



EXPANDING WORK-BASED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Invest Forward Convening: July 2022 Session Recap



ABOUT THE CONVENING

In **July 2022**, Invest Forward held a convening in Nashville, Tennessee, bringing together **leaders from 25 districts** to share ideas, learn from one another, and prioritize stimulus funding to support postsecondary pathway programs in their schools.

Research has shown that high-quality postsecondary education and training is the ticket to **long-term opportunity**. But since the pandemic began, we have seen declines in high school graduation rates, drops in direct college enrollment, a youth unemployment rate that peaked higher than it has in decades, and an education system that is still struggling to find a new “normal.”

Many schools have done tremendous work and invested heavily in strengthening and expanding their efforts to support students’ ability to obtain the training and credentials necessary to be successful beyond high school. **Invest Forward** is committed to recognizing and sharing those efforts widely, to build momentum and support for this important work.



ABOUT EXPANDING WORK-BASED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Work-based learning (WBL) as an important strategy for helping students prepare for and access good jobs. Across the country and at all levels of government, efforts are underway to expand and diversify WBL. Because high schools enroll diverse student bodies and are now more focused on helping students locate and persist on postsecondary pathways, districts are poised to play a greater role in these efforts.

Work-based learning comes in many forms; typical models include apprenticeships, internships, and on-the-job training programs. Studies show that participation in work-based learning opportunities in high school lead to impacts such as reduced time to finding employment and higher starting salaries.

STATE OF ILLINOIS COLLEGE AND CAREER PATHWAY ENDORSEMENT

Presenter: Heather Penczak, Director of Innovation and Implementation, Education Systems Center at Northern Illinois University

The state of Illinois recognized that **work-based learning opportunities cannot be extracurricular**; they need to be integrated into the school day, and they need to be intentional and sequenced. Schools must deliberately provide career awareness, career exploration, problem-based learning challenges, career development experiences, and real-world training. As students move through each stage, there should be more intensity and increased expectation for engagement.

In order to receive the **College and Career Pathway Endorsement on their diploma**, students must complete an individualized plan—which includes college planning linked to early understanding of

career goals, financial aid, resumé, and personal goals—and meet the following requirements:

1. Professional learning:

- Complete at least two career exploration activities or one intensive experience
- Complete at least two team-based challenges with adult mentoring
- Obtain 60 cumulative hours of paid or credit supervised career development experience with a professional skills assessment

2. Career-focused Instruction:

- Two years of secondary coursework, or equivalent competencies, that articulate to a postsecondary credential with labor market value. Must include at least 6 hours of early college credit.

3. Academic readiness:

- Ready for non-remedial coursework in reading and mathematics by high school graduation through criteria defined by district and local community college



EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES THAT EXPAND WORK-BASED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- [Because High School Should Be About More - Slide Deck](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Toolkit \(U.S. Department of Education\)](#)
- [The Critical Role of Intermediary Organizations in Expanding Youth Apprenticeship](#)
- [The Partnership to Advance Youth Apprenticeship](#)



VIENNA SCHOOL DISTRICT 133

Presenter(s): **Kathy Anderson**, Dean of Instruction, Vienna School District 133 and **Joshua Stafford**, Superintendent, Vienna School District 133

Vienna School District 133 is located in southern Illinois, spread across three counties and 200 square miles, and serves over 1,300 students. The district's belief that high school should do more to ensure students are "life ready" has led to an increased focus on providing high-quality career experiences for students, including more than 12 career pathways.

Undergirding all these efforts is a belief that ALL kids are career kids. The focus of Vienna's postsecondary programs is less on what college students will attend, or what they will major in, but rather to help them understand what career they want, and what experiences and course work are necessary to achieve those goals. By connecting work-based learning opportunities to dual credit programming and meaningful partnerships with the local community colleges, over 15 percent of the most recent Vienna senior classes have graduated with associate's degrees.

METRO NASHVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Metro Nashville Public Schools expanded its new [Work-Based Learning Program](#) using federal stimulus funds, giving high school students a chance to get hands-on experience in a diverse range of job opportunities at MNPS offices and with local business partners. The district had initiated a pilot through a grant pre-pandemic that linked almost 70 students to 15 business partners. These students worked over 5,000 hours and received upwards of \$70,000 in wages. Ninety-seven percent of participants graduated from high school, and 73 percent are headed to some form of postsecondary training—trade school, community college, or university. Stimulus funds are now being used to scale and accelerate this highly effective program.

Chicago Public Schools, Baltimore City Public Schools, and St. Paul Public Schools are also using their stimulus funds to offer career-connected learning opportunities.