

## CAREER FOCUS TASK FORCE #4

Ensuring High Quality Career Preparation Experiences for  
Students

Everyone Graduates Center, Johns Hopkins University School of Education

January 29, 2026

# CAREER FOCUS TASK FORCE TOPICS

- September 18: Schools and school systems
- October 28: Nonprofit, business, and community engagement
- December 2: Measuring and evaluating student outcomes
- January 26: Ensuring quality career prep experiences for students
- March 12: Career readiness for all: what principals can do



# Welcome and Preview

- Welcome and remarks (Dr. Robert Balfanz)
- Participant introductions (name and organization)
- Our process and guiding questions for breakout groups
  - In your view, how do the six Design Principles listed in the EdResearch report relate to one another (i.e., how does each component contribute to and/or build upon the others)?
  - How can schools/systems create a coherent progression of exposures and experiences for students, beyond a scattering of short-term disconnected activities? What examples have you observed of schools or systems that do this successfully?
  - How do partnerships with employers and colleges make possible high quality career experiences (work-based learning, credentialing, identifying high-wage pathways, etc.)? What are the components of effective partnerships, and examples that you've observed?
- General discussion and resource sharing
- Upcoming events

# Welcome from Dr. Robert Balfanz

# Participant Introductions

Please share your name, role, and organization

# More Questions

Among the Design Principles for high-quality CTE programs, which are most crucial for effective career experiences for students? Which are hardest to attain or most often overlooked?

**Which principles are the highest priority for school leaders or systems just beginning their career-focused program? Why?**

How can cross-sector partnerships lay groundwork for broader learning ecosystems? What collaborations between formal and informal educators are most effective?

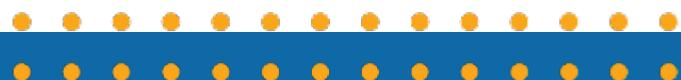
**How can schools develop pathways of three or more aligned courses in locally relevant clusters for students in the later years of high school?**

**What are some strong current partnerships in your state or community? How are effective partnerships designed and Implemented?**

What are effective strategies to offer younger students (middle and early high school) high-quality career exploration and advising?

# Our Process

- Participants will have 10 minutes to discuss each guiding question in breakout groups
- Each group will have a Google doc page on which to record thoughts, questions, suggestions, resources and connections for each of the questions
- After each discussion, a spokesperson from each group will have 3-5 minutes to share some of the group's most significant insights and/or concerns
- If time permits, consideration of the guiding questions will be followed by a broader discussion
- After the session, we will send out all resources shared and links to the Google docs



# SIX DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE CTE PROGRAMS

## PATHWAY STRUCTURE AND ACCESS

Opportunities to complete at least three aligned courses in a CTE career cluster

## PARTNERSHIPS W/ EMPLOYERS AND COLLEGES

To strengthen the alignment between CTE programs and students' college and career opportunities.

## WORK-BASED LEARNING

The most impactful WBL programs are structured, skill-building, and aligned to students' interests and career goals.

## TEACHER EXPERTISE AND RECRUITMENT

CTE teachers with industry experience or strong subject-matter test scores (even without traditional certification).

(Source: EdResearch for Action, "Evidence-based approaches to designing effective career and technical education programs," Sept. 2025)



## STUDENT EXPLORATION AND ADVISING

The opportunity to explore multiple CTE pathways before choosing one, to reduce misplacement and boost engagement and retention.

## EQUITY AND ACCESS

Practices such as multilingual outreach, personalized career advising, barrier-free scheduling, equity-focused data use, and fair admissions processes, particularly for students who have been historically underrepresented.

## Ensuring High-Quality Career Prep Experiences for Students

### **Guiding Question 1:**

In your view, how do the six Design Principles listed in the EdResearch report relate to one another (i.e., how does each component contribute to and/or build upon the others)?

## Ensuring High-Quality Career Prep Experiences for Students

### **Guiding Question 2:**

How can schools/systems create a coherent progression of exposures and experiences for students, beyond a scattering of short-term disconnected activities? What examples have you observed of schools or systems that do this successfully?

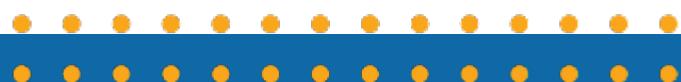
## Ensuring High-Quality Career Prep Experiences for Students

### **Guiding Question 3:**

How do partnerships with employers and colleges make possible high quality career experiences (work-based learning, credentialing, identifying high-wage pathways, etc.)? What are the components of effective partnerships, and examples that you've observed?

# Resources

- FHI360 [Work-Based Learning Manual](#)
- NCICTE [Work-Based Learning Toolkit](#)
- Colorado Succeeds, [Common Challenges and New Opportunities for CTE Programs](#)
- The 74 Million, [What Makes Some CTE Programs Great While Others Fall Short](#)
- EdSurge, [Career Education Is Having A Moment. Here's How It's Adapting...](#)



# Upcoming Career Focus Task Force Meetings

- **Thursday, March 12:**
  - **Expanding career readiness for all students: what principals can do**

Save the Date:

## **Everyone Graduates Center Events**

### **INNOVATIONS IN SCHOOL REDESIGN: Third and Fourth Seminars**

#### **“Teaching and Learning”**

- **Tuesday, February 17, 2026 , 2 – 3:15 PM EST**

Register at: <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/MNWcKc-3RVCAx5A5OlaHA>

#### **“Organizing Adults”**

- **Thursday, March 26, 2026 , 2 – 3:15 PM ET**

Register at: [https://zoom.us/meeting/register/xSecJbGAS26jw\\_pMnMQ\\_0w](https://zoom.us/meeting/register/xSecJbGAS26jw_pMnMQ_0w)

**Thank you to everyone for your  
participation!**

**You will receive notes and links from today's meeting  
in the next few days.**

**Onward, and Be Well!**