



School Board Playbook






Unlocking Career Success

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



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 \(ELs\)](#).



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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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Step 1

Engage Stakeholders

Step 2

Implement Vision

Step 3

Build Capacity

Step 4

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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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

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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