

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute
RISE Collaborative on Career-Connected Learning

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Moving from the “what if” to the “what’s next”:

Career-connected learning is not just about skill-building in a particular industry, but about a holistic approach to creating alignment between what a student knows and wants to learn and the resources and pathways in place to support their learning journey.

Key Takeaways & Themes:

- + The **career-connected learning model** is based on a human-centered design: putting students at the center, and creating opportunities for exposure and exploration to career opportunities, alongside schools, employers, community organizations and stakeholders.
- + **Communication** is key. Being transparent about the efforts to align education and employment and the intended benefits is critical.
 - + It is critical to support **students and families** as they learn about ways to access a variety of learning pathways. School leaders should be able to demonstrate the value of each pathway to the student (and their family), based on the student’s interests, aptitudes and future goals.
 - + **School leaders and teachers** should be involved in the creation of career-connected learning pathways, and be able to tap their own expertise and networks when working to incorporate entrepreneurship into the curriculum.
 - + Building relationships with **postsecondary education leaders and faculty** will require clear messages that highlight the connection between the secondary school curriculum, the postsecondary education program, and the ultimate workforce outcome. Adding dual enrollment opportunities, when possible, is key.
 - + It is key to demonstrate to **employers and industry leaders** how career-connected learning is both an opportunity for expanded education opportunities, but also the foundation for a future talent pipeline that will ultimately support local and regional workforce development needs.
- + In order to successfully activate the “Big Blur,” it is important to ensure **skills and academic learning are aligned and embedded**, not separated.
- + **A healthy career-connected learning system** brings new opportunities to students and families – exposing them to what is possible and available. Currently, many students and families bear the burden for identifying, understanding and engaging in a career-connected learning pathway alone.

- + Building career-connected learning pathways requires **building a system that promotes various options early** in a student's education career, not solely focusing on pathways as the student nears graduation.
- + **Creating urgency is key.** If school leaders across both K-12 and postsecondary education, state policymakers and state/regional employer partners do not align and collaborate today, our communities will not have the talent pipeline needed to advance solutions for the future.
- + **Next steps** include support for measuring [Durable Skills](#) and determining how to ensure that credentials are captured and portable across institutions and learner experiences.