

CAREER FOCUS TASK FORCE #4

January 29, 2026

Ensuring High Quality Career Preparation Experiences for Students

Everyone Graduates Center, Johns Hopkins University School of Education

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?

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?

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

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)?

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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?

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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-3RVCAXf5A5OIaHA>

“Organizing Adults”

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

Register at: 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!