



FORD
NEXT GENERATION
LEARNING 

Community Connected Learning

AN EMPLOYER'S GUIDE TO CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS

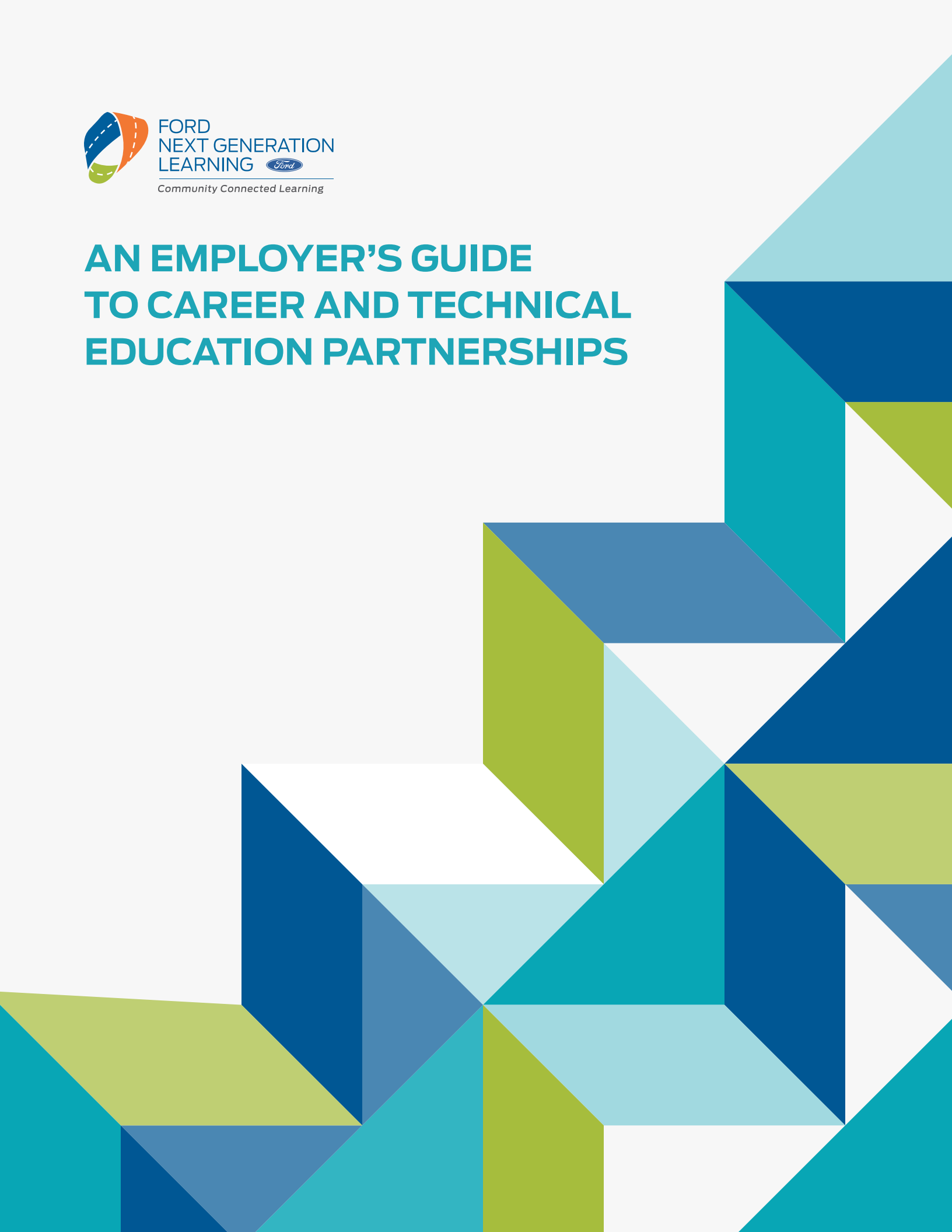


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MAKE THE SHIFT TO POWERFUL PARTNERSHIPS!

Creating a robust-talent pipeline responsive to the needs of employers and education requires both parties to change their approach regarding how they create and sustain a partnership. Yes, for many years there have been relationships between employers and education, but traditionally those relationships have been transactional in nature. If we hope to maximize the benefits from those relationships, **it requires a paradigm shift. It requires a shift from transactional relationships to powerful partnerships.** When that shift is made, employer organizations become far more than consumers of the education system. Instead, education and employers become co-investors in the success of young people. Such a shift has the power to deliver significant returns for everyone involved. In fact, for many businesses and organizations, creating powerful partnerships can be the ultimate workforce-development strategy.

Consider the Features and Benefits

First, consider the fact that young people achieve significantly more success in their learning journey when they experience authentic and deeper learning coupled with opportunities to build their social capital. That happens best when businesses and organizations, like yours, partner deeply with education. Second, when an employer fully engages with education, specifically with career and technical education (CTE), the potential benefits for the employer, their industry, and the community are far reaching. Employers who choose to develop powerful partnerships with education take advantage of an exceptional opportunity to:

- **Shape Tomorrow's Workforce:** By engaging with schools, you actively shape the future talent pool to your needs. Collaborate with CTE educators to cultivate the skills and competencies needed in your industry. By investing in education, you secure a pipeline of capable, job-ready individuals who can contribute to your business's growth and innovation.
- **Demonstrate Corporate Social Responsibility:** Participating in school-business partnerships is an impactful way to apply your commitment to social responsibility. By supporting education, you make a tangible difference in the lives of students and communities. It's an opportunity to align your brand with noble causes, building trust and goodwill among stakeholders.
- **Boost Employee Engagement and Satisfaction:** Engaging your employees in school-business partnerships can be a powerful driver of job satisfaction and team cohesion. Encourage your staff to volunteer, mentor, or share their expertise with students. These experiences foster a sense of purpose, fulfillment, and personal growth while bolstering your company's image as an employer of choice.
- **Drive Innovation and Fresh Perspectives:** Collaboration with schools injects new perspectives, ideas, and creativity into your organization. Students bring fresh eyes and untapped potential, offering unique insights and out-of-the-box thinking. This exchange of knowledge can inspire innovation, prompt unconventional solutions, and enhance your competitive edge.
- **Strengthen Community Relations:** Forge deep-rooted connections with the local community by engaging with schools. As a partner, you demonstrate your commitment to the betterment of society, leading to enhanced relationships with customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders. Building strong community ties also fosters a favorable business environment and attracts top talent.

Ready to Make It Happen?

If those features and benefits sound inviting, the next question is likely – but how do we make it happen? To help employers improve their workforce strategy by incorporating powerful partnerships with their local career and technical education (CTE) programs, Ford Next Generation Learning (Ford NGL) has developed this guide. Ford NGL believes all youth, especially those furthest from opportunity, deserve an education that nurtures their talents and full potential. Over the last 20 years, Ford NGL has prototyped and refined a variety of solutions that leverage the power of community and partnerships to prepare and support ALL students for success. One of those solutions detailed in this guide is what we call the Blueprint for Powerful Partnerships. It walks you through a step-by-step process and supports your efforts with helpful examples, templates, and resources.

BLUEPRINT FOR POWERFUL PARTNERSHIPS

The Ford NGL Blueprint for Powerful Partnerships is a framework for starting, implementing, measuring, and taking partnerships between employers and CTE programs (K-12 and post-secondary) to the next level. While powerful partnerships require committed parties from both business and education, this guide is focused on you, the employer, and how you can take a leadership role in the process. The guide organizes the framework into five stages as summarized in the following chart.

1 Before Getting Started	2 How to Get Started	3 How to Implement	4 How to Measure	5 What's Next?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Analyze and specify your company's motivation and needs. B. Identify your company's stakeholders. C. Identify the foundational knowledge and skills required. D. Determine your company's readiness and capacity. E. Understand the ways in which to engage. F. Create a company profile and supportive collateral material to use during meetings with schools. G. When ready to reach out to educators, first consider the school calendar. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Connect locally. B. Explore the partnership potential. C. Develop a partnership action plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Manage the partnership action plan. B. Implement engagement activities. C. Engage in advisory council meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Conduct employee surveys. B. Gather student feedback using pre- and post-experience surveys. C. Conduct engagement activity surveys with students, teachers, and employees. D. Conduct partnership team surveys. E. Co-host an annual partnership retreat. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Recruit from within your company. B. Expand your reach with schools. C. Celebrate and share successes.

1. BEFORE GETTING STARTED

Before reaching out to a potential education partner, prepare for success by taking the following six steps.

1-A: Analyze and Specify Your Company's Motivation and Needs

Why does your company want to partner with CTE pathway programs? How might this strategy connect with your overall workforce and talent-pipeline needs? Which aspects of your company are the priority focus? What are the sectors or skill teams that have the greatest need?

1-B: Identify Your Company's Stakeholders

Who within your company or organization must be involved in developing your powerful partnership, workforce strategy? Buy-in and ongoing commitment from your company's top-level leadership is critical as is anyone engaged in recruiting talent. In order to achieve and sustain meaningful engagement with CTE programs at local high schools and post-secondary institutions, your team must also have a well-designed structure and support system in place.

1-C: Identify the Foundational Knowledge and Skills Required

What professional and personal skills are important to see in your new employees? List those skills and determine how they align with existing CTE pathway programs and/or how they might be incorporated within a new pathway. Identify entry-level positions suitable for young people. What educational attainment or industry certifications are required to move into the various jobs? If your company has historically looked only at technical colleges, community colleges, and graduate programs, expand that pipeline to include the K-12 system.

1-D: Determine Your Company's Readiness and Capacity to Engage

It is critical that your company or organization sees the opportunity of partnering with education as a strategic partnership with career and technical education. Before getting started, understand if and how the company has engaged directly with CTE students and teachers in the past (either in the classroom and/or on the company's premises). The criteria for experience working with educators and students include:

1. Your company or organization has prior experience engaging with district and school leaders for partnership planning purposes.
2. Your employees have prior experience working with CTE teachers both within and outside of school.
3. Your employees have prior experience working with CTE students both within and outside of school.

Based on past experience, does your company or organization have the capacity to sustain and expand engagement over time? What can be done to formalize and, if necessary, expand that capacity?

1-E: Understand the Ways in which Your Company Can Engage



Build relationships and engagement with school districts, individual schools, and their students along a continuum of engagement activities.

- Develop deep, sustained transformational partnerships.
- Provide industry-informed learning experiences beyond the classroom.



Coordinate, communicate, and collaborate to align resources and provide access to staff who support engagement activities.

- Ensure engagement in activities.
- Serve on a school partnership committee.



Ready the culture, systems, strategy, and policies that enable effective engagement at all levels within the company.

- Dedicate people and financial resources to support engagement.
- Advocate for community support and educational transformation.

1-F: Create a Company Profile and Supportive Collateral Material

Prepare a profile of your company and gather supportive collateral material before you have a discovery meeting with your local school district. Doing so will be helpful as you describe and share the essential aspects of your company or organization with the district. Once you are matched with a CTE program, ask for them to create and share their profile with you as well. These materials become very useful when onboarding to the partnership begins.



Scan the QR code to access resources like those below:

1. Sample collateral from industry
2. Powerful partnership activities worksheet
3. Company profile template



1-G: Consider the School Calendar Before Reaching Out

Many school districts begin the school year in August. When planning outreach and engagement activities, take into account the school calendar and the possible impact of work routines, scheduled events, and breaks such as the following.

- Early July vacations (Teachers may also not be available in parts of June.)
- School typically begins in August. (Teachers and staff usually return to work full time 1-2 weeks before students begin classes.)
- Note any fall, winter, and spring breaks.
- Consider December, New Year, and other holidays.
- In March and April, state testing and ACT/SAT exams are scheduled.
- High school graduations are typically scheduled in the last half of May.
- Search your local district’s website for the school calendar. June can be a good time to connect with staff such as district administrators or school principals who work on a 12-month schedule.



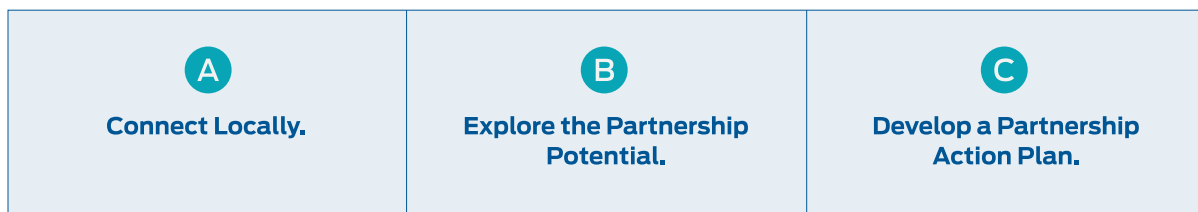
Scan the QR code to access resources like those below:

1. Printable blank wall calendar
2. Sample calendar tool



2. HOW TO GET STARTED

Effectively launching a powerful partnership between your company and CTE requires a three step approach.



The first step of a powerful business-education partnership begins with knowing how to connect. Once the connection is made, time is spent gaining an appreciation for each other’s goals and objectives, and exploring the partnership for ways to deliver mutually beneficial results. Once these shared interests and opportunities are identified, you are ready to develop a partnership action plan which outlines the engagement activities for the year. Let’s explore each step in a little more detail.

2-A: Connect Locally

Need a contact at the local high school or school district? Save yourself some time and effort by doing a little homework.

- Contact your local chamber of commerce, workforce investment board (WIB), economic development corporation (EDC), trade association, or education nonprofit. Ask to speak to their workforce or talent-development manager or go right to the top and start with the CEO or executive director. It is possible they already have an existing partnership with area schools. They may be able to make the necessary introductions and plug you right into those relationships. If so, it is probably the closest thing you'll find to pressing a partnership connection "easy button."
- Not a member of these organizations? Consider joining the one with the strongest commitment to workforce development. It is a good idea to discuss your interests and objectives with their staff before officially joining the organization.
- What if you are already a member of a local business organization, but it isn't actively involved in workforce development? Consider being an advocate for prioritizing this focus by meeting with the CEO or by championing the possibilities through your board or committee service.

Would you prefer to start by connecting directly with the school district?

- Search the local school district's website and look for references to career and technical education (CTE). District CTE staff should be willing and able to discuss their programs and share how to get in contact with the right people at the school level.
- Or, it may be best to start at the top by contacting the superintendent's office or your local school-board representative. Conduct internet searches and make some calls!

Once you have identified your point of contact, the following is a sample email requesting a meeting with a school (or district) representative to explore a potential partnership.



Scan the QR Code to access resources like the one below:

- Sample Meeting Request Email



Be Prepared for a Connection



1. Know the answers to questions like:
 - a. What is career and technical education?
 - b. What are standards, and how are those connected to competencies in my industry?
 - c. What does a pathway/academy program look like?
 - d. How does teaching and learning look different today than when I was in school?
2. Can you name the CTE pathway/academy programs the district has that might be a connection to your company/industry?
3. Can your company or organization clearly articulate your workforce needs while making a direct connection to the school's desired learning outcomes (i.e., profile of a graduate)?
4. Can your company or organization present the ways in which it is prepared to engage?

Are you able to fully answer these questions? If not, please reach out to Ford NGL for an opportunity to experience “Going Back to School” – a 90-minute, virtual workshop designed to fill you in on answers to these key questions.

Be sure to have those key talking points ready to pitch. Here's some suggestions to get you started:

Schools/District: We can help...

- Connect your teachers and students to the world of work by introducing essential knowledge, skills, and technologies into the high school curriculum.
- Build positive relationships and a community network that supports and values the contributions to student learning.
- Support teachers as they develop a relevant understanding of the world of work.

Teachers: We can help them...

- Develop their capacity to design learning experiences that engage students in exploring solutions to authentic, open-ended problems that are relevant to the world of work.
- Align instructional standards to industry needs and strengthen student experiences that allow deeper exploration of open-ended challenges with multiple opportunities to solve complex problems.
- Provide opportunities for students to explore open-ended, complex problems.
- Support students in using current resources, tools, and technologies.

Students: We can help them...

- Develop early relationships with employer partners to cultivate a professional network that fosters success in college, career, and life.
- Use authentic workplace challenges to analyze conflicting priorities, analyze information, consider multiple perspectives, and develop appropriate solutions within the constraints of a real problem.
- Engage in hands-on learning that is collaborative and based on inquiry.
- Build their toolbox of skills that strengthens their professional resume.

2-B: Explore the Partnership Potential

The first meeting you have with the CTE representative(s) is your opportunity to explore partnership potential and discuss ways the partnership can begin. This meeting typically determines if there's a partnership match.

How will your partnership be different?



Every industry seeks some kind of relationship (often transactional) with their local CTE department(s). So, the challenge is, what can be done to create a partnership that is transformational? Ask yourself, how can we design this partnership so it is both unique and mutually beneficial?

To begin with, it is important to remember that the district is not in the business of finding your company workers. A district's first responsibility is educating their students. What a powerful partnership offers is an opportunity to fully engage students in authentic experiences in which they learn their academics through the lens of industry.

From your perspective, a powerful partnership offers an opportunity to develop work-ready graduates able to fill your workforce needs. So, while the responsibilities of the school are different from the needs of your company and industry, they are not mutually exclusive. When approached collaboratively, they can be highly complementary. With that synergy in mind, approach your potential partnership by suggesting *ways you can provide the youth in your community with authentic and relevant, real-world learning opportunities that are connected to your industry/company/organization.*

The school/district will want to know your answers to the following questions.

- How does my business or organization hope to benefit from the partnership? How might the school benefit from partnering with my business? (Be as open and transparent as you can. Both the school and your business should find value in the partnership, so understanding how the school hopes to benefit is critical.)
- Who will be my company's or organization's point of contact for the school partnership? (Make sure your point person has organization and relationship skills, as well as the capacity to communicate effectively with their counterpart at the school.)

At your first planning meeting with the school, be sure to:

- Take the time to get to know each other. Educators are in the relationship business (just like many business people), and together you are exploring a partnership that has the potential to be transformational! Listening, understanding, and respecting each other's mission, goals, and objectives is essential.
- Discuss the mutual goals of the partnership. What do students need? What does the school or academy want to achieve? What does the business hope to achieve?
- Understand the student outcomes the school most wants out of your partnership. Brainstorm together how your business or organization can help the school achieve some of those desired outcomes through specific engagement activities. It is completely acceptable to confirm your company's participation at a later date. That will give you a chance to check on the interest of your team and your capacity to meet partnership obligations.
- Discuss the roles and responsibilities of each partner. Confirm your point of contact at the school for coordinating any future partnership activities. Also, make sure you identify your company's point person.

Before scheduling or confirming any activities, be sure both parties have the email address and cell phone number for each other's point of contact. (Having this information handy can be critical, especially in the case of last-minute changes or cancellations.)

- Prior to any planned activities, ask if the district or a community organization offers an orientation, onboarding, or training for in-school, business volunteers. Scheduling a tour of the school for the employer and employee volunteers would also be helpful and valuable preparation for your team members.



Scan the QR Code to access resources like the one below:

- [SAMPLE: Partnership Exploration Agenda](#)



2-C: Develop a Partnership Action Plan

A partnership action plan should be developed annually by meeting with your school partner before (or very early) in the school year. The action plan outlines the engagement activities the partnership is volunteering to do throughout the school year in support of the partnership's goals. Confirm the agreement between you and your partner district or school on those activities. Make a list of the activities and document any related agreements and understandings in a formal, partnership action plan.

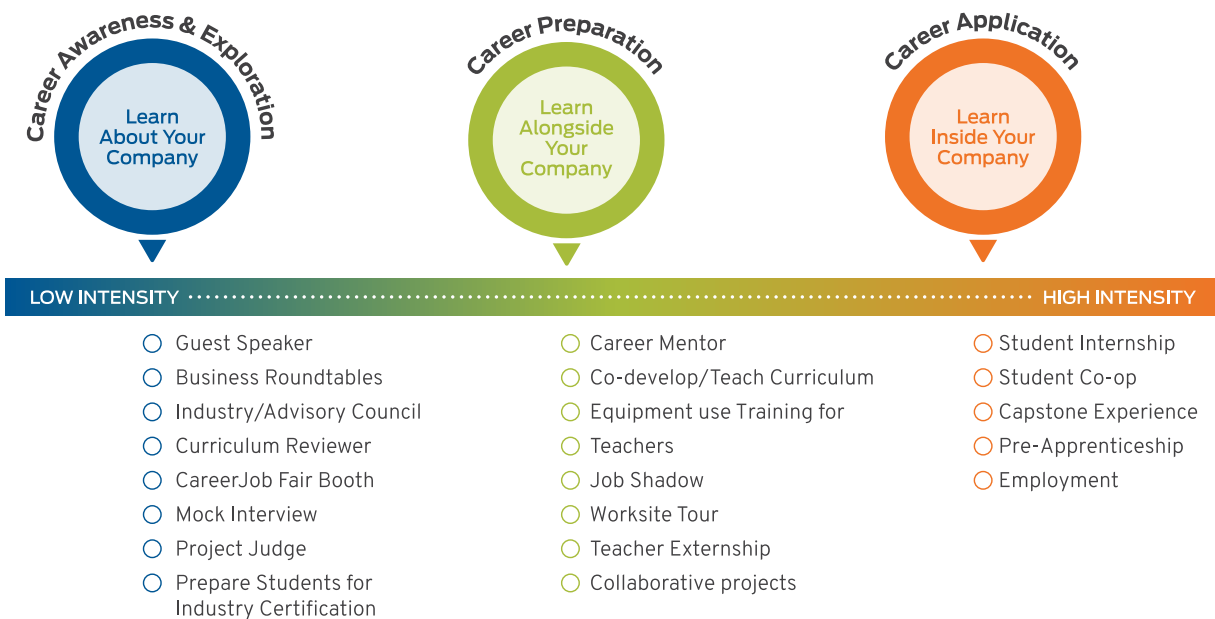
Preparing your first partnership action plan should:

- Include a first-year commitment to really get to know and understand each other versus adding a lot of engagement activities to design and host. This is one time when it is important to go slow, so you can eventually go fast. Commit to a few engagement activities that are manageable and low-intensity. This will increase the likelihood of a smooth and successful experience. It will help identify issues and opportunities that can be addressed and benefit future engagements. By the second year, the partnership will be stronger, enabling it to go deeper and establish greater and more impactful levels of engagement. For your reference, the graphic that follows this list illustrates a variety of engagement options ranging from those that are considered low-intensity to those that are high-intensity.
- Anticipate that districts may recommend that your organization become involved in the advisory council. The district may also require a minimum of two engagement activities for the year. See the engagement activity continuum and description of those activities below.
- Discuss and affirm the partnership goals including a mutual understanding of anticipated student outcomes and business related objectives.
- Detail a calendar of partnership events that incorporates and complements the school calendar. Determine and specify when partnership activities should take place. Set deadlines for establishing firm start and end dates for each activity. Once the engagement activity is on everyone's calendar, create an agreed upon timeline of tasks that need to be accomplished beforehand and designates the individual(s) responsible for making sure those tasks are successfully completed.
- Identify any potential barriers or challenges and brainstorm solutions with your school partner. For example, consider issues such as student transportation, technology requirements, food and beverage, and how to best prepare students in advance for the learning experience.

- Determine how and when performance data will be measured, how it will be evaluated relative to partnership goals, and how it will be shared with stakeholders.
- Schedule a debrief meeting after each engagement activity to review outcomes, challenges, and possible improvements. The debrief meeting is also a good time to review how well communication, promotion, and coordination efforts supported the engagement.
- Set a date at the end of the school year for the partnership to debrief during a partnership retreat regarding overall engagement efforts, specific activities, and the partnership itself. It is a time to discuss to what degree action plan goals and objectives were met. It is a time to recognize and celebrate what went well and applaud those responsible for those successes. If the overall experience shows promise, it is also a time to consider expanding your involvement and increasing your level of engagement.

Note: Because the annual session is one of broad reflection – a time to look back, to celebrate accomplishments, and to plan for the future – it may require a bit more time than the typical debrief. Many powerful partnerships give the year-end debrief special significance by treating it as both a debrief and an event. They call it their Partnership Annual Retreat. It can also be a great time to make announcements and an opportunity (if desired) for the partnership to gain favorable local media attention.

Engagement Activities Menu



This menu includes a set of activities that engages employers and schools in providing learning experiences for students to progress their learning of industry and industry’s career choices. Engagement activities are structured opportunities for your employees to interact with students and teachers either at school, at your place of business, or virtually, using technology to link students with your organization in different locations.

The purposes of engagement activities are to build student awareness of potential careers, facilitate student exploration of career opportunities, and begin student preparation for careers by allowing them to apply their learnings in the workplace. Exposure to careers through an individual activity can be beneficial, but students attain best results when activities are structured and sequenced over several years.

This menu is organized into three sections: Career Awareness and Exploration, Career Preparation, and Career Application. The sequence of engagement activities are organized under these categories by low intensity to high intensity which is defined by the time it takes both the school and the business to design and host.

Career Awareness and Exploration: This category helps students build an appreciation for the full landscape of careers by providing experiences that allow them to interact with industry professionals. Students learn about the employer’s company, the overall industry, and careers of interest. Typical activities in this category range from classroom speakers to business roundtables.

Career Preparation: This category includes engagement activities that integrate academic and CTE education with the skills and knowledge required by the workplace. While the activities listed are primarily focused on the students, there is also an important focus on the teachers. The more teachers understand the workplace skills and how they intersect with curriculum-based needs, the better prepared they will be to help their students develop and apply those skills in the workplace. Activities in this category are recommended for newer partnerships. These activities come into play once onboarding of both organizations has been completed and there is a strategic, partnership action plan in place to guide the implementation of their partnership vision. Activities in this category range from job shadows to worksite tours.

Career Application: This category includes engagement activities that allow students to apply their academic, CTE, and workplace skills alongside their CTE program’s business partners. These activities typically take more time to plan and implement. They require that the employer and school share a deep understanding of each other’s mission, goals, and operations. In any relationship, that level of understanding and mutual respect develops over time. That is why activities in this category are not recommended for a partnership that is just starting out. Activities in this category range from teacher team externships to student internships and pre-apprenticeships.

Engagement Activity Examples

To give you a better feel for what engagement can look like, below is a partial list of typical activities with brief descriptions. The list starts with those that are low-intensity – that is, they usually require the least amount of time for the partnership to plan and implement. The activities become more intense as you go through the list.

Guest Speaker: Share information with a classroom of students about your industry or career field, your professional journey, and the education/training you needed to be successful. (time commitment: 60-90 minutes)

Career Fair: Host a booth at an event where you share information about your industry or career field with lots of students. This is not to be confused with a job fair which is focused on actual hiring. (time commitment: 3+ hours)

Business Roundtables: Join other business professionals in sharing information with groups of teachers about your industry or career field and about how you use subjects such as math, English, and science in your job. (time commitment: 90 minutes plus planning)

Advisory Boards: Participate in a school-level, CTE advisory board to provide support and advice for academic programs, assist in the development of new programs, and identify best-practice standards. (time commitment: 60-90 minutes per meeting; up to 4x per year)

Work-Site Tour for Teachers: Host a team of teachers that are assigned to a CTE program (i.e., pathway or academy) to learn about your industry and your company while also making direct connections to the standards they are required to teach. The teachers and employees gain a deeper understanding and appreciation for each other's organization. That level of understanding and respect enhances the partnership's ability to incorporate and demonstrate connections between the student's academics, their CTE experience, and careers of interest. (time commitment: 3-5 hours plus considerable planning)

Work-Site Tour for Students: Host a large group of students to learn about your industry and your company. It is a great way to connect the world of work to their world of school. This activity is recommended after the teachers' tour experience.(time commitment: 3-4 hours plus planning)

Job Shadow: Host 1-3 students for most of a school day (e. g., 9 a.m.-1p.m.) at your business to shadow an employee. (time commitment: 3-5 hours plus planning)

Teacher-Team Externship: Host 2-5 teachers at your business for a single day (or up to a week) to explore a pre-identified, authentic, business challenge/problem. The teachers gather artifacts, interview different company stakeholders, and gain a better understanding of an authentic, workplace challenge/problem. Teachers then draw from their externship experience to design in-class projects through which students learn and explore. Externships are often conducted during the summer given the time demands and challenges during the school year. (time commitment: 8-40 hours plus considerable planning and implementation)

Student Internship: Host a student for an extended learning/work experience during a semester or the summer. This activity is not recommended until the partnership is well established and has experienced other, less intense, engagement activities. Note that it is typical for students to be paid for the time they spend as an intern on the job site. (duration: 8-16 weeks plus planning)

3. HOW TO IMPLEMENT

The third stage of a powerful employer-education partnership is one in which the partnership action plan is implemented and managed. The benefit gained by the employer partner is the opportunity to co-design and co-create. In fact, at this stage, it is far more than just being involved. It is about actually influencing the future direction of a CTE course or program in ways that benefit the students, the school, and the employer’s industry. To implement and manage the plan effectively, the three steps listed in the chart below are recommended. In the pages that follow, we will explore each step in greater detail.



3-A: Manage the Partnership Action Plan

If the CTE program you are partnering with has dedicated staff in place, then your role in managing the partnership action plan should be relatively easy. In any case, you still must play an active role. Reach out and check in regularly with your school contact even if you don’t have an immediate engagement activity on the horizon. The first partnership year is much about building the relationship, and doing so effectively requires touch points throughout the academic school year. The 3Cs – communication, collaboration, and coordination – are a good rule of thumb to apply faithfully.



Scan the QR Code to access resources like the one below:

- Partnership Action Plan



Establish Partnership Norms

Building a partnership plan is a great start! Now it's time to manage and monitor the partnership and its plan to ensure the partnership journey is successful. One way to do that is by having the partnership team establish its own stated set of partnership norms and revisit those norms at every meeting until they, in fact, become the standard, practiced norms. Check out the resource related to this by scanning the QR code.



Scan the QR Code to access resources like the one below:

- Partnership Norms Worksheet



3-B: Implement Engagement Activities

You should have as much of an active role in designing and planning the engagement activity as does your school partner. This is the only way to ensure the engagement activity is meeting both the needs of the school and your organization. Here are a few engagement activities you can easily replicate in the first year of your partnership.



Scan the QR Code to access resources like those below:

- Mock Interview
- Guest Speaker
- Worksite Tour



Ready to Conduct Mock Job Interviews?

A mock job interview is simply a practice interview for a job. It simulates the real-life interaction between the applicant and the employer. A mock interview gives the student the opportunity to test and practice answers to typical and nontypical interview questions. This kind of practice helps the student develop and improve interview strategies and hone their communication skills. The person conducting the interview can usually offer objective feedback about the student's answers, body language, and presentation skills.

Ready to Be a Guest Speaker?

One of the easiest ways to get involved with a class is by becoming a guest speaker. This is a low-intensity activity for the employer, the teacher, and the students relative to preparation and the actual experience. Being intentional about how this engagement activity is designed and delivered allows it to move away from a transactional activity to a transformational activity. This activity should take no longer than a few hours to design and deliver. Check out the resource folder where you will find a suggested protocol and planning worksheet.

Ready to Host Students (and/or Teachers) On-Site?

Worksite tours hosted by an employer partner are more than just field trips. They can provide a window into the nature of the employer partner's operations, its career offerings, and, more broadly, to the world of work in the 21st century. Much like tours of foreign countries which vary according to the interests of their tour groups (e.g., art, architecture, history, food, etc.) worksite tours will vary according to the purpose and objectives of the touring groups.

This is one of the most powerful engagement activities for both an employer and a school to experience together. It is considered moderately intense for both the employer and the school in terms of preparation and experience, primarily because of the time required. Being intentional about how this engagement activity is designed and delivered, moves it from what ordinarily would be a transactional field trip to a transformational activity. A well-planned and well-executed worksite tour has the potential to deepen the partnership by bridging the world of work with the classroom. This engagement activity is highly recommended for a team of teachers to experience before their students experience a tour. To design and deliver this activity, expect a time investment of up to 10 total hours. Check out the resource folder for a suggested protocol and helpful planning worksheet.

Helpful Tips When Engaging in a School Activity

Before Arriving at the School...

- Communicate your activity and speaking plans. The teacher will prepare students and be able to better support you and the students during your visit.
- Confirm and clarify any appropriate logistics. If you are bringing large pieces of equipment or models, if you will need a projector/computer for your presentation, etc., confirm and clarify your needs with the teacher.

Upon Arriving at the School...

- To assure a prompt start, arrive at the school at least 30 minutes prior to the scheduled start of your activity.
- Respect parking signs. Please be aware that each school has different parking situations. Be sure to park in designated visitor or student parking.
- Sign in at the school office. The office staff or student aids will help you find the classroom you are visiting. To make it easier for office staff to help you, be sure you know the last name of the teacher you are visiting.

Visiting a Classroom: Things to Consider

- Candy: It is not necessary to bring the students sweet treats. But if you choose to, clear it with the teacher in advance, and ask them about the best way to distribute it.
- Allergies: Due to severe allergic reactions for some students, the use of peanut products, cinnamon, and latex are discouraged. Please communicate with the host teacher before bringing any of these products.
- Swag: Feel free to bring company pens, folders, stickers, etc. to distribute to students.
- Marketing: If you would like to distribute company printed materials (flyers, brochures, etc.), they may need to be pre-approved by the school. Discuss this with your host teacher prior to your visit and/or before distributing them to students.
- Photos: Check if you are welcome to take pictures of your time with students. If approved, know it is always important to use discretion when sharing the photographs.

- If a student is not comfortable being in a photo, please do not include them in any photography.
- Do not use individual identifiers (student name, age, grade, etc.) in captions or articles.
- When using the photos, you are welcome to identify the school and class you visited (i.e., carpentry student at XYZ High School).

Upon Leaving the School...

Sign out at the school office. Just as you signed in when you arrived, be sure to sign out before leaving the school.

Common Mistakes and Tips to Avoid Making Them

Common Mistakes	Avoidance Tips
Your company identifies one employee to manage the CTE partnerships.	It's best to have an assisting understudy, so there is continuity of the partnership in case the primary person is unavailable or for some reason is no longer with the company.
Some partnerships are centered around one person in the company and are not broadly "institutionalized." When that person becomes disengaged or leaves the company, so goes the partnership.	To ensure this partnership is transformational, long-lasting, and mutually beneficial, get organizational buy-in to the partnership, especially with executive leadership/management. Refer back to the 4 As of how your company can organize its engagement (A dvice, A lign and A dvocate, A ctivate).
Schools ask your company for money.	Schools need to be able to articulate what their needs are in measurable, concrete ways. For example, we need half-day job shadows for 50 of our students by the end of the semester, or we need five engineers to judge student projects on Oct. 17th. Note: Ford NGL trains schools on how to make their "ask" clear and concise while focusing on the relationship first and foremost. This means not asking your company for money!
When multiple teachers/administrators in the building begin making multiple "asks" to multiple people in your organization, the opportunity for miscommunication increases exponentially.	There needs to be ONE partnership manager (with an understudy) for your company or organization, and all requests funnel through that partnership manager.
3C's (communication, collaboration, and coordination) are not clearly defined.	Clearly defined processes and procedures for the 3C's ensures understanding and creates more effective means to accomplish the desired outcomes.

3-C: Engage in the Advisory Council Meetings

The law that governs federal funding for school district CTE programs (often referred to as “Carl Perkins”) requires an advisory council composed mostly of industry professionals for any school or district operating a CTE program with Perkins dollars. The purpose of these advisory committees is to make sure educators keep up with the latest industry trends and workforce needs while assuring their programs reflect current industry standards and technology.

Effective Governance

The best advisory councils are usually chaired by an industry representative (or co-chaired with the CTE educator) for a fixed term of service to ensure a consistent infusion of new leadership and ideas. To be effective, advisory councils should meet at least 3-4 times each school year. That way the program’s progress can be monitored and adjusted throughout the school year. The first meeting of the school year can include an overview of the school program, however, subsequent meetings should prioritize discussions led by the business partner regarding course standards, industry trends, industry technology, and the relevance of industry certifications.

One of the common ways an advisory board is sometimes underutilized is the role it can play in holding both school and employer partners accountable for implementing partnership activities. Advisory council meetings in the middle of the school year can be spent planning (and more importantly, debriefing) partnership activities. School and employer partners who know they are expected to report at the next meeting on what took place, naturally feel a heightened sense of shared accountability to make sure planned activities happen and happen as designed.

How to contribute and make your participation in advisory council meetings effective for you.



Unfortunately, the demands of work, family, and life, combined with the often limited, industry-related experience of many high school teachers, can result in an advisory council not living up to its full potential. In a world where there never seems to be enough time, some advisory councils operate as a “check-the-box” exercise where employer partners sit and observe presentations from educators over lunch once or twice a year. Sometimes a little nudge from one of its members is all it takes to get things back on track to improved outcomes.

As a business leader committed to the mission, goals, and objectives of a powerful partnership, ask the advisory council what can be done to discuss topics you would like to see on future agendas. Offer to host mid-year meetings at your business, and, if possible, provide the food and beverages for participants. Consider including one or two other advisory council members in the conversation who share your concerns and have a valued working relationship with your education partner. Just about everyone is open to ideas for improvement if they are perceived as offers of help, not criticism.

Connect with Guidance Counselors

When it comes to partnering with your local school, don't overlook the important role school counselors play in advising students about their career options. One way to educate this important group about the opportunities in your industry is to invite a school's counseling team to attend a CTE advisory council meeting in which you plan to give an overview of your industry's workforce needs. You can also engage counselors in teacher externships or an event you are sponsoring at your partner school. If you have an opportunity to give a presentation, start with a self-introduction and consider asking educators to share the most common questions they get from students who are thinking about post-graduation plans. Your presentation should be an introduction to your industry with two or three brief examples from your business.

Here are some sample topics to cover:

- What does your industry do/make?
- How has it changed over the past 20 years?
- What academic or technical skills are valued in your industry (i.e., math, science, technical writing, etc.)?
- What high school courses, industry certifications, post-secondary training, or college degree(s) are necessary or preferred for entry-level positions (both front line and management)? Do companies in the industry typically pay for this education/training?
- What are the starting and average annual wages?
- What does a typical benefit package look like?
- What career paths are available in your industry, and what is the earning potential for those careers?
- Are there ways in which companies in your industry already partner with high schools to support student learning?

Be sure to leave time for questions and discussion, and wrap up the discussion by asking how you might help them achieve educational and career success for their students.

Working with Youth

Working with youth can be fun and personally rewarding, but when partnering with schools to plan and host engagement activities, doing so successfully requires thoughtful consideration and preparation. In this section of the guide, you will find tips for your organization to consider when working with youth. In all cases, we suggest spending time with your education partner to gain a thorough understanding of and appreciation for the students your company or organization will engage.

In the Middle School Classroom

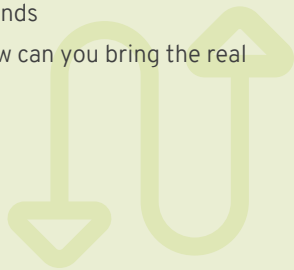
**The information below provided with permission for its use by the Anchorage School District, CTE Department.*

The large majority of the class time spent on students participating in an activity.

Signs of a great activity. Students are on task when...

- Out of their seats
- Working in groups or in pairs
- Working with their hands

Think outside the box. How can you bring the real world into the classroom?



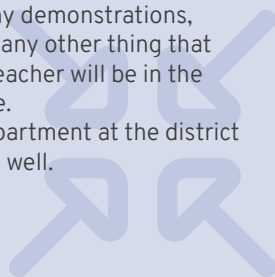
The key to a great joke is timing.

- Keep the information short and to the point.
- Avoid anything that may come across as a pep talk or a lecture.
- Limit your talking time to no more than 10 minutes or you lose the attention of your audience.



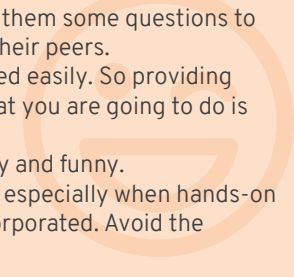
Education is a group effort. Don't hesitate to ask for anything you might need.

- Communicate with the teacher well in advance to any instructional/classroom support you may need. (i.e. projector screen)
- During your visit, feel free to ask the teacher to assist you with any demonstrations, student behavior or any other thing that may come up. The teacher will be in the room the entire time.
- Contact the CTE department at the district office for support as well.



Remember that you will be with 12 to 14 year olds.

- They have short attention spans.
- You can grab their attention by creating a fun environment. They like having fun.
- They naturally can be talkative (between each other). Give them some questions to brainstorm with their peers.
- They are distracted easily. So providing a structure of what you are going to do is important.
- They can be goofy and funny.
- They like to learn especially when hands-on activities are incorporated. Avoid the sit-and-get.



In the High School Classroom

**The information below provided with permission for its use by the Anchorage School District, CTE Department.*

Actions in the Classroom

- Visuals: Have pictures, 3-D models, tools or equipment for students to see, touch and feel.
- Tell a story: Give students the chance to learn from your mistakes and successes.
- Vocabulary: Students do not know your industry jargon. Use words that anyone can understand. If you do use jargon, explain it.

Engage Students

- Establish a connection or similarity with the students (Examples: I graduated from East High School; I took every construction class I could when I was in high school)
- Have conversations with students throughout your visit. Ask them questions and let multiple students answer the same question before moving on.
- Complement students for demonstrating positive employee behaviors.
- Keep an eye out for disengaged students and try to re-engage them.

Support

- Education is a group effort; do not hesitate to ask for assistance.
- Communicate with the teacher before and during your visit: classroom support, equipment, demonstrations, student behavior and anything else that might come up.
- Feel free to contact the CTE department at the district office for support as well.

Teens These Days

- High school students want to be treated as adults.
- Adults are still strangers; be cautious of treating students as your “friends”.
- They like to laugh.
- They are really not much different than you when you were their age.



Scan the QR Code to access resources like the one below:

- 8 Considerations When Working with Youth



4. HOW TO MEASURE RESULTS

The fourth stage of powerful employer-education partnerships is more strategic. It involves your business or organization working with your school partner in ways beyond the actual engagement activity. It is important to remember that engagement activities are designed with certain positive results in mind. In this stage, we measure, to the degree possible, whether the student and teacher experiences demonstrate progress toward the agreed upon goals and objectives.

Surveys are valuable sources of feedback for your organization and the partnership. Surveys can be conducted at the beginning and end of the year and throughout the year prior to and following an engagement activity. They can be used to gather pre- and post-event feedback. The information collected from these surveys can be used to reflect on what's working well within the partnership. They can also be used to identify what needs to be improved to ensure the partnership's goals are being effectively addressed.

Measuring results and gathering feedback to assess performance and drive continuous improvement is an expectation of a powerful partnership. This section of the guide provides you with four different ways in which data and feedback can be collected and utilized to measure results, demonstrate partnership value, and formulate plans and improvements for the future.

A Employee Surveys	B Pre- and Post- Experience Student Surveys	C Engagement Activity Surveys	D Partnership Team Surveys	E Annual Partnership Retreat
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4-A: Employee Surveys

Employee surveys are an important part of your business-school partnerships. The surveys are conducted among employees of partner organizations to gather their feedback and opinions about the impact of the school partnership. This type of survey produces data that demonstrates employee perceptions of the partnership, its effectiveness, and its impact on the company's workforce development strategies.

Employee surveys are important as a means of evaluating partnership effectiveness as they provide insights into the perceived value of the partnership, whether it is meeting the intended goals, and if there are any areas for improvement. Survey results may also help in identifying opportunities for further collaboration based upon employees' interests and goals. Another benefit that sometimes gets overlooked, especially when not measured, is the fact that business-school partnerships and engagement actually enhance employee satisfaction. That is particularly true when employees feel that they are involved in a worthwhile endeavor that gives back to their community. Employee surveys also drive continuous improvement in the partnership itself and ultimately on the benefits it provides students.

When employee surveys are used to evaluate the partnership’s impact; identify opportunities for collaboration; and enhance employee engagement and satisfaction, they enable the partnership to evolve and add value to the organization and its employees. That can, in turn, enhance employee job satisfaction and improve the likelihood of partnership sustainability.



Scan the QR Code to access resources like the one below:

- Company Employee Survey Questions



4-B: Pre- and Post-Experience Student Surveys

Pre- and post-experience student surveys are a great way to gauge what a student originally knew about your industry compared to what they know now as a result of participating in one or more activities. The data produced from this type of survey can be embedded into your company profile describing your community focus and why you partner with schools.



Scan the QR Code to access resources like the one below:

- Pre- and Post-Experience Student Survey



4-C: Engagement Activity Surveys

Each time an engagement activity is hosted, it is important to assess the results. The data gathered improves the partnership’s overall health by measuring to what degree the activity addressed the partnership’s objectives. The data gathered over time also demonstrates the effectiveness of the partnership’s action plan.

Engagement activity surveys should be tailored for each audience. For example, if the students are experiencing the activity, they should get an end-of-activity survey. The employees and/or teachers who hosted the activity should also get a customized survey. Data provides knowledge, direction, and rationale. The more information you have about the value added by the partnership, the more likely the partnership will be fine tuned for greater effectiveness and future sustainability.



Scan the QR Code to access resources like the one below:

- Worksite Tour Survey
- Advisory Board
- Guest Speaker



4-D: Partnership Team Surveys

The most common challenge employer/school teams face as they start their partnership journey can usually be linked to how well they communicate, collaborate, and coordinate. We call these contributing factors the 3Cs. Partnership team surveys are helpful tools for assessing performance and identifying improvement opportunities regarding the application of those factors.

- **Communication:** The dissemination and exchange of clear information (using established and sustainable channels) regarding content critical to the success of the partnership such as who is responsible for the various aspects of the partnership plan, for sharing successes and opportunities for growth, and for identifying and clarifying the allocation of resources.
- **Collaboration:** Working cooperatively as a partnership team to develop an agreed upon plan with engagement activities that align and support each organization's goals.
- **Coordination:** The orchestration of actions taken toward agreed-on, joint, or common partnership goals.



Scan the QR Code to access resources like the one below:

- Partnership_Team_3Cs_Self-Assessment



4-E: Annual Partnership Retreat

Co-hosting an annual partnership retreat is an opportunity for the partnership team stakeholders to take a step back, reflect on what has transpired, celebrate successes, and plan for the future. The annual retreat provides a thoughtful, supportive environment, away from much of the stress and many of the demands faced during the school year.

The following are key elements of a powerful partnership annual retreat.

- **Debrief:** Review key milestone activities according to the partnership plan and identify successes and challenges.
- **Assessment:** Review how success was defined collectively at the beginning of the year, compare evidence of progress, and identify areas of strength and potential growth.

- Reflection: Consider new learnings from the recent school year to inform planning for the next school year.
- Planning: Develop an inclusive implementation plan and timeline for all partners. Prioritize and plan key partnership activities and action items for the coming school year, setting timelines and identifying responsible parties.
- Celebration: Acknowledge and applaud successes, initiatives, and unique contributions.

Business & CTE Partnership Case Study

Partnership in Action: WireCrafters and Pleasure Ridge Park High School

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ObBY_iBDG0I



In 2017, Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS), in partnership with KentuckianaWorks (the Workforce Board) and Greater Louisville Inc. (the local Chamber), launched the Academies of Louisville, a transformative public education model* that aligns high school pathways with major areas of economic growth in the Greater Louisville region.

By connecting 15 wall-to-wall career academies high schools to 170+ signed business and community partners, the academies model aligns education and workforce development needs to better prepare students for post-secondary and career success. Business partners work with students to provide a range of hands-on learning opportunities and real-world work experiences to prepare them for life after high school and in return employers get the benefit of growing their own talent pipeline.

One Louisville-area business that is benefitting from a special Academies partnership is WireCrafters, a welding and fabrication company specializing in wire partitions. WireCrafters became a signed business partner with Pleasure Ridge Park High School (PRP) and its welding pathway in 2019.

We interviewed Chad Anglin, WireCrafters Operation Manager, about how their partnership got started and how it has evolved.

1) How did you find out about the Academies? Did someone reach out to you or did you make the first call?

Kristin Wingfield (JCPS School Business Partnership Specialist) reached out at the same time I was looking for some community involvement.

2) What interested you in the partnership?

A chance to fulfill two needs. One was a need to find a pipeline of employees to get ahead of the hiring needs. The second, and equally important, to offer our employees that wanted a bigger “sense of purpose” the chance to mentor young professionals/adults.

3) How many schools do you partner with?

Currently one. We started with two, but one was not working so well.

4) What grades do you work with at your partner school and what do you offer them?

We work with 9th-12th grades. We offer mentors that visit the school. We offer summer help positions, co-op positions, and then full time positions upon graduation.

5) What were some of the very first action steps that you took with your partner school? (What activities did you have planned initially?)

The first steps we took were to meet with the schools and set expectations and goals for each party. Initially, we planned to send welders to the school periodically, but not on a set schedule and bring in a few co-op students. That quickly morphed to sending welders over on a weekly or biweekly basis, getting multiple co-op students, donating a lot of steel, and working with them to get them material for special projects they wanted to take on.

6) What engagement activities do you offer now?

Currently we try to send welders over every Thursday. We still do all of the same employment and try to do a “signing day” for those that go from co-op to full time.

7) How many young people have you hired from your PRP? (What % is that of your workforce?) How many co-op?

We currently have four full time welders from PRP and five co-op students. The full time and co-op welders make up 18% of our welding department--quite a staggering number for such a short period we have been partnering with JCPS, especially if you consider the time lost to COVID.

8) What have you learned over the past few years about working with a school that could be helpful to other employers considering a partnership?

The instructors will make or break your program. Make sure they communicate well and you do the same. You have to be willing to accept that no matter how strong the class of students you get are, they are still young adults and when you join this partnership, you are accepting the responsibility of helping to develop these students as they mature and grow into professionals and adults.

9) Why would you recommend partnering with a school? (What’s in it for a business?)

The biggest benefit is obviously the labor. As a hiring employer, we have found very good success with our students that come on board full time. But more than that, you can use this program for your current employees as well. It’s no longer solely about profits, but actually about being a committed member of the community and really trying to improve the quality of life.




10) Any other comments you would like to share about your partnership?

I highly recommend asking yourself, are you in this for new employees or are you in this to create/build a culture. These students bring a different mindset. Employees want to belong to something bigger than themselves and work somewhere they can be proud of. We spend about 1/4 of our waking hours at work and pay is the primary reason for that, but that doesn’t mean that people don’t want to do more. Use this partnership to allow your current employees to be a part of mentoring and shaping the students that join your place of employment and you’ll reap the benefits. If you just tell the students to put your head down and work, don’t fully engage them, or don’t get the employees bought in, it may still work for you, but the benefits will not be as great.

**The Academies of Louisville is built on the framework developed by Ford Next Generation Learning (Ford NGL), which has been transforming education in communities across the United States for more than a decade.*

5. WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOUR COMPANY OR ORGANIZATION?


The fifth stage of powerful employer-education partnerships centers on three objectives. They include building a deeper bench of employees prepared to engage with schools; expanding your reach within the district; and sharing your partnership successes within and outside your company. When you share your story, you become an influential advocate for powerful business-education partnerships within your industry and community. Let's learn a little more about each of these three steps in stage 5.

 <p>Recruit from Within.</p>	 <p>Expand Your Reach with Schools.</p>	 <p>Celebrate and Share Successes.</p>
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5-A: Recruit from Within

Your organization's structure is important to consider when developing powerful partnerships with CTE. To expand involvement, make a list of employees from your company or organization who are involved with the current partnership and consider the roles they played. Then, identify ways to "build your bench" and deepen the structural support. Doing so will ensure there is support at multiple levels of the company; that more than one individual is prepared to act as the point person if needed; and that there is a sufficient group of employees cleared and adequately onboarded to participate and support the partnerships' engagement activities.

Here are the three levels of engagement to consider for the structure of your organization.

 <p>Assist</p>	<p>Subject matter experts (SMEs): This group of subject specific, knowledgeable employees and their colleagues are typically the ones called upon to plan and participate in specific engagement activities.</p>
 <p>Advise & Align</p>	<p>Middle management: The human resource director and recruitment manager(s) should be briefed and contributing to the partnership goals and objectives. Often, the HR Director (or one of their direct reports) functions as the partnership coordinator and point person for your company.</p>
 <p>Advocate</p>	<p>Leadership: The president and CEO should be briefed and supportive. Buy-in at the top is critical and fundamental to a long-term partnership.</p>



Scan the QR Code to access resources like the one below:

- SAMPLE: Recruit from within PPT



5-B: Expand Your Reach with Schools

Expand your reach within the district/schools by building relationships with more than your school's point person. As the partnership grows, you should establish working relationships with the CTE teacher(s), core academic teachers, counselor(s), the principal, and the assistant principal. Now, don't worry! Like most things worthwhile, establishing these relationships takes time. That is why it is a point of focus in stage 5 of the powerful-partnership process. As the partnership gains experience and visibility, your opportunities to build a greater number of key relationships grows, but it does require you to be intentional about making them happen.

5-C: Celebrate and Share Successes

Successes should be celebrated and shared. Throughout the year, capture evidence of the engagement activities by taking pictures and recording videos of students (and teachers) interacting with your company. Share these captures via social media, and tell your partnership story. Become an advocate for other industries/companies in your region to also get engaged. Doing so is another way to support young people, build communities, and enhance the reputation and desirability of your company as an employer and industry leader. In the end, isn't that the main focus? It takes a connected, mutually-supportive group of community stakeholders to make sure all students are successful in school, college, and in life. When that happens, it is a win that benefits everyone involved.

Examples of accomplishments to be celebrated include:

- Improvements in student outcomes resulting from work-based learning experiences.
- Recognition of investments in the partnership and returns on those investments.
- Enhancements to curriculum and the addition of more authenticity to student learning.
- More efficiency and effectiveness in the partners' communication, collaboration, and coordination resulting from a closer working relationship among the partners.

HOW CAN FORD NGL HELP?

Ford NGL is here to help your company strengthen its workforce-development strategy by successfully incorporating partnerships with career and technical education. We offer a variety of services and experiences to support your efforts including:

- Training for businesses to strengthen their organizational strategies, processes, and structures necessary for effective school partnerships.
- Training for business volunteers and teachers on how to plan and implement partnership activities effectively.
- An "Education 101" seminar for business volunteers on how schools work, their key terminology and methods, and their funding and reward sources.
- Additional training and facilitation (virtual or in-person) such as:
 - A workshop with business and education partners to plan work-based learning activities for students and develop partnership plans.
 - A workshop on designing authentic student projects designed around current challenges.
 - A workshop on engaging and creating highly-effective advisory boards.
 - A workshop on designing effective partnership retreats for annual strategic planning.
 - Training for low intensity, high-return, partner-engagement activities.
 - Customized training is also available and reflective of exploratory calls with your organization.



Want to learn more? Contact: info@fordngl.com

NOTES

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A SPECIAL THANK YOU!

Ford Next Generation Learning would like to thank the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), Workforce Development Champions. The insights and support they provided were instrumental to the development of this guide. To learn more about NAHB and what they are doing to involve their members with career and technical education (CTE), visit

<https://www.nahb.org/advocacy/top-priorities/workforce-development/workforce-development-champions> or contact Greg Zick at gzick@nahb.com.

**For more information about
Ford Next Generation Learning
contact info@fordngl.com and visit www.fordngl.com.**

First and foremost, students are at the center of everything Ford NGL does. All youth, especially those furthest from opportunity, deserve an education that nurtures their talents and full potential – an education that prepares them for a career path of choice.

To that end, Ford Next Generation Learning champions a collaborative, community-driven approach to education. Ford NGL helps educators, employers, and community leaders prepare a diverse generation of graduates who are ready to apply their passion and skills in a 21st century economy and are able to contribute to the success of their communities. Our approach requires a fundamental shift in mindset, but when applied with fidelity over time, it has shown to deliver transformational results.

