

Unleashing the Education and Workforce Development Engine

The Power of an Integrated Systems Approach To Student Success

Executive Summary:

For too long the secondary education system has operated in curricular and pedagogical silos that are not aligned with the needs of California's employers, both private and public. For the last five years, the Anaheim Union High School District (AUHSD) has taken a more fruitful approach to their education model by integrating and aligning their teaching and learning so that students and educators can better develop their academic, career, social and emotional skills to succeed as workers, citizens and life-long learners. The "through line" to this integrated approach is consistently cultivating and supporting student voice, identity, and purpose. These skills -- often labelled as civic skills -- help catalyze young people's engagement in school, foster positive student relationships with peers and adults, and bring purpose and meaning to students' academic and career learning. By centering student voice and purpose within career and academic preparation, the learning process becomes unified and community assets from traditionally different arenas can complement student learning and achievement.

Anaheim Union High School District proposes developing a Career Preparedness Systems Framework (CPSF) Toolkit and Training Lab for school districts and communities across California to learn this model and collaborate together on its implementation over a 2 year period. This integrated teaching and learning approach requires supportive administrative and community structures including this new framework and a set of supports and curricula for educators. AUHSD uses CPSF to anchor its support and guidance for teachers and community partners. CPSF centers on three main components: Hard Skills, 21st Century Skills (Soft Skills), and Student Voice & Purpose. It leverages community assets from disparate worlds including the business community, social justice organizations, non-profits, Regional Occupational Programs (ROPs), community colleges and higher education partners. These stakeholders are not usually organized into a unified strategy, but the skills and tools each contribute to form a powerful mosaic of integrated learning and skill building preparing students for meaningful careers grounded in purpose. In order to expand and deepen this successful framework, the CPSF Training Lab would involve up to five cohort districts/communities each year to learn the CPSF model from AUHSD leaders and educators in Anaheim and implement the framework in their communities, sharing best practices and challenges with one another along the implementation journey.

Context -- >

Rapidly Changing World, Structural Unemployment, and the Evolution of CTE

According to a 2013 Oxford University study (Frey and Osborne) almost half of all jobs are likely to be eliminated in the next couple decades by technology. In addition, the employability gap -- the gap between what skills employers need and what skills workers have -- is growing larger and our school systems are failing to address the skills development challenge adequately (source - [Working Nation](#)).

However, Career Technical Education (CTE) in CA schools has come a long way in the past decade thanks to educators and advocates who have pushed it beyond narrow scope and integrated CTE into the core of schools. From career academies to Linked Learning and from innovative ROP initiatives to 21st Century skills pedagogy, CTE educators and advocates have embraced a more holistic approach to developing academic, workforce, and real world skills together. Additionally, the positive impacts on student performance and equity have been demonstrated with these changes in approach. According to the California Department of Education [Fact Sheet](#) on CTE, positive impacts from CTE show that:

- Students who complete a rigorous academic core coupled with a career concentration have test scores that equal or exceed “college prep” students; are more likely to pursue postsecondary education; have a higher grade point average (GPA) in college; and are less likely to drop out the first year of college.
- 80 percent of students taking a college prep academic curriculum with rigorous CTE met college and career readiness goals, compared to 63 percent of students who did not take CTE.
- Average national graduation rate in 2008 for students concentrating in CTE was 90 percent; other students, 75 percent.

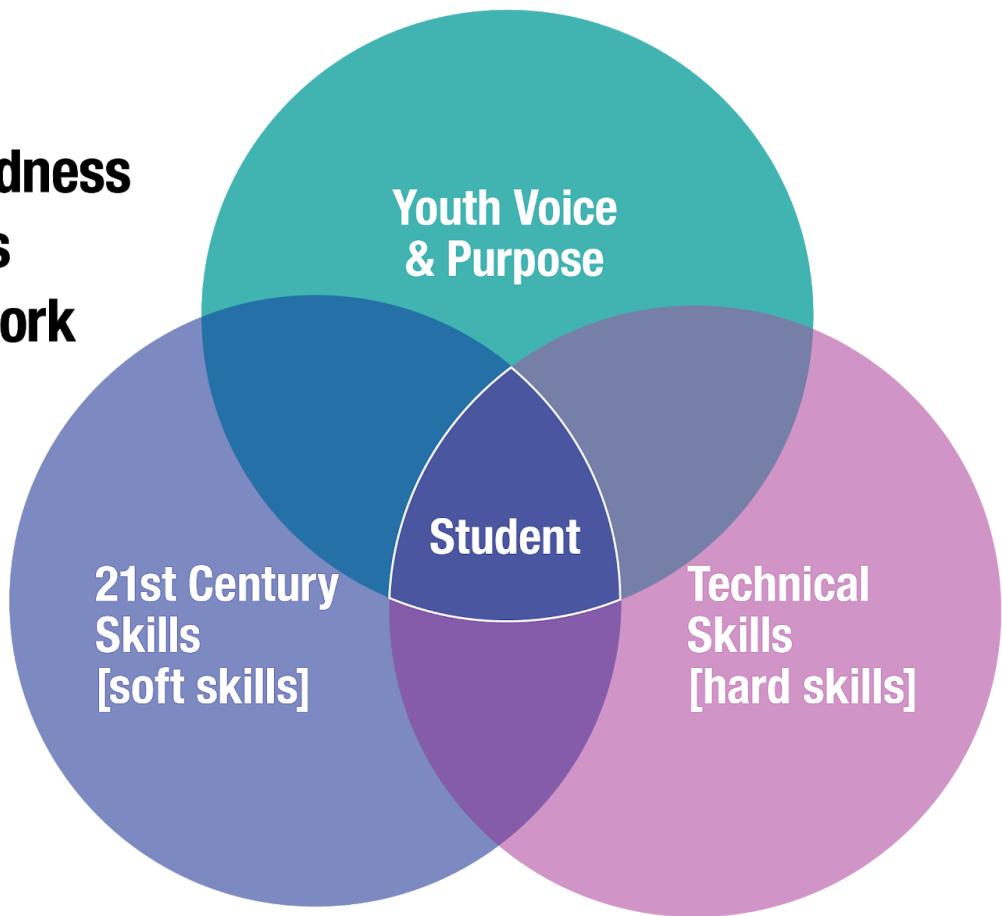
However, there are still challenges to successful CTE in schools and missed opportunities due to disjointed CTE frameworks and instructional approaches, lack of alignment between educators, counselors and community resources like Community Colleges and large employers, shortage of interesting and relevant career pathways and courses for students, internships, and the failure to put student voice and purpose at the center of 21st Century Skill building. In the current mishmash of CTE strategies in districts across California, students are not receiving long term, coordinated support from their teachers, counselors, and community in building their post-secondary futures, and too many community members still view CTE as an “extra” and not related to subjects such as Math, English, Science, and Social Studies. Also, many district administrators fail to foster student centered learning environments where young people can pursue their learning and work passions, explore topics and projects cooperatively

with peers, and share their opinions on civic issues in constructive, thoughtful ways. This intersection of academic skills, workforce skills, and civic skills is where every district can boost success and improve student long term outcomes. What is needed to make this happen is an improved CTE framework and training, materials, and planning time for district leaders, educators, and community partners to build and implement this innovative strategy in their local communities.

Policy Recommendation -->

Develop a Career Preparedness Systems Framework (CPSF) Toolkit and Training Lab for school districts and communities across California

Career Preparedness Systems Framework



Over the past five years, Anaheim Union High School District has developed a leading model for workforce development. Through its Career Preparedness System Framework, AUHSD has maximized its internal alignment and infrastructure around three essential drivers: 21st Century Skills (soft skills), Technical Skills (hard skills), and cultivation of Student Voice & Purpose (civic skills).

There are numerous, innovative features to the Anaheim CPSF strategy. Some of these include:

The Anaheim Collaborative -- A coalition of local partners who help Anaheim Union School District with its CTE and college readiness goals. Includes the City of Anaheim, local community colleges and universities, business, and not for profit organizations.

Career Technical Pathways -- These career pathways embedded in AUHSD high schools provide intensive learning experiences and internships in cutting edge jobs such as artificial intelligence, and biotechnology, and cybersecurity.

The Anaheim Innovative Mentoring Experience -- This initiative provides a range of hands on experiences with local businesses and not for profits including community mentors, paid summer internships, and leadership development workshops.

Six Year CTE Plans -- Starting in 7th grade, AUHSD counselors develop 6 year CTE plans with students to help them explore careers and skill development opportunities throughout their time in school and out of school. Students in 7th grade are enrolled in a yearlong course that has four separate CTE modules, called the “Wheel”.

Robust Dual Credit Program with Community Colleges -- All students are offered dual credit, industry specific skills and certificates at community college courses aligned to career pathways in high schools.

5 C's Approach to 21st Century Skill Building -- Communication, Collaboration, Creativity, Critical Thinking, and Character/Compassion are cornerstones of instruction and reflection throughout AUHSD courses and extra-curricular opportunities.

Robust Youth Voice and Civic Purpose Initiatives -- Throughout AUHSD, students are challenged to build their democratic skills, cultivate their own civic voice and identity, and take informed action to improve their schools and communities.

Asset Based Approach to Cultural and Language Diversity -- Students culture and language abilities are extraordinary assets in their post secondary education and careers. AUHSD innovations such as dual language seal of biliteracy, ethnic studies courses, mindfulness, and social justice collaborative projects, AUHSD students integrate their identities into their future college and career goals.

Regional Occupational Programs (ROP) -- The partnership with the Orange County ROP provides AUHSD students with hands-on learning opportunities in leading Orange County industries and technical skills and certifications.

The CPSF Framework -- >

The Anaheim Union Career Preparedness Systems Framework inserts CTE into the center of the mission of the school and the community instead of treating CTE as an “extra” or only good for certain students. With this framework, post-secondary and career success becomes everyone’s responsibility -- from the local businesses and elected leaders to the teachers, counselors, and community college professors. Most importantly, students lead their own career explorations and bring their passions, voice, and talents into the process. Because AUHSD values student voice and civic leadership from the superintendent to classroom teachers, young people are building 21st Century skills to succeed everyday. In addition, they are experimenting in healthy ways with ideas and work experiences so that they can discover their own unique path and purpose.

Overcoming Barriers and Helping CA Districts and Communities with Tools, Training, and Inspiration to Improve -- >

Too often our middle and high school educators and their leaders feel hamstrung by numerous barriers such as:

- State testing and college board testing
- Interim assessments
- State mandates
- Parental pressures
- Challenges to training teachers in deeper pedagogical approaches
- Lack of support from external partners

These barriers lead to fears and worries that innovation may lead to criticism or failures.

In order to help school district leaders and educators make the changes necessary to provide high quality, holistic CTE strategies supported by the CPSF framework, they need practical models, training workshops, curricula supports, and toolkits. They also need an immersive experience to find the inspiration and courage to make this change. Too often the trainers and workshops educators attend are provided by folks not on the “front lines” of educational systems and pressures. These presenters -- while well

meaning -- don't have the credibility of educators and administrators who are going through the day to day stresses of managing classrooms and schools. The AUHSD CPSF Training Lab would provide school district educators and leaders a chance to learn from Anaheim CTE leaders who are "on the ground", and the CPSF Training Lab would provide opportunities for like minded educators to share new ideas and successes while troubleshooting obstacles.

Educators and administrators will also appreciate that the CPSF is not meant to assess student performance for careers. Rather, it focuses on school systems and practices designed to foster better preparedness for relevant careers. Users of the CPSF should consider **the tool as an "input" indicator**, rather than an "output" indicator of potential student job performance.

Scaling and Launching the the CPSF Framework & Learning Lab -- >

The work of scaling the **CPSF Framework** and developing the **Learning Lab** will happen in 5 phases over the next 2 years.

YEAR 1

1st Phase-- Developing the CPSF Toolkit, the Learning Lab, and identify a Pilot District

In this phase, AUHSD will hire a CPSF Lab executive director to guide this overall strategy and partner her/him with key AUHSD staff, leaders, and partners who will guide the overall project and build the CPSF toolkit, training and coaching plan for the CPSF Lab, and recruit and select pilot district.

2nd Phase -- Promotion and Selection of District Cohorts

In this phase, the CPSF Learning Lab in tandem with the AUHSD leadership, will create an CPSF Initiative RFP application process for Districts throughout California, implement a promotional strategy for the CPSF Initiative, create a rubric and selection process identifying readiness of applicants, and build a CPSF onboarding process for the pilot district who is selected.

3rd Phase -- Launch of CPSF Lab with Pilot District

In this phase, the CPSF Learning Lab will launch with a multi-day conference building on the CPSF toolkit with interactive workshops, community partner presentations, youth voice and leadership training, cross-district sharing and problem solving, design thinking training, and strategic plan building.

YEAR 2

4th Phase -- Planning and Launching CPSF in Pilot District

In this phase, the Anaheim CPSF team will assist pilot district leaders in building the plan and finding the right community partners for local site implementation. In addition, the CPSF Lab will provide coaching, workshop supports, and strategies for evaluation and data collection.

5th Phase -- Reflecting, Iterating, and Continuous Improvement for local CPSF initiatives

This phase supports the iterative nature of implementing the CPSF Framework and CPSF Learning Lab strategies and the need for using assessment tools to identify strengths and weaknesses of the project, develop improvement plans, and provide additional training and coaching support.

Why Now? -- >

The Urgency of Building an Equitable Economic Recovery in California

President Joe Biden and Vice-President Kamala Harris have an economic mantra of “Building Back Better”. This is a great phrase that captures the need for both rebuilding our economy and tackling systemic inequity in our communities. Schools can be the engine for an equitable recovery if school leaders are given the tools, the resources, and the partners to develop integrated and student centered CTE strategies that integrate 21st Century skills, Technical Skills and Student Voice and Purpose.

In a January 25th, 2021 [commentary](#) in CalMatters, Sarah Bohn, Dean Bonner, and Vicki Hsieh of the Public Policy Institute of California posit that the economic recovery of California rests on two core strategies: First, targeting critical support to those most affected in the near term by the pandemic. And second, helping people climb the economic ladder in the long term.

Since the pandemic began, California has experienced massive economic upheaval and unemployment, and families and communities are suffering. Many of the jobs that

have disappeared will not return after the pandemic is over, and the need to train young people for the jobs of the future will have added urgency. The Anaheim Career Preparedness Systems Framework is a tool and a model that can catalyze improvement in our middle and high schools and our workforce development systems across the state. Districts and communities simply need the framework, tools, training, and inspiration to make this change and develop stronger workers, lifelong learners, and community leaders.