how our nation's high schools prepare all students to thrive in their future education and careers. The initiative blurs the lines between high school, college, and career to provide students with accelerated and innovative opportunities to earn college credits and gain real-world career experiences. This joint effort across the U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, and Commerce supports public and private sector leaders, government agencies, and other community-based organizations to help students earn postsecondary degrees and industry-recognized credentials that our employers need, and our economy demands. Unlocking Career Success seeks to strengthen systems of multiple pathways to success, fulfilling the promise of education as the key to economic and social mobility and providing our students with rewarding, joyful, and purposeful college and career pathways that lead them to reach their endless potential.



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Actions

Schools, adult education providers, community-based organizations, and business and industry can increase pathways through career-connected learning to [Raise the Bar](#) for adult learners by taking steps to:

1. Understand and Disseminate Local Labor Market Needs.

It is important that those in the adult education space understand local labor needs, as well as collaborate with business and industry to determine which credentials and certification programs would be most beneficial for adult learners looking to increase their standing in the workforce.

Action Items for Business and Industry:

- *Signal labor needs.* How employers articulate the types of skills and occupations that they need is foundational to informing classroom instruction, work-based learning, and students' education and career plans. Business and industry can share labor market information (LMI) to inform educators and students, ensure instructional programs and resource allocation reflects the needs of employers, and support students to continue their education and enter the workforce. Available resources:
 - [Integrated Education and Training Design Toolkit](#)
 - [Promising Practices for Collaborating with Industry and Workforce Development Partners in Integrated Education and Training Programs](#)
 - [Adult Education and the Workforce Development System: Partnering to Improve Services](#)
 - [Expanding Boundaries: Taking a Regional Approach to IELCE/IET](#)
- *Support work-based learning for adult learners.* Employers are vital to providing students with the high-quality learning experiences that occur in the workplace. Work-based learning can include career exploration activities like job shadowing and more immersive experiences such as internships and cooperative education. Registered apprenticeship is the premier earn and learn model. Available resources:
 - [Promising Practices for Integrated Education and Training Pathways to Postsecondary Education](#)
 - [Promising Practices for Integrated Education and Training Programs That Serve Beginning-Level Learners](#)
 - [Supporting the Economic Integration of Adult Learners with Emerging Literacy Skills](#)
 - [The Role of Navigators in IELCE/IET Career Pathways](#)

2. Articulate Opportunities for Reengagement.

There are various pathways to support adult learners to continue their education with a focus on career-connected learning. Some of those pathways include:

- *Community College:* Community colleges offer two-year programs leading to the Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree. These colleges also have technical and vocational



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programs with close links to secondary/high schools, community groups, and employers in the local community. Community colleges often lead the United States in educating students in cutting-edge fields such as biomedical technology, robotics, laser optics, and geographic information systems. The small size of classes at community colleges can be highly beneficial for international students as they adjust to the pace of U.S. academic life and practice their English-language skills.

- *Community College to Bachelor's Degree:* Undergraduate students studying at community colleges can earn academic credit towards a bachelor's degree. Earning academic credit at a community college, which is usually less expensive, can help lower the overall cost of a bachelor's degree. Community colleges and 4-year colleges and universities often develop special agreements for the transfer of credits and degrees between the institutions. In this "2+2 process," you can earn a bachelor's degree with two years of community college, followed by two years of university study.
- *Four-Year College:* Undergraduate education at a four-year institution is based on the concept of liberal arts and sciences. You can take classes in a wide variety of subjects in addition to your major field of study. The bachelor's degree is awarded after completing a specified number of courses in a major field of study. This can be completed in four years of full-time study or longer if going to school part-time.
- *Apprenticeship:* A registered apprenticeship is an industry-driven, high-quality career pathway where employers can develop and prepare their future workforce, and individuals can obtain paid work experience, classroom instruction, and a portable, nationally recognized credential.
- *Workforce development training:* Building the skills and competencies of American workers is essential to ensuring the competitiveness of business in the global economy. The public workforce development system recognizes that training for individuals must align with the needs of business and industry. There are several ways that the public workforce development system supports this need for training: pre-employment training, on-the-job training, and incumbent worker training.
- *Credential program:* Education programs that incorporate the opportunity to earn an industry-sought credential can give adults a leg up in the labor market. This is particularly important for those who choose not to pursue further learning immediately after high school or those who choose to work and learn simultaneously.

3. Strategically Utilize Funding Opportunities to Support Adult Learners.

There are multiple funding opportunities available to support adult learners at the Federal level:

- AEFLA supports programs that help adults get the basic skills they need including reading, writing, math, English language proficiency, and problem-solving to be productive workers, family members, and citizens. As title II of WIOA and one of six core programs authorized by WIOA, AEFLA also plays an integral role in the workforce development system by providing access to educational services for adult learners through the one-stop delivery system. While playing a critical role in adult attainment of a secondary school diploma, AEFLA also aims to assist in the transition to postsecondary education and training using career pathways.
- Upon submission of an approved Unified or Combined State Plan, [OCTAE](#) at the U. S. Department of Education provides grants to states to fund local programs of adult education and



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literacy services for eligible individuals. These services include adult education, literacy, English language acquisition, workplace literacy services, family literacy services, integrated education and training, and integrated English literacy and civics education programs.

- *The Free Application of Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)*: FAFSA is an application for Federal student aid and needs to be every adult learner's initial step in identifying Federal funding for educational programs. Individuals must complete the FAFSA form to apply for Federal student aid such as Federal grants, work-study funds, and loans. Completing and submitting the FAFSA form is free and easier than ever, and it gives you access to Federal student aid—the largest source of aid—to help you pay for college or career/trade school. In addition, many states and colleges use your FAFSA information to determine your eligibility for state and school aid. Some private aid providers may use your FAFSA information to determine whether you qualify for their aid.
- *Pell Grants*: Federal Pell Grants usually are awarded to undergraduate students who display exceptional financial need and have not earned a bachelor's, graduate, or professional degree. In some cases, a student enrolled in a postbaccalaureate teacher certification program might receive a Federal Pell Grant. Additionally, you may be eligible to receive a Federal Pell Grant if you are [confined or incarcerated and enrolled in an approved Prison Education Program](#). A Federal Pell Grant, unlike a loan, does not have to be repaid, except under certain circumstances.
- *Ability to Benefit (ATB)*: In December 2014, the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, was changed to allow a student who does not have a high school diploma or the [recognized equivalent of a high school diploma](#), or who did not complete a secondary school education in a homeschool setting, to be eligible for Title IV aid through one of the ATB alternatives if the student is enrolled in an “eligible career pathway program,” or ECPP. Students who are enrolled in an ECPP may be eligible to receive *Title IV* aid if the student meets one of the following ATB alternatives:
 - Passes an independently administered U.S. Department of Education approved [ATB test](#);
 - Completes at least six credit hours or 225 clock hours that are applicable toward a degree or certificate offered by the postsecondary institution: or
 - Completes a state process approved by the Secretary of Education.

On October 30, 2023, [final regulations](#) were published implementing this statutory change. These regulations amend the provisions of the state process alternative and provide regulatory requirements for ECPPs that are used for establishing student eligibility for *Title IV* funds and will be effective July 1, 2024.

4. Consider policies, processes, programs, and practices that increase access to and success in career-connected learning for adult learners.

There are a variety of programs that stakeholders can utilize to support adult learners in career-connected learning:

- OCTAE's Division of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL) [funds digital literacy initiatives](#) to enable adult learners to succeed in a range of academic activities, including STEM and college



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and career readiness. These initiatives enhance the integration of technology into instruction, increase student access to technology and leverage learning outside the classroom.

- Employability Skills are general skills that are necessary for success in the labor market at all employment levels and in all sectors. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 includes employability skills as a key component of workplace preparation activities for education and training programs. The [Employability Skills Framework](#) describes a set of nine key skills, organized in three broad categories: Applied Knowledge, Effective Relationships, and Workplace Skills.
- The [Advancing Innovation in Adult Education](#) project highlights practices from across the country that improved outcomes for adult learners. The resources shared offer valuable insight for adult education professionals on the innovative practices showcased throughout the compendiums of innovative practices. Resources include:
 1. Compendium of Innovative Practices: Secondary Credentialing
 2. Compendium of Innovative Practices: Bridge & IET Programs
 3. Compendium of Innovative Practices: Holistic Approaches to Adult Education Services:



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Additional Resources

- The [Literacy Information and Communication System \(LINCS\)](#) project represents a commitment by the Department to support both States and local AEFLA funded providers in their continued implementation of WIOA and building successful adult education programs. LINCS is the main dissemination vehicle used by OCTAE (DAEL) to disseminate evidence-based resources and professional development materials intended to improve the quality of instruction for adult learners. LINCS demonstrates OCTAE's commitment to delivering high-quality, on-demand educational opportunities to practitioners of adult education, so those practitioners can help adult learners successfully transition to postsecondary education and 21st century jobs. LINCS consists of the following components:
 - [LINCS Resource Collection](#) a collection of vetted resources for adult education practitioners
 - [LINCS Community](#) an online community of practice
 - [LINCS Courses](#) online courses for adult education practitioners
 - [State Resources](#) professional development and technical assistance opportunities for States and information on current and past Federal initiatives.
 - [Learner Center](#) resources for adult learners

These components provide adult educators with the information, resources, professional development activities, and online network they need to enhance their practice and ensure their adult students receive high-quality learning opportunities.

- The [Advance Integrated Education and Training \(ADVANCE IET\)](#) project represents a commitment by the Department to assist State and local adult education staff plan, design, implement, and evaluate effective IET programs and service approaches that are responsive to State and local labor market demands.
- The [Integrated Education and Training in Corrections \(IETC\)](#) project represents a commitment by the Department to provide resources and technical assistance to assist State and local adult education staff plan, design, implement, and evaluate effective IET programs and service approaches in correctional facilities that are responsive to State and local labor market demands.
- The [Enhancing Access for Refugees and New Americans \(EARN\)](#) project represents a commitment by the Department to build the capacity of States, local programs, and classroom instructors to provide comprehensive immigrant integration services, centering around Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) and Integrated Education and Training (IET) programming - by providing technical assistance that supports the linguistic, civic, and economic integration of immigrant communities.

Legal Disclaimer

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Playbook Introduction

Career-connected learning is an educational strategy that combines high-quality academic instruction, skill-based learning, and real-world experiences to prepare students with the knowledge and skills that they need to pursue their college and career goals. Career-connected learning can be delivered in a variety of ways, including in core content classes, through career and technical education (CTE) programs, in partnership with community and technical colleges, and through work-based learning experiences like job fairs, job shadows, internships, pre-apprenticeships, and registered apprenticeship programs. All young people, including English Learners (ELs), deserve equitable access to career-connected learning that provides the opportunity to gain meaningful work experience, college credits, an industry credential, and the benefits of career and academic advisement.

An English Learner (EL) is defined in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as an individual or student aged 3-21 who was not born in the United States, or whose native language is not English, and who is in enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school. Additionally, under this definition a Native American or Alaska Native student may also be an EL if they come from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on their level of English language proficiency, or whose native language is a language other than English.¹ For the purpose of this document, a multilingual learner (ML) refers to a student who can read, write, listen, and speak in more than one language at various levels of proficiency. Many states refer to ELs as defined in the ESEA as MLs. It is important to note that although an EL may fall under the definition of a ML, not all MLs are formally identified as ELs. For these reasons, the U.S. Department of Education does not use these terms interchangeably. Where provisions apply to only ELs, they are referred to as such.²

Promoting career-connected learning for ELs is particularly of high importance as ELs are a growing force in our nation's schools and will be essential to meeting national workforce needs. In fact, the percentage of public school students in the United States who were ELs was higher in fall 2021 (10.6 percent, or 5.3 million students) than in fall 2011 (9.4 percent, or 4.6 million students). In fall 2021, across the 50 states and the District of Columbia, the percentage of public school students who were ELs ranged from [0.8 percent in West Virginia to 20.2 percent in Texas](#). For a state-by-state breakdown and further statistics on the U.S. public school EL population, please refer to the U.S. Department of Education's webpage on [English Learners in Public Schools](#).

As a nation, we need to do more to recognize that being multilingual, multiliterate, and multicultural is an asset both in our classrooms and in our places of work, and to encourage leaders at the state and local levels to work together to invest, promote, and support students who are ELs and MLs to ensure that language development is a core aspect of career-connected learning, which, when developed together, can help students to boost postsecondary and career access, earn valued industry credentials, and connect our nation's youth to the global economy.

¹ [Section 8101 \(20\)](#) of the ESEA defines "English learner" as an individual— (A) who is aged 3 through 21; (B) who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school; (C)(i) who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English; (ii)(I) who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas; and (II) who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level of English language proficiency; or (iii) who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and (D) whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual— (i) the ability to meet the challenging state academic standards; (ii) the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or (iii) the opportunity to participate fully in society.

²Retrieved from: <https://wida.wisc.edu/teach/multilingual-learners>



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ELs can benefit from [greater participation in career-connected learning](#), which has been shown to help students forge direct and durable linkages between what they learn in school, their culture and language and literacy, and their personal and professional interests for their futures. For example:

- In California, an independent [study](#) found that students who participated in programming that combines college and career preparation were more likely to graduate from high school and earned more credits on average. Students participating in Linked Learning were more likely than peers to report that they received guidance from adults regarding postsecondary education planning and that their career pathway experiences helped them develop skills needed for success after high school, including confidence, organizational skills, and professionalism.
- Nationally, the [average 4-year high school graduation rate](#) for school year 2021–22 for CTE concentrators, (i.e., students who take two or more courses in a CTE program or program of study) is 96 percent—11 percentage points higher than the average rate for all students. However, ELs continue to be underrepresented in CTE and could be missing out on access to the benefits that CTE can provide. Nationally, of the more than 1 million ELs in grades 9-12, only 8 percent were CTE participants and 5 percent were CTE concentrators in [school year 2021-22](#), but there is variation by state.
- A multi-year, independent [study](#) of 16 school districts participating in the Youth Career Connect program—a high school-based program that includes employer partnerships, integrated academic and career curricula, work-based learning, and individualized career and academic counseling—found that the program led to gains in student attendance and credit accumulation, particularly for students who participated in an internship, had a mentor, and/or completed an individualized education and career development plan.
- In [North Carolina](#), high school students who participated in a CTE dual enrollment program were six times more likely to earn college credits while in high school, twice as likely to graduate high school, and were more likely to enroll in college than their peers by nine percentage points. However, ELs are often underrepresented in dual enrollment, which is evidenced by [research in California](#) that found that EL dual enrollment participation was below state averages. [The study](#) notes that 5.2 percent of EL students were taking CTE dual enrollment courses compared to 9.3 percent of all 11th graders taking CTE dual enrollment.



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Raise the Bar

The U.S. Department of Education (Department) has several strategies focused on career-connected pathways for all students and how to increase engagement of ELs and MLs in CTE. Through Secretary Cardona's [Raise the Bar initiative](#), the Department has launched two key priorities to support this work in states and districts.

Unlocking Career Success

[Unlocking Career Success](#) is one of the priority initiatives within Secretary Cardona's Raise the Bar initiative, and it is an interagency program that reimagines how our nation's high schools prepare all students to thrive in their future education and careers. The initiative blurs the lines between high school, college, and career to provide students with accelerated and innovative opportunities to earn college credits and gain real-world career experiences. This joint effort across the U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, and Commerce supports public and private sector leaders, government agencies, and other community-based organizations to help students earn postsecondary degrees and industry-recognized credentials that our employers need, and our economy demands. Unlocking Career Success seeks to strengthen systems of multiple pathways to success, fulfilling the promise of education as the key to economic and social mobility and providing our students with rewarding, joyful, and purposeful college and career pathways that lead them to reach their endless potential.

Pathways to Multilingualism

[Pathways to Multilingualism](#) is an interagency initiative designed to increase access to high-quality language programs for all students, expand access to a high-quality education for all ELs, and develop and grow a diverse educator workforce that can effectively serve our ELs and MLs. This joint effort across the U.S. Department of Education focuses students, their families, their communities, and their educators on addressing barriers that ELs may encounter and to increase opportunities for students to become multilingual, multiliterate, and multicultural to be college and career ready. We know that the [number of people in the United States](#) who speak a language other than English at home has nearly tripled over the last three decades, and our nation's students and workforce are continuing to grow more diverse and more globally connected. But only [20 percent of the U.S. population](#) can converse in two or more languages, which impacts the amount of supports we provide to students as well as our nation's economic impact.



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Actions

State educational agencies, local educational agencies, schools, community-based organizations, and business and industry can increase pathways to multilingualism through career-connected learning to [Raise the Bar](#) for student success by taking steps to:

1. Leverage Federal funds to support ELs and CTE.

- [Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act](#) of 1965 (ESEA) is designed to ensure that ELs attain English proficiency and develop high levels of academic achievement in English as well as assist educators and schools in sustaining effective language instruction and educational programs. This program can also support ELs' access to high-quality education programs such as CTE by providing supplemental supports they need to participate in the programs. Funding under Title III can be used to support ELs in career-connected learning, which includes dual enrollment, and to help students leverage their language skills within an occupational program while at the same time addressing their learning needs.
- [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#) requires public schools to take affirmative steps to ensure that ELs can meaningfully participate in their schools' educational programs and services. Schools must effectively implement a sound educational approach for EL students and adequately communicate with parents with limited English proficiency (LEP) about important school-related information in languages they can understand. Data reported to the Office for Civil Rights' [Civil Rights Data Collection](#) shows that ELs were only 3 percent of the students enrolled in Advanced Placement courses and Dual Enrollment or Dual Credit programs.
- The [Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 \(Perkins V\)](#) supports states in their implementation of CTE programs at the secondary and postsecondary levels. This support includes strategies that promote equity in CTE through data analysis; targeted funding for special populations, in which ELs are named; as well as technical assistance which could include professional development and the engagement of stakeholders that represent students who are members of [special populations](#) described in a resource from the [Center for Law and Social Policy \(CLASP\)](#).
 - Perkins V also requires secondary and postsecondary institutions to conduct a [comprehensive local needs assessment](#) (CLNA) to identify and address underlying issues that pose barriers to students who are members of special populations to access and be successful in CTE. The CLNA can be used to direct local funds and help to make the benefits of CTE more visible to students and families who are members of special populations (i.e., English Learners).

2. Incorporate tools for students, families, and educators to better engage ELs and MLs in career-connected learning.

Action Items for Students and Parents:

- Engage with your child's school to become familiar with how to enroll your students, navigate the U.S. school system, and advocate for the services and programs available to your student. [The English Learner Family Toolkit](#) was created to help students and families to choose education services that meet their needs and interests. Educators can also use the toolkit as a



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resource to effectively engage with families and students. Additional information on local, state, and Federal laws that outline the rights afforded to ELs can be found here: [Title III of the ESEA](#), [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#), and [Perkins V](#).

- Explicitly connect the economic and social value of learning multiple languages to CTE and career-connected learning pathway initiatives, particularly in materials or course catalogues that are designed for students and families. [Delaware Pathways](#), which is a statewide CTE program, showcases how students who are multilingual receive higher wages compared with monolingual employees. The state [provides information](#) for students interested in becoming an educator to see what target languages are of value in the industry and how wages increase as the student becomes proficient in additional languages.
- Participate in your school's career-connected educational programs, which can help students and families to better understand what industries and occupations and related educational programs exist in their community. For example, [San Clemente High School's Meet the Industry Night](#) helps to make students and their families aware of careers and the types of postsecondary opportunities that exist in the community.
- High school students can [explore career connected pathways](#) that allow for early college or dual enrollment with partners such as local community college, work-based learning experiences connected to areas of interest, and options to earn industry credentials while still in high school.

Action Items for Educators:

- Create awareness of the [benefits of multilingualism](#) ([Spanish](#), [Chinese](#), [Arabic](#), [Hmong](#), [Somali](#), [Tagalog](#), [Vietnamese](#), [Russian](#), [Haitian Creole](#), and [Portuguese](#)) for parents, students, and staff and consider these benefits when designing and implementing career-connected pathways.
- Create awareness about programs that are designed for students and families in [CTE](#). Families play a critical role in the education of their children and have a strong influence on the interests, talents, and skills that they bring with them to school. As described in a [Dear Colleague letter](#) jointly issued by the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, schools must provide information and communication with families in a language they understand to help families and students as they navigate important educational decisions, including when and how to enroll in CTE and other career-connected learning programs.
- Engage all families in decision-making about their students' educational options, which includes leveraging out-of-school time, summer learning, and flexible scheduling. This could include engaging [LEP parents](#) during the [Perkins V CLNA process](#) to ensure that ELs do not have barriers to participate in dual enrollment or work-based learning programs which are part of career pathways. [The English Learner Family Toolkit](#) includes strategies and resources to guide and support local educational agencies and schools to engage families and students.
- Identify and address barriers that impact EL enrollment in CTE and advanced coursework. Use the Perkins V CNLA process to assess whether EL-specific coursework may interfere with the scheduling of CTE coursework and assess needs for professional learning opportunities for CTE instructors to better [support](#) ELs in their classrooms. In addition, use the Perkins V CNLA process to leverage strategic partnerships with organizations in the community to meet families where they are, making sure they are empowered with information and an asset-based learning environment where language and cultural diversity is valued and respected.



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3. Consider policies, processes, programs, and practices that increase access to and success in career-connected learning for ELs and MLs.

Action Items for Local Leaders (e.g., principals, superintendents, mayors, and county executives):

- Consider policies and practices relevant to [alternative schools](#), [dropout prevention and re-engagement](#), and [adult education](#). Pay careful attention to policies and practices related to [accountability](#), [course placement](#), [graduation requirements](#), [credit accrual](#), [CTE](#), [work-based learning](#), [dual enrollment](#), and [college admissions requirements](#). Collectively, these policies and practices shape the educational experiences and trajectories of students, which can and should include ELs.
- Leverage funding streams across agencies, organizations, and programs. For example, in [California](#), Elk Grove Unified School District braids CTE and Title III funds to develop units of instruction bridging computer science and English language development. CTE and EL specialist teachers worked together to develop the lessons and teach in pairs. Transfer of credits is made easier by the fact that computer science and engineering pathways are offered at nearly all of the district's high schools.
- Familiarize yourself with [current state and national data](#), collect local and site level data, and use data to determine what percentage of ELs are currently enrolled in CTE programs, how those numbers compare with other student groups, and which students are successful. For example, [Ohio](#) conducts "equity labs" to analyze data on special populations and identify the largest and most pressing gaps.
- Create awareness for CTE students about the opportunities that the [Seal of Biliteracy](#) presents, which is available to students who are able to demonstrate proficiency in English and their heritage language or another language being learned in school. Validation, particularly when it is displayed on students' transcripts or learning records, that a student is bilingual and biliterate can open doors to postsecondary education and career in high demand and high paying jobs.
- Acknowledge linguistic and cultural assets when engaging families and students and empower students to shape their educational journeys. In Colorado, Douglas County School District has a [student advisory group](#) that serves as a focus group for school board and school system personnel. This structure empowers students to share their voice in policymaking and to provide feedback on the implementation of cultural assets.
- Collaborate with business and industry partners and other local leaders to identify the skills, occupations, and talent needs of your community and economic region, and to coordinate public and private partnerships that support diverse student populations. For example, the [Anaheim Union High School District](#) developed a business partnership to support the Amazon Future Engineer program.

Action Items for State Leaders (e.g., State K-12 and higher education agencies, State and local workforce development boards, and Governors):

- Consider innovative funding models to support diverse student populations. For example, [Tennessee's Innovative School Model](#) is a grant program that supports partnerships between local educational agencies, postsecondary institutions, and employers to rethink educational models that prepare students for postsecondary education and career.



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- Create and implement policy that is responsive to the needs of students' cultural and linguistic assets. For example, the [California English Learner Roadmap](#) supports local educational agencies to incorporate EL education into local program design.
- Provide guidance and/or targeted funding opportunities to local educational agencies to plan and implement CTE and other career-connected learning that focuses on equitable access for ELs, opportunities for MLs, and pathways to multilingualism for all. For example, the [Funding to Support Equitable Pathways](#) highlights promising practices from five states that braided resources to support high-quality, equitable career pathways. Also consider and provide guidance on language assessments and related funding as it pertains to students' academic and technical skill development.
- Collaborate with local industry and workforce partners to identify the industry demand for employees that speak more than one language and establish a vision for ELs and MLs within CTE. This includes support for the development of CTE and career pathways that focus on multilingualism.



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Additional Resources

- The U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition has created a fact sheet on [College Credit Bearing Classes](#) to highlight the need to increase the number of ELs in college credit bearing courses.
- The Office of English Language Acquisition created the following resource in multiple languages ([English](#), [Spanish](#), [Chinese](#) and [Arabic](#)) to highlight the benefits of CTE for ELs and how schools can provide needed support for their participation.
- The National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity created this [two-page overview of key points](#) on special populations in Perkins V, including how Federal funds can be used to promote increased access and support.
- Jobs for the Future [published a report](#) outlining best practices when designing dual enrollment to reach English learners. Additionally, Community College Research Center at the Teachers college issued a report on [how state systems can support practitioner efforts to strengthen dual enrollment, including supports for ELs](#).
- Advance CTE developed an [overview of Federal funding streams](#) that can be blended or braided to develop and sustain a more integrated career-connected learning ecosystem.
- [¡Adelante! A Community Asset Mapping Approach to Increase College and Career Readiness for Rural Latinx High School Students](#) describes an asset mapping process that reinforces students' and families' connections to their culture, school, and community while simultaneously collecting data on community assets and needs. This [two-generation approach](#) could be used to complement asset mapping processes more focused on the education and workforce systems—helping to ensure that systems' efforts reflect the assets, needs, and aspirations of students and families.
- REL Northwest published the [Career and Technical Education in Oregon: Exploring who participates and the outcomes they achieve](#) (2020) and REL Southwest published [Biliteracy Seals in a Large Urban District in New Mexico: Who Earns Them and How do they Impact College Outcomes?](#) (2022)
- Migrant Policy Institute published the [Unlocking Opportunities: Supporting English Learners' Equitable Access to Career and Technical Education](#) (2023).
- American Translators Association published [A Translator's Value\(s\) in a Shifting Market](#) on the translators and interpreters industry and its value to the whole economy (2023).

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Highly Mobile Youth Playbook

Unlocking Career Success for Special Populations



Playbook Introduction

Career-connected learning is an educational strategy that combines high-quality academic instruction, skill-based learning, and real-world experiences to prepare students with the knowledge and skills that they need to pursue their career goals. Career-connected learning can be delivered in a variety of ways, including in core content classes, through career and technical education (CTE) programs, in partnership with community and technical colleges, and through work-based learning experiences like internships, pre-apprenticeships, and registered apprenticeship programs. Career-connected learning is especially important for an often-overlooked group of students including highly mobile youth. In K-12, school mobility refers to any planned or unplanned school or district change that occurs for reasons other than grade promotion during an academic year. A school change may be voluntary—such as a student switching to an online program to support their family—or involuntary, such as being expelled. Highly mobile students may experience homelessness, be in foster care, be part of military-connected or migratory agricultural families, or have recently immigrated to the United States.

A growing body of evidence indicates that participation in career-connected learning can promote strong attendance, engagement, and academic achievement for highly mobile students by helping students forge direct and durable linkages between what they are learning in school and their personal and professional interests and aspirations. For example:

- [District of Columbia Public Schools'](#) high school students enrolled in CTE courses during the 2022-23 school year attended nearly 13 more days of school than their peers who did not.
- [New Hampshire's](#) 2023 Gallup poll surveying over 9,600 students in grades five through 12 found that students who participated in career-connected learning were more likely to be involved in and enthusiastic about school, (i.e., engagement) and to have positive ideas and energy for the future (i.e., hope).
- Nationally, the average four-year graduation rate for the 2021-22 school year for CTE concentrators, (i.e., students who take multiple courses in one CTE program area) is 96% – 11 percentage points higher than the average rate for all students. Further, a national analysis found that completion of at least three CTE credits [halved the likelihood of dropping out of high school](#) for students in foster care.
- [A study conducted by Casey Family Programs](#) found students in foster care with employment experience while in high school, such as the work-based learning opportunities offered in CTE programs, were four times more likely to graduate, and half of these students continued their education into college.
- Students in Washington state experiencing homelessness who participated in three or more CTE courses had [a four-year graduation rate of 78.9% and a four-year dropout rate of 10%](#), compared with a 61.3% graduation rate and 25% dropout rate for students experiencing homelessness who participated in fewer than three CTE courses.
- Similarly, students experiencing homelessness in Montana who participated in three or more CTE courses during the 2016-2017 school year, [had a four-year dropout rate of 4.6%](#), compared with 8.9% for learners experiencing homelessness who participated in fewer than three CTE courses.

Career-connected learning supports students to safely envision their future and who they want to become; build social capital and deepen school and community engagement; and master a strong foundation of both technical skills and academic knowledge that expands their horizons and postsecondary options.



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Unlocking Career Success

[Unlocking Career Success](#) is one of the priority initiatives within Secretary Cardona's Raise the Bar initiative, and it is an interagency program that reimagines how our nation's high schools prepare all students to thrive in their future education and careers. The initiative blurs the lines between high school, college, and career to provide students with accelerated and innovative opportunities to earn college credits and gain real-world career experiences. This joint effort across the U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, and Commerce supports public and private sector leaders, government agencies, and other community-based organizations to help students earn postsecondary degrees and industry-recognized credentials that our employers need, and our economy demands. Unlocking Career Success seeks to strengthen systems of multiple pathways to success, fulfilling the promise of education as the key to economic and social mobility and providing our students with rewarding, joyful, and purposeful college and career pathways that lead them to reach their endless potential.



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Actions

A variety of stakeholders, from state level leaders to classroom teachers can dismantle the persistent barriers that exclude highly mobile students from benefitting from career-connected learning and ensure that highly mobile students can be prioritized and supported as they navigate their educational journey between high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. Stakeholders can increase career-connected pathways for highly mobile youth by taking steps to:

1. Understand the various student subpopulations who are classified as “highly mobile”.

High rates of school mobility are often—but not always—a function of deep, historical disparities in our society and related public policies. Redlining and other discriminatory policies and practices systematically exclude historically marginalized communities, schools, and families from accessing the resources necessary to disrupt decades of public disinvestment. Data shows that students living in families with incomes below the federal poverty level are concentrated in under-resourced, low-performing schools; are three times more likely to change schools compared to their peers; and tend to transfer to other low-performing schools with similar characteristics.

Highly mobile students experience multiple school moves during their education (often within the same school year) and may experience one or more of the following:

- **Foster care.** Although students in foster care have a right to remain in their schools of origin, removal from the family home or changes in foster care placement often results in students changing schools and sometimes districts. A [statewide study](#) found that students in Colorado’s foster care system change public schools an average of 3.46 times during their first four years of high school.
- **Homelessness.** Students experiencing homelessness, including unaccompanied youth not living in the physical custody of a parent or legal guardian, have the right to remain in their school of origin. Despite federal policy provisions to ensure stability, the risk of school mobility nearly doubles while a student experiences homelessness.
- **Being part of a migratory family that works in the agricultural and/or fisheries industries.** Children of migratory families that move frequently due to seasonal agricultural work often move across districts and State lines several times following the various crops by season. Students of migratory families experience a host of factors that can challenge their educational stability and success, including the need to learn English to work during the school year, and to continuously familiarize themselves with their new school system and develop new relationships.
- **Immigration to the United States within the last three years.** Newcomer youth—a term encompassing immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and unaccompanied students and/or students with undocumented status—face tremendous adversity when immigrating to the United States, including housing instability and homelessness which can precipitate the need to change schools. Under [Federal law](#), states and local educational agencies are obligated to provide all children—regardless of immigration status—with [equal access to public education](#) at the elementary and secondary level. Newcomer youth often have the additional challenge of needing to learn a new language while adjusting to a new country. Review the Department of Education’s [English Learner Playbook](#) for more information.



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2. Leverage Federal funds and legislation to support highly mobile youth and CTE.

- *The McKinney-Vento Act* - Signed into law in 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is the latest reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) and the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act. McKinney-Vento local educational agency subgrant funds can be used to remove barriers to CTE, including the provision of expedited evaluation and transportation costs. This law requires that each child or youth experiencing homelessness must be provided services comparable to those offered to other students in the school, including CTE programming.
- *Title IV-E of the Social Security Act* - Child welfare agencies and caseworkers are required to begin working with foster youth at age 14 to develop plans for the transition support services needed, including providing them with a written description of the programs and services available to help them prepare for a successful adulthood. A key strategy for improving CTE access and performance for foster youth is ensuring that they and their caregivers are regularly provided information on opportunities to engage in career-connected learning, including CTE, throughout the secondary and postsecondary years. A second, and related, key strategy is to ensure that caseworkers, judges, and other professionals who are responsible for facilitating a supportive transition into adulthood are informed about available career-connected learning opportunities and proactive in promoting these opportunities to foster youth and their caregivers. It is also important for these professionals to consider the implication of placement changes that would require the foster youth to change school and how best to support their educational continuity.
- [*Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 \(Perkins V\)*](#) - Perkins V supports states in their implementation of CTE programs at the secondary and postsecondary levels, which includes strategies that promote equity in CTE through data analysis, targeted funding for special populations, in which highly mobile youth are named, as well as technical assistance which could include professional development and the engagement of stakeholders that represent students who are members of [special populations](#).
 - Perkins V also requires secondary and postsecondary institutions to conduct a [comprehensive local needs assessment](#) (CLNA) to identify and address underlying issues that pose barriers to students who are members of special populations to access and be successful in CTE. The CLNA can be used to direct local funds and help to make the benefits of CTE more visible to students and families who are members of special populations including highly mobile youth.

Action Items for Students and Caregivers:

- *Partner with school officials to understand the variety of opportunities* available in high school, CTE and dual enrollment. In [New Mexico](#), administrators at Las Cruces Public Schools hired Student and Family Advisors to work in the International Welcome Centers at each of the district's four comprehensive high schools. These advisors help newcomer students and families learn about school and community resources, including career-connected learning.
- *Learn from the experiences of youth.* Youth are well-positioned to inform policymakers and practitioners about the challenges that they face in accessing career-connected learning, and the supports that they need to be successful. In [California](#), students at Oakland High Law and



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Social Justice Academy surveyed their peers and teachers to address identification and support barriers for students experiencing homelessness. In [Washington state](#), youth with lived experience successfully advocated to expand college and career supports for students experiencing homelessness and foster care in the tribal welfare system, the federal foster care system, and in the state under the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children. Their advocacy also led to the creation of an [apprenticeship support program](#).

Action Items for Practitioners (Teachers, Counselors, CTE Directors, Community Based Organizations)

- *Center highly mobile youth in efforts to expand and deepen career-connected learning.* While not yet common practice, school mobility data and other indicators can assist districts and schools to develop strategic collaborations that facilitate smooth and supportive transitions between schools, alignment of curricular and instructional approaches, and shared or aligned arrangements with postsecondary and workforce development partners to allow for continuity of career-connect learning.
- *Consider cost-sharing for personnel, including school counselors, social workers, and college and career counselors, or leveraging funding streams across agencies, organizations, and programs.* In [Illinois](#), the Departments of Commerce and Children and Family Services are developing an initiative to expand career pathway services to support transition-age foster youth. Successful models for braiding and blending WIOA and Chafee Foster Care Funds are under consideration as a basis for the effort. Additionally, Danville School District 118 braided multiple public funding streams, including American Rescue Plan-Homeless Children and Youth (ARP-HCY) funds, to provide after-school tutoring and extended-year academic opportunities to students experiencing homelessness.
- *Pay careful attention to policies and practices related to [accountability](#), [assessment and course placement](#), [graduation requirements](#), [credit accrual](#), [CTE](#), [work-based learning](#), [dual enrollment](#), and [college admissions requirements](#).* Collectively, these policies and practices shape the educational experiences and trajectories of highly mobile students—and are the change levers for accelerating access and success. For example, [California](#) allows highly mobile students to graduate without completing local graduation requirements that go beyond statewide course requirements and grants eligible students the option to complete a fifth year of high school in order to complete credits necessary to graduate or complete exempted courses to maximize college and career opportunities.
- *Conduct an asset mapping process to identify available resources to be leveraged, mutually agreed upon opportunities for growth, and aligned goals to meet student and regional economic needs.* In Ohio, [Building Bridges to Careers](#) or BB2C, takes a relationship-centered approach to asset mapping, supporting districts and community partners to identify existing resources, community needs, and work-based learning experiences for students to engage within their communities.
- In [Maine](#), Androscoggin County uses a grassroots approach to asset-mapping that is responsive to both population level data as well as the voices of youth experiencing foster care, homelessness, and juvenile justice. In addition to income and employment data, the county reviews measures of well-being, including social belonging—defined as having access to full participation in community life, being respected at a basic human level, and feeling “part of” the community such that one can co-create that community and rely on the community for support—made available through the Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey.



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Action Items for Local Leaders, e.g., principals, superintendents, mayors, and county executives:

- *Partner across systems.* In [Texas](#), Dallas Independent School District partners with the City of Dallas, the Dallas Chamber of Commerce, and others to offer virtual and hybrid internship programs, supporting educational continuity during school changes. Texas OnCourse, a statewide initiative to improve college and career readiness, offers a set of advising resources to support highly mobile students.
- *Identify key data sources* to develop a comprehensive understanding of the educational trajectories of highly mobile students, including attendance, behavior, and enrollment and performance data for academic and CTE courses. For example, the State of [Colorado](#) collects and reports data on multiple measures of school mobility disaggregated for students experiencing homelessness, foster care, migrant students, and immigrant students.
- In [Massachusetts](#), Chelsea Public Schools, Everett Public Schools, Revere Public Schools and Winthrop Public Schools developed an inter-district partnership to support the stability and success of highly mobile students who move in and out of schools across the districts, while local educational agencies in [Ohio](#) conducts “equity labs” to analyze data on special populations, identify the largest and most pressing gaps, and conduct a root cause analysis.
- *Build a shared understanding of key federal and state laws*, and district and school policies and practices, that impact highly mobile students. Federal and state laws target funding, support, and/or accountability provisions for highly mobile students, including students experiencing [foster care](#) and [homelessness](#) and students of [military](#), [migrant](#), and [immigrant](#) families. It is also important to understand key provisions within federal and State laws regarding [special education](#), [Perkins V](#), and WIOA.

Action Items for State Leaders (State Education Agencies, Higher Education, Labor and Workforce Development Boards, Governors)

- *Formalize an interdisciplinary structure within your organization* (e.g., working group) *and an external cross-sector structure* (e.g., regional K-16 collaborative) to take collective responsibility for increasing highly mobile students’ access to, and success in, career-connected learning. Participants should have decision-making authority and represent a range of programs and organizations with diverse expertise, resources, and responsibilities. The [Arizona](#) Department of Education has built an interdisciplinary team that includes the CTE office and offices serving students with disabilities, students experiencing foster care and homelessness, and migrant students to engage in cross-training. The [Delaware](#) Department of Education assigns CTE staff to identify opportunities for interagency collaboration and engage partner agencies in coordinating funding, resources, and services to target their respective special populations. [Washington State](#) established Project Education Impact, a cross-sector partnership working to achieve educational parity for students experiencing foster care and/or homelessness from pre-K through post-secondary education.
- *Remove barriers to enrollment, participation, and completion.* In [California](#), San Andreas Continuation High School provides an authorized “continuation” high school for students over the age of 16 who are behind in the credits needed to graduate on time. Each pathway has its own specific CTE staff and share core academic, special education, student services, and counseling staff. Using a flexible master schedule and competency-based assessment and advancement, students can earn up to 20 credits every six weeks. In [Arkansas](#), [Virtual Arkansas and the Arkansas Department of Education](#) offer a flexible blended learning platform that allows



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students to complete either full or partial core academic, CTE, Advanced Placement, and/or dual credit courses. This type of platform may support learning continuity during school changes as it provides an avenue for students to fulfill their remaining course and/or certification requirements. School districts in [Colorado](#) offer opportunities for students to access broadband and the equipment they need to be successful in their CTE programs, including offering Wi-Fi buses to provide broadband access in under-served areas and mobile labs to provide hands-on learning experiences. In [Minnesota](#), several of Minneapolis Public Schools' alternative high schools are designed to support highly mobile students, providing meaningful education and employment opportunities and support with basic needs like housing.

- *Standardize structures statewide.* For example, the state of [New Hampshire](#) requires districts that host CTE programs to align their calendars to help standardize the programs to support smoother transitions for highly mobile students, while the state of [Rhode Island](#) provides in-state open access to all CTE programs approved by the State educational agency. If a student enrolls in a CTE program outside of their resident district, the district administering the program shall be reimbursed by the resident district, which can support educational continuity during school changes.
- *Link data sets for a more informed picture whenever possible.* The Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) in [Washington State](#) links education and workforce data to provide actionable information, including disaggregated data on highly mobile students. Additionally, the [Road Map Project](#) in King County provides an online data dashboard with mobility data by school, district, and student demographics.



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Additional Resources

- The National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity created this two-page [overview](#) of key points on special populations in Perkins V, including how funds can be used to support increased access and support.
- Advance CTE developed this [overview](#) of federal funding streams that can be blended or braided to develop and sustain a more integrated career-connected learning ecosystem.
- The [Perkins State Plans and Data Explorer](#) is designed to provide information on state Perkins V plans, including annual CTE enrollment and performance data disaggregated by special population status. This tool can help States better understand the CTE experiences of highly mobile students, including which special populations are accessing CTE. This information can help inform recruitment and support strategies to be included in the state plan.
- [With Learners, Not for Learners: A Toolkit for Elevating Learner Voice in CTE](#), was developed by Advance CTE to assist professionals in establishing feedback loops to identify and reverse the systemic barriers that prevent [special populations](#) from accessing career-connected learning.
- [Elevating Youth Worker Voice: A Practical Guide for Organizations Supporting Young People in Their Transition to the Workplace](#), was published by the Urban Institute to provide government agencies and nonprofits with a framework and practical strategies for supporting youth in developing their power and voice.
- [¡Adelante! A Community Asset Mapping Approach to Increase College and Career Readiness for Rural Latinx High School Students](#) describes an asset mapping process that reinforces students' and families' connections to their culture, school, and community while collecting data on community assets and needs. This two-generation approach targeting highly mobile students could be used to complement asset mapping processes more focused on the education and the workforce development system—helping to ensure that systems' efforts reflect the assets, needs, and aspirations of students and families.

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Individuals with Disabilities Playbook

Unlocking Career Success for Special Populations



Playbook Introduction

Career-connected learning is an educational strategy that combines high-quality academic instruction, skill-based learning, and real-world experiences to prepare students with the knowledge and skills that they need to pursue their college and career goals. Career-connected learning can be delivered in a variety of ways, including in core content classes, through career and technical education (CTE) programs, in partnership with community and technical colleges, and through work-based learning experiences like job fairs, job shadows, internships, pre-apprenticeships, and registered apprenticeship programs. Career-connected learning is especially important for an often-overlooked group of individuals—students with disabilities.¹

As a nation, it is important that we recognize the untapped potential for individuals with disabilities in the workforce and create opportunities that lead to their successful participation. Students with disabilities can and do move on to successfully participate in the workforce when given the opportunity and supports to do so, and in fact, access to these opportunities is foundational to Federal disability and workforce laws. All young people deserve equitable access to career-connected learning that provides the opportunity to gain meaningful work experience, earn college credits, and work towards an industry credential before they graduate high school. Making this a reality is possible and requires commitment and investment at all levels, including Federal, state, and local partners. Career-connected learning is an essential pathway into the workforce, and it should be available, accessible, and effective for students with disabilities.

A growing body of evidence indicates that students with disabilities in CTE not only have higher rates of secondary school completion and graduation, but also are more probable to be armed with academic aptitude, and employability skills that are portable. Connecting CTE to the transition planning of students with disabilities can be an effective way to support students with disabilities to stay in school and at the same time preventing them from dropping out. For example:

- A [2018 study](#) examined the outcomes of students with disabilities who were enrolled in regional CTE high schools in Massachusetts and found that these students were more likely to graduate on-time than students with disabilities who attended school in other settings.
- Two other studies (in [2016](#) and [2019](#)) concluded that youth with learning disabilities who completed a concentration of four CTE courses in a single program area were more likely to be employed after high school graduation than youth with learning disabilities who took no or fewer CTE courses.
- Another [study](#) found that youth with a specific learning disability or an emotional/behavioral disorder who completed three CTE courses in a single program area were significantly more likely to be employed full-time during the first two years after high school.
- During the [2021-2022 school year](#), the average on-time graduation rate of students with disabilities was 75% but students with disabilities are less likely to enroll in postsecondary education than their peers in the general population, and those who do pursue postsecondary education are more likely to drop out than students without disabilities. Another study of an earlier

¹ For purposes of the VR program, the term “student with a disability” is defined in section 7(37) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act) and 34 C.F.R. 361.5(c)(51) as an individual with a disability in an education program who is 14 to 21 years old (or the age range in the State for the receipt of transition services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and who is receiving special education and related services under IDEA or services under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. For purposes of services provided under IDEA, the term “child with a disability” is defined in IDEA as a child evaluated in accordance with IDEA requirements as having a disability and who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services. 34 C.F.R. § 300.8. Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, individuals with disabilities includes elementary and secondary students who: (1) have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, (2) have a record of such an impairment, or (3) are regarded as having such an impairment. 34 C.F.R. §104.3(j) and (l)



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cohort of students with disabilities who were attending community college found that 51% dropped out without earning a postsecondary credential after 3 years of attendance.

- The [unemployment rate](#) for people with a disability was 7.2% in 2023, about twice that of those with no disability (3.5%). In 2017, the poverty rate of working age adults (i.e., ages 18 to 64) with disabilities was almost more than twice that of working age adults who did not have a disability. In 2022, among 59,988 persons who began participating in Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services between the ages of 16 to 18, 60% were still employed in the second quarter after exit, with a median earning of \$4,738. Among 49,550 persons who were 19 to 24 at the time VR services were initiated, 57% were found to be working in the second quarter after exit, with a median earning of \$4,259.
- In 2021–22, the number of students ages 3–21 who received special education and/or related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was 7.3 million, [or the equivalent of 15% of all public-school students](#). Among students receiving special education and/or related services, the most common category of disability was specific learning disabilities, like dyslexia (a reading disability) or dyscalculia (a math disability).
- VR agencies report approximately 1.5 million individuals engage in VR services each year. In program year 2022, among 818,646 eligible individuals that had initiated VR services 421,481 (51.5%) were under age 25 at the time services began. Among participants of the VR in program year 2022, at the time that services began 2% were under age 16, 29% were between the ages of 16 to 18, and 20% between the ages of 19 to 24.
- Nationally, students with disabilities (SWD) are one of the [special populations for which CTE must collect data](#). That includes student pathways and numbers/their percentage participating in CTE. For a state-by-state breakdown and further statistics on the U.S. public school Individuals With Disabilities (IWD) population participating in CTE, please refer to the [Perkins Collaborative Resource Network \(PCRN\) site](#).
- Students with [disabilities continue to lag their peers without disabilities](#) in postsecondary education and employment. Outcomes of youth with disabilities are influenced by many factors including but not limited to parent expectations and services received to support individual needs. Services provided to students while in high school also contribute to positive outcomes. One important transition service that can be provided to youth while in high school to assist in mitigating poor outcomes for youth with disabilities is [access to career](#) and technical education.

Unlocking Career Success

[Unlocking Career Success](#) is an interagency initiative that reimagines how our nation's high schools prepare all students to thrive in their future education and careers. The initiative blurs the lines between high school, college, and career, providing students with accelerated and innovative opportunities to earn college credits and gain real-world career experiences. This joint effort across the U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, and Commerce supports public and private sector leaders, government agencies, and other community-based organizations to help students earn postsecondary degrees and industry-recognized credentials that our employers need, and our economy demands. Unlocking Career Success seeks to strengthen systems of multiple pathways to success, fulfilling the promise of education as the key to economic and social mobility, and providing our students with rewarding, joyful, purposeful college and career pathways that lead them to reach their endless potential.



Actions

Schools, community-based organizations, and business and industry can increase pathways through career-connected learning to [Raise the Bar](#) for student success by taking steps to:

1. Leverage Federal funds to support individuals with disabilities and CTE.

- *IDEA* is a Federal law that provides more than \$15 billion in Federal funds to States, and through States to local educational agencies (LEAs), to assist in providing special education and related services to eligible children with disabilities. One primary purpose of *IDEA* is to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education (FAPE) that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living.
- The Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (*WIOA*) represents the first major reform of the publicly funded workforce development system in more than 15 years. *Title IV of WIOA* amends the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act) by significantly revising requirements for, among others, the State VR program, particularly about its role as a core partner in the workforce development system. The law authorizes increased access to employment, education, training, and support services to assist individuals with disabilities, including youth and students with disabilities, to succeed in the competitive labor market. As a core partner in the one-stop service delivery system, the State VR program provides individuals with disabilities the services they need to compete for and achieve high-quality employment in the 21st century global economy.
- Additionally, *Title I of the Rehabilitation Act* is meant to assist each State in operating a statewide comprehensive, coordinated, effective, efficient, and accountable State VR program that is an integral part of a statewide workforce development system. The purpose of the VR program is to assess, plan, and provide VR services to individuals with disabilities, especially individuals with the most significant disabilities, so that they may prepare for and engage in competitive integrated employment consistent with their unique strengths, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, resources, and informed choice. The continuum of VR services offered by VR agencies provides opportunity for early engagement, career exploration, education and training, support services, and invaluable workforce experience. The VR program receives more than \$4 billion in Federal funds annually.
- Students with disabilities have rights under [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act](#), which prohibits disability discrimination by recipients of Federal financial assistance, including public elementary and secondary schools. Section 504 also includes requirements for the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for elementary and secondary students with disabilities, including regular or special education and related aids and services that are designed to meet their individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of nondisabled students are met and certain procedural requirements.
- Additionally, *the Rehabilitation Act* requires that VR agencies reserve at least 15% of their VR allotment to coordinate with LEAs in providing, or arranging for the provision of, pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities.



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- In fiscal year 2022, [42 states met the requirement](#) to reserve and expend at least 15 percent of the state's matched Federal VR allotment to provide pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities. This is an increase of 14 states from 2021.
- From fiscal year 2021 to 2022, [37 states increased the percentage of Federal funds reserved](#) and expended for these services. This amounted to more than \$46 million in additional Federal dollars being spent on pre-employment transition services in 2022.
- In Program Year 2022, VR agencies provided more than [1.6 million pre-employment transition services](#) to approximately 280,000 students with disabilities.
- The U.S. Department of Education also hosts a discretionary grant program – the [Disability Innovation Fund](#). The purpose of the Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) Program, as provided by the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 ([Pub. L. 117-328](#)), is to support innovative activities aimed at increasing competitive integrated employment (CIE) as defined in section 7 of the Rehabilitation Act ([29 U.S.C. 705\(5\)](#)) for youth and other individuals with disabilities.
- [Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 \(Perkins V\)](#) supports States in their implementation of CTE programs at the secondary and postsecondary levels, which includes strategies that promote equity in CTE through data analysis, targeted funding for special populations, in which IWDs are named, as well as technical assistance which could include professional development and the engagement of stakeholders that represent students who are members of [special populations](#).
 - Perkins V requires State education agencies to use 0.1% or \$50,000 (whichever is less) of their CTE State leadership funds for the recruitment of special populations into CTE programs, and the accountability provisions in Perkins V require states to disaggregate data. [Perkins V](#) offers states and districts the flexibility to support students with disabilities in the following ways:
 - Increase access and completion for special populations, which include students with disabilities.
 - Prepare and support teachers, specialized instructional support personnel and paraprofessionals so they can provide appropriate accommodations for students who are members of special populations.
 - Develop strategies for the recruitment of special needs populations into programs that lead to high-wage, high-skill, in-demand careers, and to coordinate the Perkins state plan with IDEA.

2. Incorporate tools for students, families, and educators to better engage IWDs in career-connected learning.

Action Items for Students and Caregivers:

- Participate in your school's career-connected educational programs, which can help students and families to better understand what industries and occupations and the related educational programs that exist in their community. For example, [San Clemente High School's Meet the Industry Night](#) helps to ensure that students and their families are aware of careers and the types of postsecondary opportunities that exist in the community.



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- Consider supplementary programs that offer workforce readiness curricula. The [Florida Center for Students](#) offers a program called Build Your Future, designed for students with intellectual disabilities. This program has curriculum that includes self-advocacy, interpersonal relationships, employment goals, work-related 21st century skills, effective communications, decision-making and effective use of technology.

Action Items for Educators:

- Create awareness about programs that are designed for students and families. Families play a critical role in the education of their children and have a strong influence on the interests, talents, and skills that they bring with them to school. Every effort should be made to inform and communicate with families and students as they navigate important educational decisions, including when and how to enroll in CTE and other career-connected learning programs.
- Consider how you will provide accommodations to better support the unique needs of individual students. In Minnesota, the [state provides funding](#) through “Access to Career and Technical Education-Special Education funding” to school districts and charter schools to support students with disabilities who may require accommodations or modifications in order to participate successfully in CTE and other work-based learning programs.

3. Consider policies, processes, programs, and practices that increase access to and success in career-connected learning for students with disabilities.

Action Items for Local Leaders (e.g., principals, superintendents, mayors, and county executives):

- Review data regularly to systematically ensure equitable enrollment for special populations, including students with disabilities. For example, [The Kentucky Profile of Transition Practice \(KPTP\)](#) serves as an important tool to guide district teams in reviewing, assessing and, when appropriate, making changes and improvements to postsecondary transition practices and programs including CTE for students with disabilities.
- Actively collaborate across the education to workforce ecosystem to create programs for students who need additional supports. In Boise Idaho, [the Blackfoot district](#) identified CTE as an area of need for its students with disabilities. This led to a collaboration between the Blackfoot district, Boise Public Schools, and the Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (IDVR) to create an afterschool CTE program that engaged students with disabilities. IDVR developed a contract with the school district outlining how the service, which is a pre-employment transition service, would be delivered, who would deliver it, and how costs would be covered.
- Partner with workforce partners to ensure that students with disabilities access and proactively participate in CTE. [In Arkansas](#), the Transition Initiative, CTE, Division of Workforce Services and the Rehabilitation and the Division of Services of the Blind partner to create CTE camps at the 9th grade level for students with disabilities.
- Familiarize yourself with [current state and national data](#), collect local and site level data, and use data to determine what percentage of SWDs are currently enrolled in CTE programs, how those numbers compare with other student groups and which students are successful. In [Maine](#), [the statewide transition forum](#) creates an opportunity for state educators and transition



Individuals with Disabilities Playbook

Unlocking Career Success for Special Populations



leaders to strategize in how to promote a successful pathway for students with disabilities in transition, Pre-ETS, Trades and CTE.

Action Items for State Leaders (e.g., State K12 and higher education agencies, State and local workforce development boards, and Governors):

- Leverage funding streams across agencies, organizations, and programs. In the State of Washington, through funding from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, [Evergreen State College and the Olympia school district](#) has a nine-month CTE/ School-to Work program where students with disabilities are prepared for competitive employment.
- Consider enacting legislation to enshrine the rights of students with disabilities. [In Pennsylvania](#), the collaboration among the Department of Labor and Industry, Bureau of Special Education and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation led to the adoption of the Employment First Act, with the goal of ensuring that students with disabilities are prepared for competitive employment.
- [In Nevada](#), the statewide initiative brings together CTE, special educators, VR, and provider partners to engage and provide equitable access to, and successful outcomes in CTE programs for students with disabilities.



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Additional Resources

- Think College published a [fact sheet](#) that provides an explanation of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, or Perkins V, and the benefits it provides to students with intellectual disabilities. There are many implications for students transitioning from secondary to postsecondary school who are pursuing career and technical education.
- Advance CTE has a [searchable, filterable database](#) that includes resources on topics like special populations, non-traditional students, delivery systems, infrastructure and zip code equity.
- [The National Technical Assistance Center on Transition](#) includes definitions, trainings, and resources on their site to support students with disabilities and the educators who support them.
- Without Limits: A Shared Vision for the Future of Career Technical Education ([CTE Without Limits](#)) calls on leaders to ensure each learner feels welcome in, is supported by and has the means to succeed in the career preparation ecosystem, including students with disabilities.
- The National Technical Assistance Center on Transition released a [Competitive Integrated Employment Toolkit](#)
- ED's Office of Postsecondary Education's Institutional Services Four Disabilities Programs:
 - [The Model Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students With Intellectual Disabilities](#)
 - [The Model Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students With Intellectual Disabilities Coordinating Center](#)
 - [Postsecondary Programs for Students With Intellectual Disabilities-National Technical Assistance and Dissemination Center](#)
 - [National Center for Information and Technical Support for Postsecondary Students With Disabilities](#)
- The Think College Network (TCN): A National Technical Assistance and Dissemination Center created a ["Think Higher. Think College." video](#) that highlights inclusiveness, access, and a sense of belonging for these students. This video also highlights how both students with and without intellectual disabilities interact with one another.
- Northern Arizona University's Institute for Human Development created a ["There is Always a Way" video](#) which supports why students with intellectual disabilities belong in STEM through the story of a student with multiple disabilities pursuing a college degree in a STEM field through the Supporting Inclusive Practices in College (SIP-C) program at Tohono O'odham Community College located in San Carlos, Arizona.

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Military Connected Youth Playbook

Unlocking Career Success for Special Populations



Playbook Introduction

Career-connected learning is an educational strategy that combines high-quality academic instruction, skill-based learning, and real-world experiences to prepare students with the knowledge and skills that they need to pursue their career goals. Career-connected learning can be delivered in a variety of ways, including in core content classes, through career and technical education (CTE) programs, in partnership with community and technical colleges, and through work-based learning experiences like internships, pre-apprenticeships, and registered apprenticeship programs. Career-connected learning is especially important for an often-overlooked group of students including military connected youth. In K-12, highly mobile youth refers to any planned or unplanned school or district change that occurs for reasons other than grade promotion during an academic year, which is often the case for students with family members in the military. Ensuring that student pathways are seamless and transferable, regardless of location is a priority for the Department of Education (Department). Review the Department's [Military Connected Youth Playbook](#) for more information.

A growing body of evidence indicates that participation in career-connected learning can promote strong attendance, engagement, and academic achievement for highly mobile students, including military-connected youth by helping students forge direct and durable linkages between what they are learning in school and their personal and professional interests and aspirations. For example:

1. [District of Columbia Public Schools'](#) high school students enrolled in career and technical education (CTE) courses during the 2022-23 school year attended nearly 13 more days of school than their peers who did not.
2. [New Hampshire's](#) 2023 Gallup poll surveying over 9,600 students in grades five through 12 found that students who participated in career-connected learning were more likely to be involved in and enthusiastic about school, (i.e., engagement) and to have positive ideas and energy for the future (i.e., hope).
3. Nationally, the average four-year graduation rate for the 2021-22 school year for CTE concentrators, (i.e., students who take multiple courses in one CTE program area) is 96% – 11 percentage points higher than the average rate for all students.

All young people deserve equitable access to career-connected learning that provides the opportunity to gain meaningful work experience, earn college credits, and work toward an industry credential before they graduate high school. Career-connected learning can support students to safely envision their future and who they want to become; build social capital and deepen school and community engagement; and master a strong foundation of both technical skills and academic knowledge that expands their horizons and postsecondary options.



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Unlocking Career Success for Special Populations



Unlocking Career Success

[Unlocking Career Success](#) is one of the priority initiatives within Secretary Cardona's Raise the Bar initiative, and it is an interagency program that reimagines how our nation's high schools prepare all students to thrive in their future education and careers. The initiative blurs the lines between high school, college, and career to provide students with accelerated and innovative opportunities to earn college credits and gain real-world career experiences. This joint effort across the U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, and Commerce supports public and private sector leaders, government agencies, and other community-based organizations to help students earn postsecondary degrees and industry-recognized credentials that our employers need, and our economy demands. Unlocking Career Success seeks to strengthen systems of multiple pathways to success, fulfilling the promise of education as the key to economic and social mobility and providing our students with rewarding, joyful, and purposeful college and career pathways that lead them to reach their endless potential.



Actions

Stakeholders can increase career-connected pathways for military-connected youth by taking steps to:

1. Understand the key governing policies for military-connected youth worldwide.

- **The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)** - Military-connected students, predominately with parents serving active duty, move approximately six to nine times from kindergarten to their high school graduation. The ESEA requires schools to report on the achievement of military-connected students on the State reading/language arts, mathematics, and science assessments administered annually. This must include students with parents on “active service,” include individuals on active duty, full-time or part-time National Guard duty, and full-time or part-time Reserve status. It would not include students with a parent who is a retiree, a veteran, or in the Retired Reserves or students with a family member (e.g., sibling or grandparent). The identifier is intended to allow educators, parents, and military leaders to track the achievement of military-connected students across multiple schools.
- **MIC3** - The [Military Interstate Children’s Compact Commission \(MIC3\)](#) is the governing body of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children or ICEOMC. The collaborative’s mission: ease the educational transitions of school-aged, military and uniform-connected students attending public schools and to include Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) schools worldwide. The administrative mechanism allows interstate collaboration to resolve complex policy challenges while retaining their state sovereignty. It addresses key issues encountered by military families: eligibility, enrollment, placement, and graduation. The Compact provides for a detailed governance structure at both the state and national levels with built-in enforcement and compliance mechanisms. The goal of the Compact is to replace the widely varying policies affecting transitioning military students.
- **DoDEA** - The [Department of Defense Education Activity \(DoDEA\)](#) is the umbrella organization that unites efforts to provide quality educational opportunities and services to military dependents around the globe. DoDEA plans, directs, coordinates, and manages the education programs for Department of Defense (DoD) dependents who would otherwise not have access to a high-quality public education. It operates 161 schools in 9 districts located in 11 foreign countries, 7 states, and 2 territories across 10 time zones. There are nearly 900,000 military-connected children of all ages worldwide, of which more than 66,000 are enrolled in DoDEA schools and served by more than 8,000 educators.

2. Leverage federal funds and legislation to support military-connected youth.

- **Perkins V** - Signed into law on July 31, 2018, the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Educational Act of 2006) (Perkins V) provides roughly \$1.4 billion dollars annually in State formula grant funds for the development and implementation of CTE programs at the secondary and postsecondary levels. Commonly referred to as Perkins V, the law encourages States to



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promote equity in CTE through data analysis, funding, technical assistance, professional development, and regular engagement of stakeholders representing students with [special population status](#)—which includes students experiencing [foster care](#) and [homelessness](#) and students of [military, and migrant and immigrant](#) families.

- Perkins V also requires secondary and postsecondary institutions to conduct a [comprehensive local needs assessment](#) (CLNA) to identify and address underlying issues that pose barriers to students who are members of special populations to access and be successful in CTE. The CLNA can be used to direct local funds and help to make the benefits of CTE more visible to students and families who are members of special populations, including directed supports for military connected youth.

3. Identify Promising Practices and Exemplars.

- Leverage resources from the MIC3. [MIC3 has a Guide for Parents, School Officials, and Public Administrators](#) that outlines the policy areas that are governed by the MIC3 compact including transfer, course sequencing, and graduation requirements.
- Pay careful attention to policies and practices related to [accountability, assessment and course placement, graduation requirements, credit accrual, CTE, work-based learning, dual enrollment](#), and [college admissions requirements](#). Collectively, these policies and practices shape the educational experiences and trajectories of highly mobile students—and are the change levers for accelerating access and success.
 - **Transitions** -the State of [New Hampshire](#) requires districts that host CTE programs to align their calendars to help standardize the programs and has the potential to support smoother transitions for highly mobile students.
 - **Staffing** - In [Texas](#), Northside Independent School District's Guidance and Counseling Department works to help ease the challenges that students living with a parent on active military duty face due to deployment and relocation. The Department formed a task force of school counselors who meet several times a year to share resources and strategies, including parent engagement and support, improving access to career-connected learning, and counseling for academic, emotional, and personal development.
 - **New programs** - [Massachusetts'](#) Perkins V plan includes efforts to create early college programs for highly mobile students, including students experiencing foster care, homelessness, and military-connected students. These early college programs will include advising, work-based learning, postsecondary linkages, integrated instruction, credential attainment, and alignment with labor market data.
 - **Asset-mapping** - [Rhode Island](#) conducted a comprehensive asset map to identify all relevant funding and work streams in the state and strategies to improve access to career-connected learning. The report includes a thorough assessment of systemic barriers and gaps that prevent the state's education and workforce development system from increasing access to career-connected learning.



Military Connected Youth Playbook

Unlocking Career Success for Special Populations



Additional Resources

- Advance CTE developed an [overview](#) of federal funding streams that can be blended or braided to develop and sustain a more integrated career-connected learning ecosystem.
- The [Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State](#) developed online learning modules for school personnel to increase understanding and awareness related to the unique challenges faced by military-connected students and families, and to provide school personnel with strategies and resources to support military-connected students.
- The Department of Education maintains a webpage of [Resources for Caregiving Veteran Families](#).
- Since May 2021, the Joining Forces Interagency Policy Committee has been an important forum for advancing cross-agency priorities related to the families of service members and Veterans, caregivers, and survivors. Federal agencies have made commitments in the [Strengthening America's Military Families](#) report in support of the [Joining Forces](#). This webpage provides resources to assist educators at all levels in better understanding and supporting the approximately 2.3 million children under the age of 18 living with a disabled Veteran and whose personal needs may compete with the caregiving tasks they perform for their Veteran parent.
- [Military OneSource](#) is a resource hosted by the Defense Department for service members and military families that includes information on a wide array of topics, comprehensive resources, and confidential help through online chat, phone, and in-person appointments.
- The U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs runs the [Veterans Day National Committee](#), responsible for planning Veteran's Day events, selecting a national poster, and developing [educator resources](#).
- In 2011, First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden came together to launch [Joining Forces](#), a nationwide initiative calling all Americans to rally around service members, veterans, and their families and support them through wellness, education, and employment opportunities. Joining Forces works hand in hand with the public and private sector to ensure that service members, veterans, and their families have the tools they need to succeed throughout their lives.
- The [Military Child Education Coalition \(MSEC\)](#) helps children growing up in military families by providing them, their parents, and professionals with programs, resources, and guidance—helping the child stay on course academically, socially, and emotionally.

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Superintendent Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



This playbook provides ways in which Superintendents and teams can blur the lines between high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. Superintendents play a significant role to Raise the Bar for student success by developing an *education-to-workforce system* that focuses on Unlocking Career Success.

Step 1

Establish Unified Vision

Step 2

Empower Implementation

Step 3

Create Conducive Environments

Step 4

Strengthen Partnerships

Establish a unified vision

The Superintendent's vision for career-connected learning serves as an animating force to bring together multiple partners and distinct priorities to improve the lives of youth. Superintendents and local education agencies have developed goals that link educators, employers, community-based organizations, and others as equal partners in attaining the Superintendent's vision. When establishing that vision, consider how to:



Create a shared vision that spans the local education agency, community and employer partners, and postsecondary institutions, including the community & technical college system, to create a career pathways system that serves young people at scale and creates options for youth to pursue higher levels of education and employment.



Position schools to lead and work together as school types and configurations vary widely, as does the availability of certain types of career-connected programs and funding structures, to ensure that every student has access to high-quality career-connected learning and to ensure that schools are responsive to student and employer needs.



Leverage data to improve partnerships and research-driven practices that include student and family voice and input from stakeholders across the P-12, postsecondary, and workforce systems to create common goals and shared language that anchors school-based services and operational routines to improve student success and transition.

Tools to establish a unified vision for career-connected learning:

Develop a Vision

In California, [LA Unified School District's Ready for the World Strategic Plan](#) explicitly states that all students will be ready to thrive in college, career, and life with clear measurable goals. In Ohio, [Columbus City School's strategic plan](#) includes an objective to expand career and technical education (CTE) pathways in alignment with local industry needs.

Establish Clear Expectations

Develop graduation requirements in partnership with families and students to ensure that community voice is at the center of system design and the community is represented in the solution. In Virginia, the [Academies of Hampton](#) portrait of a graduate envisions all students prepared for success in careers, lifelong learning, and life. In New Mexico, [Zuni Public Schools](#) portrait of a graduate includes A:Shiwi core values to ensure youth are responsible citizens who make positive contributions to the world.



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Empower the implementation team

Superintendents play a unique role within the local education agency and are essential to scale career-connected education systems. Superintendents create, shape, and champion the school system's vision, translate that vision into a discrete set of goals and milestones, and serve as a coach to key staff who are responsible for implementation. When empowering the implementation team, consider how to:



Create a district strategic plan that prioritizes career-connected learning, defines complementary actions and goals for central office, school-based leadership teams, and other school-based staff, and allocates the resources necessary to reimagine high schools through the expansion of the four keys to Unlocking Career Success.



Bring together a cross-cutting management team that consists of central office and building administration, educators and counselors, community and employer partners, and students and their families to ensure that each partner is responsible for the success of students and the school system strategic plan.



Support principals, teachers, and counselors through mentorship and coaching models, professional learning, and other opportunities to build relationships with postsecondary, community, and employer partners, which can help to drive the four keys to Unlocking Career Success and meaningfully connect in-school and out-of-school learning.

Strategies to empower the implementation team:

Create District and School Based Teams

In California, the Porterville Unified School District deploys dedicated teams to support pathways programs within their schools. In Texas, the Dallas Independent School District has established a dedicated CTE office with clear communication and outreach mandates.

Consider New Funding Sources

In California, Oakland's Measure H is a local tax that provides consistent funding for career readiness programs across the local education agency.

Centralize Administrative Services

Centralized CTE teacher credentialing, data, and accountability systems can empower implementation teams. School systems that are large or those that work within a system, like an intermediary unit or Perkins consortium, can help to share resource. In California, the Fresno Unified School District's CTE Teacher credentialing program includes centralized information about requirements, credentialing organizations, and open job positions for the district.

Support Professional Learning

In Virginia, Fairfax County's Great Beginnings teacher induction program provides comprehensive supports for new teachers. In Florida, Broward County Public Schools' Professional Learning Communities provides teachers the opportunity to gain skills to better support students, including a specific focus on subjects relating to career-connected learning.



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Create conducive environments

Superintendents can help to remove the arbitrary divides that separate P-12, higher education, and workforce development by ensuring that the classroom is not the only place where learning occurs. Extended and summer learning models, on-the-job training, and secondary-to-postsecondary partnerships help to accelerate opportunities for youth. When creating conducive environments, consider how to:



Support students secondary to postsecondary transition which can include helping to facilitate partnerships between local education agencies, community & technical colleges, and local workforce development boards to drive the four keys to Unlocking Career Success and coordinate in-school and out-of-school youth programs and services.



Leverage community partners including community-based organizations, non-profits, local philanthropic groups, and others to support system innovation, build and scale relationships with the community and with employers, and better connect students with wrap-around services, transition supports, and out-of-school learning opportunities.



Elevate employer engagement to ensure that education and training programs reflect and respond to employer needs, partner with industry groups or associations to help scale apprenticeship and work-based learning programs, and to create opportunities for employers to help shape local policies that support career pathways.

Ways to create conducive environments:

Support Community-Based Organizations and Intermediaries

Embed community-based organizations and intermediaries within the school system to provide additional wraparound and transitional supports for students. In Louisiana, New Orleans's YouthForce NOLA is an education, business, and civic collaborative that provides schools with the capacity to offer students technical skills and work experiences. In Georgia, Achieve Atlanta is an organization that provides wrap around supports in partnership with schools to support college access.

Partner with Community Colleges and Apprenticeship Programs

In Florida, Miami-Dade's Dual Enrollment program has a clear articulation agreement for the program. In Tennessee, Metro Nashville's Public School's Better Together program is a joint venture between the public school system and community college that aligns career pathways from high school to college and careers. Superintendents can work with local industry, workforce, and labor unions to centralize work-based learning opportunities like CareerWise has done in many communities, as exemplified by CareerWise New York, which created a youth apprenticeship system that facilitates relationships between schools and businesses, bridging the divide between education and workforce demands.



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Build and strengthen partnerships

Youth career pathway programs require coordination across local education agencies and partnerships with employers and community facing organizations. Several local education agencies have partnered with intermediary organizations, public and private partnerships, and/or cross-agency teams to improve opportunities for youth and support career pathways. When building and strengthening partnerships, consider how to:



Engage state and local workforce development boards to leverage and embed services offered through in-school and out-of-school youth programs under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) within the local education agency, as well as ways in which the school system can support the implementation of these programs.



Build strategic partnerships to expand the four keys to Unlocking Career Success, which can include partnerships with community & technical colleges to expand dual or concurrent enrollment programs in academic and career-focused coursework, eliminate remedial education courses, and expand industry credential programs.



Support intermediary organizations to build the capacity of the local education agency to engage employers and community-based organizations, to scale work-based learning opportunities, create or expand youth apprenticeship programs, and to support student career navigation and coaching.

Opportunities to build and strengthen partnerships:

Form and Codify Partnerships

This can occur through formal methods like a memorandum of understanding or partnership agreement, or less formally through employer or community advisory groups and school-based activities and events.

Engage Students and Parents

Host youth town halls, student advisory groups, and industry parent nights. In Arizona, Westwood High School offers a free parent university that offers classes on topics such as parenting skills, academics, and social-emotional learning. In Colorado, Douglas County School District has a student advisory group that serves as a focus group of high school students for school board and school system personnel.

Engage Private and Philanthropic Partners

Establish dedicated funding to support innovation and system development. In California, Porterville Pathways Foundation supports the school district's pathways and Linked Learning program to work directly with employers to establish apprenticeship programs, industry advisory committees, and work-based learning experiences.



Superintendent Playbook

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Workforce Development Boards Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



This Playbook provides steps in which workforce development boards (WDBs) can blur the lines between high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. WDBs can play a significant role to Raise the Bar for student success by developing an *education-to-workforce system* focusing on Unlocking Career Success.

Step 1

Develop Regional Plans

Step 2

Set Standards and Fund Priorities

Step 3

Champion Employer Voice

Develop Regional Strategic Plans

WDBs play a crucial role in serving employers and the education system by convening and collaborating with local educational institutions, businesses, government officials, and employers to advance growth and high-quality career opportunities to meet the needs of the regional economy. Boards also help link the needs of a community and the talent needs of a region by developing regional workforce plans and sector strategies. When developing regional strategic plans consider how to:



Bring educational partners into the conversation. Our talent pipelines start in school systems so connecting the local education system and the community and technical college system as early as possible to in-demand skills and regional careers is a long-term workforce sustainability strategy.



Incentivize work-based learning opportunities. Access to relevant, real-world learning will encourage youth to pursue high quality, in-demand jobs and is essential to integrate employers more fully within the education and workforce system.



Articulate in-demand skills and occupations. Translate the needs of employers and industry to help students obtain the skills they require to be successful. How employers articulate the skills they need is foundational to informing P-12 educational partners and meeting the workforce needs of the region.

Tools for developing regional strategic plans:

Leverage Perkins and WIOA

Several laws, specifically (1) the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins V), and (2) the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provide a range of opportunities for business leaders to get involved and embed industry needs and skills across the education and workforce development system.

At the state level, business and industry can provide labor market information (LMI) and guidance to inform career and technical education (CTE) programs and Perkins V and WIOA Unified or Combined state plans (hereinafter, WIOA State Plans), specifically the states' visions and goals, industry sector strategies, and in-demand occupations.

At the local level, business and industry feedback is an important element of local CTE applications; in particular, LMI is necessary to complete the Perkins required Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA). Materials published by AdvanceCTE, the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), and Business Leaders United provide various resources on how employers can get involved in strengthening career and technical education.



Workforce Development Boards Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



Tools for developing regional strategic plans (continued):

Elevate the role of youth

In Washington state, the [Pacific Mountain Workforce Development Strategic Plan](#) regularly monitors labor market trends to develop employer partnerships and demand-driven programming for youth and adults. The plan emphasizes the importance of the education-to-workforce pipelines, considering key federal legislation including the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Many states include youth voice in the workforce planning processes through dedicated feedback sessions, empathy interviews, school shadowing opportunities, and other methods. This ensures that the individuals responsible for creating youth workforce implementation strategies are connected to youth themselves.

Co-develop policies with P-12, higher education, CTE, and business leaders

In Washington state, the Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County developed a [regional blueprint](#) to align shared regional priorities in response to pandemic disruption. The blueprint strategies prioritize the role of youth: (1) investing in and prioritizing youth of color, (2) ensuring high-quality youth work experiences, and (3) embedding youth voice in planning, process, and service delivery.



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Set Standards and Fund Priorities based on LMI

WDBs are responsible for setting standards and determining funding priorities based on local LMI and the needs of employers, youth, and adults in their region. This is a large responsibility that determines the economic viability and quality of life for many communities. Consider how to use LMI when setting standards and funding priorities and:



Incorporate regional context. Each region, state, district, and municipality are distinct. Determine the best way to effectively share complex data sets throughout the ecosystem.



Review data regularly to identify market trends. LMI data can change swiftly based on myriad factors, so regular review is required for the data to be both accurate and actionable.



Standardize definitions and requirements across systems. These can be an animating force for effective cross-system alignment. For example, defining occupations that are in-demand helps to inform investments made under WIOA and Perkins and can help identify the industries and occupations that are a priority for the region, which will then help to inform work-based learning priorities and career-connected learning.

Tools for setting standards and funding priorities based on LMI:

Provide timely LMI

Numerous staff in the education and workforce system use LMI to align career-connected learning programs with in-demand careers and advising students.

In Vermont, the Business Roundtable and Vermont Agency of Commerce organized almost 100 employers to forecast new jobs across 11 critical job categories, which mobilized education partners to align resources and curricula to support this market need.

In Virginia, the Shenandoah Valley Career Hub is a collaborative effort among business, education, and economic development communities to broaden awareness of high-demand, high-wage careers in the region including through a partnership with a local TV station that featured 24 different career pathways that are high-wage and do not require a 4-year degree.

Define in-demand occupations that reflect High Wage High Demand (HWHD) career opportunities

Translate the needs of labor, employers, and industry to help students develop the skills they need to be successful, including analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, present- and future-occupational trends, and direct input from employers.

Georgia took a regional approach to employer engagement by leveraging WIOA sector strategy efforts to support industry engagement in CTE through the Work-Source Sector Partnership initiative.



Workforce Development Boards Playbook

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Tools for setting standards and funding priorities based on LMI (continued):

Create and validate a list of high-value workforce credentials

The list should prioritize credentials with the highest labor market value, and these credentials should be stackable and easily transferred. These credentials should lead to occupations that are in-demand, high wage, and provide growth opportunities. In addition, ensure credentials are consistent across the state's Perkins and WIOA state plans. By taking on the role of creating aligned, standardized lists, P-12 entities can align CTE opportunities to the adult workforce development systems.



Workforce Development Boards Playbook

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This Playbook provides steps in which workforce development boards (WDBs) can blur the lines between high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. WDBs can play a significant role to Raise the Bar for student success by developing an *education-to-workforce system* focusing on Unlocking Career Success.

Step 1

Develop Regional Plans

Step 2

Set Standards and Fund Priorities

Step 3

Champion Employer Voice

Provide a Mechanism to Champion Employer Voice

Youth career pathway programs often span P-12, postsecondary, and the workforce development system, requiring coordination across local educational agencies (LEAs) and partnerships with employers and community-facing organizations. WDBs provide a critical connection point to employers in this coordination effort. When providing a mechanism to channel employer voice consider how to:



Engage the whole community. WDBs are conveners and should utilize this role as frequently as possible to ensure that educational and workforce development programs are tightly connected to employer demand. This should include the needs of small and large employers, as well as those with local and national representation.



Identify industries essential to economic and workforce development. With rapidly evolving technology, many jobs of the future do not exist today. WDBs can help communities prepare for this new reality by communicating with educational leaders to share information about emerging skills and industries regularly.



Partner with other labor and employer groups including employer associations, chambers of commerce, business roundtables, unions, and other groups to collect and share employer and industry needs, signal skill and occupational needs within and across industries, and build the capacity of employers to work with education and the workforce development system.

Tools for channeling employer voice:

Consider creating regional, public-facing websites

Indiana's Hoosiers by the Numbers provides a dashboard for LMI that disaggregates data by county and topic.

Other states have **created annual LMI reports or analyses that are publicly accessible**. For example, Colorado's Talent Pipeline Report provides an annual analysis of LMI and highlights talent development strategies. Colorado's public-facing intermediary then helps P-12 systems identify available work-based learning opportunities and/or youth workforce programs that align to the region's LMI and the Talent Pipeline Report.

Maryland's Department of Labor provides LMI via the LMiDashboard empowering the education and workforce development communities to make data-driven decisions.

Wisconomy is a Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development tool that provides robust labor market data visualizations to inform alignment between education programs and workforce needs.

Actively support braided funding models

Partners in Texas used funding from the local WDB to have teachers complete industry externships with key industry leaders to better understand what those industries look like so they can more effectively communicate options about careers to students.



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Tools for channeling employer voice (continued):

Leverage the power of convening

In Minnesota, the Chamber of Commerce brings together the business community and local high schools through the [Bloomington Future Leaders](#) program that includes a speaker series and mentoring on career exploration.

An initiative of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, [Kentucky's Talent Pipeline](#), was launched by the Kentucky Chamber Workforce Center to empower employers to lead on workforce development by creating employer collaboratives across the state to support talent pipeline development for key sectors.



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