



A Union of Professionals

Promising Pathways in Career and Technical Education

A Compact of Commitment

We believe that all American students deserve a high-quality education. Robust career and technical education programs that prepare students for work in the 21st Century are vital to fulfilling that promise. This means fundamentally rethinking how we educate students for the careers of the knowledge economy.

The United States is witnessing profound economic changes that have eroded the foundations of middle-class families and threaten our prosperity. In order to compete on a global level, Americans must come together to develop our most important resource: our young people. We all have a stake in ensuring that students have opportunities to earn good wages, support their families, and pay taxes.

Today's career and technical education is not yesterday's vocational education, which in many instances was a dead-end track largely separate from academic preparation. Instead, it is infused through the entire curriculum, providing a vital link between the world of school and the world of work that can motivate students to continue their education and arming them with the knowledge and flexible skills that will make it possible for them to adapt to the jobs of the future.

The best career and technical education programs are aligned to the skills and knowledge needed for the jobs of today and tomorrow's labor market. High-quality programs involve real partnerships between K-12 school systems, community colleges, labor organizations, and employers. Together, they develop curriculum and certification requirements. Teachers take part in professional development and "externships" in businesses and industries. In addition to coursework, students take part in mentoring, job-shadowing, internships and pre-apprenticeships that often provide them with the chance to land jobs, while still retaining the option to go to college.

Creating and strengthening these promising pathways for students requires unprecedented partnership and coordination. Therefore, we pledge to come together as affiliates of the American Federation of Teachers, school districts, community colleges, city governments, and business organizations. We commit to creating local roundtables where we will take stock of our career and technical education programs, identify promising careers that match our labor-market needs, and enlist relevant businesses to help schools and community colleges to ensure that our programs are aligned to the workplaces of the 21st Century.

Together, we will set measurable goals for creating more and more opportunity and hold ourselves accountable for reaching them. We pledge to bolster our community's workforce and provide meaningful pathways for young people to gain the knowledge and skills to not only dream their dreams, but achieve them. Career and technical education, done right, offers a path to reclaim the promise of America.