



# 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.



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## 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.



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## 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.



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## 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.



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## 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.



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## 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](#).



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