



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.



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